


1969

Benjamin Britten's Contribution to Church Music

Marcella Rauch
Ouachita Baptist University

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P. Rauch

APPROVAL STATEMENT

BENJAMIN BRITTEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO CHURCH MUSIC

BENJAMIN BRITTEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO CHURCH MUSIC

A Thesis

Presented to

The Director of Graduate Studies
MARCELLA RAUCH
Ouachita Baptist University

APPROVED

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Church Music
Riley Library
Ouachita Baptist University.

James Bergman

by

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DEAN OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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The writer wishes to express her appreciation to the members of her committee for the time and assistance they gave so generously during the preparation of this thesis, and to the staff of Riley Library of Ouachita Baptist University for their help in obtaining books and scores.

By

Special acknowledgements go to Mr. Alec Wyron, Organist and Choirmaster at the MARCELLA RAUCH, John the Divine, for the inspiration that led to the idea of studying Benjamin Britten's music, and for suggestions on research material; to Mr. W. Stuart Pope, Managing Director of Bonsey and Baskin, Inc., for complimentary copies of music and for help in obtaining research material; and

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1964. The Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies presented him with the first Aspen Award for Service to the Community. The honorary award was accompanied by a citation reading: "The Benjamin Britten, now as a brilliant composer, performer and interpreter through scores of films and recordings, whose music has truly inspired and entertained, clearly and appropriately more fully its own nation, America and beyond." A composer whose ability to recognize others' needs and to be chosen to help and comfort has become a part of his understanding of music, and his own life, is a true and noble musician as the word has been used in the past.

¹Address by Alan Watts at Harvard, North Carolina, July 20, 1965.

²Eric Routley, *Benjamin Britten: A Study* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 67.

³David Looney, "Introduction," *The Discovery of India* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1947), p. 11. Also see *The Discovery of India* by Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, trans. by Mrs. Lata Nehru (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1947), p. 11.

mid-twentieth century. Such a composer is Benjamin Britten.
INTRODUCTION

1. THE PROBLEM

Benjamin Britten is one of the outstanding twentieth century composers in both creativity and originality. Alec Wyton speaks of him as a "shining light" among contemporary composers for the church.¹ Erik Routley states that the great watershed in English sacred music is in Britten's work.² In 1964 the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies presented him with the first Aspen Award for Service to the Humanities. The monetary award was accompanied by a citation reading: "To Benjamin Britten, who as a brilliant composer, performer and interpreter through music, of human feelings, moods and thoughts has truly inspired man to understand, clarify and appreciate more fully his own nature, purpose and destiny." A composer whose settings of religious themes "throw new light on the chosen texts and breathe new meaning and life into our understanding of them"³ may very well be regarded by future historians as the most important composer of sacred music in

¹Address by Alec Wyton at Montreat, North Carolina, July 20, 1968.

²Erik Routley, Twentieth Century Church Music (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 68.

³David Lumsden, "Introduction," The Treasury of English Church Music, Vol. V, 1900-1965, Gerald H. Knight and William L. Reed, Eds., (London: Blandford Press, 1965), p. xiv.

mid-twentieth century. Such a composer is Benjamin Britten, nurtured if church music is to survive as a vital art."⁴

I. THE PROBLEM

Wienandt asserts that Britten has made the greatest impact Statement of the problem. The purpose of this study will be to study the contribution of Benjamin Britten to church music through the analysis of the words and music of some of his works based on religious themes.

A study of Britten's church music may expose the means by which the gulf is being bridged between sacred and secular and suggest future possibilities in the development of music for the church.

Importance of the study. Many churches have a predilection for sacred music written in previous centuries or contemporary music that imitates it. As secular music is continually seeking new ways in which to express the spirit of the times, the continued exclusive use of stereotyped sacred music widens the gap between sacred and secular that began to form about two hundred years ago. At that time most of the mainstream composers turned their best efforts to writing for the concert hall and the theater because the church failed to encourage and support them. The situation must be reversed and the gap narrowed or closed if church music is ever to return to its former greatness. Evidence indicates that this may be happening now with the present trend among the expert composers to write music suitable for the church. "It is through the mature giants of English contemporary composition, Walton, Tippett, and Britten, that a living and lasting link between sacred and secular music has

Church music. While no true distinction between church and non-church music exists, the term shall be used in this study to designate music with text suitable for performance in the worship service.

Sacred music. This term shall denote music written or used for a church celebration, or music having a religious text.

⁴Lumsden, op. cit., p. xiii.
⁵Elwyn A. Wienandt, Choral Music in the Church (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1967), p. 580.

been and is being forged; this cross-fertilization must be nurtured if church music is to survive as a vital art."⁴

Wienandt asserts that Britten has made the greatest impact of any living English choral composer.⁵ Percy M. Young notes that Britten's "talent for communication and his perception of the human values that may be discussed through music has compelled the attention of a world wide audience."⁶ A study of Britten's church music may expose the means by which the gulf is being bridged between sacred and secular and suggest future possibilities in the development of music for the church.

II. DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

Church music. While no true distinction between church and non-church music exists, the term shall be used in this study to designate music with text suitable for performance in the worship service.

Sacred music. This term shall denote music written or used for a church celebration, or music having a religious text.

⁴Lumsden, op. cit., p. xiii.

⁵Elwyn A. Wienandt, Choral Music in the Church (New York; The Free Press, 1965), p. 393.

⁶Percy M. Young, A History of British Music (New York; W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1967), p. 580.

with Secular music. This term shall mean music not written for the church or not having a religious significance.

III. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Music existed long before there was a church, and was used for both religious and non-religious purposes. Sacred and secular music ran parallel, although primitive man made no distinction between them as his religion was so thoroughly intermingled with his life. Both archaeological discoveries and studies of primitive people living in remote areas today show that music was an important part of the rituals and ceremonies that accompanied almost every act of their daily lives. In the British Museum are many pre-historic bas-reliefs found near the Tigris River in Asiatic Turkey. These reliefs depict historical events, religious ceremonies, royal entertainments, hunting parties, military victories. All are being celebrated by musicians performing on instruments. At the present time certain primitive Eskimo and American Indian tribes still sing songs about any events of significance in their lives--from the weather to healing, from work to dance songs.

In the formative years of the Christian Church melodies were used from many sources--Jewish Psalms which had been sung in the Temple or Synagogue, the Psalms of ancient Babylonia (York; W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1950), p. 74.

with which they had come in contact through the dispersions, the secular and pagan melodies of the day, and songs they knew from their Christian experiences such as the Magnificat (Luke 1:46), and Benedictus (Luke 1:68), and the Nunc Dimittis (Luke 2:29-31), and were used according to local taste and resources, chant, or plainsong. Its purpose was to aid the project. Early church leaders were worried about the influence of any kind of music. The fact that it could arouse emotions was as much a danger to the early church as it was an advantage. Clement of Alexandria in the third century and St. John Chrysostom in the fourth denounced the practice of using pagan melodies and advocated the use of plain, unadorned melody "uncontaminated by instrumental accompaniment" as the music most fitted "for the glory of God and the propagation of the Divine Word."⁷ St. Augustine (354-430) noted that the same music can be made to serve sacred or secular purposes and wrote, "Yea, very fierce am I sometimes, in the desire of having the melody of all pleasant music, to which David's Psalter is so often sung, banished both from mine own ears, and out of the whole church, too."⁸

As the church expanded by the founding of monasteries, The standard of living had risen and composers were now directing

⁷Young, op. cit., p. 5.

⁸Oliver Strunk, Source Readings in Music History (New York; W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1950), p. 74.

all over Europe, the music composed by the monks and sung by the monastery choirs was the music sanctioned by the church. Pope Gregory I reorganized the Schola Cantorum, the official choir school at Rome, near the end of the sixth century and gave his name to the official music, the Gregorian chant, or plainsong. Its purpose was to aid the projection of words by using a smooth flowing line of speech. Now one type of music was considered superior to others by the church and better able to impart doctrine. Those who were qualified to teach singing were sent out from Rome along with the missionaries and administrators. Church music became The monastery wall had become the dividing line between sacred and secular music. The gulf widened until church music became increasingly professionalized and was intended to be understood only by God and the performer rather than the audience. Its function was to adorn a ceremony, accompany a procession, or elevate the mind of the worshiper.

By the sixteenth century the status of church music had changed radically. The Reformation with its emphasis on congregational participation in the music had let down the bars between the professional church musician and the amateur. The standard of living had risen and composers were now directing their best efforts toward wealthy patrons of the arts.

Music printing had developed far enough that music was be-

L. Moody by J. Wilbur Chapman (Philadelphia: John C. Winston and Company, 1900), p. 137.

coming accessible to music lovers and the commercialization of music had begun. The field of hymnody was opening up rapidly with congregational singing.

Church music declined as it began to seem less important than secular music and it received less attention from the best composers, who were now writing for the concert hall and the theater. With the notable exception of J. S. Bach (1685-1750), most of the oratorios and masses that were written in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were not intended to be performed in church and used melodies that sounded like secular rather than sacred music. Church music became overly emotional and sweet with pleasant texts. Saccharine harmonies replaced unisons and strong counterpoints.

What had disappeared was the spirit of Protestantism, the conviction, sense, and desire for churchly thought which in the past inspired sacred art. . . . The church was the refuge for all the music unfit for theater or concert halls.⁹

The form of art in which any given generation finds the most perfect expression for its ideals of beauty depends upon the nature of the religious feeling of that generation.¹⁰

One bright spot in the early nineteenth century was the Oxford Movement in England. The Church of England, from

⁹Paul Henry Lang, Music in Western Civilization (New York; W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1941), p. 1008.

¹⁰John Addington Symonds, The Life and Work of Dwight L. Moody by J. Wilbur Chapman (Philadelphia; John C. Winston and Company, 1900), p. 137.

the effects of the Industrial Revolution, was suffering a decline in faith characterized by an idle priesthood and a socially inarticulate church, and attempted to reassert its authority as the repository of Christian doctrine, keeper of the public conscience, and chosen channel of the Gospel. The Oxford Movement effected greater orderliness and beauty in the service, recovered lost treasures of the past in hymnody, and gave more serious attention to both choir and congregational singing. This resulted in an improvement in hymn literature that spread to other churches, particularly the Protestant Episcopal Church in America, and led to the development of that product of the Anglican Church, the anthem. In the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries only two eminent composers gave a great deal of time and effort to writing church music--the two Englishmen, Gustav Holst (1874-1934) and Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958). Their efforts have brought about a noticeably better quality in English church music and the improvement is still spreading to other countries. Erik Routley calls these two composers the "pioneers of the first major English musical dissent of the twentieth century."¹¹ Their dissent was within

¹²Ralph Vaughan Williams, *National Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963).

¹¹Routley, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

accepted musical idioms and involved the use of Tudor period music and folk music, but was away from the conventional harmonic practices of the nineteenth century. In church music Vaughan Williams became the great popularizer of a new style that was really ancient yet sounded modern. His views on this subject are interestingly set forth in his book National Music.¹² Holst was a pioneer through his lecturing and teaching as well as his examples of a clear texture and an economy of resources in his church music. The twentieth century has also seen a change in the theology of church music. No longer is its function to awaken devout feelings. Now it is to be a vehicle for the word of God. Some appropriate non-Biblical texts are being used from both ancient and modern poets, and composers are exploring the possibilities of contemporary developments in music. Benjamin Britten was "brought into the orbit of church music by an imaginative priest" who in 1943 commissioned him to write a composition to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of his church. Britten responded with a cantata, "Rejoice in the Lamb," which was the renaissance of real music coming back into the church. "Britten's is indeed a new voice and a and their particular contribution to twentieth century church

¹²Ralph Vaughan Williams, National Music (London: Oxford University Press, 1963).

¹³Alec Wyton, "Benjamin Britten and Church Music Today," Showcase, Music Clubs Magazine, 39:10, n. 5, 1960.

significant one for the future."¹³

Chapter IV will be a study of the music of the specified works in relation to the text and the resulting contribution

to church music. This study will appraise Benjamin Britten's contribution to church music through his personality, characteristics of the texts he has chosen, and the music to which he has set them. The delimitations will be the works on religious themes with words, beginning with "A Ceremony of Carols" published in 1943 through Cantata Misericordium of 1963.

V. SOURCES AND TREATMENT OF DATA

Primary source materials that will be used in this study are scores of the works analyzed and recordings of the works that are conducted by Benjamin Britten. Secondary source materials that will be used are other recordings, books, periodicals, microfilms, and photoprint copies.

Chapter II will contain biographical data that will be studied in relation to the personal contribution to church music of Benjamin Britten, the man.

Chapter III will be a study of the texts he has chosen and their particular contribution to twentieth century church

¹³Alec Wyton, "Benjamin Britten and Church Music Today," Showcase, Music Clubs Magazine, 39:10, n. 5, 1960.

music.

CHAPTER II

Chapter IV will be a study of the music of the specified works in relation to the text and the resulting contribution to church music.

Chapter V will be a summary of the findings and some new conclusions drawn from the results of this study.

Benjamin Britten was born on November 22, 1913, appropriately on the day of St. Cecilia, patron saint of music. He was "born a genius" who by nature sets in accordance with the laws of music. . . .¹ His mother was an amateur pianist and singer. She held the position of secretary for the local choral society, through which Benjamin came into early contact with a large choral repertoire. The outside musical world made its impression on him by the visiting soloists who stayed in their home. Through these singers he gained experience at an early age in the art of accompanying, and perhaps the subconscious desire to write for the voice.

At age twelve he began to study under the composer, Frank Bridge, who insisted on his having a thorough knowledge of the craft of composition. A scholarship to the Royal College of Music in London provided for his formal education in music. Here he was dissatisfied with being held back by Procrustean teaching methods. "When you are immensely full of energy and ideas you don't want to waste your time being

¹Paul Hamburger, "The Pianist," Benjamin Britten: A Commentary On His Works From a Group of Specialists, Donald Mitchell and Hans Keller, Editors (New York: Philosophic Library, 1952), p. 315.

CHAPTER II

THE MAN

Benjamin Britten was born on November 22, 1913, appropriately on the day of St. Cecilia, patron saint of music. He was "born a genius . . . who by nature acts in accordance with the laws of music . . ." ¹ His mother was an amateur pianist and singer. She held the position of secretary for the local choral society, through which Benjamin came into early contact with a large choral repertoire. The outside musical world made its impression on him by the visiting soloists who stayed in their home. Through these singers he gained experience at an early age in the art of accompanying, and perhaps the subconscious desire to write for the voice.

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¹Paul Hamburger, "The Pianist," Benjamin Britten: A Commentary On His Works From a Group of Specialists, Donald Mitchell and Hans Keller, Editors (New York: Philosophic Library, 1952), p. 315.

taken through elementary exercises in dictation."² His composition teacher at the college, John Ireland, "knew that this was one of the finest musical brains the college had seen for many years," and added that the boy was "very industrious."³

His first job was writing documentary music for the General Post Office Film Unit. This was his first collaboration with the poet, W. H. Auden. Their friendship awakened him to "a fuller sense of an artist's political responsibility, a deeper appreciation of the beauties of English poetry, and a growing awareness of the esthetic problems involved in the alliance of words and music."⁴ An important influence on his intellectual development was Auden's anti-bourgeois feelings.

Believing that violence breeds violence and hatred breeds hatred, Britten was a pacifist and peace-pledger even before World War II. As a conscientious objector during the war he served by playing concerts in war plants and hospitals.

²Benjamin Britten's response to Murray Schafer in British Composers in Interview (London; Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1963), p. 114.

³Ibid., p. 30.

⁴Eric Walter White, Benjamin Britten: A Sketch of His Life and Works (London; Boosey and Hawkes, Ltd., 1948), p. 12.

After World War II, he settled in the east English seacoast town of Aldeburgh (pronounced Awlburra) in his native Suffolk. He left England for a period of nearly three years, 1939-1942, but returned when he discovered his attachment was too strong. He said:

Suffolk, the birth place and inspiration of Constable and Gainsborough, the loveliest of English painters; the home of Crabbe, that most English of poets; Suffolk, with its rolling, intimate countryside; its heavenly Gothic churches, big and small; its marshes with those wild seabirds; its grand ports and little fishing villages. I am firmly rooted in this glorious country. And I proved this to myself when I once tried to live somewhere else.⁵

His recreation included deep-sea fishing, tennis, bird watching, and long walks by the sea to think about ideas for compositions. He followed a rather strict routine for working hours, yet was a sociable neighbor and entertained frequently.

His contemporaries called him "a man of great human compassion,"⁶ "a composer with a social conscience . . . an artist who feels himself part of a community,"⁷ and vitally sympathetic to the struggle of the individual against the

⁵ Joseph Machlis, Introduction to Contemporary Music (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1961), p. 304.

⁶ Address by Alec Wyton at Montreat, North Carolina, July 20, 1968.

⁷ Donald Mitchell, "The Musical Atmosphere," Benjamin Britten: A Commentary on His Works From a Group of Specialists, Donald Mitchell and Hans Keller, Editors (New York: Philosophic Library, 1952), p. 53.

mass.⁸ On the occasion of his winning the Aspen Award Britten said:

I certainly write music for human beings--directly and deliberately. I consider their voices, the range, the power, the subtlety, and the color potentialities of them. I consider the instruments they play--their most expressive sonorities, and where I may be said to have invented an instrument (such as the slung mugs of "Noye's Fludde") I have borne in mind the pleasure the young performers will have in playing it. I also take note of the human circumstances of music, of its environment and conventions; I try to write dramatically effective music for the theater-- And then, the best music to listen to in a great Gothic church is the polyphony that was written for it and took account of the great resonance: this was my approach in War Requiem-- I calculated it for a big reverberant acoustic, and that is where it sounded best. I believe therefore in occasional music, although I admit there are some occasions that can intimidate one--I do not envy Purcell writing his "Ode to Celebrate King James's Return to London From Newmarket." On the other hand, almost every piece I have ever written has been composed with a certain occasion in mind, and usually for definite performers, and certainly always human ones.⁹

In the process of composing and producing or recording some of his works he demonstrated his skill as a conductor, a literary critic, a dramatic and vocal coach, a research scholar, and a pianist--both solo performer and accompanist.

⁸The Earl of Harewood, "The Man," Benjamin Britten: A Commentary on His Works From a Group of Specialists, Donald Mitchell and Hans Keller, Editors (New York: Philosophic Library, 1952), p. 7.

⁹Benjamin Britten, "On Winning the First Aspen Award," Saturday Review, 38, August 22, 1964.

Many of his works were written for amateurs--boy choirs and small parish choirs, for example--as he believed them to be important in the forming of a musical tradition. He stated that serial methods of composing made it impossible to write "gratefully" for voices and difficult for amateurs to sing. His unfailing perception of what an amateur group is capable of performing increased his effectiveness as a composer of church music.

He liked writing music for children and wrote with a rare understanding of them. "Composer Britten . . . likes to write for children-- 'They find my idiom easier than grownups do.'"¹⁰

Britten's music for children is childlike but never childish. The unsophisticated, fresh quality of the child's voice stirs in him all that is happy, warm and tender but never sentimental. . . . There is an indefinable something in Britten's music that at once communicates with children and rings true to them.¹¹

His music is "underlined by moral concern. Britten considers the problems of the time; of persecution, of corruption of good by evil, of personal alienation and rejection, of mental and spiritual isolation. . . . Britten in music

¹⁰ Benjamin Britten, "By Ark and Rocket," Time Magazine, 53, June 30, 1958.

¹¹ Alan Fluck, "Benjamin Britten and Schools," Music in Education, 26:57, May 15, 1962.

is the complete master of communication."¹² "I have few complaints personally. I am touched deeply by the response given me. If I did not communicate I would consider I had failed."¹³

One result of his belief that music should "communicate" and involve people was his writing of parable operas, or church operas ("Curlew River," "The Burning Fiery Furnace," and "The Prodigal Son").

What's the use of writing English operas when there are no English opera houses in which to perform them? On the other hand, almost every town, not to say village, has one of those old Gothic churches in which this form of writing can flourish, and involve the local musicians as performers.¹⁴

A man of compassion for his fellow man and sensitivity to the problems of society; trained in the art of the composition of music; inspired by the beauty or significance of words; believing in "personal relationships" and wanting his music "to be of use to people, to please them, to 'enhance their lives,'"¹⁵ he was peculiarly equipped to write

¹²Percy M. Young, A History of British Music (New York; W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1967), p. 606.

¹³Schafer, op. cit., p. 124.

¹⁴Benjamin Britten, "Britten at Aldeburgh," Saturday Review, 43, July 29, 1967.

¹⁵Benjamin Britten, "On Winning the First Aspen Award," Saturday Review, 38, August 22, 1964.

church music.

CHAPTER III

THE WORDS

Martin Luther, while by no means rejecting them, wrote hymns with neither the traditional Biblical nor liturgical texts. His words spoke to men of the great issues of the time. One such issue was the basic Reformation doctrine of justification by faith. From Ein' feste Burg:

And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us.

* * * * *
That word above all earthly powers,
No thanks to them, abideth;
The spirit and the gifts are ours
Through him who with us sideth.¹

This new freedom eventually led to the same degeneracy in texts that music was undergoing, as set forth in the background of this study. Words became overly emotional and sentimental and even blasphemous in some cases. Later generations moved farther away from Biblical and liturgical texts and even to a general relaxing of truth and relevance. As was the case with music, liberty led to license.

The twentieth century saw a change in church music texts partly because secular composers were finding their works performed in churches and so turned to setting Christian

¹Martin Luther, "Ein' Feste Burg," The Hymnbook (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian Church, 1955), p. 91.

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³ Percy M. Young, A History of British Music (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1967), p. 607.

¹ Martin Luther, "Ein' Feste Burg," The Hymnbook (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian Church, 1955), p. 91.

texts to music. Routley states that he thinks a revival of literary taste among musicians has attracted them to Christian texts even when they did not necessarily subscribe to the beliefs behind the texts.²

A student of the works of Britten early and frequently encounters references to his ability to set words to music in an especially appropriate manner. "Britten's feeling for words and his ability to transfer verbal into musical symbols . . . are almost unrivalled in contemporary music."³ He showed a rare discernment in the choice of texts for his sacred works. From a wide acquaintance with English poetry--both ancient and modern--he was able to see possibilities for effective musical settings in unusual poetic expression. "Rejoice in the Lamb," a festival cantata, was commissioned by and dedicated to the Very Reverend Walter Hussey and the choir of St. Matthew's Church, Northampton, for the fiftieth anniversary of the consecration of their church in 1943.

The text was taken from a long chaotic poem by an eighteenth century man of letters, Christopher Smart, who, through an over-indulgence in prayer and strong drink, found himself spending his last days in a home for the

²Erik Routley, Music Leadership in the Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), pp. 47-48.

³Percy M. Young, A History of British Music (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1967), p. 607.

insane. Smart, like many deranged people, had moments of real lucidity. Rejoice in the Lamb, is an outpouring of praise of all created things to Almighty God.⁴

After the theme is set, Old Testament characters are summoned to join in praising God. Following a beautiful and short "Hallelujah" section the poet tells how his beloved pet cat worships God in his own way:

For I will consider my cat Jeoffry.
 For he is the servant of the living God,
 Duly and daily serving him.
 For at the first glance of the glory of God in the East
 He worships in his way.
 For that is done by wreathing his body seven times round
 With elegant quickness.
 For he knows that God is his saviour.
 For God has blessed him in the variety of his movements.
 For there is nothing sweeter than his peace when at rest.
 For I am possessed of a cat, surpassing in beauty
 From whom I take occasion to bless Almighty God.⁵

The mouse also praises God and the flowers glorify Him:

For the flowers are great blessings.
 For the flowers have their angels
 Even the words of God's creation.
 For the flower glorifies God
 And the root parries the adversary.
 For there is a language of flowers.
 For flowers are peculiarly the poetry of Christ.⁶

⁴Alec Wyton, "Benjamin Britten and the Church," A. G. O. Quarterly, 5, January, 1964.

⁵Benjamin Britten, Rejoice in the Lamb (London: Boosey and Hawkes, Ltd., 1943), pp. 14-16.

⁶Ibid., pp. 19-20.

The poet then used his own suffering as an occasion for praising God, singing "But he that was born of a virgin shall deliver me out of it all."⁷ Letters of the alphabet and musical instruments praise God and the cantata closes with a repeat of the "Hallelujah":

There be one God in persons three,
 Pater Hallelujah from the heart of God, (of equal beauty)
 The son And from the hand of the artist inimitable,
 Gloria And from the echo of the heavenly harp
 Gaude In sweetness magnificent and mighty, (let us rejoice)
 Leave Hallelujah, worldly birth,
 And follow us this joyful birth.

In "A Ceremony of Carols" Britten captured in a twentieth century idiom the essence of the simple charm and deep religious feeling of the poetry of the middle ages. The historical continuity of the Christian faith is attested by his use of this ancient poetry.

Wolcum Yole!

Wolcum be thou hevenè king
 Wolcum Yole!

Born in one morning, for whom we sall sing!
 Wolcum, Thomas marter one,
 Wolcum, seintes lefe and dere,
 Wolcum Yole!⁹

⁷ Ibid., pp. 24-25.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 38-40.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 11-16.
 Benjamin Britten, A Ceremony of Carols (London; Boosey and Hawkes, Ltd., 1943), pp. 3-6.

There is no Rose

There is no rose of such vertu
 As is the rose that bare Jesu.
 Alleluia, (praise ye the Lord)
 For in this rose contened was
 Heaven and earth in litel space,
 Res miranda, (a wonderful thing)
 By that rose we may well see
 There be one God in persons three,
 Pares forma, (of equal beauty)
 The aungels sungen the shepherds to:
 Gloria in excelsis Deo.
 Gaudeamus, (let us rejoice)
 Leave we all this worldly mirth,
 And follow we this joyful birth.
 Transeamus, (let us be transformed)
 Alleluia,
 Res miranda,
 Pares forma,
 Gaudeamus,¹⁰
 Transeamus.¹⁰

Deo gracias!¹³ Balulalow

O my deare hert, young Jesu sweet,
 Prepare thy credil in my spreit,
 And I sall rock thee to my hert,
 And never mair from thee depart.

But I sall praise thee evermoir
 With sanges sweet unto thy gloir;
 The knees of my hert sall I bow,
 And sing that richt Balulalow.¹¹

"If this be the truth" King Herod said,
 "That thou hast told to me,

That the roasted cock that stands in the dish
 Shall

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 11-16.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 19-22.

¹² Ibid., pp. 29-30.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 51-58.

This little Babe

This little Babe so few days old,
 Is come to rifle Satan's fold;
 All hell doth at his presence quake,
 Though he himself for cold do shake;
 For in this weak unarmed wise
 The gates of hell he will surprise.¹²

And finally the quaint idea of giving thanks for Adam's disobedience because of the results:

Deo gracias!
 Adam lay ibounden, bounden in a bond;
 Four thousand winter thought he not to long.
 And all was for an appil, an appil that he tok,
 As clerkès finden written in their book.

Ne had the appil takè ben, the appil takè ben,
 Ne haddè never our lady a ben hevenè quene.
 Blessed be the time that appil takè was.
 Therefore we moun singen,
 Deo gracias!¹³

Britten's use of folk song is shown in his setting of the legend of "King Herod and the Cock":

There was a star in David's land,
 In David's land appeared,
 And in King Herod's chamber so bright it did shine there.

The wise men soon espièd it and told the king on high
 That a princely babe was born that night
 No king shall e'er destroy.

"If this be the truth" King Herod said,
 "That thou hast told to me,
 Then the roasted cock that stands in the dish
 Shall crow full senses three."

¹² Benjamin Britten, *King Herod and the Cock* (London: Boosey & Tames, Ltd., 1965).

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-58.

O the cock soon thrusten'd and feather'd well
 By the work of God's own hand,
 And he did crow full senses three
 In the dish where he did stand.¹⁴

In the medieval church ways were found to make the Bible stories come alive for the common people, most of whom could not read. Stained glass windows depicting Bible scenes were used as visual aids. "Noye's Fludde" was one of the medieval miracle plays acted out in church to convey the story of that momentous event. Britten's setting was written for amateurs, including the children, who played the parts of all the animals by wearing headdresses, and as ballet dancers portraying the raven and the dove leaving the ark.

Britten involved the congregation in this production by including three hymns that are basic to the drama in both words and music. The play opens with the hymn "Lord Jesus, think on me," the last verse setting the stage for the play:

Lord Jesus, think on me,
 That, when the flood is past,
 I may th'eternal brightness see
 And share thy joy at last.¹⁵

The second hymn is at the climax of the storm after all the animals and people are in the ark. They sing "Eternal

¹⁴ Benjamin Britten, King Herod and the Cock (London: Boosey and Hawkes, Ltd., 1965).

¹⁵ Erik Routley, Words, Music and the Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), p. 159.

Father, strong to save," and are joined by the congregation in the second and third verses. The play closes with "The spacious firmament on high," surely the sentiment of the people aboard the ark. down for you.
 Paradise is yours in loveliness,
 For you the angels sing,
 Yes, The cantata, "St. Nicolas," was written to be performed at the Centenary Celebration of Lancing College, Sussex. Eric Crozier's libretto expresses Britten's philosophy of compassion for mankind. It tells the story of Nicolas, Bishop of Myra, who lived in the fourth century and suffered during the persecution of the martyrs by Rome. Most of the legends about him concern his care of the poor and the oppressed. Nicolas sings:
 You hug the rack of self,
 Pour your treasures out to bribe distress,
 You cultivate your wilderness,
 For you he lived and died,
 To bring you life
 To desecrate your wilderness,
 Ah! bow down your hard and stubborn hearts!
 confess yourselves to Him in penitence,
 And humbly vow your lives to Him, to holiness.¹⁷

Poor man!

I found him solitary, racked by doubt:
 Born, bred, doomed to die
 In everlasting fear of everlasting death:
 The foolish toy of time,
 The darling of decay--
 Hopeless, faithless, defying God.
 Heartsick, in hope to mask the twisted face of poverty,
 I sold my lands to feed the poor.
 I gave my goods to charity
 But Love demanded more.
 Heartsick, I cast away all things that could distract my mind
 From full devotion to His will;
 I thrust my happiness behind,
 But Love desired more still,
 Heartsick, I called on God to purge my angry soul,
 To be my only Master, friend, and guide.
 I begged for sweet humility
 And Love was satisfied.¹⁶

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

¹⁶ Benjamin Britten, Saint Nicolas (London: Boosey and Hawkes, Ltd., 1948), pp. 16-19.

From prison Nicolas again sings of his compassion and

begs man to repent: thy summons and I come in haste,

For my short life is done;

O man! the world is set for you as for a king!

Paradise is yours in loveliness,¹⁷

The stars shine down for you,

For you the angels sing, ^{rus begins to sing pianissimo the}

Yet you prefer your wilderness,

Nun You hug the rack of self, ^{test thou thy servant depart in}

Embrace the lash of sin,

peace Pour your treasures out to bribe distress, ^{e verses. The}

You build your temples fair without and foul within:

Sanc You cultivate your wilderness, ^{loria Patri. Nicolas' final}

Yet Christ is yours!

Time For you he lived and died, ^{to Thee," is followed by the}

God in mercy gave his Son to bless you all,

chor To bring you life ^{"As it was in the beginning, is now and}

And Him you crucified

ever To desecrate your wilderness. ^{Amen!"²⁰ The cantata closes}

Turn away from sin!

with Ah! bow down your hard and stubborn hearts! ^{"God Moves in}

Confess yourselves to Him in penitence,

a My And humbly vow your lives to Him, to Holiness.¹⁷

Britten involved the audience in "St. Nicolas" by in-

cluding two congregational hymns. After Nicolas is chosen

bishop the people unite with the choruses to sing "Old Hun-

dredth." They have been singing to Nicolas, "Serve the faith,"

and in the hymn they sing "Him serve with fear."

All people that on earth do dwell,

teenth ce Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice! ^{bombs. He}

Him serve with fear, His praise forth tell,

composed Come "ye before Him and rejoice."¹⁸ ^{tions of the tradi-}

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 51-55.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 46-85.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 87-88.

tional In the closing number Nicolas sings: *Offertorium*,

Sanctus Death, I hear thy summons and I come in haste, about
 For my short life is done;
 death. And O! my soul is faint with love,
 For Him who waits for me above.¹⁹

The words illustrate Britten's effective use of a non-Biblical text written by a professed non-Christian. Wilfrid Owen was a protest poet of the first World War, a "conscience-peace," and continues as Nicolas sings two more verses. The *Nunc Dimittis* is followed by the *Gloria Patri*. Nicolas' final line, "And dying, yield my soul to Thee," is followed by the chorus singing forte, "As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. World without end, Amen!"²⁰ The cantata closes with the congregation participating in the hymn "God Moves in a Mysterious Way" to the tune of London New.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
 The clouds ye so much dread
 Are big with mercy, and shall break
 In blessings on your head.²¹

In 1961 Britten was commissioned to write a large choral work to celebrate the consecration of the new St. Michael's Cathedral at Coventry--the old cathedral, built in the fourteenth century, having been destroyed by enemy bombs. He composed the "War Requiem," combining sections of the tradi-

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76. Wilfrid Owen in a letter written in a hospital in France, quoted in *Requiem* by Alec Robertson (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1967), p. 267.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 82-85.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88. Elwyn A. Wlanand, *Choral Music of the Church* (New York: 1955), p. 394.

tional mass for the dead (Requiem, Dies Irae, Offertorium, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, and Libera Me) with secular poems about death.

The words illustrate Britten's effective use of a non-Biblical text written by a professed non-Christian. Wilfrid Owen was a protest poet of the first World War, a "conscientious objector with a very seared conscience,"²² who was killed in battle at the age of twenty-five just before the Armistice of 1918. His anti-war poems reflect some basic teachings of Christ: pity for mankind, the reconciliation of enemies, and the eventual triumph over death. Using them as a text resulted in a moving sacred work.

Britten interspersed the words of the mass for the dead, words of hope, with Owen's poignant anti-war poetry, words of hopelessness.

His composition is at once painful and moving, accusing and forgiving. . . . It brings into sharp focus a number of sensitive matters: a criticism of war; the conjunction of liturgical and secular (and sometimes anti-clerical) texts; and the casting of a major musical work in an up-to-date musical idiom.²³

²²Wilfrid Owen in a letter written in a hospital in France on May 2, 1917, and quoted in Requiem by Alec Robertson (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1967), p. 267.

²³Elwyn A. Wienandt, Choral Music of the Church (New York: The Free Press, 1965), p. 394.

Owen's interpretation of the Dies Irae reveals the fears of the men on the battlefield--more than the fear of death, the fear of being maimed or left wounded and forgotten in No Man's Land:

Bugles sang, sadd'ning the evening air;

 The shadow of the morrow weighed on men.
 Bugles sang.
 Voices of old despondency resigned,
 Bowed by the shadow of the morrow, slept.²⁴

As the solo soprano sings Lacrimosa her song is interrupted by a soldier's threnody for a dead comrade:

Move him into the sun--
 Gently its touch woke him once,
 At home, whispering of fields unsown,

 Are limbs, so dear-achieved, are sides,
 Full-nerved--still warm--too hard to stir?
 Was it for this the clay grew tall?²⁵

The English and the German soldier are reconciled in death in the moving baritone solo, "I am the enemy you killed, my friend." God's promise of life after death is in the Offertorium: "Make them, O Lord, to pass from death unto life, which of old Thou didst promise to Abraham and his seed."²⁶ This promise holds in spite of man's inhumanity to man:

²⁴ Ibid., p. 278.
²⁴ Alec Robertson, Requiem (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1967), p. 273.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 276.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 279.

When lo! an angel called him out of heav'n,
 Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,
 Neither do anything to him. Behold,
 A ram, caught in a thicket by its horns;
 Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him.
 But the old man would not so, but slew his son,
 And half the seed of Europe, one by one. . . .²⁷

Britten introduced Wilfrid Owen's poems to many who otherwise would not know them. They expose a common disillusionment with Christianity--the failure of Christians to practice what they profess--yet the themes of pity, reconciliation, and deliverance from death override the hopelessness.

At the close of the first performance of the "War Requiem" in Coventry Cathedral, "there came that authentic hush that is the finest tribute an audience, deeply moved, can pay to a masterpiece."²⁸

The war inspired another setting by Britten of a war poem. Edith Sitwell's "Still Falls the Rain" is the text for his "Canticle III," written in memory of the young Australian pianist, Noel Mewton-Wood. The poem is sub-titled "The Raids, 1940, Night and Dawn," and makes an analogy between the air raids and the Crucifixion destroying the innocent.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 223-224.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 278. *Benjamin Britten in British Composers in Interview* by Murray (New York: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1963), pp. 120-121.

²⁸ Alec Robertson, *Requiem: Music of Mourning and Consolation* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1967), p. 285. *Introduction to Contemporary Music* by Joseph Machlis (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1961), p. 304.

Still falls the Rain--
 Dark as the world of man, black as our loss--
 Blind as the nineteen hundred and forty nails
 Upon the Cross.

Then sounds the voice of One who like the heart of man
 Was once a child who among beasts has lain--
 "Still do I love, still shed my innocent light, my Blood,
 for thee."²⁹

Britten attributed his ability to set words to music to a study of Purcell. "Purcell is a great master at handling the English language in song, and I learned much from him. I remember a critic once asking me from whom I had learned to set English poetry to music. I told him Purcell."³⁰ "One of my aims is to try and restore to the musical settings of the English language a brilliance, freedom, and vitality that have been curiously rare since the death of Purcell."³¹ In 1947 Britten realized "Three Divine Hymns" of Purcell with words by Dr. William Fuller, formerly Lord Bishop of Lincoln.

Lord, What is Man

Lord, what is man, lost man,
 That Thou shouldst be so mindful of him?
 That the Son of God forsook his glory, his abode
 To become a poor tormented man!

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 223-224.

³⁰ Benjamin Britten in British Composers in Interview by Murray Schafer (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1963), pp. 120-121.

³¹ Benjamin Britten in the Preface to "Peter Grimes" as quoted in Introduction to Contemporary Music by Joseph Machlis (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1961), p. 304.

The Deity was shrunk into a span

And that for me, ³²

O wondrous love for me.

.....

We Sing to Him

We sing to him whose wisdom formed the ear,

Our songs let Him who gave us voices hear,

We joy in God who is the spring of mirth,

Who loves the harmony of heaven and earth,

Our humble sonnets shall that praise rehearse

Who is the music of the universe.

And whilst we sing, we consecrate our art

And offer up with every tongue a heart. ³³

Evening Hymn

Now that the sun hath veil'd his light,

And bid the world good-night,

To the soft bed my body I dispose,

But where shall my soul repose?

Dear God, even in thy arms, and can there be

Any so sweet security! ³⁴

.....

Between 1943 and 1963 Britten used two Chester Miracle

Plays ("Noye's Fludde" and "Abraham and Isaac") as texts.

Miracle Plays were a fourteenth century form of religious

drama and the ones designated "Chester" were produced in the

town of Chester. "Noye's Fludde" is the complete play set

to thee Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry,

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth

Heav'n and earth are full of the Majesty of Thy Glory. ³⁶

³²Henry Purcell, "Three Divine Hymns," from Harmonia Sacra (London; Boosey and Hawkes, Ltd., 1947), pp. 1-2.

³³Ibid., pp. 11-13.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 14-15. Te Deum in G Major (London; Oxford University Press, 1935), pp. 1-3.

to music; the play "Abraham and Isaac" provided the text for "Canticle II."

The shorter sacred works of Britten include four liturgical settings: the "Te Deum in C Major" (written in 1935), "Festival Te Deum," "Jubilate Deo," and "Missa Brevis in D"; three anthems for solo voice, choir, and organ: "A Wedding Anthem," "Hymn to St. Peter," and "Antiphon"; and five carols: "A Hymn to the Virgin" (written in 1930), "The Holly and the Ivy," "Chorale on an Old French Carol," "Shepherd's Carol," and "Corpus Christi Carol," an arrangement by the composer of one of the variations from an earlier work, "A Boy Was Born"; an SATB anthem, "A Hymn of St. Columba"; and "Psalm 150," for two-part children's voices and instruments.

The two Te Deum settings were written for church choirs. The traditional text was probably written by Nicetas (circa 400), Bishop of Remesiana.³⁵

We Praise Thee, O god,
 We acknowledge Thee to be the Lord,
 All the earth doth worship Thee,
 The Father everlasting,
 To Thee all angels cry aloud,
 The Heav'ns and all the Powers therein,
 To Thee Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry,
 Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth
 Heav'n and earth are full of the Majesty of Thy Glory.³⁶

³⁵Willi Apel, Harvard Dictionary of Music (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 734.

³⁶Benjamin Britten, Te Deum in C Major (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), pp. 1-3.

The "Jubilate Deo" (Psalm 100) was written for a church choir, St. George's Chapel, Windsor, at the request of His Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh, and first performed there in July 1961. "Missa Brevis in D" for three-part boys' voices and organ was written for George Malcolm and the boys of Westminster Cathedral Choir and first performed on the occasion of Mr. Malcolm's retirement as organist and choirmaster there. It is an unusually small form of the mass in only four movements, Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, and Benedictus, and can be used either liturgically or for concert performance.

"A Wedding Anthem" with words by Ronald Duncan was written for the marriage of the Earl and Countess of Harewood, and is scored for soprano and tenor solos, choir, and organ.

The climax is reached in the fourth stanza:

These two are not two
 Love has made them one
 Amo Ergo Sum!

And by its mystery
 Each is no less but more
 Amo Ergo Sum!

For to love is to be
 And in loving Him, I love thee
 Amo Ergo Sum!

"Hymn to St. Peter" and "Antiphon" were written for church choirs to perform.

³⁴ Benjamin Britten, Hymn to St. Peter (London: Boosey and Hawkes, Ltd., 1955).

³⁷ Benjamin Britten, A Wedding Anthem (London: Boosey and Hawkes, Ltd., 1950), pp. 18-22. (London: Boosey and Hawkes, Ltd., 1956).

Hymn to St. Peter (from the Gradual of the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul)
 Thou shalt make them Princes over all the earth:
 They shall remember thy name, O Lord.
 Instead of thy fathers, sons are born to thee:
 Therefore shall the people praise thee,
 Alleluia.
 Thou art Peter.
 And upon this rock I will build my church.
 Alleluia.³⁸

An antiphon is a short text from the Scriptures or elsewhere set to music in a simple syllabic style:

Praised be the God of Love,
 Here below and here above,
 Who hath dealt his mercies so
 To his friend and to his foe:
 That both grace and glory tend
 Us of old and us in the end.
 Praised be the God alone
 Who hath made of two folds one.³⁹

"A Hymn to the Virgin" is for two unaccompanied choruses singing antiphonally a macaronic (two languages) carol of anonymous authorship dating circa 1800. Chorus I sings in English and Chorus II answers in Latin. Samaritan with a Latin text by "The Holly and the Ivy" for unaccompanied voices is an unusual setting of the traditional words in seven verses with a refrain after each verse. The sopranos sing verses one and seven, accompanied by the altos; the tenors sing verses two

³⁸ Benjamin Britten, Hymn to St. Peter (London; Boosey and Hawkes, Ltd., 1955).

³⁹ Benjamin Britten, Antiphon (London; Boosey and Hawkes, Ltd., 1956).

and six, accompanied by the basses; the altos sing verses three and five, accompanied by the tenors; and the basses sing verse four, accompanied by the sopranos and altos, making an A B C D C B A pattern.

"Chorale" and "Shepherd's Carol" were written for a B.B.C. program called "Poet's Christmas," and are settings for unaccompanied chorus with words by W. H. Auden. "Corpus Christi Carol" is an arrangement for solo voice and piano of words by an anonymous fifteenth century poet. "A Hymn of St. Columba" (Regis regum rectissimi) was based on a text attributed to St. Columba (521-597) for chorus and organ. "Psalm 150" was written for a school and is a lively setting of that Psalm for the children.

"Cantata Misericordium" was written for and first performed at the Commemoration Day ceremony of the Centenary of the International Red Cross in Geneva, Switzerland, September 1, 1963. It is the parable of the Good Samaritan with a Latin text by Patrick Wilkinson. Again Britten uses a theme of compassion for man. The opening chorus sings:

Blessed are the merciful.

Blessed are those who succour the afflicted in body.⁴⁰

The baritone soloist sings "Thou shalt love thy neighbor

⁴⁰ Benjamin Britten, Cantata Misericordium (London; Boosey and Hawkes, Ltd., 1963).

as thyself." Tenor and baritone together ask, "But who is my neighbor?" The chorus responds, "Let us now enact a parable of Jesus." The parable is acted out by tenor and baritone soloists accompanied by a mixed choir and orchestra. The closing chorus sings:

O that men like this gentle helper, who saved
 a wounded man and treated as his neighbor an
 unknown stranger, may be found all over the
 world. Disease is spreading, war is stalking,
 famine reigns far and wide. But when one
 mortal relieves another like this, Charity
 springing from pain unites them.⁴¹

Tenor and baritone sing "Who your neighbor is, now you know." The chorus answers "Go and do likewise."

The wide range of Britten's sacred texts is impressive: Psalms, the Mass, the liturgy, medieval poetry and Miracle Plays, legends, folk songs, hymns, a chaotic poem by a madman, and modern poetry. His personal beliefs in involvement and communication have been elucidated in his choice of texts as well as his personal attributes of compassion and moral concern for his fellow man. Like Martin Luther, while using traditional Biblical and liturgical texts, he also uses non-Biblical and non-liturgical texts, and they speak to men of the great issues of the time.

⁴¹ Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

THE MUSIC

Benjamin Britten's music exemplifies the stylistic changes in music that have occurred in the twentieth century, changes that have affected church music as well as secular music: new freedoms of harmony, tonality, melody, rhythm, and form from traditional practices. Dissonances no longer had to resolve to consonances. Tonality was not a requisite. Melodies did not depend for their shape and length on regular phrases or the harmonic structure. Rhythm was free to follow the melodic line or the words (in vocal music) or the form. Form was not predominantly developmental; serial composition technique followed a pattern conforming to its own principles, and "there was an interesting and significant revival of the ostinato. Modern composers . . . have been attracted by its polyphonic and rhythmic possibilities as well as by its anti-Romantic precision and straightforwardness."¹

That radical breakthrough, which Ernst Pepping called "Stylistic change of music," . . . began already in the last years before World War I, starting in 1911. It involved a determined detachment from the late Romantic art of the end of the century, a new elaboration of all musical means from the rudiments . . . a re-discovery of the primary forces of music. . . .

¹Willi Apel, Harvard Dictionary of Music (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 547.

It consisted furthermore, of the will to find the way back from the ivory tower of the l'art pour l'art concept to art rooted in life, from the egocentric expression of feeling to the feeling of being bound in fellowship. . . . The basis for a new awakening of liturgical music, of church music proper, was given at the same time by this stylistic change. New music and new church music came from the same root.

Once again after more than one and a half centuries a period had begun which was characterized by stylistic equality in sacred and secular music. The composer did not have to change pens if he wanted to write a secular work today, a sacred one tomorrow. Simultaneously church music was blessed with composers who would be considered true masters and who began to work actively on the freshly plowed fields.²

Britten "began to work actively on the freshly plowed fields" with the festival cantata, "Rejoice in the Lamb." Although this was not his first setting of a sacred text, it was a landmark in church music, according to Alec Wyton. A parish priest had commissioned a relatively unknown young composer rather than going to the traditional source for such works, the cathedral organists.³ Example 1 is a program note by the Very Reverend Walter Hussey, dedicatee of "Rejoice in the Lamb." (See the letter from Father Hussey.⁴)

²Oscar Sohngen, "What Is the Position of Church Music in Germany Today," Cantors at the Crossroads, Johannes Riedel, editor (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), p. 204.

³Address at Montreat, North Carolina, July 20, 1968.

⁴Infra, p. 111.

REJOICE IN THE LAMB

Festival Cantata

by

BENJAMIN BRITTEN

Programme Note.

The words of the Cantata—"Rejoice in the Lamb"—are taken from a long poem of the same name. The writer was Christopher Smart, an eighteenth century poet, deeply religious, but of a strange and unbalanced mind.

"Rejoice in the Lamb" was written while Smart was in an asylum, and is chaotic in form but contains many flashes of genius.

It is a few of the finest passages that Benjamin Britten has chosen to set to music. The main theme of the poem, and of the Cantata, is the worship of God, by all created beings and things, each in its own way.

The Cantata is made up of ten short sections. The first sets the theme. The second gives a few examples of one person after another being summoned from the pages of the Old Testament to join with some creature in praising and rejoicing in God. The third is a quiet and ecstatic Hallelujah. In the fourth section Smart takes his beloved cat as an example of nature praising God by being simply what the Creator intended it to be. The same thought is carried on in the fifth section with the illustration of the mouse. The sixth section speaks of the flowers—"the poetry of Christ." In the seventh section Smart refers to his troubles and suffering, but even these are an occasion for praising God, for it is through Christ that he will find his deliverance. The eighth section gives four letters from an alphabet, leading to a full chorus in section nine which speaks of musical instruments and music's praise of God. The final section repeats the Hallelujah.

Note by THE REV. WALTER HUSSEY.

The marvel of "Rejoice in the Lamb" is that the music, while so fresh and new and distinctively contemporary, is within the ability of an amateur parish choir to perform. Solmization syllables are above each voice part as an additional aid to amateur singers.

The opening chorus uses the tone middle C set in unison for the choir, except for two measures, while a middle C organ pedal is sustained throughout. This is all shown in examples 2 and 3. Staying on pitch is not a problem with the aid of this pedal tone in spite of dissonant harmonies in the accompaniment.

An exciting second chorus of Old Testament characters being called upon to praise God is followed by a lovely and quietly rejoicing Hallelujah section in fugato form. Example 4 shows the entries of the four voices.

The tenor solo, "For the flowers are great blessings," is "one of the most moving passages in music."⁵ Example 5 is the close of this solo.

Example 6 shows how Britten set the text that described the author's suffering in recitative style for the entire chorus, an unusual effect.

In the music analyzed for this study a strength of Britten's was in setting words of great exultation to quiet

⁵Wyton, op. cit.

Example 4

Andante con moto (♩ = 60)

Key F ³ P.m.

Hal - le - lu - jah, Ha - le - lu - jah, Hal - le - lu - jah

Hal - le - lu - jah, Hal - le - lu - jah

Hal - le - lu - jah

Hal - le - lu - jah; Hal - le - lu - jah,

- lu - jah from the heart of God, and from the hand of the ar - tist

- jah..... from the heart of God, and from the hand of the

from the heart of God..... Hal - le - lu - jah from the hand of the

Hal - le - lu - jah from the heart of God,..... and from the hand.....

Example 5

|| :s :l :t :d' | t :l :s | l :- :s }

For there is a lan - guage of flowers. For

4 Pm D t m l 5 Pm 4 Pm

|| l :t :d' | t :d' | t :l | t :- :- d' m' d' t s | l . l :l | - :t }

flowers are pe - cu - liar - ly the po - - - e - try of

ten.

pp al fine

3 Pm 4 Pm

|| d' :- :- | : : | : : | : : | : : | : : ||

Christ.

senza rit.

Example 6

Grave quasi recitativo (♩ = 54)

dfc $||t$:t t It .t :- .t | t :t .t It .t :- .t t }
pp TREBLES
 For I am un - der the same ac - cu - sa - tion..... with my
 $||r_m$:m .m Im .m :- .m | m :m .m Im .m :- .m m }
pp ALTOS
 For I am un - der the same ac - cu - sa - tion..... with my
 $||t$:t .t It .t :- t | t :t .t It .t :- .t t }
pp TENORS
 For I am un - der the same ac - cu - sa - tion..... with my
 $||r_m$:m .m Im .m :- .m | m :m .m Im .m :- .m m }
pp BASSES
 For I am un - der the same ac - cu - sa - tion..... with my

$||s .s :- | - :-$ | :s .s | s :- :r' :d' :s | to .t, .t, | - :- }
pp
 Saviour_ For they said, he is be - sides him-self.
 $||ma .ma :- | - :-$ | :ma .ma | ma :- :s :s :s | to .t, .t, | - :- }
pp
 Saviour_ For they said, he is be - sides him-self.
 $||d' .d' :- | - :-$ | :d' .d' | d' :- :d' :d' :d' | tm .m :m | - :- }
pp
 Saviour_ For they said, he is be - sides him-self.
 $||s .s :- | - :-$ | :s .s | s :- :r :ma :s | tm .m :m | - :- }
pp
 Saviour_ For they said, he is be - sides him-self.
 (Solo)
 p p
mp

music, initially creating an intense interest in the idea being presented, and finally a gratification. "Rejoice in God, O ye Tongues," the opening chorus, begins *andante misterioso, pianissimo sostenuto*. The "Hallelujah" is for the most part a rhythmical yet soft *andante con moto* both when it appears as the third chorus and as the closing chorus. Accordingly, the cantata opens and closes quietly rejoicing, creating an anticipation which is finally satisfied in a climax in the penultimate chorus, and gratified at the close.

A year before "Rejoice in the Lamb" Britten had composed "A Ceremony of Carols," nine settings of medieval English poems, for treble voices and harp. This song cycle illustrates how contemporary composers in search of new tonalities have extensively used the church modes. Leon Dallin in Techniques of Twentieth Century Composition discusses the use of the modes and the construction of "synthetic" scales derived from all possible combinations of tetrachords and other patterns.⁶ "In Freezing Winter Night" from "A Ceremony of Carols" is cited as an example of the rarely used locrian mode,⁷ as shown in example 7.

With a key signature of G minor this melody could be

⁶Leon Dallin, Techniques of Twentieth Century Composition (Dubuque; William C. Brown Company Publishers, 1957), Chapter IV, p. 33.

⁷Ibid., p. 30.

Example 7

8. In Freezing Winter Night

ROBERT SOUTHWELL

Andante comodo (d. d) (♩ = 84)

Anglo-Saxon
word for
happy

SOPRANO

Be - hold, a sil - ly

ALTO

Be - hold, a

TENOR

Be -

BASS

Andante comodo (d. d) (♩ = 84)

HARP
(or Piano)

ten - der babe, in free - sing win - ter night, In home - ly man - ger

babe, in free - sing night, In man - ger

hold a sil - ly ten - der babe, in free - sing win - ter night, In

phrygian mode with a chromatic alteration, but it reaches a tonic on D. The diminished tonic triad is avoided altogether.

Other carols in the cycle make use of the aeolian mode ("This Little Babe," "Deo Gracias") and lydian mode ("Spring Carol"), while "That Yonge Child," in example 8, uses a synthetic scale built of two harmonic minor tetrads, and the phrygian mode.

Example 9 shows how "Balulalow" uses a typical contemporary freedom of tonality by constantly alternating between major and minor mode.

As in "Rejoice in the Lamb" Britten achieves a thrilling effect with the utmost simplicity of means. Each line of "There is no Rose" is followed by a unison chanting of a Latin word or expression. The "Transeamus" following the last line of the poem, a nine measure unison, is one of the highlights of the work, as shown in example 10.

Percy M. Young used the term Gebrauchsmusik in connection with "A Ceremony of Carols."⁸ Characteristics of Gebrauchsmusik listed in Harvard Dictionary of Music apply well:

Forms of moderate length; simplicity and clarity of style; small ensembles; avoidance of technical difficulties; parts of equal

⁸Percy M. Young, The Choral Tradition (New York; W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1962), pp. 273-274.

Example 8

Andante quasi recitativo (♩ = 48)

SOPRANOS

parlante

That you - gö child when

HARP (or Piano)

p

* Harp

pp ma risonante

it gan weep... With song she lul - led him a - sleep:

cresc.

più f

That was so sweet a mel - o - dy It pass-éd al - le min'streisy.

più f

p

phrygian

Example 9

James, John and
Robert WedderburnAndante placevole ($\text{♩} = 48$) ($\text{♩} = 144$)HARP
(or Piano)

First system of the Harp/Piano accompaniment. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The music is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Andante placevole' with a quarter note equal to 48 beats. The first measure starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a fermata over the first two notes. The accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a slower-moving bass line in the left hand.

SOPRANO SOLO

p

First system of the Soprano Solo. The vocal line is on a single treble clef staff. It begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a fermata. The lyrics are: "O my deare hert, young Je - su sweet, Pre -". The accompaniment continues from the previous system.

Second system of the Soprano Solo. The lyrics are: "- pare thy cred - dil in my spreit, And I sall rock". The vocal line continues with a fermata over the final note of the phrase. The accompaniment continues.

Third system of the Soprano Solo. The lyrics are: "thee to my hert, And ne - ver mair from". The vocal line begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a fermata. The accompaniment continues.

Benjamin Britten, A Ceremony of Carols (London: Boosey and Hawkes, Ltd., 1943), p. 19.

Example 10

pp sotto voce
Trans-e - a - - - - mus, Trans-e -

pp
Trans-e - a - - - - mus, Trans-e -

poco marcato

- a - mus, Trans-e - a - - - - mus.

- a - mus, Trans-e - a - - - - mus.

- a - mus, Trans-e - a - - - - mus.

- a - mus, Trans-e - a - mus, Trans-e - a - mus.

dim.

Benjamin Britten, A Ceremony of Carols (London: Boosey and Hawkes, Ltd., 1943), p. 15.

interest and so designed that they can be played on whatever instruments are available; soberness and moderation of expression; emphasis on "good workmanship."⁹

The terms delightful, charming, and captivating apply equally well to "A Ceremony of Carols."

"Britten is without equal in the handling of words. He sets them so naturally--why didn't we think of that?"¹⁰ He has accomplished this by a rhythmic flexibility, asymmetrical phrases and patterns, dissonant and unexpected melodic intervals.

In the "Festival Te Deum" this extraordinary ability to fit the melodic line to the text is evidenced by the time signatures which change constantly with the rhythm of the words. Under the four voice-parts the organ accompaniment moves steadily in a 3/4 time signature, with a rhythmic notation to the organist of what the voices are doing rhythmically set between the manual and the pedal scores. Again Britten has set words of exultation in an andante tempo, *sempre piano e comodo*. The voices move in unison, gradually building up to a forte climax at the top of page five, "Lord God of Sabaoth"; after a dramatic drop of a tenth, they suddenly diminish to *pianissimo* for an intense "Heav'n and earth are

⁹Apel, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

¹⁰Wyton, *op. cit.*

full of Thy Glory," the dissonant organ chords resolving to C Major, as shown in example 11.

In the second section the voices first enter singly, each entry being one whole step higher: sopranos enter in the key of C, tenors in D, basses in E, altos in F#, then all voices together in A^b. Louis Halsey suggests that the three contrapuntal measures, "The Holy Church thro'out all the world doth acknowledge Thee," might depict the Universal Church praising God in different places and in different tongues.¹¹ The first theme returns in a treble solo. A fortissimo climax occurs twelve measures from the end, voices again in unison, on "O Lord in Thee have I trusted," with an octave drop and diminuendo on "trust-ed." "Festival Te Deum" then closes pianissimo with a dolce treble solo, "Let me never be confounded." Again the quiet ending conveys a depth of feeling befitting the text.

The music of the "War Requiem" reflects the ideas portrayed in the libretto. The three contrasting kinds of sounds of the performing groups add to the poignancy of the text and make the emotional impact of the work almost unbearable: "The impassive calm of a liturgy that points beyond death (boys and organ), the mingled mourning, supplication, and guilty apprehension of humanity in the mass (choir and main orchestra. . .),

¹¹Louis Halsey, "Britten's Church Music," Musical Times, 103:686, October 1, 1962.

Example 11

Ho - ly! Ho - ly! Ho - ly! Lord God of Sa - ba-oth!...

f cresc.

Ho - ly! Ho - ly! Ho - ly! Lord God of Sa - ba-oth!...

f cresc.

Ho - ly! Ho - ly! Ho - ly! Lord God of Sa - ba-oth!...

f cresc.

Ho - ly! Ho - ly! Ho - ly! Lord God of Sa - ba-oth!

ff dim subito

Heav'n and earth are full of the ma - jes-ty of Thy Glo - ry.

pp

Heav'n and earth are full of the ma - jes-ty of Thy Glo - ry.

pp

Heav'n and earth are full of the ma - jes-ty of Thy Glo - ry.

pp

Heav'n and earth are full of the ma - jes-ty of Thy Glo - ry.

ppp

and the passionate outcry of the victim of war (the male soloists and chamber orchestra)."¹²

Britten accomplished the "guilty apprehension of humanity" and the "passionate outcry of the victim of war" by means of a tonal instability, especially the use of the tritone as a kind of leitmotif--the "mourning motive."¹³ The tritone is used as a harmonic interval in both voice parts and accompaniment, as a melodic interval, and as a soft background accompaniment. Example 12 shows the tritone, C to F#, between violins and organ left hand, in measure 1; between the violins in measure 4; and between the F# in the violins and C in the organ left hand in measures 5 and 8.

Chromaticism, bitonality, tonal ambiguity, and unresolved dissonances all contribute to the tonal instability.¹⁴ "War Requiem" finally closes on an F major chord, not a resolution of all the dissonances and uncertainties, but to "indicate the possibility of peace, in which Britten himself believes."¹⁵ This closing is shown in example 13.

¹²Peter Evans, "War Requiem," Music and Letters, April, 1963, p. 196.

¹³Alec Robertson, "Britten's War Requiem," Musical Times, 103:309, May, 1962.

¹⁴See A. M. Whittall, "Tonal Instability in Britten's War Requiem," Music Review, 24:210-4, n3, 1963.

¹⁵Whittall, op. cit., p. 204.

For a comprehensive Example 12 of this work see

(Allegro)

f smooth

Boys I & II
& Organ r.h.

Te - de - cet hy - mnus, hy - mnus, De - us in

Organ l.h.

mf

Violins I & II

pp

II div.

1 2 3

II

Si - on; — Te - de - cet hy - mnus, hy - mnus, De - us in Si - on; —

I div. 4 5 6 7 II div. 8

appears in the voice parts as a unifying device.

The C section is a treble solo with choral refrains after each phrase. After building up to a fortissimo climax

Example 13

on "And we worship Thy Name," the dynamic level drops to a

forte

to keep

work to

figure

in endi

stead of

fresh ap-

proach to traditional texts within the framework of tonality

Very slow

ppp

S (a T)

Re - qui - e - scant in pa - ce.

Bells

ppp

A (a B)

rall. ppp dim.

div.

pppp

A - men, A - men.

ppp

pppp

For a comprehensive discussion of this work see
Requiem: Music of Mourning and Consolation by Alec Robert-
 son.¹⁶

The "Te Deum in C Major" is unusual in beginning with forty-six measures of various inversions of the C major chord in the voice parts (SATB). The organ pedal has an ostinato figure that is not the notes of the C chord. Example 14 shows the voices singing the C major chord and some of the ostinato.

This harmonic scheme returns to close the number after a B and a C section. Example 15 shows how the B section goes into several keys, while the ostinato figure of the pedal appears in the voice parts as a unifying device.

The C section is a treble solo with choral refrains after each phrase. After building up to a fortissimo climax on "And we worship Thy Name," the dynamic level drops to a forte "World without end" then a piano "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin." Britten again brings a work to a close quietly. The organ pedal plays the ostinato figure on the last seven measures. "Te Deum in C" is unusual in ending with the voices in a second inversion C chord instead of root position, as shown in example 16.

This setting is typical of Britten's new and fresh approach to traditional texts within the framework of tonality

¹⁶Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, New York, 1968.

Example 14

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "All the earth doth wor - ship Thee, — the Fa - ther ev - er - last - ing. To". The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics "Thee all An - gels cry a - loud, — the Heav'n's and all the Powers there - in. To Thee Cher - u -". The piano accompaniment continues with a steady rhythmic pattern. The third system shows the vocal line concluding with "cresc." and the piano accompaniment with a final flourish. Performance markings include *mf sost.*, *più f*, *mf*, *sempre mf*, and *cresc.*.

mf sost. All the earth doth wor - ship Thee, — *più f* the Fa - ther ev - er - last - ing. To *f*

mf sost. *mf* *più f* *sempre mf*

Thee all An - gels cry a - loud, — the Heav'n's and all the Powers there - in. To Thee Cher - u - *cresc.*

Benjamin Britten, Te Deum in C Major (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 2.

Example 15

The glorious company of the A - pos - tles,
 Praise Thee.

pp Ch. *pp* Sw. *legato*
molto marcato Man. *p marcato*

The good - ly fel - low-ship of the Pro - phets,
 Praise Thee. The

The good - ly fel - low-ship of the Pro - phets, The

pp *p* *m.s.*
 Ped.

no - ble ar - my of Mar - tyrs,
 Praise Thee. *mf* throughout all the

no - ble ar - my of Mar - tyrs, The Ho - ly Church throughout all the

Example 16

rall.

dim. poco a poco

Più lento
p sempre dim

pp Ped. 16ft only

-found - ed, *pp* Let me nev - er be con-found - ed, *pp* Let me

p dolcis Let me nev - er be con-found ed, *pp* Let me

pp Ancora piu

rall. *Andante poco lento*

- er be con - found - ed. *pp* *dim.*

nev - er be con - found - ed. *pp* *dim.*

- er be con - found - ed. *pp* *dim.*

nev - er be con - found - ed. *pp* *dim.*

rall. *Andante poco lento*

ppp

pp marcato

The musical score is divided into several systems. The first system shows a piano introduction with a 'rall.' marking and a 'dim. poco a poco' instruction. The tempo then changes to 'Più lento' with a 'p sempre dim' instruction. The piano part features a 'pp' dynamic and a 'Ped. 16ft only' marking. The second system contains the vocal entry with the lyrics 'Let me nev - er be con-found - ed, Let me'. The piano accompaniment is marked 'p dolcis' and 'pp'. The third system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment, with the piano part marked 'pp' and 'Ancora piu'. The fourth system shows the vocal part with lyrics '- er be con - found - ed.' and '- ed.', and the piano part with 'pp' and 'dim.' markings. The fifth system continues the vocal part with similar lyrics and piano accompaniment with 'pp' and 'dim.' markings. The final system shows the piano part with a 'rall.' marking, 'Andante poco lento' tempo, and 'ppp' dynamic, ending with a 'pp marcato' marking.

and motive-development.

The cantata, "St. Nicolas," was written to be sung by amateurs. In the words of the composer:

As stated in the dedication, Saint Nicolas was written to be performed at the centenary of a school, when it was sung by the combined choirs of three boys' schools (the main chorus) and one girls' school (the gallery choir). It is therefore suitable for performance by any numerically big chorus, even if the singers are not very experienced. The choir in the gallery should have a separate conductor.

The string parts are not very sophisticated and can be played by amateur players, preferably led by a professional quintet. The piano duet part is also of only moderate difficulty. The first percussion part is obligato (sic) and should be played by a professional drummer, who may play as many of the instruments included in the second part as feasible; the second part is ad libitum and may be played by as many gifted and/or enthusiastic amateurs as there are instruments. On the other hand, the solo tenor part, as can easily be seen, is no amateur matter. The conductor must be cool-headed and should turn to the congregation/audience to conduct them in the two hymns.¹⁷

Example 17 shows how the birth of Nicolas is set to a gay waltz tune in the lydian mode. The part of Nicolas as a boy is sung by soprano voices; as he grows into a young man the voice changes to the tenor.

During the course of a sea journey to Palestine, a storm breaks. "Lightning hisses through the night, blinding sight with living light" and the other storm effects are sung

¹⁷ Benjamin Britten in a Note to "St. Nicolas" before p. 1. See Chapter III, p. 26 for the story of the cantata.

by the choir in the gallery, interspersed with shouts of "Man the pumps! Life-boats! Lower away! Shorten sail!" from the main choir--all accompanied by descriptive storm music. Nicolas prayed for their deliverance and the storm was stilled.

Britten involved the audience in the performance by including two congregational hymns. Following the chorus "Nicolas comes to Myra and is chosen Bishop," the composer makes such a smooth transition to the tune of "Old Hundredth," as in example 18, that no stylistic change is felt in the music.

The chorus, singing of the many miracles that Nicolas performed, in example 19, sings "His piety and marvellous [sic] works" in what Alan Fluck calls "text book harmonies" that have a "new, fresh and vital sound."¹⁸

In the closing number Nicolas tells of his impending death. Underneath his solo the chorus is singing pianissimo in unison Nunc Dimittis as shown in example 20. This is followed by Gloria Patri begun mezzo forte and building up from a forte "As it was in the beginning" to a fortissimo "Amen!"

An instrumental interlude takes the dynamic level back down to pianissimo. A six measure organ solo leads skill-

¹⁸"Benjamin Britten and Schools," Music in Education, 26:58, May 15, 1962.

Example 19

Andante piacevole (♩ = 76) *p dolce e legato*

SOPRANOS & ALTOS

TENORS & BASSES

For for - ty

p dolce e legato

p legato

years our Ni - co - las, Our Prince of men, our shep - herd and Our

gen - tle guide, walked by our side.

p

Ped. sim

(48) *p* We turned to him at birth and death, In *cresc.*

p *cresc.*

Benjamin Britten, Saint Nicolas (London: Boosey and Hawkes, Ltd., 1948), p. 66.

Example 20

Nic. LORD.....

S A let - test thou thy ser - vant de -

T B

Nic. *sempre largamente*
I come..... to

S A - part in peace,.....

T B *sim.*

Nic. life, To.....

S A ac - cord - ing to thy word.....

fully to the congregational hymn, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way." The first stanza is sung softly, the second stanza forte, with the male voices singing a counter-melody, and the final stanza is a unison fortissimo for a dramatic climax.

"Noye's Fludde," a musical setting of the Chester Miracle Play is set for adults' and children's voices, children's chorus, chamber ensemble, and children's orchestra. The children's orchestra calls for recorders, bugles, handbells, strings, and percussion, including a set of tin mugs to be tapped with a spoon. The play can be staged in an ordinary church with simple scenery. Britten has involved the congregation by incorporating three hymns into the score. The importance of these hymn texts was discussed in Chapter III. Musically they are important as they are related to the main motifs of the work.¹⁹ The play opens with "Lord Jesus think on me" to the tune of Southwell, given in example 21.

When the people see the storm coming they sing the theme in example 22.

During the fury of the storm they all sing "Eternal Father, strong to save." Measures five and six, as shown in example 23, are reminiscent of the repeated notes of the hymn tune in example 21.

¹⁹Erik Routley, Words, Music and the Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), p. 160.

Example 21

Southwell

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Southwell". It consists of two staves of music, both in treble clef and G major (one sharp). The top staff is labeled "A" and the bottom staff is labeled "B". Both staves begin with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The top staff has a "1592" written above it. The music is written in a simple, diatonic style. The top staff (A) starts with a quarter rest, followed by a series of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4. The bottom staff (B) starts with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes: A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4. Both staves end with a double bar line.

Erik Routley, Words, Music and the Church (Nashville; Abingdon Press, 1968), p. 159.

Example 22

Ah greate God, that arte so good, that worckēs not thy will is wood,
Now all this worlde is on a flude, as I see will in sighte.

Erik Routley, Words, Music and the Church (Nashville; Abingdon Press, 1968), p. 160.

The closing hymn is "The Spacious Firmament on High" to the tune of Tallis' Canon which again bears a resemblance to the motif in example 21 in repeated notes and intervals. Example 24 compares the three hymn tune fragments.

Routley points out an important contribution to church music that Britten made in "Noye's Fludde." When the hymns are sung by the congregation "the normal worship of the church is locked securely into the drama being played. Noah comes up to date. The flood is now--the danger and the forgiveness are now."²⁰

The Chester Miracle Play, "Abraham and Isaac," provided the text for Britten's "Canticle II." The part of Abraham is to be sung by a tenor, Isaac by an alto, and the voice of God by the tenor and alto combined, an innovation of Britten's, possibly to make God's voice more impersonal.

"Missa Brevis in D" was written for a three-part boys' choir and is not too difficult for amateurs to sing, even though it employs such contemporary musical devices as bi-tonality and a twelve-tone row. There are also intricate rhythms, abrupt key changes, ambiguous harmonies, and the use of modes, yet the music is so skillfully worked out that the parts can be easily mastered with a little rehearsing. The "Kyrie" begins with a long descending melodic line that passes

²⁰ Ibid., p. 162.

from the Treble I part through the Treble II and the Treble III, each part entering a perfect fourth lower and in imitation of the preceding part. After a three measure "Kyrie eleison" in harmony this melodic line is inverted and returns to the original starting note. A three measure "Christe eleison" in harmony and the opening descending melodic line is repeated; the three measure "Kyrie" in harmony is repeated with a two measure extension bringing this section to a close.

The "Gloria" begins with the celebrant intoning the notes in example 25.

The organ plays an ostinato figure, as in example 26, throughout that is derived from the intoning.

The meter is 7/8 which makes possible some interesting rhythmic intricacies. There is a short bitonal section at "Qui tollis peccata mundi." The voices are in F major while the accompanying ostinato stays in the original key of D major. The "Gloria" closes with a fivefold amen, example 27, using the same ostinato figure.

The "Sanctus" is based on a twelve-tone row in the organ part which weaves in and out of the voice parts, as shown in example 28.

Each voice enters in a different key. The pitches are easy to find as Treble III enters on the note Treble I is singing, and Treble II enters on the note both of the other

Example 25

Glo-ri-a... in ex-cel-sis De-o.

Example 26

ORGAN

Lively (♩ = approx. 38 (♩ = 1))

f

Benjamin Britten, Missa Brevis in D (London; Boosey and Hawkes, Ltd., 1959), p. 3.

Example 27

I *pp* A - men, *pp* A - men, A - men.

II *pp* A - men, *pp* A - men.

III *pp* A - men, *pp* A - men.

ppp

parts are singing. The middle section, the "Benedictus," is bitonal. Solo III sings "Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini" in the key of G Major, immediately imitated by solo I in the key of C Major. Solo III repeats the first phrase, this time followed by solo I only one beat behind. An extension leads back into the "Sanctus" to close the section.

"Angus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi," the next part of the "Missa Brevis," is sung three times in unison; between each repetition there is a short and dissonant "miserere nobis." The organ accompaniment throughout is an ostinato figure of ascending thirds in the left hand with a prominent use of seconds in the right hand. Example 29 shows how "Missa Brevis" closes with an unusual "Dona nobis pacem" ascending the lydian scale by harmonic intervals of seconds and ending on a 6/4 chord.

Reviewers were unanimous in the highest praise of this work. Alec Wyton wrote, "This is a model of good taste when so much present day church music is inflated and pompous."²¹

Donald Mitchell wrote an article about the "Wedding Anthem" to call attention to Britten's understanding of the poetic image and his ability to match it in music.

²¹ "Benjamin Britten and the Church," A. G. O. Quarterly, January, 1964.

marked
pp cresc. do - na no - bis pa - cem, (mf) do - na no - bis

marked
pp cresc. do - na no - bis pa - cem, (mp) do - na no - bis pa - cem,

pp cresc.

(f) do-na no-bis pa-cem, ff do-na no-bis pa-cem, ff do-na no-bis pa-cem,

pa-cem, (f) do-na no-bis, do-na no-bis pa-cem, ff do-na, do-na no-bis pa-cem,

(f) do-na no-bis pa-cem, ff do-na no-bis pa-cem, ff do-na no-bis pa-cem,

Reduce
pp

p dim. do-na no-bis pa-cem, *ppp* do-na no-bis pa-cem.

p dim. do-na, do-na no-bis pa-cem, *ppp* do-na no-bis pa-cem.

p dim. do-na no-bis pa-cem, *ppp* do-na no-bis pa-cem.

dim. *ppp*

Strictly speaking . . . the [fourth] stanza is not a "poetic image" but rather a poetically expressed metaphysical concept; the Oneness attained by and through the Love of God--the Oneness of Two. [See Chapter III, page 34.] Now this special kind of "poetic image" obviously raises certain problems of depiction for the composer; elementary "pictorial" depiction is hardly possible, and "pictorial" evocation of a loose impressionist order would be an evasion of the problem altogether. The only satisfactory solution can be reached by matching the metaphysical concept of the stanza with a musical form, the meaning of which (at least in this context) will correspond to the inner content of the poem.²²

Example 30 shows how Britten sets "Amo ergo sum" as a soprano and tenor duet to attain the "Oneness of Two."

Mitchell points out the tenor inversion of the soprano part as symbolic of the two parts converging and wanting to combine. They eventually do combine on the final "Amo ergo sum," singing in unison.

"Psalm 150" was written for two-part children's voices and instruments and was first performed in June 1963 at the Aldeburgh Festival by the Northgate School Choir and Orchestra, conducted by the composer. The introduction is a lively march which becomes the accompaniment for the first verse of the Psalm. At measure 132 to an oom-pah accompaniment in 7/8 meter the children sing "Praise Him in the sound of the trumpet . . . upon the Lute and Harp . . . in the Cymbals

²²"The Poetic Image," Tempo, n 25:21, Autumn 1952.

Example 30

}fe:m :l lfe:-:m | - : : lfe:m :- | : : lfe:m :r | d :- :r | l :- : -
 they are not two..... Love, love has made them one.....
 } : : lr:m:t, | r :- :m | - : : | r:m :- | : : | r:m :f | s :- :f
 they are not two... Love, love has made them

 }l :- : - | - : - : | l :- : - | s :- : - | f :- : - | m :- : - | r:m :f | s:l:t | d' :- :s | - :d :-
sempre p
 A - mo, A - mo Er - - go
 }ta:- : - | - : - : | ta:- : - | d :- : - | r :- : - | m :- : - | f :m:r | d:t,l, | s, :- :d | - :s :-
sempre p
 one. A - mo, A - mo Er - - go

 }r :- : - | - : - : | - : - : | : : | r:m :- | : : | r:m :t, | r :- :m:m | - : :
 sum!..... And by its mys - te - ry.....
 }lfe:- : - | - : - : | - : - : | : : | fe:m :- | : : | fe:m :l | lfe:- :m:m | - : : | lfe:m :- |
 sum!..... And by its mys - te - ry..... Each,

Benjamin Britten, A Wedding Anthem (London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1950), p. 19.

and Dances . . . upon the Strings and Pipe." After each group the accompaniment imitates the instruments named, as shown in example 31.

"Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord" is a four-part canon. The lively march returns for the ending.

The three anthems, "Jubilate Deo," "Hymn to St. Peter," and "Antiphon," were written for church choirs and are within the ability of amateurs to perform. "Jubilate Deo" is conducive to being "joyful in the Lord." It is in A B A B A form. The first A in A B A B A form is antiphonal between tenors-sopranos and basses-altos. "Be thankful unto him" begins a contrasting section of quiet four-part harmony. "And his truth endureth from generation to generation" is a return of A in fugato style. The words of the Gloria Patri begin in this section and go through the next B in four-part harmony rather than antiphonally. The final A section is the "Amen." The organ accompaniment is exhilarating, with the right hand keeping an obbligato over a sustained left hand line, as shown in example 32.

The music of "Hymn to St. Peter" is based on a melody adapted from the plainsong "Alleluia" for the feast day of that saint, first given out by the organ then sung by the choir. The accompaniment plays the choir parts and adds a pedal ostinato throughout the entire first section. A fugue in quick 6/8 time follows with the voices entering one

Example 31

Trum - pet: *ppp* Praise Him u - pon the Lute and Harp.

pp *dim.* *pp*

Detailed description: This musical score is for Example 31. It consists of two systems. The first system features a trumpet part on a single staff with a dynamic marking of *ppp* and a crescendo hairpin. Below it is a piano accompaniment with two staves (treble and bass clef). The piano part begins with a dynamic marking of *pp*, followed by a *dim.* (diminuendo) marking, and ends with another *pp* marking. The second system continues the piano accompaniment with a dynamic marking of *f* and a crescendo hairpin.

Praise Him u - pon the well-tuned Cym-bals: *f* the loud Cym-bals. *shouted*

Praise Him u - pon the well-tuned Cym-bals: *f* the loud Cym-bals. *shouted*

pp *f* *ffz*

Detailed description: This musical score continues Example 31. It features two vocal parts (Soprano and Alto) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal parts have lyrics: "Praise Him u - pon the well-tuned Cym-bals: the loud Cym-bals. shouted". The vocal parts are marked with a dynamic of *f* and a crescendo hairpin. The piano accompaniment has two staves (treble and bass clef). It begins with a dynamic of *pp*, followed by a dynamic of *f* and a crescendo hairpin, and ends with a dynamic of *ffz*. There are also some performance markings like *att* and *ppp* in the piano part.

Example 32

S.A.T.B.

Written for St. George's Chapel, Windsor, at the request of H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh

JUBILATE DEO

BENJAMIN BRITTEN

O be joy - ful

O be joy - ful

Lively

SOPRANOS
ALTOS

TENORS
BASSES

Lively

ORGAN

in the Lord, all ye lands:

Serve the Lord

in the Lord, all ye lands:

Serve the Lord

Published by arrangement with Messrs. Boosey & Hawkes Ltd.

A setting in C major of *Te Deum Laudamus* by Benjamin Britten is also published (Oxford Church Services S464)

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measure apart; it is repeated, the second ending being extended and words sung only on beats two, three, five, and six. The quasi-plainsong returns and the anthem closes with a treble solo singing "Tu es Petrus," answered by the choir (in English), example 33, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church. Alleluia!"

"Antiphon" begins with five dissonant chords--ppp, pp, p, mp, and mf--each one marked with a fermata. Organ and chorus then begin "Praised be the God of Love," according to the composer's directions, "Majestically, but with a swing." The voices are in unison until "Here below," sung in harmony pianissimo, followed by a solo (preferably in a gallery apart from the choir), "And here above." As in Britten's other anthems discussed, there is a contrapuntal section and an unusual ending. Example 34 shows how the chorus in unison sings fortissimo, "Who hath made of two fold one," answered by a trio in the gallery, "One." The gallery trio repeatedly sings the word "One" on an F major triad in first inversion, alternating with the choir singing the word "Two" on a series of chords: C major, A major, F# major, and an interval of B natural and D. All voices finally unite on the word "One" in F major. The organ is sustaining the F major triad of the gallery trio throughout.

"Nothing more unlike a traditional church anthem could be imagined, but the freshness and spontaneity of Britten's

Example 33

- trus Et su - per hanc pe -

ppp
Thou art Pe - ter, Thou... art Pe - ter.

ppp
Thou art Pe - ter, Thou... art Pe - ter.

ppp
Thou art Pe - ter, Thou... art Pe - ter.

ppp
Thou art Pe - ter, Thou... art Pe - ter.

- tram

ppp
And up - on this rock,.... up - on this rock

ppp
And up - on this rock,.... up - on this rock

ppp
And up - on this rock,.... up - on this rock

ppp
And up - on this rock,.... up - on this rock

Benjamin Britten, *Hymn to St. Peter* (London; Boosey and Hawkes, Ltd., 1955), p. 12.

invention shine through every bar."²³ "A Hymn of St. Columba" and "A Hymn to the Virgin" are not so suitable for an amateur church choir as the anthems described above. The first has a Latin text which is less familiar than the Latin words of the mass (as in "Missa Brevis in D") and some choirs would find that feature difficult. This anthem was first performed by the Ulster Singers in Donegal, Ireland, and is probably too difficult for amateur singers. The second would probably be used only by a church that venerates the Virgin Mary. Although the parts are not difficult to sing, it is a cappella and scored for two choruses and would be beyond the resources of the average volunteer church choir. "Corpus Christi Carol" was arranged for and recorded by Britten and a boy soprano. It is a melody of simple charm marked "gently flowing." The words are in English. The piano accompaniment is built around a descending five note pattern in the top voice that is repeated throughout and is inverted at the end. Britten has brought an acquaintance with Purcell to many through his editing of some of Purcell's songs. Britten wrote in a foreword to the "Three Divine Hymns": "It has been the constant endeavor of the arranger to apply to these reali-

²³ Eric Walter White, *Benjamin Britten: A Sketch of His Life and Works* (London: Boosey and Hawkes, Ltd., 1948), p. 75.

²⁴ Halsey, op. cit., p. 688.

zations something of that mixture of clarity, brilliance, tenderness, and strangeness which shines out in all Purcell's music." That he succeeded is attested by E. W. White's comment, "He realized the figured bass with characteristic ingenuity and invention."²⁴

Britten's sacred music analyzed in this chapter covers a wide range of possible performers and occasions. There are works for children's school choruses or church choirs, boys' choirs, adult amateur or professional choruses, amateur or professional soloists, and a boy soprano; there are works for either liturgical or non-liturgical church services, a wedding, concert performances, school performances, seasonal Christmas performances, and the drama of "Noye's Fludde" which is suitable for either church or school performance.

This music typifies the stylistic changes in music that occurred in both secular and sacred music in the twentieth century--freedom of harmony, tonality, melody, rhythm, and form--changes that made Britten instrumental in bringing sacred music back into the mainstream of twentieth century music.

His personal belief in involvement and communication

²⁴Eric Walter White, Benjamin Britten: A Sketch of His Life and Works (London; Boosey and Hawkes, Ltd., 1948), p. 35.

is evidenced in his musical settings as well as in his choice of texts.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Benjamin Britten was influential in bringing both English music and church music back into the mainstream of music by using contemporary musical idioms. In doing so he not only awakened a new interest in church music, but in the church itself.¹

A combination of the man, the words, and the music, i. e., his personal philosophy, his choice of texts, and his ingenious settings, adds up to an expression of the Christian faith that speaks effectively to mid-twentieth century man. The essence of a composer, who he really is and what he believes in, comes through his music and the listeners respond to it. This is communication, and Britten communicates.

Music can be a religious or an aesthetic experience, or both. Britten's choice of texts provides both; his music provides an aesthetic experience that, coupled with the text, becomes a religious experience. His literary taste was a criterion that is a challenge for other composers to watch. His texts are sentimental without being maudlin, personal without being egocentric, and casual without being commonplace. His use of non-Biblical and non-liturgical texts is striking.

¹ Alec Nyton, "Benjamin Britten and the Church," *J. G. Q. Quarterly*, January 1964, p. 3.

as in "A Ceremony of Carols" CHAPTER V "St. Nicolas," "A Wedding" SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS Owen's poems in the

"War Requiem". His use of Biblical and liturgical texts is Benjamin Britten was influential in bringing both equally striking as in the two Te Deums, "Noye's Flutte," English music and church music back into the mainstream of "Missa Brevis," the "War Requiem," and "Psalm 150". Britten music by using contemporary musical idioms. In doing so he is "pre-eminent" among "leading composers of distinction who not only awakened a new interest in church music, but in the shed new and brilliant light on the eternal truths which [the church itself.]¹ words of the Bible] are believed to contain."²

A combination of the man, the words, and the music, Good music enhances even the best poetry, and the i. e., his personal philosophy, his choice of texts, and his religious experience derived from Britten's texts is immeasurably ingenious settings, adds up to an expression of the Christian faith that speaks effectively to mid-twentieth century man. The essence of a composer, who he really is and what he believes in, comes through his music and the listeners respond a challenge to them, and to church musicians to raise the level of taste in their congregations and the level of performance of taste in their congregations and the level of performance

Music can be a religious or an aesthetic experience, or both. Britten's choice of texts provides both; his music provides an aesthetic experience that, coupled with the text, becomes a religious experience. His literary taste set a criterion that is a challenge for other composers to match. His texts are sentimental without being maudlin, personal without being egocentric, and common without being commonplace. His use of non-Biblical and non-liturgical texts is striking,

¹Alec Wyton, "The New Look in the Church's Music," English Quarterly, January 1964, p. 3.
²Alec Wyton, "Benjamin Britten and the Church," A. G. O. Quarterly, January 1964, p. 3.

as in "A ceremony of Carols," "Rejoice in the Lamb," "St. Nicolas," "A Wedding Anthem," and Wilfrid Owen's poems in the "War Requiem". His use of Biblical and liturgical texts is equally striking as in the two Te Deums, "Noye's Fludde," "Missa Brevis," the "War Requiem," and "Psalm 150". Britten is "pre-eminent" among "leading composers of distinction who shed new and brilliant light on the eternal truths which [the words of the Bible] are believed to contain."²

Good music enhances even the best poetry, and the religious experience derived from Britten's texts is immeasurably enhanced by the music. Just as his texts have set a high standard and raised the level of literary taste, his church choral music has set a standard for church composers that is a challenge to them, and to church musicians to raise the level of taste in their congregations and the level of performance in their choirs.

One major problem facing church musicians today is finding good music that is within the ability of the average amateur choir to perform. More composers have become aware of this problem and have written music on a suitable level. Some churches have solved this problem by commissioning first-rate composers to write works adapted to their needs. Britten

²Alec Wyton, "The New Look in the Church's Music," English Church Music 1968 (Addington Palace, Croydon, England; The Royal School of Church Music, 1968), p. 8.

(Serial) music has simply never attracted me as a method, although I respect many composers was "brought into the orbit of church music"³ with the commission from St. Matthew's Church that resulted in "Rejoice in the Lamb." The important thing in this case, as in similar cases, was finding exactly the right composer for the desired music.⁴ St. Matthew's also, for the same celebration, commissioned Henry Moore to do a statue of the Madonna and Child, Graham Sutherland to paint a mural of the Crucifixion, W. H. Auden to write a litany for St. Matthew's Day, and C. S. Lewis to speak to the congregation.

Britten proved that he could effectively write commissioned works. He is a master at judging what each group wants and is capable of performing. "In my experience," he wrote, "[the conditions of performance] are not only a restriction but a challenge, an inspiration."⁵ His desire to communicate is perfectly provided for in commissioned works as there is a vital relationship between composer and performer when both are working toward the same objective.

His success as a church music composer may be partly explained by his appeal to the amateur church singer.

Britten's special talent for setting words to music

³Supra, p. 9.

⁴Benjamin Britten's response to Murray Schafer in *British* Infra, p. 111. Interview (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1963), p. 120.

⁵Benjamin Britten, "On Winning the First Aspen Award," Saturday Review, 38, August 22, 1964. Making (London: The Bureau of Current Affairs, 1951), p. 56.

[Serial] music has simply never attracted me as a method, although I respect many composers who have worked in it, and love some of their works. It is beyond me to say why, except that I cannot feel that tonality is outworn, and find many serial "rules" arbitrary. "Socially" I am seriously disturbed by its limitations. I can see it taking no part in the music-lover's music-making. Its methods make writing gratefully for voices or instruments an impossibility, which inhibits amateurs and young children. I find it worrying that our contemporary young composers are not able to write things for the young or amateurs to play and sing.⁶

He wrote melodies that the amateur choir could easily learn; he added parts with such natural voice leading that they could be mastered by amateur singers. His use of tonality is pandiatonic, with its absence of characteristic harmonic functions. He wrote for unusual combinations of voices as well as the traditional choruses. He showed that religious faith can be joyful and exhilarating. His accompaniments are interesting and add a great deal to the total effect. His music is contemporary in style without being avant-garde. "He has genuinely found a public, and has created music which is alive and sensitive and modern and at the same time not impossibly remote."⁷

Britten's special talent for setting words to music

⁶Benjamin Britten's response to Murray Schafer in British Composers in Interview (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1963), p. 120.

⁷Wilfrid Mellers, Music in the Making (London: The Bureau of Current Affairs, 1951), p. 56.

and his choice of unusual words made him a leader in the field of sacred vocal music. He was one of the first composers to set contemporary poetry to music--very few settings had been done by the 1930's. His reactions to the problems of society influenced his choice of texts. The "War Requiem" attracted attention to his use of a liturgical text that had an appeal wider than to just one faith. His use of medieval poetry helped to emphasize the historical continuity of the Christian faith. His understanding of the poetic image⁸ resulted in words happily wedded to the music.

His melodic lines fit the text primarily because of a flexibility of meter. His use of rhythm is what Wilfrid Mellers called "spiritual" as opposed to "corporeal"--numerical rather than accentual.⁹ "Spiritual" rhythm has a minimum relationship to bodily movement, is subtle and complex in its organization, and is "additive," with no strong accents. Symmetrical melodies with traditional tonality and balanced phrases are incompatible with contemporary melody writing. Symmetry and tonality are no longer considered criteria of beauty in melody.

⁸Supra, p. 79.

⁹Wilfrid Mellers, Caliban Reborn: Renewal in Twentieth Century Music (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1967), p. 3.

By his use of pandiatonicism and "spiritual" rhythm Britten has been able to create melodic lines with a sweep and a vitality--to create tension and release by his use of dissonant intervals, intervals whose notes do not vibrate in an equally divisible number of vibrations. The degree of tension in a melodic line depends on the speed at which a dissonance is resolved to a consonance.

Apparently, two of his favorite devices in accompaniments are ostinato figures and pedal point which create false relations and dissonances, yet he finds ways to make the voice parts easy enough for amateur singers to read.

He creates atmosphere by the use of different planes of sound as the gallery choir in "St. Nicolas" and "Antiphon," and the three planes of sound in the "War Requiem"; he creates special effects by such means as the quasi-recitative for the entire chorus in "Rejoice in the Lamb," soft chants at the ends of phrases as in "There is no Rose" in "A Ceremony of Carols," the extended use of a C major triad as in "Te Deum in C," and one of his most effective devices is the setting of words of exultation to quiet music. At the beginning of a work this creates an interest and anticipation; at the close it creates a feeling of repose and fulfillment.

"Exuberance . . . is surely one of the ingredients that makes Britten's music immediately acceptable to so many

inexperienced listeners, whatever their ages"¹⁰ His music is more accessible to the ordinary listener and perhaps appeals more than many other contemporary composers because of the interest of the texts, the vitality of the music, and his apparent musical savoir-faire.

His music has intellectual appeal and may speak to people who are emotionally unmoved by the message of the church. "Musical sounds heard in a religious context often have a power to affect deeply even those who have repudiated all organized forms of religion. . . . even if intellectual difficulties had long before caused them to sever their connections with religion."¹¹ Britten's sounds heard in the context of his texts could have the power to affect those who do not respond to the purely emotional or the commonplace in music.

Because of his appeal to people of all ages and of all faiths Britten's music could be a contributing factor in the development of the ecumenical movement within the church.

¹⁰ Imogen Holst, "Britten and the Young," Benjamin Britten: A Commentary On His Works From a Group of Specialists, Donald Mitchell and Hans Keller, Editors (New York: Philosophic Library, 1952), p. 279.

¹¹ Stephen Spinks, Psychology and Religion (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 142.

The present century differs from all others since the Reformation in being an age in which the unity of Christian Churches is regarded as more to be desired than the clear statement of their differences. . . . Specific points of difference are being attacked with the object of reconciliation. . . . Theology is invoked as a reconciling factor, not as a divisive factor. But . . . what really distinguishes the present age from all others is the profound change in the spiritual climate, both without and within. . . . In our age the church cannot afford any longer to be disunited, and that union in the will of Christ is an urgent necessity if the church is to survive the assaults of secularism.¹²

As Romanticism in music had emphasized egocentricity, Romantic church music contributed to an egocentricity of religions. The ecumenical movement is a movement away from this and needs to be reinforced with appropriate music.

Routley has written with great insight about Britten's contribution to the church through the drama and music of "Noye's Fludde" in Words, Music and the Church.¹³ He cited Britten's choice of the three hymns incorporated into the play as the proper way to choose hymns for public worship: according to their reference to other ideas in the service, with a concern that they are singable, and to include some that people regard as "their own" so that participation in

¹²Erik Routley, Creeds and Confessions (London: Gerald Duckworth and Company, Ltd., 1962), pp. 154-155.

¹³Erik Routley, Words, Music and the Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968).

the worship is complete. Even more than for the inclusion of hymns, "Noye's Fludde" is how to present the Bible--if not staged as a play or musical drama, at least read or preached with drama. Routley concludes his argument: "The one thing that you do not think of for a moment at a performance of Noye's Fludde is a concert of classical music. That is why it is a far more powerful contribution to the ongoing life of the church than are many more elaborate masterpieces."¹⁴

Through his music Britten is a present-day prophet, one who speaks out for a cause. He speaks for the cause of concern for fellow human beings, for peace, for compassion and justice for the oppressed. A prophet is always a step ahead of the common people and speaks in a new language in terms of his own understanding.

Our world is not just one that Michelangelo, Shakespeare, and Mozart have passed through, but a world they have helped create.

Christ is more real to us because of the Pieta and "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" and for every other significant form the spirit releases into the world.¹⁵

This is a world Benjamin Britten has helped to create; and Christ is more real because of such a work as the "War Requiem."

¹⁴Ibid., p. 164.

¹⁵Julian N. Hartt, A Christian Critique of American Culture (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1967), p. 353.

Both the church and church music are being revitalized to fit the needs of the times. People are ready to respond to change in church music as they have responded to other changes in their lives--changes occurring at an unprecedented rate of speed. The church is worthy of the best music that the best composers are capable of writing, and Britten has written church music of a consistently high standard with exciting and imaginative new sounds.

Britten's contribution to church music is manifold. His music has awakened a new interest in the church itself by communicating on a new and higher intellectual level with contemporary man; his literary taste has helped to raise the standard of church music texts; he has demonstrated that the average church choir can sing contemporary music; he has been willing to work on a commission basis and tailor the material to fit the individual needs; he has written sacred music that not only speaks to the worshiper but lifts his heart and mind in joyful praise; he has made Christ's teaching of concern for others his own personal philosophy that shines out in his music; he has created a music that could be a contributing factor to the unity of all Christians. He has made an impact on church music that could be expressed in the words of the poet, Edith Sitwell:

Praise be to those who sing
Green hymns of the great waters to the dry
And tearless deserts in the souls of men.

1957-1958
1959-1960

1957-1958

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APPENDIX

6 October 68

Dear Mrs Ralphs -

Thank you for your letter. I doubt if I can be of much help. If you are writing a thesis on Benjamin Britten, I am sure that you will find all the evidence you need in his music: even the books about him are bound to be secondary sources. I don't know him personally, nor, I'm afraid, do I know anybody who does. I don't myself care much for books about composers except when they are strictly commentaries on their music, so I can't recommend any such books about Britten, not having read them. This is hopelessly unhelpful, and I'm sorry about that. But I am sure that an examination of his music and of the influences that have been at work on him - e.g. Purcell, who I am sure is of great importance to Britten - will supply adequate material. Of course, what other composers say about his music would be interesting up to a point - e.g. Stravinsky's (to me incomprehensible) disparagement: but I don't know where you would find that, except by a combination of diligent research and good luck.

It's not kind of you to mention my own books and I hope they have been helpful. I'm sorry that all I know about Britten is his music, which you also will know, so I can't add anything useful to your knowledge.

Yours sincerely

Erik Routley

THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE

CATHEDRAL HEIGHTS, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017

October 8, 1968

Alec Wyton, M.A. (Oxon)
F.R.A.M., F.R.C.O., CHM., F.A.G.O.
Organist and Master of Choristers

Marilyn Keis
S.M.M., A.A.
Assistant

Mrs. Ralph Rauch
Box 767
Ouachita Baptist University
Arkadelphia, Arkansas

Dear Mrs. Rauch:

Many thanks for your letter and I was so pleased to hear from you and so was Marilyn. I am flattered to be asked to send a picture and one is enclosed herewith.

I don't know any other books about Britten persse, but there are many references in other books, and I think immediately of the various Pelican Books, such as the Pelican Book of Choral Music by Arthur Jacobs, Chamber Music by Alec Robertson, and British Music of our Time by A. L. Bacharach; together with "Music in the Twentieth Century" edited by Howard Hartog. I am sure you know that Eric Routley writes some things about Britten in his "Twentieth Century Church Music", a book which is strong in many ways, but thoroughly unrepresentative when it speaks about music in America.

I hope you hear from Stuart Pope, but in the meantime, it might not hurt if you were to write a letter to the Very Reverend Walter Hussey, Dean of Chichester Cathedral, Chichester, Sussex, England. Walter Hussey is the dedicatee of "Rejoice in the Lamb" and knows Britten very well, and he might be very pleased to give you any pointers in terms of getting a response out of Ben.

I had a great time with the SAI Convention, and I think that the group I spoke to there, was just about the most responsive people to whom I have made a formal lecture. This is not to be confused with the wonderful people at Montreat, but I've given many formal lectures, particularly to AGO groups and the SAI people really responded and sparkled.

Please keep me in touch with your work. If I can help in any way please let me know.

From the Dean of Chichester

THE DEANERY · CHICHESTER · SUSSEX
TELEPHONE: CHICHESTER 3286

11th November, 1968.

Dear Mrs. Rauch,

Thank you for your letter. Oh dear me! What a difficult task.

Mr. Britten wrote the Anthem "Rejoice in the Lamb" for S. Matthew's Church where I was at the time in Northampton. I think the choir was rather a good one for ~~the~~ parish church and entirely voluntary. It of course had boy sopranos. Mr. Britten heard the choir before writing the work.

I think the really important thing that I would say is that I am firmly convinced that it is enormously valuable from the musicians' point of view and the Church's point of view to commission work if one is keen and interested, then it may be that one will commission a work from somebody who will become famous; but I think the important thing is to take all the trouble one can to find out who is the best and ablest person who would be suitable. I think Mr. Britten would agree with these views.

In a sense the fact that one is often very restricted with money makes it more exciting and more of a test of one's taste because one has to pick a much younger and less experienced composer. Mr. Britten shared something of my enthusiasm in this cause.

With all good wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Walter Hassey

THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE

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February 21, 1969

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Marilyn Keiser
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 Assistant

Mrs. Ralph Rauch
 Box 767
 Ouachita Baptist University
 Arkadelphia, Arkansas

Dear Mrs. Rauch:

Many thanks for your letter and I am delighted to hear about the progress of your thesis. By all means, you may use my quotes in the thesis and I would love it if I may see a copy when it is finished. It is alright, too, to reproduce my letters...I don't imagine I said anything too devastating, did I?

Britten's reply to your birthday greeting is characteristic. I don't know whether I told you this, or whether I mentioned it in the course of our week in Montreat, but Ralph Vaughn Williams was similarly, and perhaps even more compassionate. A student of mine at Union Theological Seminary about 12 years ago was writing a thesis on Vaughn Williams' church music and he had some questions which I couldn't answer. I suggested that he write to the old man and he got back six pages of detailed reply typed by Vaughn Williams himself and carefully annotated with musical examples. This reinforces my belief that one has to be a firstclass "people person" to write effective music for worship.

I am going to show your letter to Marilyn and I know she will join me in warm greetings to you.

Yours most sincerely,


 Alec Wyton

vc

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

BENJAMIN BRITTEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO CHURCH MUSIC

Church music. Master of Arts (Church Music), May, 1969.
100 pp., Bibliography, Appendix.

The purpose of this study was to discover Benjamin
Britten's contribution to church music by his sacred music
written during the

An Abstract of a Thesis

This study was presented to
The Director of Graduate Studies
Ouachita Baptist University

These studies resulted in a general philosophy
was one of moral concern for fellow men, and that
he believed in communication and involvement between composer,
performer, and listener. His music, along with a dis-
cerning literary taste, was a reflection of his
choice of texts. He found the lyrics to have potent and
evocative poetry as well as biblical and liturgical texts. The
music in which he set these texts was designed to have a
distinctly twentieth-century sound in the new uses of har-
mony, tonality, melody and rhythm. It was music the average
listener could appreciate.

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Church Music

Marcella Rauch
May 1969

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

Rauch, Marcella, Benjamin Britten's Contribution to Church Music. Master of Arts (Church Music), May, 1969, 100 pp., Bibliography, Appendix.

The purpose of this study was to discover Benjamin Britten's contribution to church music in his sacred music written during the period 1943-1963.

First, a study was made of his personal philosophy from all available literature on the subject; next, a study was made of his choice of texts, from the same sources; finally, a study was made of the music to which he had set these texts, from the scores and from recordings.

These studies revealed that his personal philosophy was one of moral concern for fellow human beings, and that he believed in communication and involvement between composer, performer, and listener. This philosophy, along with a discriminating literary taste, was a definite influence on his choice of texts. He found the beauties in both ancient and modern poetry as well as Biblical and liturgical texts. The music to which he set these texts was discovered to have a distinctively twentieth century sound in its new uses of harmony, tonality, melody and rhythm; yet it was music the average amateur could appreciate and/or sing.

The background of this study showed the general decline of church music following the Reformation as it came to seem less important than secular music. There was a wide gap between sacred and secular music by the beginning of the twentieth century, with the best composers turning their efforts to secular music. Britten was influential in bringing sacred music back into the mainstream of music by his use of contemporary musical idioms. He had awakened a new interest not only in church music but in the church itself.

His personal philosophy combined with his choice of texts that have literary merit and his contemporary musical settings have made a vital impact on church music. They provide a contemporary religious experience for both performer and listener.