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“THE INEFFABLE MOMENTS WILL BE HARDER WON”: THE GENESIS, COMPOSITIONAL PROCESS, AND EARLY PERFORMANCE HISTORY OF MICHAEL TIPPETT’S THE HEART’S ASSURANCE

BY

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DISSEMINATION

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Abstract

Commissioned by tenor Peter Pears, Michael Tippett’s *The Heart’s Assurance* is an easily overlooked song cycle among twentieth-century English vocal repertoire, overshadowed by Benjamin Britten’s cyclical works and those of other British composers. This cycle, which moved Tippett to tears into his nineties, was intended to eulogize the memory of one of his dearest friends, Francesca Allinson. Tippett later expanded the dedication to serve as a requiem to both Allinson and the millions dead from World War II. The cycle’s poets Sidney Keyes and Alun Lewis also number among the war’s casualties. The violent imagery of the poets’ texts supplied an appropriate framework to characterize Tippett’s ardent pacifism and his response to the losses of war. In fact, *The Heart’s Assurance* represented a watershed moment to Tippett throughout his life, one to which he returned frequently in his private and public writings. In this respect, the cycle is best understood as a memorial work and for its personal significance to Tippett, rather than a composition that gained singular acclaim. Pears and Britten premiered the cycle at the 1951 Festival of Britain. Its high-profile venue positioned Tippett as a star ascendant among English song composers, yet *The Heart’s Assurance* did not retain this pinnacle in the repertory; nor did Tippett attempt to compose such a purely voice and piano opus again.

*The Heart’s Assurance* emerged eight years after Tippett’s first project with Pears and Britten – the neo-Purcellian cantata *Boyhood’s End* (1943). An exploration of previously unpublished letters from Tippett to Pears concerning *The Heart’s Assurance* reveals the development of their friendship, the collaboration with Britten the pianist, and the earliest kernels of discussion regarding the cycle. Additional unpublished correspondence with the South African-born British composer Priaulx Rainier, and documents within the BBC Written Archives, shed further light on the cycle’s genesis.

The majority of scholarship on Tippett focuses on his larger orchestral and operatic works. This study reveals why scrutiny of *The Heart’s Assurance*, clearly a smaller genre, is essential for a greater appreciation of Tippett’s life and persona. Furthermore, this examination elevates our understanding of Tippett’s perception of the artist’s role in modern society. This was an issue with which he wrestled a great deal, as can be seen in his published writings and selected letters, and in his voluminous amount of unpublished correspondence. This author argues that the methodology by which one may fully comprehend both composer and artwork is that which sees a synthesis of its formative elements: what this author names as the “British Library Sketches” (GB-Lbl MS Add.)
72026), the “Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches” (GB-ALb 2-9400780), and the fair copies that form the “Autograph MS” (GB-ALb 2-9400536 and 2-9400538). Drawing upon these materials, the current dissertation applies genetic criticism to this author’s transcriptions of the four extant leaves for *The Heart’s Assurance* in the British Library Sketches, revealing that Tippett’s compositional process was text-driven and melodically-inspired. Further discussion contrasts and compares these sketches with the later *Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches* and the autograph MS. Analysis of these manuscripts presents a micro-view of Tippett’s creative development, and insights into his search for the inexpressible.

Complicating the cycle’s history thereafter is Pears’s pronouncement on it in his contribution to *Michael Tippett: A Symposium on His Sixtieth Birthday* (1965) fourteen years after its première. Pears’s essay is a partial response to Tippett’s earlier manifesto on composers and text-setting in his concluding essay to Dennis Stevens’s *A History of Song* (1960). Contextualization of Pears’s commentary requires us to understand that Britten was frequently associated with Tippett in twentieth-century English culture. At the same time, this dissertation makes it clear that Tippett’s ideas on song-writing in his treatise contradict the realities evinced in *The Heart’s Assurance*.

The present examination also offers a discussion of Pears’s and Britten’s annotations in their personal copies of the published scores. The early performance history of the cycle, including all known performances of *The Heart’s Assurance* by Peter Pears, are documented and discussed, along with notable later performances by other artists, and recordings. In sum, this dissertation provides the singer, collaborative pianist, professional voice instructor, and the scholarly community alike a broad and detailed perspective on Tippett’s song cycle. The larger goal is to contribute a focused appreciation of Tippett’s compositional process and creative skill, thereby offering richer performance and listening experiences.
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I am equally obliged to Ms. Gwyn Rhydderch and the Trustees of the Tippett Estate for their kind permission to reproduce manuscript leaves from Tippett’s _The Heart’s Assurance_, as well as allowing me to reproduce a number of letters from Tippett’s previously unpublished correspondence. Images from Pears’s and Britten’s personal scores of the Schott Edition of _The Heart’s Assurance_, containing their own markings, are used with permission of the Britten-Pears Foundation. Furthermore, I am especially thankful for permission to reproduce excerpts of E-mail correspondence with Dr. Christopher Wintle, Dr. Alison Garnham, Dr. Paul Kildea, Dr. Nicholas Clark, Dr. Thomas Schuttenhelm, and Dr. Jenny Doctor.

Dr. Sherri K. Phelps is my lifelong friend, confidante, and sister, for whom I am immeasurably grateful, and whose keen mind ceaselessly inspires me. Over the years I have been the recipient of more familial kindness than anyone could hope to repay; for the Sagers, the Schumans, the Bells, the Berrys, the Oglesbys, and the Vickers family, I am richly blessed. My Mother and Father, John and Karen Vickers, have taught me abiding faith, deep-seated integrity, and an awareness of true happiness: family. My Non—this work’s dedicatee—signed her every letter to me with a loving phrase I have come to treasure: “Sing to His Glory.” I always will, Non.
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The two great cases of the holocaust and the gulag are, of course, exemplary cases of the return of the dead in the twentieth century. The shadows of their victims will continue to chase ... until we give them a decent burial, until we integrate the trauma of their death into our historical memories.¹

Preface

Statement of Purpose

Michael Tippett’s *The Heart’s Assurance*, composed in the 1950s, was a watershed moment in his compositional life. This dissertation’s discussion of the five-song cycle provides an enhanced perspective on how the composition came to serve as a catharsis for the composer. The cycle acts as a lens through which we can view the composer’s inner self; his response to both personal and international loss; his relationships with his contemporaries, especially Benjamin Britten, Peter Pears, Priaulx Rainier, and executives at the BBC; and his socio-musical position as an artist in post-war Britain, specifically in relation to his belief in nonviolence and the pacifist cause. These perspectives are rendered by examining previously unpublished correspondence, deciphering and transcribing compositional sketches and pencil drafts, comparing the pencil copies and ink fair copies with the autograph manuscript, and gleaning interpretative insights from the annotations the performers of the première made in their personal scores. These vital, yet neglected sources serve as cartography of Tippett’s creative process, allowing one to chart assumptions about the genetic arc of the cycle from inception through to première, refining previous dating, number of songs, the originally-intended venue, and even the year it was to have been premièred. Moreover, the sketches have provided significant genetic implications in terms of Tippett’s compositional process, revealing a text-based, melody-driven impetus, alongside Tippett’s own idiosyncratic figured-bass-like shorthand. In effect, one can reverse engineer the published work, peeling away its layers to uncover each stage of

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2 Michael Tippett (2 January 1905 – 8 January 1998). See also n2 of Chapter One, p. 17.
Tippett’s compositional process, back through the autograph, to the drafts, to the only known extant sketches at the British Library.

In his collection of personal essays, Moving Into Aquarius, Tippett wrote that for the artist, “the ineffable moments will be harder won.” The Oxford English Dictionary defines ineffable as that which “cannot be expressed or described in language; too great for words; transcending expression; unspeakable, unutterable, inexpressible.” Tippett made his remark in direct response to Erich Neumann’s statement that, “Anyone whose ears do not burn, whose eyes do not cloud over at the thought of concentration camps, the crematoriums, the atomic explosions which make up our reality,” is essentially immune to our shared humanity. The artist’s function in society—which Tippett describes as a mandate—is to respond to the events occurring around them. This mindset conditioned Tippett’s compositional life, providing the specific cerebral environment that shaped The Heart’s Assurance. Tippett’s response to the war and the personal losses it caused also involved this cycle. For Tippett, it was from this striving that any ineffable moments would be won. Such a straightforward, yet poignant phrase sums up Tippett’s lifelong pursuit of expressive transcendence. Lawrence Kramer might refer to this manner of subjectivity as the “simulacra,” or mirror, into Tippett’s creative process. For Tippett, to seek the unutterable and attempt to give it voice will necessarily involve a difficult journey. How very apt this realization is to understanding Tippett’s protracted compositional process. There can be little doubt that the depth of Tippett’s psychological inquiries has paralleled his personal struggle with musical expression.

Chapter One of this dissertation positions the cycle within Tippett’s life, establishing the inspiration that endeared it to him for the remainder of his career. Fundamental to that discussion

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4 Quoted in Tippett, Moving Into Aquarius, pp. 122-123.
are his relationships with the cycle’s dedicatee, Francesca (“Fresca”) Allinson—to whose life and subsequent suicide the work is an elegy—as well as with its first performers, Peter Pears and Benjamin Britten. Equally essential in maintaining an appropriate perspective on Tippett’s innermost relationships is his political stance as an ardent pacifist.

Chapter Two documents the compositional process of the cycle, within the compositional period of Tippett’s first mature opera, The Midsummer Marriage (1946-52). We are afforded various glimpses into the compositional process through previously unpublished letters to and from Tippett. These letters render a three-dimensional perspective on his struggle with the task of writing the music, and thus the scheduling difficulties surrounding the première. The chapter also considers when the work was commissioned, begun, and completed.

Chapter Three is an introduction to the words and music of the cycle. It introduces us to the memorializing poetry of The Heart’s Assurance and the music that accompanies it. Reproduced in Chapter Three are the five poems that form The Heart’s Assurance as a cycle: “Song: Oh journeyman” (Alun Lewis), “The Heart’s Assurance” (Sidney Keyes), “Compassion” (Lewis), “The Dancer” (Lewis), and “Remember Your Lovers” (Keyes). Chapter Three is intended to familiarize the reader with the cycle as a whole prior to viewing it in more genetic and musical detail in Chapter Four. It also considers the vexed question of whether The Heart’s Assurance is or is not a song cycle.

Chapter Four defines and applies the principles of genetic criticism and analysis to: the unbound leaves of pencil sketches from the Tippett Collection at the British Library, London; the pencil drafts, pencil and ink sketches, and the ink fair copies that form the autograph manuscript in the archival collection of the Britten-Pears Foundation, Aldeburgh, Suffolk; and the individual performance copies belonging to both Pears and Britten, also in Aldeburgh. These materials help to chart the compositional process of The Heart’s Assurance from its earliest fragments to the published score, and to show how Tippett approached and honed the work.
Chapter Five contextualizes the poetry that inspired Tippett’s composition and positions each of the work’s young poets, Sidney Keyes and Alun Lewis, within the genre of war poetry. The poets’ short lives are set against the backdrop of World War II. Tippett’s musical setting, a separate artwork from the poetry, is assessed in relation to the poems themselves. Chapter Five is thus a companion to Chapter Three.

Chapter Six charts the early performance history of the cycle from its initially-suggested first performance for the 1950 Edinburgh Festival—a fact revealed through internal correspondence uncovered at the British Broadcasting Corporation’s (BBC) Written Archives that has been previously overlooked in the existing secondary literature—to its actual première at the 1951 Festival of Britain. The interpretative markings in the personal performance copies that belonged to both Pears and Britten are also analyzed for their significance in illuminating the complicated nature of realizing the score for voice and piano alike. The early concert performances with Britten are traced through to the subsequent performances with Pears and the Australian pianist Noel Mewton-Wood in the early-1950s. Additionally, early performances of the work by other artists are discussed with relation to the recorded history of the cycle. The chapter concludes with a commentary on the first recording of the cycle by Pears and Mewton-Wood.

Chapter Seven serves as a postscript to The Heart’s Assurance. Much of the cycle’s obscure afterlife may be viewed in light of the 1965 Festschrift for Tippett’s birthday, Michael Tippett: A Symposium on His Sixtieth Birthday, in which both Britten and Pears contributed appreciations. This chapter critically reviews Pears’s essay, because his contribution virtually assails the very cycle to which he gave voice. Throughout this study, we sense a number of theories behind Pears’s argument that have not been previously entertained. As we shall see in Chapter Seven, though, Pears’s criticism of Tippett’s composition depicts a shift in the singer’s conception of the cycle, which is itself a partially subjective response. Difficulties in the work’s reception may account for the quarter-
century gap between Pears’s recording of the work and the next recorded performance by the English tenor Philip Langridge. Although a thorough discussion of the reception of the cycle lies outside the scope of the current study, such a history would contribute to our understanding of this cycle’s overall position within the repertoire of musical memorials. Moreover, the following half-century of performances, particularly those at which Tippett was present, indicate that the work remained an essential and penetrating centerpiece of his compositional life.

All of this scholarship, however, amounts to nothing if it does not produce a richer appreciation of the composition from a contextual knowledge of its creation, its creator, and its parts, all culminating in its performance. Supported by the research that follows, the music and the poetry of Tippett’s cycle remains the central and definitive source of inspiration for this study.

Secondary Literature Review

Very little secondary literature has addressed *The Heart’s Assurance* in any significant detail. Certainly the cycle is frequently mentioned in Tippett narratives, but rarely is it granted more than a few lines of the most basic biographical detail. With four exceptions (noted below), the cycle scarcely receives more than four to five pages of examination.

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6 *Nota Bene:* This dissertation refers to the published score of *The Heart’s Assurance* with great frequency. Because there are no differences between the published editions and reprints of the cycle, the pagination of *The Heart’s Assurance* (London: Schott & Co. Ltd, 1951. Schott Ed. 10158, ISMN M-2201-0130-4) will be used throughout this dissertation, followed by the system of the corresponding page, and then the bar number related to that system. For example, a reference to the second bar of the fourth system on page three will be transcribed as 3.4.2. Therefore, the reader will follow the numerous musical references with greater ease if the published Schott Edition is at his or her side. Because the musical examples in this dissertation do not always follow the printed layout within the Schott Edition, editorial annotations indicating precisely where the system and page breaks occur are contained within brackets in those examples, as necessary. As is customary, in the course of discussion, *manuscript* will be abbreviated as MS; its plural form, MSS.
As one of the more extensive studies of the life and works on Tippett—even twenty-five years after its publication—and his only substantive biography, Ian Kemp’s *Tippett: The Composer and His Music* (1984) distinguishes itself in flowing prose and astute musical analysis. However, the last fifteen years of the composer’s life remain, of course, virtually unexplored. To date, Kemp’s volume is the only Tippett biography to follow the composer’s life, times, and music. Succeeding the sixty-one page biography are four major chapters within which the respective compositions are discussed chronologically: viz, 1923-34, 1934-52, 1952-58, and 1958-76, followed by a Postscript: 1976—.

Reading Kemp’s book provides keen insight into Tippett’s life and works. This is due in no small part to his close friendship with the composer, but more so because Tippett himself encouraged and took an active role in the process.

Kemp devotes less than four pages’ discussion to *The Heart’s Assurance*, which, while perceptive, is hardly comprehensive. Kemp writes that, “*The Heart’s Assurance* was the product of [Tippett’s] decision to write a ‘true song cycle.” But Kemp challenges the notion: “As a matter of fact *The Heart’s Assurance* is not a true song cycle in the classic narrative tradition of, for example, *Die Winterreise* or *Dichterliebe,*” but rather an exclusion of the pattern “much favored by Britten, in which an emotional experience too intense for expression in a single song is given room for expansion in a group of songs.” Kemp’s very definition, however, is exemplified in both of his examples, in which Schubert and Schumann each expand the multiple emotional states of their protagonists into a “group of songs,” principally because they are “too intense for expression in a single song”; thus, by Kemp’s definition, *The Heart’s Assurance* should be accorded the status of song cycle, yet it is not.

Kemp’s interpretation of *song cycle* is not definitive. As we shall see in Chapter Three, there are

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8 Ibid., pp. 298-302.
9 Ibid., p. 298.
10 Ibid.
unifying musical gestures that create a cyclic cohesion in *The Heart’s Assurance*; furthermore, Tippett imagined the comingling of the poets’ voices as that of a single narrative voice, or the very “I”—in the first person—that Kemp says is required of a “true song cycle,” which will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Of vital importance is Tippett’s semi-autobiographical *Those Twentieth Century Blues* (1991). It is a *semi*-autobiographical work because of the disclosure post-publication that it was actually ghostwritten by his assistant and one-time lover, Meirion “Bill” Bowen. Obviously Bowen was privy to personal information about the composer, even writing, perhaps, under Tippett’s guidance. A general perception is that large quantities of the text may indeed be transcriptions of conversations between Tippett and Bowen. Additionally, the volume includes correspondence with important figures in Tippett’s life. As with all autobiographical materials, the subjectivity of the volume in relation to its accuracy and authorial agenda must be considered. Nevertheless, the preface is as witty and direct as the book it introduces, clearly elucidating the manner in which Tippett’s narrative will unfold, as a series of—sometimes-anecdotal—stories, not essays. The volume expresses Tippett’s gratitude for the openness of the world in 1991, in contrast to the preceding years that were closed to the realities of his unabashed homosexuality. Mentions of his

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12 It is known that many of Tippett’s MSS and correspondence are held privately. A notable private collection of Tippettalia is in the hands of Meirion Bowen, Tippett’s longtime assistant from the 1960s until the composer’s death. When Thomas Schuttenhelm was preparing the *Selected Letters of Michael Tippett* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005; hereafter SLMT), Bowen had oversight of all of the materials, and offered Schuttenhelm full assistance in the preparation. In interviews, Schuttenhelm describes the miscellany as “that great trove of Tippett gold,” which will be referred to as the Bowen Collection in this dissertation. Schuttenhelm’s first-hand accounting of the vast quantities of Tippett primary source material seen while preparing SLMT is staggering, ranging from correspondence and journals to sketches and MSS.

In Meirion Bowen’s brief introduction to the works list in *Michael Tippett* (London: Robson Books, 1997), he writes, “Apart from a few items acquired for other collections, or missing, the manuscripts of Tippett’s published works, either complete or incomplete, are all at the British Library,” p. 283. This, however, is at odds with Schuttenhelm’s account.

In 2003, while in Spain, Bowen suffered from a debilitating stroke that removed him from the public. Moved back to England under the care of his immediate family, whose focus is understandably on his convalescence, all attempts at securing curatorship of the Bowen Collection have thus far been denied. One hopes that for the sake of future Tippett scholarship, the Bowen Collection will be delivered into the safe keeping of the British Library or another publicly accessible archive, where it may be properly catalogued and available for ongoing research.
close friendship and association with Pears and Britten are frequent in number; also, his cherished friendship with Francesca “Fresca” Allinson and her ultimate suicide figure prominently into the narrative. The seventh chapter of TTCB—itself seventy-four pages [one-fourth the length of the entire work] and taking its name from the work that memorialized Fresca, “The Heart’s Assurance”—.touches on many of the themes of the song cycle. These themes include the inevitability of war, loss, love, fear, his first meeting with Britten and Pears, his wartime imprisonment, and numerous letters to Fresca.

Bowen also authored a biography entitled Michael Tippett, building primarily on his years at Tippett’s side. Bowen’s firsthand experience with Tippett is of distinct importance and in his accounting one finds relevant details from the composer’s life that might otherwise be absent from the composer’s narrative. However, Bowen’s Tippett lacks the objective underpinning of Kemp’s shorter biographical treatment and bears evident hagiographic intent, if not residue. Bowen does discuss Tippett’s late works in the book’s second printing—something Kemp was not able to do in his 1984 edition (or its 1986 reprinting)—yet the volume is perhaps best interpreted as a slightly devotional text.

Though tangential, an equally valuable contribution to Tippett studies is Donald Mitchell and Philip Reed’s Benjamin Britten: Letters from a Life (Volumes One and Two), followed by subsequent volumes that add the editorial acumen of Mervyn Cooke (1991, 2004, 2008, 2010). Volumes two, three, and four of the projected six-volume set of Benjamin Britten’s letters and

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journal entries offer correspondence and essays surrounding the composition of both of Tippett’s major collaborative works with Britten and Pears, *Boyhood’s End* (1943), a neo-Purcellian cantata that set prose by W. H. Hudson, and *The Heart’s Assurance*. Volume five contains a letter from Britten referring to Pears’s writing of his essay for Tippett’s *Festschrift* contribution. Far more important, however, is the revelation in the exhaustive notes that there exists a series of letters between Pears and Tippett surrounding the genesis—and one would assume the commission—of *The Heart’s Assurance*. The fourth volume, covering the years 1952-1957, notes that Thomas Schuttenhelm, editor of the *Selected Letters of Michael Tippett* (2005), excluded these letters from its publication. Fortunately, the comprehensive letter-by-letter notes within Mitchell, Reed, and Cooke’s volumes direct the researcher to the Britten-Pears Library, where the Pears-Tippett letters are preserved; the significant content of these letters will be discussed in the chapters to follow.

The only dedicated volume of Tippett correspondence is the aforementioned *Selected Letters of Michael Tippett*. Schuttenhelm’s volume is limited in its notes and contextualization—the very assets that make the Mitchell and Reed volumes indispensible. Faber imposed book length and Tippett centenary deadlines, further limiting the depth to which Schuttenhelm was permitted to probe. In the foreword to Schuttenhelm’s selection of Tippett’s letters, David Matthews reveals that the

15 Reed, Cooke, and Mitchell laud Schuttenhelm’s significant contribution—with a sideward criticism that he is “occasionally wayward in chronology”—stating: “Schuttenhelm did not select any of Tippett’s letters to Peter Pears (also at BPL), many of which are concerned with *Boyhood’s End* and *The Heart’s Assurance*,” n5, p. 108. In fact, those letters from Tippett to Pears are accessible at BPF (formerly the BPL) and have formed the kernel of this study.

16 Schuttenhelm, *SLMT*.

17 Interviews with Schuttenhelm reveal that two earlier drafts of *SLMT* existed: a Complete Correspondence of Michael Tippett was prepared, and a volume of interim length was also proposed by the author, both of which were deemed too extensive and too similar in scope to the Britten: *Letters from a Life* series. The prevailing reproach of Schuttenhelm’s work is its lack of substantive notes, which is fair criticism; however, it is regrettable that issues predetermined by the publisher were in effect responsible for the limited content. A close reading of the Introduction gives considerable context for the volume, and reveals that it was the author’s intent, in co-operation and with the support of the Tippett Estate, to publish as many letters as possible and to leave the commentary for future scholarship. The present dissertation is an attempt to fill some of this scholarly gap. In addition, Schuttenhelm informs the author of two forthcoming publications, both by Cambridge University Press: an edited *Tippett Companion*, and a monograph devoted exclusively to Tippett’s orchestral music, which should provide further commentary. Most importantly, those forthcoming publications as well as the present document are indebted to the letters contained in *SMLT*. 
volume contains barely one-fifth of the nearly 2,500 surviving pieces of correspondence. Therefore, not all of the correspondence related to The Heart's Assurance is included (See n15, above).

Schuttenhelm’s book is divided into chapters named for the person with whom the correspondence resulted, each beginning with a brief biographical introduction. The chapter entitled “Benjamin Britten” includes thirty-five letters from Tippett to Britten. The genesis of The Heart's Assurance figures prominently in three letters to Britten from 1951; a 1950 letter to David Ayerst (a one-time journalist-turned-educator, who was Tippett’s lifelong friend); and a tender description of the cycle’s personal meaning to Tippett in a 1953 letter to Anna Kallin (a reviewer and editor, who became a producer of the BBC Third Programme). Of equal importance, are the numerous discussions between Tippett and their mutual friends about Allinson, in whose memory The Heart's Assurance was composed. It is unfortunate that the more than forty letters between Pears and Tippett have not been included in the publication. However, none of Pears’s letters to Tippett are known to be extant.

In The Music of Britten and Tippett (1982; second edition, 1990), Arnold Whittall capitalized on the reality that Britten and Tippett are often compared, offering a study in which both composers’ works stand side-by-side. An important contribution of the book is its comparison of each composer’s vocal works. Not surprisingly, Whittall provides a careful, contextual knowledge of Tippett’s life, his work, and suggestive interpretations of his compositional intentions. Although Whittall addresses nearly all existing song-related scholarship, it does not, of course, go beyond 1989; neither does it extend the bibliography of secondary literature discussed here. The volume is divided into three chronological sections. The first discusses Tippett’s relationship to song cycle as a form, specifically Tippett’s distinctions between Boyhood’s End and The Heart’s Assurance. Whittall

notes that Tippett’s productivity during the 1946-1952 compositional period of *The Midsummer Marriage* cannot be compared with Britten’s in the least. Yet, Whittall writes, “Tippett was so absorbed with the process, and problems, of creating [the opera] that it seems surprising that he was prepared to turn aside for any other works at all. There are only two: the short *Suite for the Birthday of Prince Charles* (1948) […] and the song cycle *The Heart’s Assurance*.\(^\text{19}\) Whittall alleges a rhetorical style in Tippett’s cycle that he attributes to its positioning within the composition of the opera. Whittall again contends that “rhetorical emphases” are evident in the vocal line of the cycle’s second song, its namesake, “The Heart’s Assurance.”\(^\text{20}\) Whittall goes on to write a very short song-by-song analysis of the cycle that is less than two full pages and that particularly notes the technical demands of the piano writing. Harmonically, Whittall indicates that chromaticism “submerges” many of the key signatures that Tippett suggests, and that shifts in major and minor modality produce “an increasing threat to the relative stability of the triad-centered extended tonality” that marked his compositional practice up until the cycle.\(^\text{21}\)

In recent years, Whittall has further contributed to scholarship on Tippett’s song writing.\(^\text{22}\) While his consideration of *The Heart’s Assurance* is not more than two pages, he directly criticizes Kemp’s definition of *song cycle*.\(^\text{23}\) However, Whittall contends that “other factors point the work in the direction of more dramatic genres, as a collection of arias – or even a mix of arias and monologues.”\(^\text{24}\) This issue of *song cycle* will be addressed in Chapter Three.

\(^\text{23}\) Whittall, “Transcending Song,” p. 175. Whittall writes, “Even if it were generally agreed that the ‘true song cycle’ involves an element of reflection, or detachment, this can still lead to a sense of direct participation in some action of narrative, such as we find in Schubert’s *Winterreise*, where the narrator is also the protagonist, and there is undoubtedly ‘an “I” talking,’ from the very beginning: ‘Fremd bin ich eingezogen.’”
\(^\text{24}\) *Ibid.*
Denis Stevens asked Tippett to write the closing section of his 1960 book, *A History of Song*. The result, effectively Tippett’s treatise on song composition, describes the selection of the poetry in “the gradual composition” of *The Heart’s Assurance*. His vulnerability, although brief, is evident in his carefully chosen words about the cycle’s genesis and the personal challenge of selecting its texts. Tippett also expounds upon his opinions surrounding the genre of song as an art form. An extended assessment of and response to Tippett’s “Conclusion” will be central to Chapter Five.

One of the earliest contributions to the limited secondary literature concerning *The Heart’s Assurance* is Peter Evans’s essay, “The Vocal Works,” in Ian Kemp’s *Michael Tippett: A Symposium on His Sixtieth Birthday* (referred to throughout this dissertation as Tippett’s *Festschrift*). Evans’s essay provides the most extensive discussion of Tippett’s song output, in addition to assessments of his choral works and operas. Evans also responds to “the peculiar insights” of Peter Pears’s shorter tribute in the same volume (an issue to be discussed in Chapter Seven of the current study). He names *The Heart’s Assurance* as “the locus classicus for Tippett’s mastery of varied-strophic construction,” a technique referred to by Tippett in his letter of 13 May 1950 to Pears. Evans’s musical examples point to the numerous instances of the vocal line’s reflection of, or response to, the piano-accompanimental figures, marking the distinctive nature of each song and thus a feature of the cycle.

Barbara Docherty’s three studies of the literature used in *The Heart’s Assurance* comprise the remaining extended treatments of the cycle. Two articles by Docherty address the literary

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background of *The Heart’s Assurance* directly. Each article provides biographical information about Alun Lewis and Sidney Keyes, the poets of *The Heart’s Assurance*. These discussions consist largely of the poets’ relationships to their contemporaries. In the first essay, “Sentence Into Cadence: The Word-Setting of Tippett and Britten” (1988), Docherty dissects the poetic structure of both Keyes and Lewis’s poems in *The Heart’s Assurance*, as well as John Donne’s sonnets in Britten’s *The Holy Sonnets of John Donne* (1945). Docherty scrutinizes the “verbal music of a poem,” discussing metric structure, syllabic stress, and diction, issues dealt with in Chapter Five.

The second article, “Syllogism and Symbol: Britten, Tippett and English Text” (1989), is an expansion of the previous study of *The Heart’s Assurance*, to which are added Britten’s *Winter Words* (1953) and Tippett’s *Boyhood’s End*. Docherty positions the two composers somewhat oppositionally. Docherty views Britten as a syllogist, concerned primarily with the text and structure. Docherty finds Tippett to be a symbolist, “proceeding by symbol, periphrasis and allusion.” As this dissertation will show, her proposed division is inaccurate in terms of Tippett, who is equally concerned with matters of both syllogism and symbol. Although Docherty’s argument is interesting, it can readily be countered, for neither *Boyhood’s End* nor *The Heart’s Assurance* are exclusively allegorical. In her conclusion, Docherty argues that, ultimately, Tippett and Britten exchanged positions: Tippett becoming more the syllogist and Britten the symbolist. Docherty’s theories may


28 Docherty, “Syllogism and Symbol.” The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *syllogism* as logic, or: “An argument expressed or claimed to be expressible in the form of two propositions called the premisses, containing a common or middle term, with a third proposition called the conclusion, resulting necessarily from the other two.” In its general usage—if such exists—syllogism is further defined as: “An argument or something ironically or humorously regarded as such.”

29 Docherty, “Syllogism and Symbol,” n2, p. 56. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *symbolism* as: “The practice of representing things by symbols, or of giving a symbolic character to objects or acts; the systematic use of symbols; hence, symbols collectively or generally.”

30 While this dissertation certainly does not seek to comment extensively on Britten’s musical compositions, it is this author’s opinion that Docherty’s assignation of the particular boundaries of either symbolist or syllogist onto Britten is also inaccurate. Although minor examples may be found, one might indiscriminately project the same character onto any number of works (or construct oppositional relationships between any pair of composers).
find traction in the field of literary criticism, but her selective application—and reapplication—as it suits her argument, seems arbitrary, or at least unsupported by a full consideration of the music. Her discussion of *The Heart's Assurance* is only four pages long, making it more typical than exceptional of the existing Tippett literature. The most beneficial aspect of Docherty’s work is her analysis of the metre in the poems, which is present in each essay.

In her essay “*The Heart's Assurance*: Tippett’s ‘War Requiem?’” (2002), Docherty makes an explicit reference to Britten’s quotations from T.S. Eliot and Wilfred Owen. Her allusion to Britten’s *War Requiem* (1962) is intentional, and in her conclusion she implies that *The Heart’s Assurance* stands in the same relation to *A Child of Our Time* as does Britten’s *The Holy Sonnets of John Donne* to the *War Requiem*.

Precious few books are dedicated to principles of genetic criticism in musicology or the humanities, let alone studies of British composers. However, the field is growing, and William Kinderman and Joseph E. Jones’s *Genetic Criticism and the Creative Process: Essays from Music, Literature, and Theater* (2009) presents numerous case studies that may be applied as analytical models in assessing compositions in various states of completion. Kinderman’s forthcoming *The Creative Process in Music* offers models for the examination of Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, Wagner, Mahler, Bartók, and Kurtág. Patricia Hall and Friedemann Sallis’s co-edited volume *A Handbook to Twentieth-Century Musical Sketches* is a broader study of genetic criticism and the creative process. A welcome addition to that scholarship is Thomas Schuttenhelm’s forthcoming monograph on Tippett’s creative process (See n17 of this Preface). Drawing on the models put forth by Kinderman

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and Jones, this dissertation hopes to contribute an enhanced understanding of Tippett’s creative and compositional process in song composition.

Summary

The existing secondary literature on *The Heart’s Assurance* has contributed little more than a cursory introduction to the work, which is invariably subverted for lengthier discussions about Tippett’s operatic innovations and symphonic works. The current study reveals why attention to this smaller genre is essential for an understanding of Tippett and his overall life and persona. Much, although not all, of the secondary literature on Tippett tends at least to mention the cycle—notable exceptions being both of David Clarke’s 1999 and 2001 volumes. But, existing scholarship on the cycle is disparate, at best. One can read insightful passages about *The Heart’s Assurance*, but not in a single volume and certainly nothing that attempts to present a comprehensive assessment of the work.

This dissertation expands on previous discussions of the poetry and the lives of the cycle’s poets, Keyes and Lewis, and contextualizes the poets and the inherent meaning of their poetry within Tippett’s life and works. This dissertation greatly augments our knowledge of the compositional process of *The Heart’s Assurance*, especially through the use of previously unpublished correspondence. It also contributes this author’s transcription and assessment of the unbound leaves of compositional sketch material held in the Tippett Collection at the British Library and presents the first examination and commentary on the complete sketches, drafts, and autograph manuscripts.

of The Heart's Assurance held in the Archive of the Britten-Pears Foundation. Finally, this dissertation offers the first critical commentary of Peter Pears's and Benjamin Britten’s annotations of their personal copies of the published scores, revealing the intrinsically complicated nature of the cycle and Tippett’s demands of its performers.
Chapter 1: A Historical-Biographical Sketch of Michael Tippett

“Pacifism Really Is Something To Me—not for what it is now, but for its future”

A discussion of Michael Tippett would be wanting if it were to neglect the central theme that pervaded his life from maturity: pacifism. With that in mind, this thumbnail sketch of Tippett’s life leading up to and encompassing the composition of The Heart’s Assurance will emphasize such matters. It was Tippett’s pacifism that defined his early adulthood, and certainly shaped many of his lifetime explorations interpersonally, psychologically, and musically.

In October 1940, when Tippett was thirty-five years old, he was appointed Music Director of Morley College in South London. His first months at Morley occurred in the immediate aftermath of its near destruction by a German incendiary bomb. The following month, in November, Tippett became a signatory of the Peace Pledge Union—an organization for which he would become President in 1956—avowing the Reverend Dick Sheppard’s straightforward statement of pacifism: “I renounce war and never again, directly or indirectly will I support or sanction another.”

1 Schuttenhelm, SLMT, p. 96; Tippett to Francesca Allinson.
2 Michael Tippett was born on 2 January 1905 in London, but was raised in the Suffolk village of Wetherden. He attended Brookfield Preparatory School in Swanage, Dorset, from 1914 until 1918, after which time he started English public school at Fettes College on scholarship. After five terms there, he transferred to Stamford Grammar School in Lincolnshire, where he remained from 1920 to 1923. On 30 April 1923, Tippett was admitted to the Royal College of Music in London, graduating in December 1928. In 1929, Tippett moved to Oxted, where he lived until 1951 [Kemp, pp. 8-18]. For further reading, the lengthy introduction and first chapter of Kemp’s biography paints a richly detailed portrait of Tippett.
3 Kemp, p. 40.
On 16 November 1940, Tippett registered for conscientious objectorship. His status remained provisional until 3 February 1942, when his file came before the South East London Tribunal at Lambeth, under whom he was given “non-combatant military duties,” and against which he appealed. His Appellate Tribunal date was 30 May of that year and he was again ordered to non-military duties; even this stood in stark opposition to his moral sensibilities. He never reported for any of the various options made available to him.

He returned instead to his choir in Oxted and later recounted, “It was at Morley that I first met Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears. I wanted a tenor to take part in a performance in November 1942 of Gibbons’s verse anthem My Beloved Spake.” Theirs was a fast friendship, built on many commonalities: musical, philosophical, political, and sexual. Music was surely a unifying factor, but their avowed pacifism and mutual homosexuality—particularly in light of its illegality under Great Britain’s Labouchère Amendment (Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885)—cemented their shared outsider status. Ultimately, Britten and Tippett’s lasting harmony was their shared esteem and their equal respect of Pears’s vocal gifts. In a letter to Britten at the end of 1942, Tippett confides, “what I really meant to write about was how much easier all this present trouble is with you and Peter as friends.” Indeed, Tippett composed for them the previously mentioned cantata, Boyhood’s End, borne out of their reciprocal passion for the compositions of Monteverdi and Purcell. It was

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5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Tippett, TTCB, p. 116. Charmingly, Tippett further describes an occasion when he conducted Britten’s Hymn to St Cecilia, “with the composer in the choir and Peter singing the solo tenor part!”
8 It would seem natural to assume the old adage that “birds of a feather flock together,” but in fact, Tippett was far more flamboyant and socially unapologetic about his homosexuality than either Britten or Pears, whose relationship—on the whole—gave the appearance of being modeled after heterosexual coupling.
9 In Michael Tippett: A Symposium on his Sixtieth Birthday, edited by Ian Kemp (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), Britten wrote of Tippett: “whenever I see our names bracketed together (and they often are, I am glad to say) I am reminded of the spirit of courage and integrity, sympathy, gaiety and profound musical independence which is yours, and I am proud to call you my friend. Your devoted Ben,” pp. 29-30. Tippett wrote: “Ben was, quite simply, the most musical person I have ever met. His technical mastery was incredible,” Tippett, TTCB, p. 117.
10 Schuttenhelm, SLMT, p. 190.
11 Tippett, TTCB, pp. 116-117.
premiered by Pears and Britten on 5 June 1943 at Morley College.\textsuperscript{12} Also, at Britten’s instigation, Tippett was compelled to mount the first performance of \textit{A Child of Our Time} in the spring of 1944, with Pears singing.

The letters to Britten in 1943 shed further light on the “trouble” of Tippett’s conscientious objectorship battle, even to the point of his counsel calling Pears into court to testify on Tippett’s behalf. This was problematic for Pears because his own conscientious objector status had not yet been settled. Yet Tippett’s counsel sought to use Pears’s own case to strengthen their argument such that, “if the man who sings the songs obtains ‘reasonable excuse’, then it is a curious anomaly in British justice if the man who writes the songs does not.”\textsuperscript{13}

On 21 June 1943, Tippett was compelled to appear before the Oxted Police Court for his refusal to comply with the Appellate Tribunal’s ruling from the previous year, which had ordered him to choose from among a series of non-military duties. In spite of a protracted and impassioned defense, Tippett was remanded to Wormwood Scrubs for three months’ imprisonment.\textsuperscript{14} The day after the Tribunal, on 22 June, the \textit{Daily Telegraph} quoted the eminent English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams’s testimony for the defense:

I think Tippett’s pacifist views entirely wrong, but I respect him very much for holding them so firmly. I think his compositions are very remarkable, and form a distinct national asset, and will increase the prestige of this country in the world. As regards his teaching at Morley College, it is distinctly work of national importance to create a musical atmosphere at the college and elsewhere. We know music is forming a great part in national life now; more since the war than ever before, and everyone able to help on that work is doing work of national importance.\textsuperscript{15}

The stance of pacifism was not without its consequences in England, either socially or economically. Those who applied for conscientious objector status were the subjects of ridicule and it could easily have an impact on their professional opportunities. Add to this the suspicion of

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\item[14] Kemp, p. 41.
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homosexuality, and there is a veritable probability of professional backlash. Tony Scotland writes that during this period there existed “a deep-seated prejudice amongst some BBC staff against both conscientious objectors and gay men.”16 Scotland records an internal memo from Clarence Raybould, an assistant conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, responding to Tippett’s court proceedings with loathing, and including him in his equal disdain for Britten and Pears as “the gang … of Conscientious (!) Objectors and general slackers” for whom the “unbalanced adulation of one or two of these people is enough to make a normal person rather sick.”17 If Tippett was to be imprisoned, further concern would have been that the BBC could not play the individual’s music, due to a ban on airing works by anyone “serving a prison sentence.”18

Kemp notes that Tippett acted contrary to the advice of many of his friends, including Britten, Pears, Arnold Bax, and Adrian Boult, who pleaded with him to “accept one of the many alternative jobs they arranged for him to be offered after the Appellate Tribunal.”19 Tippett sarcastically quips that from among those options—none of which he accepted—he could “don the blue uniform and be librarian or some such for the RAF [Royal Air Force] orchestra,” or “go back into London social work […] conducting choirs in shelters and clubs.”20 He was also afforded the opportunity to serve as a music organizer for the ENSA, the Entertainments National Service Association—for whom Britten and Pears performed, leading to their exemption from military service—founded in 1939 with the intention of providing entertainment to the various service

17 Ibid.
18 Lewis Foreman, “Forging a Relationship and a Role: Michael Tippett and the BBC, 1928-51” in Michael Tippett: Music and Literature, edited by Suzanne Robinson (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2002), p. 140. Foreman explicates Tippett’s successes in light of his supporters within the BBC and the considerable airtime he was afforded through its various programmes.
19 Kemp, pp. 41-42.
20 Schuttenhelm, _SLMT_, pp. 95-96.
personnel in England’s armed forces. But Tippett was resolute in his desire not “to betray the thousands of young objectors who might value the example of an older man when faced with the obloquy leveled at ‘conchees.’”

In a letter from 1942, Tippett writes to Allinson of his desire to maintain his conviction in the face of oppression:

I realised that the old shame and fear was hiding behind the pacifism, just as it had hid behind physical cowardice of adolescence and homosexuality, of later years – and this time I seem to have accepted it more fully – so that I feel I have the strength to walk forwards or backwards, to live in the light or the shadow, to be the respectable member of society or the conchie-scapegoat.

Tippett was even accused of choosing prison “merely to spite the state or [himself].” To the contrary, Tippett called his imprisonment the price of pacifism.

In that same letter, Tippett, with some exasperation, states that he must not simply abide by “social nursing,” but he must truly take a stand. “For pacifism really is something to me,” he writes, “not for what it is now, but for its future, in an England becoming more insidiously Führer-ridden every week.” Tippett lamented, “everyone hopes I will compromise”; in the end, however, he did not.

Two months into his ninety-day prison term, Tippett was released for good behavior and returned to his post at Morley College. During his imprisonment, Britten and Pears appeared in a recital for the inmates, for which Tippett and John Amis served as page-turners. To emphasize the nature of the relationship between Tippett, Britten, and Pears at the time, Tippett recalls: “On

21 Kemp, p. 42. “Conchee” was a pejorative slang used to malign conscientious objectors (variously spelled “conshee” and “conchie”).
22 Schuttenhelm, SLMT, p. 95; Tippett to Allinson.
23 Idem., p. 96.
24 Tippett, TTCB, p. 142. Tippett’s account of his period in Wormwood Scrubs is detailed in pp. 142-145, followed by his letters to Evelyn Maude.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
leaving prison (21 August 1943) I had breakfast with Peter and Ben.”

Thereafter, not surprisingly, he upped his involvement in the Peace Pledge Union as both a public speaker and writer, and remained devoted until the end of his life to the cause of pacifism and all those claimed in its stead.

Francesca (“Fresca”) Allinson

Francesca (“Fresca”) Allinson (1902-1945), who had been central to Tippett’s relationships since the 1920s, was an amateur choral conductor and specialist in folk-song collecting. In addition, it was Allinson who introduced Tippett to Purcell’s music in the 1930s, whereupon “he became fascinated by its rhythmic vitality and its expressive harmony.” Through the years, Tippett and Allinson lived together off and on as lovers in every sense but the sexual—what Kemp coined as an amitié amoureuse—sharing every facet of one another’s lives; they even fleetingly discussed having children together. Bowen wrote that Allinson and Tippett’s sexless love affair remained intense and psychologically intimate. While Allinson lived her romantic life independently of Tippett, engaging in both lesbian and heterosexual affairs, at the end of the day—not to oversimplify this extremely complicated relationship—in an emotional sense, they found companionship in each other. “During the war period, Fresca and I shared each other’s troubles, ambitions and dreams,” Tippett wrote.

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27 Ibid., p. 156.
28 Kemp, pp. 24-25. Considerable insights into Allinson’s psyche may be gleaned from her semi-autobiographical tale A Childhood, published in a very small quantity in 1937.
29 Kemp, p. 44.
30 Bowen, p. 10.
32 Tippett, TTCB, p. 163.
However, Tippett’s rapport with the women in his life was hardly conventional; neither was it particularly healthy, in actuality. Tippett “collected” mother figures, of which Allinson was one. Tippett cultivated these relationships and went to great lengths to ensure that each of these women was kept at a distance, one from another. Included in this complicated trio of women were Evelyn Maude, the woman with whom Tippett was allowed to communicate during his Wormwood Scrubs incarceration; and Priaulx Rainier, the South African-born British composer.

A consequence of the war, however, was Tippett and Allinson’s separation, primarily because she was afraid of life in London and the threat of the incessant German bombings there. She went to the country with her family, struggling with the rigors of life in the midst of such chaos. By 1945, Allinson, Jewish on her mother’s side, was careworn increasingly from her own depression, exacerbated by her struggles with thyroid goiter. In particular, Allinson could not rationalize the bleak reality of what a postwar Europe might entail; and Tippett was incapable of remedying her situation or alleviating her despair. Allinson ultimately took her own life in the summer of 1945. Tippett wrote: “Depressed by ill-health and the war, Fresca had indicated to her family that she might commit suicide … [and] one spring day, took a taxi out to the village of Clare (in Suffolk) and threw herself from a bridge into the River Stour, in imitation of Virginia Woolf.”

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33 One of the restrictions placed on inmates at Wormwood Scrubs was that while they could correspond outside the prison’s walls, they could only do so with one person of their choosing. Evelyn Maude was Tippett’s correspondent. During this period, she frequently acted as proxy, handling the dissemination of messages to particular individuals and artistic organizations on his behalf and replying to him with their respective responses. Kemp notes that Maude had fallen in love with Tippett, yet attempted to separate these feelings from the reality of their relationship, which remained platonic, p. 25.

34 Tippett, along with Priaulx Rainier and the English sculptor Barbara Hepworth, co-founded the St. Ives Festival of Music and the Arts occurring from 6 through 14 June 1953. The Festival appears to have been a one-off event to celebrate the Coronation of HRH Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. Hepworth would later design the sets and costumes for Tippett’s *The Midsummer Marriage* at the Royal Opera House in 1955.


36 *Idem.*, p. 32.

37 Kemp, p. 25.

Allinson left Tippett both a book of Shakespeare’s sonnets opened to No. 57 (LVII), and a letter. Both were found after the suicide. From that Shakespeare sonnet, we can glean a part of Allinson’s psychological state, and an emotional sentiment she wished to convey to Tippett. That sonnet reads:

Being your slave, what should I do but tend  
Upon the hours and times of your desire?  
I have no precious time at all to spend,  
Nor services to do, till you require.  
Nor dare I chide the world—without end hour,  
Whilst I, my sovereign, watch the clock for you,  
Nor think the bitterness of absence sour,  
When you have bid your servant once adieu.  
Nor dare I question with my jealous thought  
Where you may be, or your affairs suppose,  
But, like a sad slave, stay and think of naught,  
Save, where you are, how happy you make those:  
So true a fool is love, that in your will  
(Though you do anything) he thinks no ill.

In her suicide note to Tippett, Allinson expounded on a number of the aspects of their relationship reflected in the sonnet. She wrote:

Darling—it’s no good—I can’t hold on any longer. […] You don’t know how long and how ardently I have longed to die. I should love to have talked it over with you – but that would have involved you in responsibility for my suicide and so it could be. […] If we have to live many lives, may I live near those I now love again and make a better job of living. And may I love a bit better. I can’t live without the warm enfolding love of another person – and in this life I have smashed up my chance of that (in my love too). Darling, forgive me. I am so tired and have been for so many years.39

Later reflecting on this, Tippett confessed: “It was nearly five years before I wrote a commemorative work for her. When I did, finally, with the encouragement of Peter and Ben, I widened it to commemorate all those who lost their lives and loves in the brutality of battle.”40

Clearly, Tippett needed the perspective which only distance from Allinson’s suicide could bring. He

39 Idem., p. 185.
40 Idem., p. 187.
was capable of eulogizing her only when “the personal wound began to heal, and, more importantly, as the very real wounds of the war healed.”

Those wounds, the horrors of World War II, claimed between an estimated fifty-two million to seventy-two million lives; the English gave nearly 449,800 of their own citizens to that number, including 67,000 civilian fatalities. To comprehend such numbers is beyond the sheer scope of our psychological capacity; we think of the loss *at a universus*, but humankind is not—or should not be—capable of grasping that order of magnitude. As World War II was escalating, these sensibilities inspired Tippett to write *A Child of Our Time*, hoping for a ceasefire, hoping against hope. Wilfrid Mellers insightfully suggests that the conclusion of the oratorio served as a prelude to *The Heart’s Assurance*. If *A Child of Our Time* represented Tippett’s feelings during the war, then truly *The Heart’s Assurance* reflected his sympathies in its aftermath. Mellers argues that Tippett’s oratorio “dramatizes” the reality of “Nazi terror,” but depicts “the public experience ‘from within,’ expressing its relevance to all of us.” Recognizing Tippett’s ability to capture the innate sense of public mourning is crucial to our understanding of the immediacy of *The Heart’s Assurance* and should be the rule by which we measure both its success and continued relevance.

Michael Tippett was born five years into the twentieth century and lived until very nearly the beginning of the twenty-first. World War I marked Tippett’s childhood and by the time he was in his early-thirties, England and the Continent were again embroiled in war. Mellers cites Tippett’s “acute

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41 Idem., p. 299.
42 When dealing with an incalculable loss of human life, there is no single source which provides—daresay *could* provide—an absolute number. Virtually every encyclopedia or reference volume on World War II lists death tolls separated by the tens and hundreds of thousands, if not millions; low estimates report 52,199,262 dead, while the highest reach 72,754,900. For the purpose of this work, and its centrally British theme, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) was the source consulted to account for the United Kingdom’s war dead. The CWGC covers the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, and Australia.
44 Idem., p. 234.
awareness of the anguish inherent” in British society during World War II. It is apparent from Tippett’s writings and lifelong advocacy for peace and nonviolence that his sensibilities were marked by a heightened awareness of global conflict. Such sensitivity, coupled with—perhaps inspiring—his belief that artists must respond to the events occurring around them, set the stage for the composition of *The Heart’s Assurance* (See Table 1, next page).

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**Table 1.1: Timeline for the years between Allinson’s suicide in 1945 and the première of *The Heart’s Assurance* at the Festival of Britain in 1951.**

1945 – British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin hold the Yalta Conference; German Führer Adolf Hitler commits suicide; Nazi Germany surrenders, marking the end of the Third Reich; Auschwitz is liberated; World War II ends in Europe; the United Nations is founded; Germany is divided; the United States drops atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan; Japan surrenders to the Allies, ending World War II; the Nuremberg Trials reveal and seek to punish the atrocities perpetuated by Nazi Germany.

1946 – Nine months after his resignation as British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill delivers a speech entitled “The Sinews of Peace” at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, alongside President Harry Truman—the speech is colloquially referred to as the “Iron Curtain” speech, depicting the European schism between communism and democracy; the first meeting of the UN General Assembly takes place in London; full-scale civil war breaks out in China between the Nationalists and the Communists.

1947 – Jewish refugees aboard the SS Exodus 1947 are turned back from British ports; India and Pakistan demand complete independence from British rule; the United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) is founded; the so-called Doomsday Clock is set for the first time, monitoring the potential for full-scale atomic war.

1948 – Mohandas Gandhi is assassinated; the State of Israel is founded; hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs are displaced from their homes; the Policy of Apartheid is declared in South Africa; the Berlin Blockade is imposed by the Soviets in an effort to assert military might over the reunification of Western Germany; President Truman enacts the Berlin Airlift; Communists overtake Czechoslovakia in a bloodless coup; the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea is formally declared.

1949 – China officially becomes a communist nation: the People’s Republic of China; the Republic of Ireland declares its complete independence from Great Britain and the Commonwealth; the Berlin Blockade against Soviet aggression compels the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); President Truman announces to Americans that the Soviet Union has an atomic bomb.

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Each of these events has been selected based on their relevance to the central component of war memorialization inherent to *The Heart’s Assurance*. It is crucial then, that since a response to war—and Tippett’s very pacifism—is central to this dissertation, we have an awareness of pivotal global events that transpired in the years between Francesca Allinson’s death and the première of the work that served as Tippett’s memorial piece for her. These individual events, estimated as historically decisive by the author, are taken from *The Oxford History of Britain*, edited by Kenneth O. Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975); and *The Oxford History of the Twentieth Century*, edited by Michael Howard and William Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). For further reading, see also: Eric Dorn Brose, *A History of Europe in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
1950 – President Truman calls for the creation of the hydrogen bomb in response to the Soviet Union’s atomic bomb testing in 1949; the Soviet Union formally declares that they possess an atomic bomb; Albert Einstein asserts that nuclear war could lead to global annihilation; North Korea crosses the 38th Parallel invading South Korea, marking the beginning of the Korean War; the United States enters the Korean War; the People’s Republic of China enters the Korean War; General Douglas MacArthur asserts that he has not ruled out the use of nuclear weaponry in Korea; Chinese communists arrive at the northern border of Vietnam, escalating the French Indochina War from rural insurgency to a war fought with Soviet and American weapons, vastly predating the Vietnam War.

1951 – The United States begins nuclear tests in Nevada; King Abdullah of Jordan is assassinated while praying at the Al Aksa Mosque in Jerusalem; King George VI opens the Festival of Britain, envisioned to instill a sense of British postwar recovery and marking the centenary of the 1851 Great Exhibition; President Harry Truman signs the peace accord with Japan, officially ending World War II between the two nations; Winston Churchill is again elected Prime Minister.
Chapter 2: The Compositional Process of *The Heart’s Assurance*

“I’m better on my own slow way.”

Beginnings: Michael Tippett’s Commission from Peter Pears

Certain discrepancies exist regarding the actual commission date and compositional period of *The Heart’s Assurance*, as will be explored below. Bowen writes that *The Heart’s Assurance* numbered among precious few distractions during the six-year process of the composition of his first mature opera, *The Midsummer Marriage* (1946-1952), but places the compositional period from 1950 to 1951. In Mitchell, Reed and Cooke’s third volume of *Letters from a Life: Selected Letters of Benjamin Britten*, the editors date the work as 1950-52. As is known, however, the work was premièred and published in 1951. In an unpublished letter from Tippett to Britten and Pears (postmarked 22 October 1952), the composer writes, “My dear Ben & Peter […] You are an incomparable pair of artists & that’s I suppose all there is to say. Except that my ear for poetry is so inadequate that the ‘bands’ really are ‘blood-soaked’, not ‘blood-stained’ [a reference to song three, “Compassion”]. So change it sometime – at any rate for Aldeburgh.” With the exception of that single word’s emendation in the published score, the work was not corrected thereafter by the composer; allowing that Mitchell,

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1 Schuttenhelm, *SLMT*, p. 156; Tippett to Douglas “Den” Newton.
4 Unpublished letter to Britten and Pears in two leaves and the envelope addressed to Pears, dated 22 October 1952, GB-ALb Tippett Correspondence.
Reed, and Cooke’s extension of the dating was intended to include the tiny correction made in this reprinting, 1952 is otherwise inaccurate.5

Biography accords to Pears the commission of this work—which is due, at least in part, to the inscription of Pears’s name in the published score—yet there is no explicit evidence for it in the form of a letter of agreement, correspondence, or a contract. However, it is not surprising that if the commission occurred in a letter from Pears to Tippett, that such a letter no longer exists; as will be discussed below, Tippett notoriously discarded the correspondence he received. In all likelihood, given the friendship between the artists since Boyhood’s End, while a letter may certainly have followed, the commission was probably suggested and agreed upon during the course of conversation. But this means that the date of the commission is uncertain.

The literary scholar Barbara Docherty supplies a 1948 commission date for the cycle and she cites Jenny Doctor, formerly Director of the Britten-Pears Library in Aldeburgh, as supplying the information.6 Currently Doctor is on the faculty of the University of York and is a frequent scholar at the BBC Written Archives (WAC) in Caversham. Doctor has said (in correspondence) that she cannot lay her fingers on the dating that substantiates Docherty’s assertion, although she feels she would not have afforded that information to Docherty unsubstantively. She also recollects, however, that the commission-related information that may have been in her preliminary research notes for Humphrey Carpenter’s The Envy of the World: Fifty Years of the BBC Third Programme and Radio 3, 1946-1996, remained in his possession.7 Prior to his death in January 2005, he informed her that the notes

5 Page 11 of the original Schott publication of the score incorrectly prints the text “blood-stained” in Alun Lewis’s poem “Compassion”; subsequent reprintings corrected it to “blood-soaked.” It is apparent in the reprinted edition that “soak—” is delicately inked in by hand and is not typeset over “stain—”. Illustration III below (page 137) shows the torn-out page from the program for the first performance of the cycle, complete with Lewis’s “blood-soaked” [sic]. See Illustration X and Example 6.1 in Chapter Six of this dissertation (p. 145) for Britten’s correction of a rhythmic error in the score as well as the still-uncorrected textual error on page 1 of the Schott Edition (1.4.3).
had been destroyed after the publication of his monograph. Doctor writes that during his preparations for writing the Radio 3 history: “[Carpenter] had interviewed Tippett about various things. Humphrey was particularly interested in Tippett’s relationship with Francesca Allinson and asked him about it. It is possible that my dating came from that interview. Unfortunately, when I wrote to Humphrey Carpenter shortly before his death and asked for the documentary materials that we collected in preparation for that book, he told me that he had destroyed everything.”

In any case, the MS and published score denote “Commissioned by Peter Pears” above the title of the work. Evidence from Tippett’s letters indicates that his composition of the cycle did not begin in earnest until 1950, as will be discussed below. However, as we shall see, Tippett’s letters also reveal other earlier, pre-1950—and pre-1948—compositions that may have been incorporated into The Heart’s Assurance.

The Compositional Process

Apart from numerous mentions in his correspondence, little is known about Tippett’s gestational and creative process regarding The Heart’s Assurance. Concerning the general act of composition, however, Tippett bemoaned much struggle. Without the four leaves of sketch material in the British Library related to the cycle, which are discussed in Chapter Four, still less would be known about this work’s genesis. As we will see, these sketches represent proto-melodic vocal lines beneath which the final piano accompaniment of at least three of the resulting five songs was laid.

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8 E-mail correspondence with Doctor, 15 September 2010.
9 Ibid.
The Heart’s Assurance occupies a unique position within Tippett’s output as a dividing line between The Midsummer Marriage (1946-52) and the remainder of his compositions thereafter. In the midst of the opera, Tippett wrote a vulnerable and frank self-assessment of his compositional difficulties to Britten in a letter dated 3 March 1950. Therein, Tippett laments: “I find I suffer now from a deep-seated fatigue that’s always round the corner, waiting to pounce. I have never kept so long at one huge continuous invention. It isn’t complicated. I don’t seem to use anything but common chords. And there’s no counterpoint!”\(^{10}\) Tippett is quite lucid about his struggle to compose, his weariness from the prolonged process, and blunt about his overwhelming fear. He is even self-deprecating about what he considers to be the opera’s lack of complexity. “I sigh all the time for your wonderful ease of composition,” Tippett declares to Britten, “and what I can steal I do.”\(^{11}\) Thus, while Tippett may not enjoy his subservient positioning to Britten’s perceived mastery in composition, he nevertheless acknowledges his admiration of Britten and casts himself in such a deferential role.

In a simple pair of sentences in the same letter, Tippett indicates, “I want to do some songs if I can and fancy have come at some poems, which I’m wanting to see. But I don’t want to write second-rate stuff for you.” This modest confession could easily be overlooked, yet it might be the first legitimate mention of what would become The Heart’s Assurance. It begins the chronological line of a series of letters during the same time period that point toward the cycle. There is the implication that Tippett has yet to see the poetry, but this might actually mean he was waiting for a copy of the anthology For Your Tomorrow (1950), which was obviously brought to his attention, but which he had not actually been able to read or see yet. This anthology was a collection of poetry by poets who died in World War II; it contained Sidney Keyes’s poetry, which will be discussed additionally below.

\(^{10}\) Schuttenhelm, SLMT, pp. 199-200.
\(^{11}\) Ibid.
Interestingly, a letter to Douglas “Den” Newton on 28 September 1943—the period concurrent with Boyhood’s End—sheds light on the complexity of the Britten-Tippett relationship. In it, Tippett recounts to Newton his recent experience in Northampton for the première of his Fanfare No. 1, for which Britten was in attendance. Tippett writes that the incident “was rather like B.B. taking his younger brother out – and I feel uncomfortable as his young brother, asked to show forth fruits of the high promise. There’s an element of unreality, from B.B.’s own present make-up.”

This letter conveys a theme that is not infrequent in Tippett’s correspondence with his intimates: encounters with Britten that irritated him or about which he commented. This was not, however, accorded to the public accounting of Britten and Tippett. Crystallizing the distinctions between Britten and Tippett, Bayan Northcott writes:

In contrast with a composer such as Benjamin Britten, whose innate musicality was nurtured from the start, perhaps the key to Tippett as an artist is that he was essentially self-created. By his own account, he seems to have fallen in love with the idea of becoming a composer before he had much musical experience or any evidence of real talent. And decades later he was to insist, ‘Looking back, the drive to make musical and theatrical artefacts was always strong, but absorbed into it was an intellectuality which I could never refuse’ [TTCB]. Thus, where for Britten music was the given thing, to be adapted according to textual or social function, for Tippett it was more of an endpoint, the medium in which the impressions, thoughts and intuitions of a complex mind could most nearly be resolved. And where Britten cleaved increasingly to the idea of the composer as a servant to the community, Tippett seemed to view his role as more in the nature of a seer, conveying to audiences, through his sonorous image-making faculty, intimations of the collective psyche or the ineffable beyond.

Publicly, Tippett courted the association with Britten. In his private correspondence, however, Tippett sought to distance himself from Britten and commented on the idiosyncrasies that separated them (they also show that Tippett was not immune to envying Britten). Acknowledging that he did

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12 Idem., pp. 155-156.
13 Ibid.
not possess Britten’s fleetness and fluency in composing, and tired of any reliance on Britten to open doors for him, Tippett wrote, “I’m better on my own slow way.”\textsuperscript{15}

To return to \textit{The Heart's Assurance}: in April 1950, Tippett penned three letters to his close friend Priaulx Rainier regarding the cycle. In the first of these unpublished letters, postmarked 11 April, Tippett writes: “I’m so much better since I ‘released’ the opera, & I’ve even sketched out most of the tiny song cycle. One song I think may even be not so bad. But it’s no major work.”\textsuperscript{16} In his very self-deprecating manner, Tippett reveals elements of struggle with the opera as well as the proto-Jungian, liberating concept of \textit{releasing} that against which one experiences resistance. Yet we also see Tippett referring to a work about which he had obviously spoken or corresponded with Rainier as the “tiny little cycle.” In a sort of false humility, Tippett esteems one of the songs while slighting the whole, handily dismissing it in the next breath. This is a common trope in his letters (See n23 in this chapter).

The next week, in a letter postmarked 17 April [1950], Tippett writes to Rainier at length:

> I've realised that I have to let the work \textit{[The Midsummer Marriage]} settle, & that somehow these v. long works need a somewhat different perspective than of composing I have gained by turning to some few songs. Even if, compared with you, they are too civilised not the reverse. For I've chosen lyric, rather than strophic verse, & more or less eschewed all declamation. No songs concocted out of sonnets! But it doesn't reach an inch forward, & that's that. All that can be said is that the years of the opera have produced an easiness of which I suppose these songs may be the hang-over. [...] Now I'd better begin work at my Song!\textsuperscript{17}

Not only are we afforded still another glimpse of Tippett’s wrestling with the opera—which is, for the first time, credited with having some substantive influence, “an easiness,” on the composition of the cycle—but also we see \textit{The Heart's Assurance} acting as a relief from the labor associated with \textit{The Midsummer Marriage}. It is also interesting to see Tippett state that the songs do not “reach an inch

\textsuperscript{15} Schuttenhelm, \textit{SLMT}, p. 156.
\textsuperscript{16} Royal Academy of Music Archives (\textit{GB-Lam}), IPR/3/84/1/5. This and further correspondence within the Rainier Collection are reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the Tippett Estate.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{GB-Lam}, IPR/3/84/1/6.
forward” in his evolution as a composer. Thus, it seems even at this early stage, Tippett believed the songs were connected to previously-established models of song composition.

In his final unpublished letter to Rainier in this series, postmarked 24 April [1950], Tippett reiterates the struggle he is facing with the cycle. He writes: “My songs, of course, after the first flash of ‘sketches’ have bogged down safely into the usual labour – & the proper snails-pace [sic].”18 This letter, despite its brevity, conveys interesting facts. The reference to the “flash of ‘sketches’” underscores a theme prevalent in each of the Rainier letters: that during this period Tippett was working with sketches and had not completed the songs. These sketches must surely be those that form the British Library Sketches, discussed below. Moreover, this letter bears Tippett’s admission that composing was a slow, arduous process for him.

In an undated letter from 1950 to his lifelong friend David Ayerst (published in SLMT), Tippett writes: “I’ve sketched out some songs for Peter and Ben to present at Edinburgh this year [i.e. the Edinburgh Festival, which would occur in August 1950]. From a new anthology from poets killed last war – For Your Tomorrow. A gentle flavour of young spring promise cut short.”19 Herein, Tippett refers to both the Edinburgh Festival, which was apparently the initially proposed première venue, and Pears and Britten. Likewise, Tippett again refers to “sketches” and the inspiration drawn from the volume, For Your Tomorrow, in which Keyes’s poetry is found (See n21 in this chapter). This letter imparts the sense that Tippett was overwhelmed with “promise cut short,” in what must be both a reference to the cycle’s final song, “Remember Your Lovers,” and the premature death of the poet (who, in this letter, appears to be only Keyes). But he notes gentleness when, substantively, the Keyes poems are anything but. This does not necessarily refer to the Lewis poems, of which at least one has an air of dance-like jocularity, but neither does Lewis receive mention in the letter. Although

18 GB-Lam, IPR/3/84/1/7.
19 Schuttenhelm, SLMT, p. 245.
Chapter Five below discusses the poets and poetry of the cycle, it is not known specifically how Tippett was introduced to Lewis’s poetry, or from which volume or poetry journal his selections actually came.

In an unpublished letter to Peter Pears dated 13 May 1950, nearly a month after the second letter to Rainier, Tippett writes from Oxted (See Illustration I for a facsimile of the first page of this letter, p. 38):20

Dear Peter,

Your’s [sic] & Ben’s card came this morning – & here is the music of the songs to date. There are four, 2 each of Sidney Keye’s [sic] & Alun Lewis. The whole will have the title ‘The Heart’s Assurance’. Their theme is personal love during war. They’re all strophic song form, love songs. They are to be (for me) a memorial to Francesca Allinson. Something I have wanted to do for a long time. So it’s all coming out well. I’m sorry the title has been changed. But I had to decide to stick to rather the best verse, & to discard the really poor, & so I had to come out of the ‘For Your Tomorrow’ [21] another way, because that excluded Alun Lewis’ because he wasn’t Public School. So all in all it’s much better as it is. The individual poems to songs are therefore these: (as printed in the poetry books).

1. Song. Alun Lewis
2. [Song:] The Heart’s Assurance Sidney Keyes
3. Compassion A.L.
4. Remember Your Lovers. S.K.

As you will see I am using one of the titles to be the title of the little cycle. And if we think it were better to add something to the first title then we must use the opening words ‘Oh journeyman’.

It really will be a tiny cycle because the poems when I’ve finished with them are dissolved into some musical & emotional units & are fairly considerable, especially the last, ‘Remember Your Lovers’. I have an idea you may like them quite a lot. […] In fact I have been much moved by them. […] If you really do like the songs & they suit you & all were well, then you must be angels & consider if you can’t record them. That would mean more to me than gold. I can’t help feeling that somewhere, at least in one of the songs, I’ve caught an echo of Ben. I hope so! They’re not abstruse but lyrical, & not storming the heavens. I’ve chosen strophic song-verse deliberately so that they’re real songs not declamation.

Love to Ben,

Michael

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20 Author’s transcription of the unpublished letter in five leaves from Tippett to Pears, dated 13 May 1950, GB-ALb Tippett Correspondence.
Dear [name],

I was delighted to hear of [event] this morning. I have always admired [person]’s work. Here is the manuscript of [work], along with the letter of [date].

There are four, two each of [works].

I am pleased to hear of the whole new [work].

The whole will have the title "The Heart’s Assurance," since it is a personal love theme song. They are to be (for me) a memorial to [person] in [place].

Something I had wanted to do for a long time. It is all coming well, I’m sorry the title has been changed, but I had to decide to which to give the best sense.

I discard the really points. To [work], a form of the ‘For some concern’ and this way, because...
An unfortunate reality for Tippett scholarship is that the composer did not file away the letters he received; hence we do not have any of Pears’s letters to the composer. Thus, much of what exists by way of Tippett correspondence is one-sided, necessitating informed guesswork. This letter, however, adds further insight to the existing scholarship about various aspects of The Heart’s Assurance. Namely, the letter details a decisive dedication to Allinson for the first time in Tippett’s hand. We may also infer that while an open commission had been on the table from Pears, there were no set parameters for the songs and that he and Tippett were in ongoing discussions about the form the work would take. In fact, Tippett again calls the work a “cycle,” which in previous letters he frequently referred to diminutively as “Peter’s songs” or “Peter’s little set.”

Moreover, this letter provides us with a snapshot of the cycle’s earlier four-song form. Thus, in mid-May 1950, a fifth song—“The Dancer,” which would eventually be placed fourth—not only did not exist in the context of the cycle, but was not even mentioned. This letter also acknowledges that Tippett was considering additional poems for inclusion in the cycle, which may point to “The Dancer.” However, Tippett somewhat contradicts what he wrote to Rainier a month earlier. To Rainier, Tippett says that he is setting texts that are “lyric, rather than strophic verse,” while to Pears he again writes that they are “lyrical” but that they are “strophic song-verse.” Tippett’s letter to Rainier may imply that he was originally considering different poetry, which might have changed by the time he wrote the letter to Pears; but each letter also has a sense of uncertainty about how he will approach the very texts he is setting. In both of these letters, Tippett tries to make it clear that “declamation” is not his instinct; this is ironic in hindsight, given the final style of the songs.

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22 It was quite common for Tippett to respond to people on the reverse side of letters in his possession, taking advantage of any blank page on which to write.

23 In a letter from Tippett to Pears on 21 May 1950, Tippett asks: “Are the songs likely to be worth so much?! Heaven knows.” Self-deprecation is a common element in Tippett’s correspondence, but this letter’s opening line could be responding to something Pears had written, or might be telling of Tippett’s indecision about how to proceed musically. Unpublished letter in four leaves from Tippett to Pears, dated 21 May 1950, GB-ALb Tippett Correspondence.
Nevertheless, one is to assume that Tippett was indeed attracted to the notion of strophic verse—in spite of what may have been a script error in his letter—because the music that accompanies the cycles’ texts creates what Evans sees as a modified strophic melodic framework overall.24

Also in the 13 May 1950 letter to Pears, we can glean that an earlier title, “For Your Tomorrow,” appears to have emerged from their previous discussions, and might have been suggested by Pears. Indeed, its source was For Your Tomorrow: An Anthology of Poetry Written by Young Men From English Public Schools Who Fell in the World War, 1939-1945.25 The volume contains the poetry of Sidney Keyes—educated at Tonbridge School and Queen’s College, Oxford— but not that of Alun Lewis. However, prior to listing the songs, Tippett writes, “as printed in the poetry books.” This implies that his exposure to Lewis’s poetry was not in poetry journals or magazines, but in book form, however not in the For Your Tomorrow anthology. Lewis’s publications as a source for The Heart’s Assurance will be discussed at length in Chapter Five. Thus, if we are to believe what the composer wrote in Denis Stevens’s A History of Song, about the “gradual” creative process of his cycle and his comment that he was initially responding “to one poem by Sidney Keyes,”27 that is, the poem that would come to lend its name to the cycle as a whole, then we are necessarily compelled to believe that it was after the publication of For Your Tomorrow in 1950 that he considered the inclusion of Lewis’s poetry into the cycle.

25 The reference to “For Your Tomorrow” by the anthology compilers must surely be a nod to John Maxwell Edmonds’s famed 1919 epitaph for the First World War, “For your to-morrows these gave their to-day.” A quarter-century later, it was updated as the Kohima Epitaph: “When you go home / tell them of us and say / for your tomorrow / we gave our today” commemorating the Battle of Kohima and the British 2nd Division.
There is a remote possibility that the composition of one of the songs in *The Heart’s Assurance* did actually prefigure not only Allinson’s death, but also Tippett’s incarceration in Wormwood Scrubs (where Tippett was held from 21 June 1943 to 21 August 1943). In a letter to Britten in August 1943, after his early release from prison, Tippett writes:

> I’ve decided to see if I can turn up the only early song I have kept – unless I destroyed it before I went in. If it’s there I’ll copy [it] out for Peter to see – and then set to finish another which has one verse done out of 3. It’s not very characteristic, but it will suffice I think – unless anything better pops up.²⁸

Lewis’s “The Dancer,” a three-stanza poem, was first published as a “first draft” in the July 1939 issue of the poetry journal *Welsh Review*; it was later published by George Allen & Unwin in 1942, therefore it is possible that it could be the poem to which Tippett refers in the letter to Britten.²⁹ If, in fact, Tippett’s setting of “The Dancer” is from this pre-Wormwood Scrubs period, it may account for its similarity to the neo-Baroque idiom of other works of this time that were inspired by Henry Purcell’s compositions. Likewise it may explain its quite dissimilar nature from the remaining four songs of the cycle. Yet this explanation does not elucidate why “The Dancer” is not referenced in the 13 May 1950 letter to Pears. But maybe he simply had not decided to include it yet. Nevertheless, since there are no extant song holdings in the Britten-Pears Library that coincide with Tippett’s 1943 mention of a song to Britten, and no published song that would otherwise account for it, it is possible that he did not send the song to either Pears or Britten and/or decided upon its inclusion in the cycle at some point in late-1950 or early-1951. This may account for Tippett’s otherwise undocumented first exposure to the poetry of Alun Lewis.

²⁸ Schuttenhelm, *SLMT*, pp. 196-197.
²⁹ Gwyn Jones, “Postscript” in Alun Lewis’s *In the Green Tree* (London: George Allen & Unwin Limited, 1948), p. 138. Jones writes: “In July 1939 we printed the first draft of his poem ‘The Dancer’ (those attracted by the craftsmanship of poetry may like to set this against the version that later appeared in *Raiders’ Dawn*), p. 138. It is impossible to say whether Tippett ever saw this earlier draft version of “The Dancer,” but it is certainly a provocative question.
Alternatively, Keyes’s poems “The Heart’s Assurance” and “Remember Your Lovers” are also three stanzas long, but they were not printed until 1943 in *The Cruel Solstice*, for which the publication month in 1943 remains uncertain.\(^\text{30}\) If the 1943 publication of *The Cruel Solstice* could be clarified as prior to Tippett’s June 1943 incarceration, the genetic timeline of the cycle could also be conjecturally revised, because it introduces the possibility that the “only early song” mentioned to Britten could be one of the two Keyes poems. However, this unlikely possibility slightly contradicts the 1950 letter to Ayerst, above, which specifically mentions the *For Your Tomorrow* anthology in which the very same pair of Keyes’s poems was published. The songs discussed in the letter to Ayerst have the quality of a recent discovery and does not depict a song that was seven years old alongside another that was newly composed.

Of course, we must also allow that Tippett may not have ever found the “only early song,” meaning, as he wrote, that he could have “destroyed it.” Complicating matters slightly more is Schuttenhelm’s repeated editorial annotation of *The Heart’s Assurance* in *SLMT*, an example of Mitchell and Reed’s previous criticism of “wayward dating.” Numerous pre-1950 letters in *SLMT* are editorially connoted as referring to *The Heart’s Assurance*, when in fact, there is little if anything to substantiate this claim. Specifically, when Tippett writes to Britten about the otherwise unnamed “songs” in letters from 1943-44, Schuttenhelm’s editorial insertions indicate that composition on *The

\(^{30}\) Geoffrey Hill, “Sidney Keyes in Historical Perspective” in *The Oxford Handbook of British and Irish War Poetry*, edited by Tim Kendall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). In Hill’s footnote on the ubiquitous 1943 dating of *The Cruel Solstice*, he writes: “I take the year 1943 from *The National Union Catalogue: Pre 1956 Imprints*, cccev. 44. ‘Late’ [1943] is my conjecture,” Hill writes. “I own two copies of *The Cruel Solstice*. One imprint page (a) reads 1943 Reprinted 1944; the other (b) has First published January 1944 Reprinted April 1944, Reprinted June 1944. Both title-pages give 1944. Volume (b) misspells the name of the dedicatee; volume (a) spells it correctly.” The volume held by the English Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign does not correspond with either of the volumes Hill describes; Hill notes that all of Keyes’s early printings were by Routledge. The title page of the Illinois volume bears only the date 1943; the volume is published London: Routledge; the spelling of the dedicatee’s name is “John Heath Stubbs,” which does not bear the hyphen accorded “Heath-Stubbs” in Hill’s chapter; *US-J [English] 821 K52c.*
Heart’s Assurance was begun as early as mid-September 1943.\(^{31}\) This places the beginning of the composition of the cycle five years earlier than any existing secondary literature surrounding the work. While it is possible that these “songs,” too, refer to the aforementioned “only early song,” it is more likely that they refer to a pair of Latin songs for Pears that were never to materialize. The Latin songs are mentioned specifically in other Tippett letters to Den Newton of the same period.\(^{32}\)

Any such earlier dating of The Heart’s Assurance—be it the possibilities presented in this dissertation or in SLMT—challenges much of the existing scholarship surrounding the cycle’s genesis, and could also imply that Tippett was not initially attracted to (all of) the poems as memorial pieces for Allinson, as was his claim. An earlier dating is also at odds with Tippett’s dating of The Heart’s Assurance in Those Twentieth Century Blues, where he states he did not write the work until five years after Allinson’s death (i.e. 1950, but still not offering a specific date). However, we cannot fully discount the possibility that if Tippett did rediscover the song he had written before his imprisonment, and if that song was in fact “The Dancer,” then it could be argued that at least some part of the cycle was begun in 1943.

Depicting the reality of Tippett’s slow-paced composition as it relates to The Heart’s Assurance is a letter to him held in the BBC Written Archives Collection (WAC) from Basil Douglas dated 22 June 1950. Douglas, of the BBC Music Department, writes:

> If your new songs are not ready in time for the Edinburgh Festival perhaps you would let us have them for the Festival of Britain next year. The Third Programme’s contribution to the Festival of Britain takes the form of six public song recitals in the Wigmore Hall, devoted entirely to English songs, and it would be very nice to have a new cycle from you in this

\(^{31}\) Schuttenhelm’s SLMT contains further letters referring to “the second song” [for The Heart’s Assurance] that he was working on “for Peter,” pp. 197-198. Additionally, regarding a letter to Newton dated 21 October 1943 in SLMT, Schuttenhelm again accords to “the 2 songs” the editorial insertion: “[from The Heart’s Assurance],” pp. 158-160. The “2 songs” are more likely the pair of Latin songs referred to in the unpublished letters depicted in n32 below. The Latin songs were never completed, or an extant MS is not currently available. See reference in the Preface of this dissertation for information about the Bowen Collection; if the Latin songs do exist in unpublished MS, it is conceivable they are privately held in the Bowen Collection.

\(^{32}\) Unpublished letters to Den Newton, GB-Lbl/MS. MUS. 292, ff 151 c, d; 1, 2, 3. Tippett writes to Newton: “I want to get the 2 latin [sic] songs done for Peter - & the Sonatina for Tony…”
series. I have written to Peter and Ben to the same effect – they will be, of course, taking part. 33

This letter imparts many significant facts. It gives the first formal mention of both performance opportunity and venue for the work. It reconfirms Tippett’s lack of progress in completing the songs, the subject of which was much to Tippett’s chagrin in his April correspondence with Rainier. Further, Douglas essentially releases Tippett from any increased pressure in the compositional gestation of the work leading to the 1950 Edinburgh Festival; in the end, the cycle was not performed at the Edinburgh Festival. It also serves as his invitation to join the BBC Third Programme’s series of “Six English Song Recitals” at the 1951 Festival of Britain (See Appendix I for this author’s transcription of the complete programming of the recitals as published in The Radio Times). Tippett’s inclusion in this series virtually engraves his name into the canon of composers that the BBC felt should be representative of the British musical landscape to the Festival’s attendees. Certainly to this last point, it cannot have escaped Tippett’s attention that such an opportunity entailed significant visibility both nationally and internationally for the first performance of his cycle. Additionally, this letter finalizes the première with Pears and Britten; a notably auspicious pairing whose collaboration was implicit, but is nevertheless secured by Douglas’s confirmation.

None of the extant correspondence from Tippett to either Pears or Britten indicates when the cycle was completed or when they received their final copies of the MSS. However, in a letter to Eric Walter White on 4 April 1951, Tippett writes, “I have just finished the song cycle & am collecting myself together for Act 3 Scene 2” of The Midsummer Marriage. 34 This letter divulges the date by which the cycle had been completed—at least by 4 April 1951. Further, Tippett again acknowledges that there was a definite pause in his composition of the opera, a point that has been well-documented in the secondary literature. Yet this letter also denotes continued frustration with

33 BBC WAC, RCONT1, Michael Tippett, Composer, file 1C, 1946-55, 22 June 1950.
the compositional process of the opera; just as Tippett’s complaints over the slow task of writing the cycle dominated so much of his correspondence, so too did the opera during its far lengthier compositional period. The remainder of the letter focuses on Tippett’s complications with the opera’s texts, but he does note to White that the “première of [the] Songs is [at] Wigmore – May 7. Come if you can.”35

35 Ibid.
Chapter 3: Words and Music

“Love under the shadow of Death.”

This chapter will introduce the poetry of *The Heart’s Assurance* and Tippett’s setting of it, acting as a companion to Chapter Five, where it will be discussed in more detail. Perhaps the first question to address here is that of genre. In this work, Tippett presents the two poets’ voices as a single, unified expression, and in doing so he underscores the first-person narrative that has long been associated with *song cycle*. However, the narrative alone is not generally considered to be the only unifying aspect of a song cycle, although it was of utmost concern to Tippett. Susan Youens writes:

The coherence regarded as a necessary attribute of song cycles may derive from the text (a single poet; a story line; a central theme or topic such as love or nature; a unifying mood; poetic form or genre, as in a sonnet or ballad cycle) or from musical procedures (tonal schemes; recurring motifs, passages or entire songs; formal structures); these features may appear singly or in combination.

Renowned early examples include Beethoven’s *An die ferne Geliebte*, Schubert’s *Die schöne Müllerin* and the deeply introspective *Die Winterreise*, and Robert Schumann’s *Frauenliebe und -leben* and *Dichterliebe*. In the same entry, Youens notes that Schumann was unique because he reordered poems and effectively assumed the role of *Dichter* himself; moreover, that “because the elements that provide

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1 Tippett, *TTCB*, p. 187.
2 Susan Youens, “Song Cycle” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, edited by Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell (London: Macmillan, 2001), volume XXIII, pp. 716-719. “Song cycles can be difficult to distinguish from song collections,” Youens writes, “which were frequently presented in a planned design. They may be as brief as two songs (dyad-cycles) or as long as 30 or more (e.g. Schoeck’s *Das bolde Bescheiden* op. 62). The term ‘song cycle’ did not enter lexicography until 1865, in Arrey von Dommer’s edition of Koch’s *Musikalisches Lexikon*, but works definable in retrospect as song cycles existed much earlier,” p. 716. Youens’s entry is a revision of the “song cycle” subject entry of Luise Eitel Peake in the 1980 edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, although peculiarly Eitel is not an acknowledged author.
cohesiveness are so many and variable, however, exceptions abound” that challenge a codified
definition of the genre.3 Specifically, it is notable that Schumann—like Tippett—combined more
than one poet in his cycle *Myrthen*, which contained the poetry of eight poets.4 Thus the contention
that Tippett could have functioned as both poet and composer is applicable to his selection of
disparate poems and poets, uniting them not only into a thematic setting and psychological vein but
also projecting them as a solitary voice.

In her subject entry on song cycle, Youens both defines and traces the development of the
genre, a far more expansive view that is at odds with Kemp’s assertion that *The Heart’s Assurance*
was not a song cycle per se. While Kemp’s definition remained somewhat limited, Tippett’s own words
explicate his belief that *The Heart’s Assurance* was indeed a song cycle. In her *New Grove*
conclusion, Youens cites Tippett among significant contributors to twentieth-century song cycle composition
alongside Béla Bartók, Britten, Aaron Copland, Paul Hindemith, Francis Poulenc, Igor Stravinsky,
and Vaughan Williams.5

The composition of *The Heart’s Assurance* in 1950-51 occurred during the writing of Tippett’s
opera *The Midsummer Marriage*. Tippett, in fact, used quite a lot of the stylistic rhetoric of the opera in
the cycle. Arnold Whittall makes this point: “Perhaps because of the problems in scaling down his
overriding operatic-orchestral concerns, the music seems to have rather more of rhetoric than true
exaltation about it; but its technical processes reveal the full resources of Tippett’s tonal language.”6

3  Ibid.
4  Ibid. Schumann’s *Myrthen* belongs among the group of exceptions that blurs the line between a cycle and a collection.
It is nevertheless bound together by the composer’s intentions and large-scale thematic coherence. Presented as
a wedding gift to Clara, *Myrthen* is twenty-six settings of the poetry of Robert Burns, Lord Byron, Catherine Fanshawe,
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Heinrich Heine, Thomas Moore, Julius Mosen, and Friedrich Rückert.
5  Ibid. Eitel Peake (1980) also cites “avante garde” cycles such as Lukas Foss’s *Time Cycle* and George Crumb’s *Ancient
Voices of Children* as “song cycles in full accord with the history of the form,” volume XVII, pp. 522-523. Representing
still another example of the genre of song cycles is György Kurtág’s *Kafka-Fragmente*, op. 24 (1985-1986) for soprano and
violin, which—like Britten’s use of portions of Friedrich Hölderlin’s poetry for the cycle *Sechs Hölderlin-Fragmente*, op. 61
(1958)—combines otherwise disparate fragments from Franz Kafka’s diaries and letters as the textual basis for the cycle.
Indeed, in the published score of *The Heart’s Assurance*, one can see many of the same gestural units employed by Tippett in the opera, drawing upon his devotion to both Purcell and Beethoven. Bowen writes that the cycle manifests “ardent lyricism, rich in Purcellian melismas and word-painting […] offset by imitations of aggression and conflict.”

Tippett recounts, “During my first Christmas in Oxted, we went off to Bonn – I wanted to see the birthplace of Beethoven.” Visiting the birthplace, or even the grave, of influential composers is commonplace among artists, but this instance signals Tippett’s esteem of Beethoven within his life and career. Elsewhere in *TTCB*, Tippett acknowledges the model that Beethoven’s string quartets provided for him in his own compositions, which he variously referred to as his “passion for Beethoven.” More significantly, in “Archetypes of Concert Music,” Tippett writes: “The musical forms deployed in my Double Concerto were those of Beethoven: a succinct dramatic sonata allegro, a slow movement virtually modeled on the song–fugue–song layout of the Andante of Beethoven’s String Quartet in F minor, Op. 95, and finally a sonata rondo with coda.” Tippett is unafraid of citing the Beethovenian influence on his music.

*The Heart’s Assurance* is, essentially, a work that seeks to reconcile the issues of love, death, and war on multiple levels, as Tippett himself admitted. In 1960, he wrote: “Considering then the nature of my response to Keyes’s poem, I could distinguish between a response arising from my own life – concerning the woman to whom the song-cycle is dedicated who died as the last war [World War II] ended; and a response to a more general situation in which my personal experience might be subsumed; Love under the shadow of Death.” Whittall has also observed that the poets’

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7 Bowen, p. 71.
8 Tippett, *TTCB*, p. 22.
“subject-matter touches, however obliquely, on Tippett’s abiding concerns – the need for honesty, self-knowledge, and the revulsion at man’s destructiveness.”13 It is necessary to recognize that Tippett’s generation was raised in what Rachel Cowgill has called a “Culture of Remembrance,” fully predisposed to a retrospective and constant memorializing of World War I, while at the same time seeking reconciliation and catharsis in the face of its enormous losses.14 For this reason, the occurrence of World War II twenty years later was the ultimate catastrophe for Tippett’s generation. Hence, *The Heart’s Assurance* takes on a threefold memorial: most intimately that of Francesca Allinson, but also the war dead of World War I and World War II, providing another clue about Tippett’s emotional struggle to complete the work.

The literary scholar Janis Stout discusses the shared social constructs of America and England in the face of both world wars, especially as it relates to the grieving process. Stout writes that if we are to make any sense of human atrocities, it will be the result of poets’ and composers’ efforts to lead us toward amelioration.15 *The Heart’s Assurance* is the ideal example of Stout’s contention, bringing together poets who were bound up in the war and a composer who was responding to their poetry. In a sense, magnified by the composer’s subtitle: “Love under the shadow of Death,” the elegiac nature of *The Heart’s Assurance* is expressed as a love transfigured in death, and serving as a foil to the anxiety and dread inherent in war.

Elaborating on his musical rendering of the lyrics, Tippett writes, “I tried to express in the setting of these poems their dominant quality, the threat which death gave to love.”16 The songs—following Tippett’s selection of poetry—address an array of psychological concerns one might

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13 Whittall, p. 141.
imagine a young soldier could encounter on the battlefield. The poems do not envision a quaint resolution to the horrors of war, rather they face it head on and explore raw images, such as: a lover cradling the bloody, matted head of her wounded husband; a sardonic entreaty not to place one’s faith in love, but to resignedly accept the promise of fear; a barren widow dancing insanely to distract herself from her grieving while at the same time earning her livelihood by selling her body; a perpetual “revolution” of wandering and restlessness; and further still, a stark allusion equating the very bed of passionate lovemaking to the waiting embrace of a crypt. Tippett never intended for this cycle to release the listener tenderly from its grasp. Quite the contrary, the composer’s explicit intention was to use music to ravage our psyche with the very real fear that gripped its protagonists, Keyes and Lewis, and to place us in the theatre of war alongside them, thus feeling death’s assault on love.

*The Heart’s Assurance* comprises five songs, written for high voice: “Song: Oh journeyman” (Alun Lewis), “The Heart’s Assurance” (Sidney Keyes), “Compassion” (Lewis), “The Dancer” (Lewis), and “Remember Your Lovers” (Keyes). Tippett’s markings for the songs are: *Allegretto con moto scorrevole* (scorrevole means “sliding” or “floating”); *Allegro giocoso, Lento, Presto*; and, *Andante ma con moto*. Each of songs will be briefly described below.

1. “Song” (Alun Lewis)

Oh, journeyman, Oh, journeyman,
Before this endless belt began
Its cruel revolutions, you and she
Naked in Eden shook the apple tree.

Oh soldier lad, Oh soldier lad,
Before the soul of things turned bad,
She offered you so modestly
A shining apple from the tree.

Oh lonely wife, Oh lonely wife,
Before your lover left this life
He took you in his gentle arms.
How trivial then were life’s alarms.

And though Death taps down every street
Familiar as the postman on his beat,
Remember this, remember this,
That life has trembled in a kiss
From Genesis to Genesis,

And what’s transfigured will live on
Long after Death has come and gone.

The cycle begins with an accompanimental figure that creates a sense of moto perpetuo. Tippett repeats this rapid piano gesture in both the third and fifth songs of the cycle, creating cyclical cohesion. The rhythmic uniformity expressed in the opening of the cycle owes its thematic imagery to the text that sits atop its perpetually “endless” sixty-fourth note “revolutions” [Verse one, lines two and three]. Acknowledging his impending voyage—perhaps from this life into the next—the narrator calls out to the “journeyman” in falling minor sevenths, as if hinting at the senselessness of the actual journey. Tippett creates a thematic idea that is repeated four more times—both rhythmically and melodically—on the words “soldier lad,” “lonely wife,” “remember this,” and finally in the awareness that “Death has come... and gone,” replete with the knowledge that “what’s transfigured will live on.”

There is also a sense in which the music might never come to rest, moving but never-ending. This is particularly true of the piano and vocal parts. The absence of certitude is also evident in the song’s 5/8 time signature, which removes stability and consistency, alternating between groupings of two plus three and three plus two. Thus, in the song’s conclusion, after beginning the phrase on a single E-flat, the narrator chants on E-natural, “that life has trembled in a kiss from Genesis to Genesis” (See Example 5.5, p. 117) over the constant rise and fall of the accompanimental pattern. In the passage that follows, the E-natural continues for: “And what’s transfigured will live on,” until the word “long,” at which point “after” drops the fifth to A-natural. At this point the song’s opening minor seventh leap on “Death has come” is heard, following the same figuration of Tippett’s setting of
‘journeyman.’ What Tippett is doing here is referring back to Britten’s *Peter Grimes*, emulating Grimes’s repeated E-natural from the aria “Now the Great Bear and Pleiades,” the text of which ultimately implores: “Who, who, who… can turn skies back… and begin again?” Upon the completion of the cycle Tippett admitted this when he wrote to him: “there are one or two happy ‘quotations’ from you – turns of phrase which strike my ear as having been learnt from the master!”

2. “The Heart’s Assurance” (Sidney Keyes)

Oh never trust the heart’s assurance—
Trust only the heart’s fear:
And what I’m saying is, Go back, go back my lovely—
Though you will never hear.

Oh never trust your pride of movement
Trust only pride’s distress:
The only holy limbs are broken fingers
Still raised to praise and bless.

For the careless heart is bound with chains
And terribly cast down:
The beast of pride is hunted out
And baited through the town.

The poem that lends its name to the entire cycle is second, bearing a rather sardonic tone with its melody and text delivery. The rapid setting of the word “never” is fleeting and almost whimsical—a device Tippett repeats throughout the song—creating a strong musical juxtaposition against the text. Framed by the admonishment to “never trust the heart’s assurance,” one might consider that the poet is making a Biblical allusion to Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” Keyes creates binary positions in his poem, as in: “never trust the heart’s assurance—trust only the heart’s fear.” Thus the grim reality of the poem is that of polarity:

entreats the subject to listen, while acknowledging they will not. The same technique is evident in the following examples: “never trust your pride of movement—trust only pride’s distress”; the insidious invocation that “the only holy limbs are broken fingers—still raised to praise and bless”; and finally, the very arrogance of the subject’s downfall, which is “hunted out—and baited through the town.” Beseeching gives way to the acceptance that in spite of these warnings, the beloved will “never hear,” either out of a youthful dismissal of the realities of mortality or because the life in question was suddenly stopped short.

3. “Compassion” (Lewis)

She in the hurling night
With lucid simple hands
Stroked away his fright
Loosed his blood-soaked bands.

And seriously aware
Of the terror she caressed
Drew his matted hair
Gladly to her breast.

And he who babbled Death
Shivered and grew still
In the meadows of her breath
Restoring his dark will.

Nor did she ever stir
In the storm’s calm centre
To feel the tail, hooves, fur
Of the god-faced centaur.

“Compassion” is the central song in the cycle and its poem is a mere four quatrains; yet it is vocally the most demanding of the five settings, spanning very nearly two octaves (C³ to B⁴ in a tenor’s range; an octave higher for soprano). Vocally, “Compassion” bears none of the sympathies of which its name hints, and encompasses the full vocal range of the cycle. The Heart’s Assurance demands a fully developed voice with exceptional flexibility and stamina, and an ability to convey the
text, coupled with an acute sensitivity of the dramatic nature of each distinctive song within the work. The simplicity of the poem’s appearance on the page belies the technical demands that Tippett necessitates of the singer; such demands are in keeping with the gruesome tone depicted by Lewis’s text.

4. “The Dancer” (Lewis)

‘He’s in his grave and on his head
I dance’ the lovely dancer said,
‘My feet like fireflies illume
The choking blackness of his tomb.

‘Had he not died we would have wed,
And still I’d dance’, the dancer said,
‘To keep the creeping sterile doom
Out of the darkness of my womb.’

‘Our love was always ringed with dread
Of death’, the lovely dancer said,
‘And so I danced for his delight,
And scorched the blackened core of night
With passion bright’, the dancer said—

‘And now I dance to earn my bread’.

Tippett’s penultimate song hearkens back to his Morley College roots as its music director, and builds on the tradition of performing Purcell’s music there since the turn of the twentieth century. Kemp suggests that, “Tippett continued [this Purcell tradition] with such single-mindedness that a chance visit to any concert given under his supervision would probably have been rewarded with an unknown anthem, ode or chamber work.” Elsewhere, in the Festival of Britain—in which The Heart’s Assurance had its première—Tippett, a board member of The Purcell Society, contributed “Purcell and the English Language” to the Arts Council of Great Britain programme book for the

20 Kemp, pp. 43-44.
series: “Eight Concerts of Henry Purcell’s Music.” These concerts ran from 8 May 1951 to 26 June 1951; Tippett conducted the seventh concert at the Victoria and Albert Museum with the Morley College Choir and Philharmonia Orchestra. Interestingly, the very text that had introduced Tippett and Pears professionally opened that program, *My Beloved Spake*, on this occasion, clearly by Purcell.21

Nowhere in this cycle is Tippett’s awareness of Purcell—and his song tradition—more obvious than in the opening measures of “The Dancer,” whereupon one can imagine that the prima ballerina rushes to center stage from the *corps de ballet*, “rises on her points and performs a pirouette.”22 The musical lyricism in the vocal line stands in stark contrast to the morose nature of the poem, about which the dancer ultimately reveals darkly, if resignedly, that she dances “to keep the creeping sterile doom out of the darkness of [her] womb.” A victim of circumstance—as was the whole of postwar Europe—the dancer admits that: “Now I dance, dance, dance… to earn my bread.” In the poem, a sense of the loss of her lover is palpable; it becomes heartbreakingly clear that our dancer is no longer the ballerina she may once have been, but a vagabond whose dance must go on to ensure her very livelihood.

5. “Remember Your Lovers” (Keyes)

Young men walking the open streets  
Of death’s republic, remember your lovers.

When you foresaw with vision prescient  
The planet pain rising across your sky  
We fused your sight in our soft burning beauty:  
We laid you down in meadows drunk with cowslips  
And led you in the ways of our bright city.
Young men who wander death’s vague meadows,  
Remember your lovers who gave you more than flowers.

22 Kemp, p. 301.
When you woke grave chilled at midnight
To pace the pavement of your bitter dream
We brought you back to bed and brought you home,
From the dark antechamber of desire
Into our lust as bright as candle-flame.
Young men who lie in the carven beds of death,
Remember your lovers who gave you more than dreams.

From the sun shelt'ring your careless head
Or from the painted devil your quick eye,
We led you out of terror tenderly
And fooled you into peace with our soft words
And gave you all we had and let you die.
Young men drunk with death’s unquenchable wisdom,
Remember your lovers who gave you more than love.

Stout describes the role of popular song in the grieving process, particularly resulting in building morale and communicating a sense of victory, yet equally heartrending in conveying loss. While much of her study may focus on popular song, the themes of loss are found in memorial works of classical music such as The Heart's Assurance. Considering that model of grieving en masse, we arrive at the cycle’s final song, “Remember Your Lovers,” which draws upon the shared English-consciousness of the bugle call known as The Last Post. In Great Britain, that bugle call is synonymous with military funerals and Remembrance Day ceremonies and is based on a rising fifth. “Remember Your Lovers” is similarly built on the rising fifth, and we may imagine that the unaccompanied vocal entrance piercing the uncustomary silence in an invocation that would have probably torn the heartstrings of any English audience member. The upward leap forms an unholy trinity: the first three declamations a formal nod to the bugle call, each growing in intensity, yet withdrawing any prospect of hope; each statement is sung unaccompanied.

23 Stout, pp. 126-140. Stout cites numerous examples in her chapter “Poetry and Music Enlist.”
24 In America, the musical equivalent to The Last Post is a bugle call entitled Taps, which is played for Memorial Day tributes and military funerals; for Americans it conjures the memory of loss marked by an air of solemnity. Whatever the circumstance, it is readily identifiable in both its melody and dotted anacrusis, rising fourth.
Conversely, the grieving narrator’s fourth and final cry is met neither by quiet nor the perfection of the fifth, but rather a fortissimo minor sixth ascending from B-flat to G-flat. In this instance, the bugle call is “sharpened” by the enormity of the situation: to Tippett, a mere fifth simply cannot express such grief and the voice extols his final benediction, uncontrollably augmenting the Last Post. The previous ad libitum conceit of stillness is overwhelmed by the raging carnage of the battlefield and is at once overwhelmed by a four-octave, thirty-second note drum roll evocation in bounding B-flats on the piano, consuming the two-four bar: “Young men”—lifting upwards, as if in a heavenward sob to the tenor’s high A-flat on—“drunk with death’s unquenchable wisdom.” Tippett rhythmizes “unquenchable” as if it were the bugle’s militaristic farewell on Armistice Day; the rhythmic device is equally echoed throughout the song in the piano part. Docherty calls the fifth song “an interdict against death’s power.”

We might wonder how Keyes and Lewis were able to write such profound poetry. The answer may lie in the fact that so much weight was placed on their shoulders—the weight of war—when they were so very young themselves. These young men spoke with a certainty that is generally accorded to the mature, but the war cast them in roles they were never intended to play. This helps explain how these poets’ prevenient words called out to Tippett, beckoning him to engrave them musically. Arguably, the young poets’ voices resonate today as much as when it was premièred more than half a century ago.

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Chapter 4: A Genetic Analysis of the Manuscript Sources: Process Revisited

“The Full Resources of Tippett’s Tonal Language.”

Introduction to Genetic Analysis

This chapter looks at The Heart’s Assurance using the technique of “genetic analysis” (critiques génétiques), which musicological study has recently embraced. For many musical readers, an inherently puzzling aspect of the term critiques génétiques is its association with the field of genetic sciences and its debt to the French literary movement of the 1970s. Genetic criticism, in its most effective and beneficial state, contextualizes and synthesizes all of the constituent parts of a work’s creation, in order to fully appreciate the whole. Salient sources include, but are not limited to: musical sketch material; written prose sketches of the arc of a work; various drafts of the artwork during the compositional process; correspondence related to the work or reflecting the time period in which the work is being composed or about which it responds; poetry and literature that inspire its composition; written marginalia in the volumes in which such texts are published; musical quotations or references within the work; and diary or journal entries from the period surrounding the composition in question. Numerous components from genetic criticism have thus already been used in Chapters One, Two, and Three of this study.

1 Whittall, The Music of Britten and Tippett, p. 141.
2 This dissertation will distinguish between what it refers to as the “British Library Sketches” (GB-Lb/MS Add. 72026), the “Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches” (GB-ALb 2-9400780), and the fair copies that form the “Autograph MS” (GB-ALb 2-9400536 and 2-9400538).

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Genetic criticism by its very nature seeks an assemblage of all available source materials. But inherent to such study, especially as it relates to sketch and draft analyses, is the opportunity to interpret the composer’s intentions on the page. This is especially true as we see sketches evolve into prototypes and drafts of completed works. We can accept that sketches and early drafts may be incomplete compositions and not convey a composer’s full intentions, but we can still gain insight from them into the mind of the composer and his or her creative process. A table delineating all material related to The Heart’s Assurance may be found at Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Extant Sketch, Draft, and Autograph MS Material for The Heart’s Assurance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Archive and Location</th>
<th>Name Assigned to Material</th>
<th>Library Sigla</th>
<th>Number of Pages and Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Britten-Pears Foundation (BPF), Aldeburgh, Suffolk</td>
<td>The Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches</td>
<td>GB-ALb 2-9400780</td>
<td>25 ff. Pencil drafts of the complete cycle, with interleaved sketch material. Ff. 1r., 5v., and 14v. are blank MS pages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPF</td>
<td>The Autograph MS</td>
<td>GB-ALb 2-9400536</td>
<td>31 ff. Ink fair copy of the complete cycle. Sketch material for the accompaniment to “I. Song” is found on f.8v. Ff. 4v.-8r., 11v., 14r.-14v., 18v., 19v., and 24v. are blank MS pages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPF</td>
<td>“Remember Your Lovers” (Second Ink Copy)</td>
<td>GB-ALb 2-9400538</td>
<td>7 ff. Second ink fair copy. Ff. 1v. and 6v. are blank MS pages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The “British Library Sketches”

The earliest extant sketch fragments of *The Heart’s Assurance* comprise three songs found on four undated, unbound, loose MS leaves housed in the Tippett Collection of the British Library. These four leaves comprise what this study names as the *British Library Sketches*. This author’s transcriptions of the four sketch leaves appear hereafter as Tables 4.2 – 4.5. For each of these tables there appears two versions: (a) which is a literal transcription of Tippett’s sketches, and (b) which presents this author’s annotations of these sketches. We do well to define sketches as being comprised of rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic patterns. Often, one repetition within a sketch can confirm another, clarifying obscurities in certain phrases. Likewise, we have the benefit of hindsight from the vantage point of the completed work, and are thus able to see ideas that the composer abandons or that may have been adjusted in the final score.

As noted in Chapter Two, this collection of sketches might be those about which Tippett was referring in his April 1950 correspondence to Rainier, and about which he also commented to Ayerst. If the *British Library Sketches* are those referred to in the Rainier correspondence, then this would suggest that the “tiny song cycle” to which he refers on 11 April 1950, was only three songs in length. Furthermore, while the letter to Pears on 13 May 1950 clarifies that “Compassion” had been decided upon as a fourth text, there is no corresponding sketch extant. In the absence of any sketch material, coupled with the letter to Douglas the following month confirming that Tippett was not going to reach completion of the cycle by the Edinburgh Festival in August 1950—and contrary

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3 Unless otherwise noted, all commentary hereafter addresses the annotated (b) version, leaving the (a) version for the reader’s reference. For the purpose of clarity, the annotated (b) version of each sketch brackets text, additional pitches, note values, tied note values, slurs, key signatures, and clefs. In some instances, the bracketed information, such as a note value, positions the stem in the opposite direction from the original; this, too, is bracketed.

to the pre-Wormwood Scrubs possibility mentioned above—one could posit that neither “The Dancer” nor “Compassion” came into existence as part of the cycle until early-autumn 1950 at the earliest.


The first leaf of the *British Library Sketches*, f[1]r., contains the main vocal melodic incipits of “Song: Oh journeyman” (See Tables 4.2a and b, pp. 62-63. For the remainder of this discussion of the *British Library Sketches*, the reader is asked to look primarily at the (b) version of each table). Using a 5/8 time signature placed above the staff, Tippett notates the first vocal entrance, at measure [1], as a pick-up to the next measure (just as in the published score at 1.1.2 – 1.2.1). It is evident that Tippett knew he wanted to deemphasize the first word “Oh” in order to place the first syllable of “journeyman” on the strong downbeat. Also on f[1]r., there are five words of Lewis’s text: “cruel” (aligned with most of the pitches that would occupy 1.3.2 in the published score) and “postman on his beat” (which would ultimately be 5.3.3 – 5.4.1; see bars [6], [23], and [24] of Table 4.2b).

A close study of f[1]r. reveals that the sketch contains compacted prototypes of what would become elaborated melodic lines in later drafts. One such proto-melodic example calls into comparison measure [4] with the last five notes of measure [7]. It is apparent in bar [4] that Tippett is setting the text “Before this endless,” despite his conflicting use of accidentals. While the G-sharp remains in question in measure [4], the issue with accidentals is apparently solved in the concluding four pitches of measure [7], which are reproduced in the published score at 1.2.3. The combination of bars [8] and [9] may reflect a compacted version of what would ultimately become 1.3.2 – 1.4.1. Although the first two pitches of [8] may indicate that Tippett had once thought of approaching the
word “cruel” from beneath the G-sharp, the melodic shape evokes what would become the second and third iterations of “cruel, cruel revolutions.” The rhythmic values are not exact in bars [8] and [9], and Tippett had yet to compose what would ultimately be the notation of the initial three pitches of “revolutions,” at 1.3.3. Nevertheless, one can see in the truncated approximation of this phrase that the melody was taking shape.

Significantly, this sketch reveals various details of the piano accompaniment for the first song. Measures [11], [12], and [13] might indeed be accompanimental material. In pitches, if not in exact note values, bar [11] corresponds to the score at 2.1.1, beats three through five. Tippett also provides a clue of “pf.”—obviously indicating pianoforte—above [12] and beside the word “Echo.” Indeed, measures [12] and [13] provide the left-hand echo in the piano from 2.1.2 – 2.2.1. There, the rhythms reflect that of Tippett’s setting of the text “Naked in Eden,” which returns in bars [16] and [17]. The final two pitches of [16] display a partial harmonic suggestion of what Tippett would compose at 2.1.1. However, what would eventually become the actual melody is reflected in the bracketed pitches. Together with its pickup, bar [18] may have been an initial attempt in setting “shook the apple,” at 2.2.1 – 2.2.2. Measures [19] and [20] are clearly a reiteration of bars [14] and [15] in the staff above them, conceivably signposting the unison passage Tippett would employ in 1.4.2 – 1.4.3. The triplet figure that follows in measure [21] cannot be accounted for in the score. Tippett only incorporates triplets into the piano part of the first song at 5.2.2 – 5.3.3. This occurs beneath what is sketched for the voice at f.[1]r. at measures [23] and [24]. Still, the triplet relationship is tenuous at best. Measure [22] may be related to “shook the” at 2.2.1, but otherwise it is too ambiguous to determine.

A horizontal pencil line separates the topmost sketch material, which covers six of the top seven staves, from the bottom five staves [the lowermost blank staves were not included in the transcriptions]. This stroke visibly delineates the separate sketches of two different songs. On the
Table 4.2a: British Library Sketches – f.[1]r. (Author’s Transcription)
Table 4.2b: British Library Sketches – f.[1]r. (Author’s Annotated Transcription)
staves that contain bars [25] through [29], Tippett sketches two lines of music that would form vocal lines within the final piece of the cycle: “Remember Your Lovers.” These measures comprise three vocal phrases from the third verse of Keyes’s poetry; however, the text is not underlaid in these sketch fragments. Tippett would alter the first melodic phrase, “From the sun shefl’ring your careless head” only slightly, creating an eight-note triplet figure from fourth-space E-flat up to G, and then down to F-natural into future drafts of this song; see 22.5.2 – 23.1.2 in the published score. In the second phrase, “Or from the painted devil your quick eye,” the passage again ascends from B-flat, this time in the minor mode. Tippett would later rhythmicize “de-vil” as a D-flat sixteenth-note followed by a dotted eighth tied to another eighth-note at 23.2.2. The words “your quick eye” complete the phrase ascending to fifth-line F-natural from 23.2.2 – 23.3.1 with new rhythmic values. The bottom line of f.[1]r. at measure [27] marks the shift to G major on the high G of the durationally extended phrase “We led you out of terror.” Tippett would later make an eighth-note triplet pattern on the words “led you,” from the three notes preceding bar [28], or from 23.3.2 to 23.4.1. At bar [29], the second space A-natural predicates what Tippett would ultimately notate as a passing tone from C-natural, thus resulting in a B-natural to A-natural on “tenderly” and completing the phrase at 23.4.2. Tippett also modifies the rhythm of “tenderly” to reflect natural speech inflection.


The reverse of f.[1]r.—f.[1]v.—is unrelated to the song cycle. It seems to come from a project of indefinite origin that was left unrealized. In fact, f.[1]v. does not contain a single note of music. Instead, it is suffused with text. The transcription is as follows: “Men: The argument of Saint Paul; Women: Αγρός Παύλος; Women: about faith (Fides); turn his letter to be Hebrews – Jews /
Hebrew! – Hebrews. The action of the Invisible (Fides) in the Visible (Mundus); Homo (Ἀγγέλος).
Psyche (Greek) / Image / Coniunctio – via Homo / Hymn like Word: Logos – opens out: Music &
Cantamus.” The translation of the Greek, is as follows: Agios Paulos, Holy Paul; Fides, faith; Mundus,
universe; Homo, man; Andros, man; Psyche, soul; Coniunctio, joining together; Logos, word; and
Cantamus, we sing.

It appears that f.[1]v. details a choral work, but it is not The Vision of Saint Augustine (1963-
65), which, given the text fragments, might have seemed a logical possibility. Neither is it related to
the choruses within the opera King Priam (1958-61). If f.[1]v. were something truly significant,
Tippett would have refined these ideas repeatedly, mapping the path toward a definitive end. This
was his habit with most sketches that found their way into completed works. There is no mention of
any such project in either the published or unpublished correspondence with Christopher Fry, a
frequent collaborator from Tippett’s early adulthood. Furthermore, as with many composers, there
are numerous examples of other projected works that would never come to pass during Tippett’s
lifetime.

We can conclude that f.[1]v. was a fleeting idea jotted hastily onto the reverse side of this leaf
of staff paper. After it was discarded, Tippett picked up the sheet at a later point and began
sketching what is actually f.[1]r. In all likelihood, when he turned the sheet over to rediscover the
abandoned idea, he went on to the unbound leaf that is f.[2]r., then to f.[2]v., and so on. In this
sense, Tippett’s sketchbooks present the challenge of Beethoven’s Skizzenbücher and his conversation
books, the volumes Beethoven carried with him and which he would open to any page and begin
writing. This is obviously the case in the British Library Sketches, specifically the versos of folios one
and three.
The *British Library Sketch* f.[2]r. is dedicated to the opening melodic vocal phrase of the final song of the cycle, “Remember Your Lovers” (See Tables 4.3a and b, pp. 68-69). It continues that which was begun on f.[1]r. and as such reveals the complete framework for the song. In one of the few examples of piano writing in the collection, the sketch contains rhythmic patterns of the accompaniment. It also contains Tippett’s idiosyncratic figured bass markings. These were apparently sketched to serve as reminders to Tippett at a future point. In addition to the quasi-figured bass fragments, Tippett maps an approximate key area, as well as a harmonic chord progression. Tippett folded both of these elements into the future drafts. Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4 almost certainly served as the model for much of the accompaniment to “Remember Your Lovers,” and because of this, it seems reasonable to consider that Tippett’s harmonic gesture here was drawn from this Beethoven work (See the discussion later in this chapter, pp. 89-95; also see Figure XI, page 91, for the first leaf of Tippett’s *Autograph MS*). There are additional annotations on the page between the fifth and sixth staves that remain unintelligible (i.e. “+7 +8 So the turn?”). The “+7” may well refer to a raised seventh scale degree, or the addition of the seventh scale degree, which is not unusual in the final song. Following this logic, “+8” likely implies the octave. The phrase “So the turn?” may literally refer to the turning figure in the accompaniment at 20.4.1, marking one of the *British Library Sketches*’ few early indications of the piano’s role. Likewise, at bars [6] and [14] on f.[2]r., it becomes apparent that Tippett is referencing the rhythmic groupings that would form the piano’s motivic figure accompanying the entire song (See 18.2.1).

The three melodic phrases underlaid by Tippett with text on f.[2]r. are of varied length (See Table 4.3a). They may be seen in Table 4.3b at: [A] “When you foresaw with vision prescient,” from 18.3.2
Table 4.3a: British Library Sketches – f.[2]r. (Author’s Transcription)
Table 4.3b: British Library Sketches – f.[2]r. (Author’s Annotated Transcription)
– 18.4.1; [B] “We fused your sight” and the single word, “beauty,” from 19.1.1 – 19.1.2 and the downbeat of 19.2.1; and [C] “We laid you down” from 19.2.2 – 19.3.1. In the case of [A], Tippett’s underlay is imprecise. Also, beneath text fragment [A] is written: “to B-flat & F → A-flat,” with a further arrow running across the page to the proto-melodic phrase that would become 20.2.2 (with the pickup, 20.2.1) through to 20.3.2. In a larger sense, the harmonic progression written beneath text fragment [A] is realized in the score: “B-flat [minor]” from 18.3.2 to 18.4.1, “& F,” which may imply the F-natural that is constant in the right-hand piano part at bar [8], from 18.3.2 to 18.4.2; “→ A-flat” depicts the shift to the major at 19.2.2. The melodic sketch at [B] is written above the harmonic-rhythmic gesture and open C-major chord that we see in the left-hand of 19.1.1. A single note appears beneath the word “beauty,” a B-flat, which accordingly follows the same harmonic motion in 19.2.1. And, at [C] beneath the text is the A-flat that was to be its new chord at 19.2.2. But most significantly, the arrow drawn upward from the word “down” indicates the octave leap in the voice part from D-flat up to D-flat, which occurs at 19.3.1 of the published score. Tippett’s downward arrow to C minor, underneath which is written “down in meadows” within the middle staff, might denote the ascending C minor passage alluded to quickly in the piano accompaniment in the final beat of 19.3.1 beneath “meadows.” At bar [17], Tippett also spells what must surely be a C minor chord. It is unclear if [17] has any relation to the song; C minor is never a harmonic focus in the published score of this piece.5

We will now turn to phrases under which Tippett did not write text, but which were clearly prototypical of the finished song. For instance, measures [1] and [2] contain not only the opening melodic phrase, but also the second phrase. Rhythmic alterations in Table 4.3b represent only slight adjustments from the arrhythmic opening phrase into the 3/4 meter at 18.2.1. On the word “lovers,”

5 The only other fleeting reference to C minor in the fifth song may be found at 21.5.1, but is insignificant as it pertains to the sketch material under discussion.
Tippett would ultimately decide upon the D-natural, instead of F-natural. If in measure [3], we move the “figured bass” material to the right, aligning it with measure [2] above, and consider that bar [3] is actually treble clef, then the F-sharp is the pitch that appears in the piano part underneath “lovers.” This creates an augmented chord and a truly unexpected aural shift. Thereafter, what Tippett himself inscribes as a natural sign with his own question mark, would reflect the transitional move through D Major to B-flat minor from 18.2.2 – 18.3.2, incorporating the half-note D-flat in the vocal part before text fragment [A]. Thus the B-flat and G-flat in measure [3] ultimately belong to the phrase “When you foresaw” (exclusively at 18.3.2). Half-step movement in the vocal line also becomes integral to the completed version of this phrase. In the next measure, that G-flat would eventually become a G-natural, reinforced by harmony of E-flat9 over the B-flat pedal (which leads to F/B-flat minor within 18.3.3). Tippett also adjusts the rhythms in measure [2].

Bar [5] of f.[2]r. is the second statement of the “Remember” theme and spans three measures in the completed score, from the pickup to 20.2.2 – 20.3.2. In the sketch, Tippett notates the phrase with a D-flat pickup; in the published score, a parenthetical C-sharp is noted beside the D-flat (establishing the new A Major tonality of 20.2.2). Otherwise, the differences are primarily rhythmic augmentations and a small adjustment to the measure’s final accidental. As in the published score, the phrase ends with the word “flowers,” but Tippett changes the second syllable to a D-sharp instead of a D-flat.

The bottom two staves of f.[2]r. contain the cycle’s closing phrase, alongside Tippett’s marginalia: “last.” Here, the word signifies the last iteration of the song’s ascending Last Post motif (augmenting the rising perfect fifth of 18.1.1, 20.2.1, and 22.3.1, as noted in Chapter Three). In the sketch, Tippett notates the B-flat half-note rising to a G half-note, but next to the G is a flat sign on top of which there is a hash mark, crossing it out (See Table 4.3a). It is evident that at least initially, while Tippett knew he would not repeat the leap of the fifth in his climactic phrase, he was unsure
whether it was to be a G-flat—as the published key signature would indicate—or a G-natural. 

Alternately, it is possible that Tippett struck out the G-flat knowing that it would be accounted for in his key signature. Yet nowhere on the sketch does Tippett write a key signature. This goes against Tippett’s consistency in his use of accidentals. Therefore, we have to consider Tippett’s uncertainty.

After the shifts in meter to 2/4 and 3/8 from 24.4.2 – 24.4.4 in the published score. Tippett returns to a 3/4 meter at 24.5.1. He does not notate the sketch rhythms exactly as he would in the finished score, but nevertheless retains the same identifiable rhythmic character. It is noteworthy that the four-measure phrase: “Drunk with death’s unquenchable wisdom,” does not appear in the sketch material at bar [18]. Tippett did not write in any text at measure [18], although it is obvious that the phrase lines up with the final statement of the “Remember” theme: “Remember your lovers who gave you more than love.” Although there are minor changes and discrepancies between the sketch and the published score, it is evident that Tippett had a melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic contour in mind at this early stage.

Finally, measure [19] reveals that beneath each of the successive downbeats of 24.5.2, 24.5.3, and beats one and three in 24.5.4, Tippett notates a harmonic progression (assuming bass clef): A-natural, F-natural, E-flat, and a return to F-natural. This passage appears as the bass line of Tippett’s final four bars in the published score. Measure [19] displays the pitch progression that would be harmonized with major triads for A and F (with the melody tracing a scalar passage descending from a flat seventh to the fifth and eventually to an A-flat, implying passing F minor). This is followed by a minor triad for E-flat, and finally an F major triad at the cadence. Arnold Whittall states that, “Whether one regards the song as being throughout in an extended B-flat minor which happens to close on the dominant, or in an extended F major which tends strongly to its subdominant minor, the concluding cadence, with its Phrygian melodic descent, may seem almost arbitrary in its very
The term “arbitrary” does not fully convey the inconclusive nature that Tippett’s ultimate phrase imparts. That which is arbitrary implies things random or illogical, leaving to chance a decision about which Tippett was sure – even in these earliest sketches. Furthermore, when compared to the British bugle call, The Last Post, which also ends on a sustained dominant, Tippett achieves the unsettling relationship he invoked as the final song began.


Occupying the top three staves of sketch f.[2]v. are four bars of musical material that have been crossed-out. These measures may or may not be part of the cycle’s genesis. If it is not an attempted prototype of another part of The Heart’s Assurance, then just as with f.[1]v., it may be an undetermined sketch for another work. It is also conceivable that when Tippett completed f.[2]r. and turned the manuscript paper over to see the “pre-existing sketch” at the top, he then crossed through it.

Noticeably, f.[2]v. is the most densely-packed of the British Library Sketches (See Tables 4.4a and b, pp. 74-75). It allows for a close reading of Tippett’s developmental text-setting techniques, involving preliminary and secondary forms of numerous key phrases. Measures [1] and [2] contain the opening vocal phrase of the second song of the cycle, “Song: The Heart’s Assurance.” A second, more decisive version of the opening phrase appears with underlaid text at measures [9] through [13]. Tippett’s repetition of this phrase in the sketch material indicates that he wanted to ensure that it accurately depicted his melodic conception of the poem. This also supports Tippett’s claim that this song—or its text, rather—represents his inspiration for this cycle. The repetition of the word

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6 Whittall, The Music of Britten and Tippett, p. 142.
Table 4.4a: British Library Sketches – f.[2]v. (Author’s Transcription)
Table 4.4b: British Library Sketches – f.[2]v. (Author's Annotated Transcription)
“never” is exclusively Tippett’s and is not original to Keyes’s poem. In bar [10] of the sketch, Tippett notates the text as: “Oh n-e-v-er trust the heart’s assurance,” which is the only complete line of text that he transcribes onto the page.

As is customary in his sketches, Tippett writes the key signature only once and it is assumed on subsequent staves. Thus, he writes a single fifth-line F-sharp to denote the key signature of G Major at bar [1]. Measures [1] and [2] represent Tippett’s proto-melodic sketch of the song’s introductory vocal line. It is helpful to compare these measures with bars [9] through [13] for greater intelligibility of this theme’s rhythmic and melodic evolution. One can also see how Tippett solved the quandaries of setting “Trust only the heart’s fear,” from 7.3.3 – 7.4.1, by contrasting measures [3] and [4] with bars [14] through [17]. The former sketch material is actually a fusion of 7.3.4 – 7.3.5, which Tippett elaborates in the later rendering. A second attempt at setting “…heart’s fear…” is found in the first four notes of measure [7]. The second attempt presents the pitches Tippett would settle upon in the final version, but neither the rhythms nor the ultimate dotted half-note on C-natural are sketched. Bars [14] through [17] display the closest approximation to the published edition.

Tippett’s sketch is largely written without meter and for this reason, the editorial barlines in measures [1], [5], and [7] may help the viewer see where Tippett’s divisi would ultimately be found. In the published score, at 7.2.3, Tippett decides on syncopated rhythmic values for the last four pitches of bar [1]. More arresting, especially for a sketch, is Tippett’s use of interpretative rhythmic markings. He writes poco ritard followed by an a tempo marking above measures [16] and [17]. This correlates to 7.3.5 (but note Tippet’s ultimate change of mind in his indication of calando in the previous measure only).

After the editorial barlines at measure [7], we are afforded a first glimpse of the phrase “And what I’m saying is” (7.4.2 – 7.4.4). The original poem’s text, “what I’m saying is,” fits with the five
ascending eighth notes. Yet that reading does not allow for the repetition of “what I'm saying,” for which Tippett would opt. Measures [18] and [19], however, are almost precisely come scritto in the Schott Edition at 7.4.2 – 7.4.4. In the middle of measure [7] there is the partial text: “Go back my lovely though you will never hear” (See bar [7] in Table 4.4b). Tippett would expand this phrase in his second effort, seen at the pickup to measure [21] through [24]. The continuation of measure [24] carries Tippett on to f.[3]r. of the British Library Sketches. Measure [8] further links these two leaves. The two sixteenth notes in measure [8] could, along with measure [5] of f.[3]r. (See Table 4.5b, p. 78), represent the opening rhythmic gesture in the piano part of this song and number among the few instances of sketched piano accompaniment.

British Library Sketches – f.[3]r.

The bottom two staves of f.[3]r. contain additional fragments from the second song, “The Heart’s Assurance” (See Tables 4.5a and b, p. 78). If the two pages were in an opened sketchbook together, with f.[2]v. open on the left and f.[3]r. opened on the right, it appears as if Tippett continued his sketch from measure [24] of f.[2]v. across the page onto measure [8] of f.[3]r. Because the upper staves of f.[3]r. contain material that is unrelated to The Heart's Assurance, it is conceivable that he merely continued writing in the space available to him.\(^7\) Regardless, Tippett obviously

\(^7\) The British Library catalogue does not offer suggestions as to the works to which these fragments belong. This is an additional indication that Tippett worked in a rather haphazard manner when sketching, all the while writing on any unused manuscript space at his immediate disposal.
remained focused on the lower portion of the opened sketchbook. Assuming this, measure [8] of f.[3]r. is actually the text from 8.1.5, “you will never hear.” The only minor adjustments Tippett made between sketch and draft are the rhythmic modification and the upbeat ascent from B-natural to the eighth-note E-natural on the word “though,” a solution he may have been sketching, as mentioned above, in the final pitches of bar [7] on f.[2]v. This example is rendered in the annotated transcriptions of f.[2]v. and f.[3]r.
The additional link between these two folios is found in the accompanimental figure that becomes an essential feature of this song. Measure [5] is the proto-motivic gesture seen in the upper voice of the piano at the song’s opening, and again in the right hand of 8.2.1 – 8.2.2. Along with at least the descent of the first half of 8.2.3, measure [5] reflects, if not exactly duplicates, the final score. Moreover, the descending pitches of measures [6] and [7] may be related to an early representation of 7.1.3 – 7.2.1 and 8.2.3 – 8.2.4. In any case, it is plain that Tippett had this developing melodic framework growing in his mind.

Measures [1] through [4] in the topmost staves are not immediately discernable in the existing cycle, although the fact that Tippett bracketed together bars [3] and [4] with the sketch material beneath it in bars [6] and [7] implies that it was associated with an early conception of the work. Moreover, bars [4] and [7] could suggest a fluctuating major/minor modality based on D-natural if we assume that measure [10] is in the bass clef. However, it is intriguing to consider that the triplet figures of bar [2] bear some relation to the motives within the third song of the cycle, “Compassion,” for which no sketch material is extant. It remains a possibility that this was a prototype of the song’s themes. Nevertheless, it is wise to remember that for every successful finished work, there may be many aborted attempts. These may manifest themselves later in other works by the artist, or not at all.


Further evidence that Tippett’s compositional process involved some manner of disorganization is depicted on the opposite side: f.[3]v. contains an ostensible stage map for a performance of a piece that included six voices, SSATBB, arranged in two semi-choirs à 3 around
six horns; two each of oboes, clarinets, bassoons, and contrabassoons; three trumpets and three trombones; and, “3 or 6” recorders. This may relate to performances of other works Tippett had planned during his tenure at Morley College; however it does not appear to be directly related to his own compositions.

None of the ancillary material in the British Library Sketches necessarily helps date them. Moreover, an examination of the other notebooks and unbound sketch leaves in the British Library divulges that it was typical of Tippett to open any available notebook—much like his use of the most random of correspondence material, including the reverse of bank statements—and hastily write out project ideas. However, the Rainier correspondence referred to in Chapter Two does seem to place this sketch material in the spring of 1950.

The British Library Sketches clarify that the composition of The Heart’s Assurance was led by the texts, which inspired the creation of the melodies. This leads us to an understanding that Tippett’s compositional process for the cycle was melodically conceived. To a great extent, the piano part remained in Tippett’s head at this stage, or it had yet to be conceptualized. This is further substantiated when comparing the British Library Sketches with the Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches, discussed below. (One might conclude that a similar creative process was part of the composition of “Compassion” and “The Dancer”). By comparison, the British Library Sketches bear all the melodic characteristics—and as we have seen, even some of the accompanimental motifs—that would be
evident in the completed drafts and sketches to follow. There is no extant sketch material for any music conceived between the British Library Sketches and those of the Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches.

The “Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches”

The Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches, occupying twenty-five leaves, contain pencil drafts and occasional sketch material of the complete cycle, including the piano accompaniment in Tippett’s hand. They are far more complete than the British Library Sketches, and obviously represent a later stage of the work’s genesis. The title page for these sketches reads: “Songs / The Heart’s Assurance / (pencil),” also in Tippett’s hand. That Tippett specifically denotes “pencil” on the title page of the Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches clarifies the ongoing nature of their form and of his process. In other words, they are not set in ink. However, the texts and vocal line of several of the first four songs are actually overwritten by Tippett in ink until f.10v. In these instances, Tippett seems to have been satisfied enough with his composition of the vocal phrases to fix those particular lines in ink. The first two songs of the cycle are composed on 18-stave orchestral paper.

The opening song of the cycle, for which Tippett does not pen a title, begins on f.2r. Tippett has inked in both the text and melody, as well as the clefs and key signature of the vocal line; this extends throughout the first two MS pages, ff. 2r. and 2v., ending at the published 3.5.2 (See

8 The autograph full pencil score of The Midsummer Marriage—dated “Oct 11th 1952 7.30p.m.”—is housed in the Tippett Collection at the British Library in two volumes, GB-Lbl Add. MS 53771A and B, respectively. Significantly, an initial inspection of this and various other of Tippett’s autograph scores confirms that his manner of composition for The Heart’s Assurance was quite representative of his general compositional process at least until the early-1950s. For example, within the pencil autograph of The Midsummer Marriage, f.103v. [which reads “Act 2 / (pencil)’] contains exclusively melody-oriented sketch material on three staves in A-flat major. Furthermore, after two entirely blank folios at the back of the volume, f.175r. and f.175v. contain sketch material that is not dissimilar from the British Library Sketches of The Heart’s Assurance. Specifically, these final leaves display Tippett’s highly hieroglyphed and idiosyncratic figured-bass harmonic shorthand.

9 GB-ALb 2-9400780.
Figure I). In these two MS pages, Tippett wrote out the vocal line and text very neatly, allowing the space of three staves between each line of the voice part. These first two pages have the appearance of a fair copy of the vocal line: allowing ample space before the first vocal cue, cleanly marking barlines, rests, slurs and ties, dynamics, and tempi. An assumption is that, for these two MS pages, Tippett was preparing the score to set down the piano accompaniment, which is completely absent from the *British Library Sketches*. Indeed, the piano part is sketched in lightly beneath the vocal line. This further supports the assertion that Tippett envisioned this entire cycle almost exclusively from the perspective of the text and vocal melody, beneath which the accompaniment was added only later.

![Figure I. Introduction to f.2r. in the Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches, GB-ALb 2-9400780. 1.1.1 – 1.2.2.](image)

Tippett’s confidence in the direction of the sketch did not continue (See Figure II). The final two MS leaves of the first song, ff. 3r. and 3v., are written entirely in pencil. A single instance of red pencil appears on f.3v. to inscribe a treble clef and the word “as,” represented in the published score at 5.3.3. The piano accompaniment on f.3r. is marred by six sizeable erasure marks and smudging. Some of this may be due to the transference of lead onto the hand, which was then transferred back onto the paper creating a smearing effect. The reality is that the smudges leave the impression of
uncertainty about what form the accompaniment would take. In contrast to the inked-in text and vocal line on the first two MS pages, Tippett’s pencil-writing of these elements thereafter is incredibly light on the page. It appears as if he wrote it knowing it might need to be erased, adjusting to allow for the evolving state of the accompaniment.

All four pages that comprise ff. 2r. through 3v. reveal the comparative lightness of the piano inscription. Certainly for what became an incredibly complex and florid piano part, clarity was crucial, yet this sketch seems hasty and tentative. As is the case throughout the remainder of the drafts, sketches and fair copies of the autograph MS, Tippett is concerned with the minutiae of the score. He micromanages the voice and the piano in his every written nuance and shading within the cycle.

The second and titular song of the cycle begins on f.4r., simply marked “II” in the upper central margin (See Figure III). Spanning three leaves in length, f.4r. carries considerable similarities in penmanship and inscription to ff. 3r. and 3v. While the text and melody begin in pencil overwritten in ink at the fourth bar, such a pattern does not continue throughout the song. The inked-over text ends at 8.1.2, the fourth system of the MS, and the melody stops less than two bars later, aligned with the word “though” on the B-flat of 8.1.4. Tippett uses a different ink than he had used in the first song in the Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches. While the opening four bars of piano

Figure II. Bottom system of f.3r. in the Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches, GB-ALb 2-9400780.
5.2.1 – 5.3.2.
accompaniment embody the thematic material from f.3r. of the British Library Sketches, the published score does not differ in any way from this opening draft material. The entirety of f.4v. is in pencil and the page is full of erasure marks and revisions. Under the third bar of the left-hand piano line of f.4v., at 8.4.2, Tippett writes parenthetically: “(or E?)” with an upward arrow pointing to the bass F-natural. In the published score, he did not make this modification.

Figure III. Introduction to f.4r. in the Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches, GB-ALb 2-9400780. 7.1.1 – 7.3.1.

There are two versions of the four measures that would form 9.4.3 – 9.5.2 on f.5r., which corresponds to the final phrase of the song. Version A (See Figure IV) occupies the first three staves of the page, and is separated by a blank staff, followed immediately by a parallel Version B (See Figure V) of the same measures. In both Versions A and B, the melodic setting of the final four syllables of text is the same as the published score, at: “[bait]ed through the town.” However, the alternate versions that Tippett considered can be seen in the not-quite-erased bars underneath. The opening melodic phrase, “pride is hunted out and bait[ed],” and its accompaniment in Version A are entirely different in pitch if not in rhythm from the decisions made in Version B. At 9.4.4 in Version
A, Tippett did not even notate the opening of the right-hand piano accompaniment, and one can see that in the left-hand of the same bar he had not settled on the second inversion G major sonority that would underscore Version B. In Version A, he opted for a harmonically ambiguous G octave. In Version B, although additional notes are evident, one sees the vocal and accompanimental phrases that would ultimately be folded into the autograph MS. In the second bar, a fourth line D-natural is visible on the first syllable of “hunted.” Below this, the eventual B-natural is added, assuming bass clef for the right-hand piano part. The final three bars of the song are sketched beneath Versions A and B. Under the left-hand piano part in the penultimate bar, Tippett adds to his sketch to reflect what ultimately appears in the final two beats of the published version at 9.5.4 (See bar 2 of Figure VI).
The innermost song of the cycle, “Compassion,” begins on f.6r. The MS paper that Tippett used from f.6r. through to the end of the Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches at f.10v. is 12-stave paper, which differs from the opening pair of songs. As with “The Dancer,” the third song does not appear in the British Library Sketches, and this is the first sample of what is clearly a fully formed work. If earlier sketch material exists for either of these songs, its whereabouts is not currently known. However, it is conceivable that such a source remains yet to be found, perhaps in the Bowen Collection. Alternatively, Tippett’s text-driven, melodically-inspired sketches for the other three songs of the cycle suggest that such prototypes might have existed, even if they were discarded.

Once again, Tippett sets the entire text and vocal line in ink, which has been written over the initial pencil sketch. Nevertheless, upon close inspection, there are incidents of palimpsests where the original pencil markings’ impressions remain, in spite of their erasure. Unfortunately, for the scholar, Tippett often erased sketch material or destroyed it entirely. Thus, having any sketch material whatsoever is both invaluable and rare. But while the ink indicates Tippett’s confidence concerning the vocal line, we get only a glimpse of the fragmentary sketches of the accompaniment. Here the heavy erasure markings further suggest that he was not entirely settled on how the piano part would develop. Tippett’s ink markings remain just as detailed and copious as the piano accompaniment appears hesitant (See Figure VII). However, Tippett’s frequently varying compound
and simple meters are completely intact and no revisions appear between this draft, the fair copy, and the subsequent published score. This is yet another indication of the rhythmic clarity that Tippett had acquired from his scanning of the poets’ texts.

The song “Compassion” concludes on f.7v. (See Figure VIII) with what is vocally the climax of the cycle: a high B-natural for the voice in the phrase from 13.3.3 through 13.5.1. But just as in the published score, Tippett notates an ossia E-natural, should a singer be incapable of reaching the higher note. The composer’s dramatic and emotional demands of the pianist and singer are equally steep.
The fourth song of the *Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches*—the song not referenced in the letter to Pears on 13 May 1950—covers six MS pages. It is this song, “The Dancer,” that has previously been referred to as the possible prequel to the cycle. It may date from the period prior to Tippett’s incarceration. Beginning on f.8r., the twelve-bar piano introduction is cleanly sketched, yet beneath it the erasure marks are many and severe. The preponderance of erasure and rewriting in the accompaniment suggests that Tippett struggled to produce the clarity that is evinced in the finished draft. The published score matches the draft in every sense with the exception of the lower grace note before each trill at 14.1.4, 14.2.4, 15.3.1, 16.3.4, and 16.4.2 (See Figure IX).

![Figure IX. Introduction of f.8r. in the Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches, GB-ALb 2-9400780. 14.1.1 – 14.2.3.](image)

Tippett also marks the bars in which he wants piano pedaling. At the entrance of the voice, Tippett again writes over the text and the vocal melody in ink. The text, in particular, appears to have been inked in haste, with a very light stroke that is not always evenly aligned with the initial imprinting of the words in pencil. The clear spacing of the vocal line and the otherwise flawless accompanimental writing implies that an earlier sketch might have once existed. Given the strophic nature of the text here, the use of motivic repetition is a somewhat implicit solution for the composer (See Figure X). Thus, a number of measures bear *simile* marks. Once Tippett decided on the accompanimental introduction, his notating of the piano staff must have been rapid, because he used sequential figures in those repeated bars. Tippett also repeated the introductory
accompanimental passage before the second and third verses. One can also see a textual transcription error in the second bar of Figure X, as Tippett sets “yet still” instead of “and still,” which is corrected in the fair copy and the published score.

The final song of the cycle covers seven MS pages, starting at f.11r. and extending through f.14r. This song is distinctive for its unaccompanied introduction. Despite the ad libitum marking, Tippett notates optional breath marks, as well as assigning rhythmic values to the melody. Were these relationships not explicit, Tippett might have easily written ad libitum with unstemmed noteheads. However, he did not, and that suggests that his ad libitum is quite specific (See Figure XI, a complete leaf from the fair copy, f.20r., page 91). Furthermore, upon examination of the opening vocal phrase, one discovers that it is effectively three bars in common time if one allows an eighth rest for the notated breath marking (See Example 5.17, page 125).

Prominent as a cohesive motive throughout the Aldeburgh Draft of this song is the piano’s introductory rhythmic gesture of 18.2.1 (See Figure XI, p. 91). Bowen writes that this is based upon, although not a direct quote of the first movement of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major,
Op. 58.10 As the song develops, the melismatic piano passages evoke those of the concerto, notably its cadenzas, which Beethoven wrote weeks after the première of the work.11 Owen Jander discusses the “three chapters” of Beethoven “Orpheus” Concerto, which follow the sequence of the movements: “The Song of Orpheus,” “Orpheus in Hades,” and “Orpheus and the Bacchantes.”12 Thematically, while the Orpheus myth has been much-discussed in relation to the Beethoven concerto, the final song of The Heart’s Assurance has never been subjected to the same consideration.13 In the concerto, both piano and orchestra vie for supremacy; the piano representing Orpheus as he seeks to infiltrate Hades and rescue Euridice from the onslaught evoked by the Furies of the orchestra. Owen Jander writes, “The most compelling of all musicians is the mythological Orpheus.14

This study suggests that the Orpheus relationship is embodied in the psychological metaphor of the solitary lover calling out across the fields of dead soldiers—or Hades—with an entreaty for

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11 Leon Platinga’s Beethoven’s Concertos: History, Style, Performance (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), notes the location of the autograph MSS for Piano Concerto No. 4 and Beethoven’s cadenzas in Zurich and Paris, n47, p. 369. Platinga writes: “One area in which an intersection of style and keyboard range impinge directly on modern-day performance is in the selection (or creation) of cadenzas. It was evidently in 1809 that Beethoven composed a series of cadenzas for the first four piano concertos (there are also extra ones for the first movements of the First and the Fourth),” p. 294. Although the Fourth Piano Concerto was composed in 1805-1807, Beethoven’s cadenzas were not published until 1809; the composer himself gave the première in a concert on 22 December 1808, pp. 210-215. See also “The Cadenza” in Owen Jander’s Beethoven’s “Orpheus” Concerto: The Fourth Piano Concerto in its Cultural Context (Hillsdale: Pendragon Press, 2009), pp. 94-102.


13 See “The Heroic Style II, 1806-1809” in William Kinderman’s Beethoven (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). Kinderman notes, “It can do no harm to think of the Orpheus myth” as a possible programmatic or inspirational intention by Beethoven, “as long as we do not limit the music to this association,” p. 116. So, too, within the Tippett cycle, we should be mindful of the musical primum non nocere of such analysis.

14 Owen Jander, “The Three Chapters of the Orpheus Myth As They Figure in Librettos of Operas: The Favorite Episode, the Subject Avoided, and the Theme Cultivated,” in Words on Music: Essays in Honor of Andrew Porter on the Occasion of His Seventy-fifth Birthday, edited by David Rosen and Claire Brook (Hillsdale: Pendragon Press, 2003), p. 152. Striking subtexts relate the Jander article with Tippett and The Heart’s Assurance. Jander writes, “Chapter three of this myth, however, has always been problematic. It has to do with the less familiar episode regarding the death of Orpheus, ossia Orpheus and the Bacchantes. According to Ovid, Orpheus, having lost his Euridice a second time, forswears the love of women… and now uses his lyre to sing songs about boys beloved by gods. Most particularly, Ovid’s Orpheus tells the story of Jupiter’s attraction to the youth, Ganymede, and Apollo’s love of Hyacinth,” pp. 152-153.
Figure XI. Complete leaf of f.20r. in the Autograph MS, GB-ALb 2-9400536.
18.1.1 – 18.3.2.
remembrance and the vain hope of being reunited. Just as the first movement of the “Orpheus” Concerto uncharacteristically begins with the solo piano, in the case of The Heart's Assurance, the fifth song commences with the unaccompanied voice. The proposition that the solo piano represents Orpheus on his quest against the furies—creating the dynamic contrasts between the solo instrument and the full orchestra—is paralleled in the relationship of the unaccompanied voice to the full texture of the piano role. Therefore, Tippett creates a fusion of the thematic motif from the first movement of Piano Concerto No. 4 into the accompanimental figures of the fifth song of The Heart's Assurance, further unifying the interconnectivity of this relationship.\(^{15}\)

It is difficult to refrain from citing further parallels between the Beethoven piano concerto and the Tippett song cycle. However, there are two passages in these works that stand out in this respect. For the first, it is instructive to know that prior to the beginning of “The Song of Orpheus,” according to Ovid, Orpheus “tested the many strings of his lyre by strumming them with his thumb.”\(^{16}\) In the Beethoven, this strumming is represented in the opening rolled chord of the piano, but also in the octave glissando spanning the D octave in the fourth measure of the first movement. In Tippett’s score, this glissando is found in the third beat of the first measure of the piano part. Tippett retains this motif throughout the song. After Tippett’s protagonist has tested the strings of his lyre, he proceeds into the mouth of Hades, the battlefield. The second event that relates the Beethoven and the Tippett is also reflected in the main theme from the previously mentioned passage. After the glissando up the D octave, the piano does not resolve to the tonic, but—as Jander notes—Beethoven leaves the phrase “hanging on the dominant.”\(^{17}\) This is precisely the technique

\(^{15}\) The second movement of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4 is marked Andante con moto, while Tippett’s marking for the fifth song of his cycle, “Remember Your Lovers,” is Andante ma con moto. Jander notes that Beethoven systematically utilizes a five-measure figure to codify the entire concerto, which one may be inclined to project onto Tippett’s use of five songs.

\(^{16}\) Jander, Beethoven’s “Orpheus” Concerto, p. 57.

\(^{17}\) Ibid.
Tippett uses in his termination of the entire cycle, which results in an absence of conclusion – an imperfect cadence on the dominant (See Figure XII, p. 94; Illustration VIII, p. 142). Tippett leaves his listener waiting, suspended in anticipation of a resolution that does not come. Furthermore, by concluding the song with a final statement of the “Remember” theme, and a perfect restatement of Tippett’s opening piano passage in A Major, he creates greater cyclical cohesion.

It seems appropriate to consider that since discussions of the Fourth Piano Concerto’s Orpheus connection existed during the mid-twentieth century—as indeed they had since the nineteenth century—it is likely that Tippett was exposed to such a debate. Tippett acknowledged Beethoven’s prominent influence on his career. In The Midsummer Marriage, for example, he references Beethoven’s Symphony No. 7. In Tippett’s Concerto for Double String Orchestra, he uses the model of the slow movement from Beethoven’s String Quartet in F minor, op. 95. In Tippett’s Symphony No. 3, he quotes the opening of the “Schreckensfanfare” from the finale of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. Therefore, the “Orpheus” Concerto may well have served as Tippett’s model for the final song of The Heart’s Assurance.

The Orpheus link is especially feasible when looking at the texture of the song, in which the voice is entertaining the same battle with the ferocity of the accompaniment beginning at 19.1.2, coupled with the dread-filled nature of the text. This, and other so-called Beethovenian accompanimental passages may be viewed in Appendix III of the current study. Of course, in this

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18 The programmatic history of what Leon Platinga calls Beethoven’s “most captivating work in the genre” of piano concertos, dates to Adolph Bernhard Marx in 1859; quoted in Platinga’s Beethoven’s Concertos: History, Style, Performance, pp. 185, 189.
19 Cited in Kemp, pp. 88-89. See also n10 and n11 of chapter three in this dissertation, p. 48.
20 Kemp, p. 91.
21 Idem., p. 143.
23 In Jander’s conclusion to Beethoven’s “Orpheus” Concerto, he writes: “The countless similarities between events in Beethoven’s concerto and events in the texts of Ovid, Virgil, and Hyginus leave no room for doubt. Beethoven’s op. 58 is his “Orpheus” Concerto,” p. 149.
Figure XII. The final leaf, f.14r. in the Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches, GB-ALb 2-9400780. 24.3.2 – 24.5.5.
scenario, there is a twist: a role reversal for the piano, which acts as the orchestra against the Orpheus of the voice.

Acknowledging the imperative “negative supplement” of the cycle’s namesake, to “never, never, never, never trust,” Kinderman asks whether “the apparent Beethoven allusion also shifts into an environment shaped by anxiety and negation.” Based on the cycle’s roots in war, apprehension, and loss, such a response by Tippett seems likely.

Curiously, the final MS page of the Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches, f.14r., does not contain a single word of the text (See Figure XII). The vocal line is complete, starting at 24.3.2, the phrase marginally marked as “last” on f.[2]r. of the British Library Sketches. It is all the more peculiar that Tippett should have come this far in the draft and not have included the missing sixteen words, the final couplet. Assuming this, f.14r. contains no errors marking it as distinct from the published version, including specific dynamic markings and phrasing.

The Autograph MS

The autograph MS is a fair copy in ink of the complete cycle in Tippett’s hand that consists of thirty-one leaves. The autograph MS also includes a single leaf of sketch material (f.8v.), as well as two cover leaves in Tippett’s hand: f.11r., “3. Compassion / (Alun Lewis)” and f.19r., “The Heart’s Assurance / V / Remember Your Lovers / (Keyes).” Thus, the autograph MS consists of thirty-four leaves. The complete cycle is held inside an orchestral folio labeled in Rosamund Strode’s hand as: “TIPPETT / The Heart’s Assurance / – Complete ‘tidy’ copy, as / used by publishers’

24 Commentary from writings and discussion with Kinderman, 13 December 2010.
25 GB-ALb 2-9400536.
engravers. – A second (ink) copy of the last song, ‘Remember your lovers.’” The outer folder is marked f.00r. by the BPL.

Given its intended use by the engravers of the Edition Schott publication, the autograph MS does not tell as rich a tale as its predecessors. However, this fair copy stands out for a specific reason: the tattered state of the cycle’s namesake song, “The Heart’s Assurance,” f.10r. (See Figure XIII). Contrasted to the remaining four songs that comprise the autograph MS, one may surmise that this particular song was perhaps mailed separately. The deep creases in the paper suggest that it was folded into an envelope, or was conceivably dog-eared and taped as the result of use. The condition of the copy is markedly different from the rest in a collection in which the balance of the cycle is in clean, neat, fair copy form.

Figure XIII. Third leaf of f.10r. in the Autograph MS, GB-ALb 2-9400536. 9.1.1 – 9.2.4.

*Rosamund Strode (1927-2010) served as Britten’s music assistant from 1964 until his death in 1976. From 1976 until her retirement in 1992, she was the Britten-Pears Library’s Keeper of Manuscripts. Known for her encyclopedic knowledge of the BPL’s holdings, she had a penmanship that is as distinctive as it is trustworthy.*
A peculiar feature of the fair copy is f.8v., which contains fragmentary sketches for either the first bar of “I. Song,” or the antepenultimate or penultimate accompanimental bars of the same piece (See Figure XIV, discussed below). The date of these sketches is unknown. The ineluctable impression of these sketches is that the composer was toying with how best to notate the intricate piano figure. The first grouping of thirty-second notes, in pencil, is clearly the opening eight pitches of the entire cycle. Presumably pleased with the clarity of this sequence, Tippett writes the pattern again in ink further along the staff (See Figure XIV). Two staves beneath the opening sketch are three groupings of sixteenth-note figures atop half notes. Although this slower rhythmic pattern is not found in the piece, the melodic fragment, when played as thirty-second notes, is in fact similar to that of the ascending phrase in the left-hand of the piano part in the song’s conclusion (6.5.1 or 6.5.2), though without the sharp sign on the sixth pitch. While there is no clef assigned to the sketch, this passage does not appear at any other point of the song by reading it in the treble clef. The half notes—a second line B, fourth line F, second line B\(^2\)—in Tippett’s sketch (See Figure XIV) do not

Figure XIV. Sketch fragment on f.8v. in the Autograph MS, GB-ALb 2-9400536.

\(^{27}\) This reading takes into account Tippett’s tendency to position noteheads a little below lines and spaces.
appear in the final piece, nor does the exact rendering of the final four sixteenth notes of this lowermost sketch. Together with ff. [2]v. and [2]r. of the *British Library Sketches*, this fragment in the autograph MS is among the only independent piano figures in Tippett’s sketches.

As noted by Strode, the autograph MS contains an additional fair copy of “Remember Your Lovers.” It covers seven folios. It is supplementary to the fair copy of the complete work and there are no differences whatsoever. Pears may have used this copy in performance, possibly for the Noel Mewton-Wood Memorial Concert on which this single song from the cycle was performed. This idea will be discussed in Chapter Six. Further supporting the notion that it was a performance copy used by Pears, there is the frequent use of red pencil underlining the text from the second page to the end, beginning at 19.1.1, or f.2v. (see Figure XV). There are also “reminders” of accidentals as well as breath and dynamic markings in red pencil. This fair copy is in clean condition, and in many respects it is a cleaner copy from which to read than that of the complete autograph, which bears many of the printer’s markings from Schott.

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28 GB-ALb 2-9400538.
The analysis of the British Library Sketches in this chapter, though detail-intensive, allows for a singular understanding of the essential issues involving the cycle’s genesis. They demonstrate Tippett’s text-oriented creative process. The mosaic-like, non-linear quality of Tippett’s sketches presents an exciting opportunity for the scholar who likes puzzles. One cannot dismiss the possibility that more folios of The Heart’s Assurance exist within other sketch fragments attributed entirely to other works. Neither can one avoid the possibility that sketch material not currently enfolded in the British Library Sketches was discarded entirely. The revelation of the piano part in the Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches portrays the greatest leap in the cycle’s composition, as does the addition of the otherwise absent pair of songs. Combined with the minor adjustments between the Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches and the Autograph MS, our knowledge of the genetic and developmental growth of the music for this cycle will enhance the discussion of Tippett’s method of text-setting in Chapter Five.
Chapter 5: The Poets and the Poetry: Cultural Contexts and Compositional Choices

“I Was Responding to the Poetry of the Second World War”

A discussion of *The Heart's Assurance* as song necessitates beginning with the genre of war poetry. Tim Kendall’s *Modern English War Poetry* offers a glimpse of war poets and their poetry’s response to the two great conflicts of the twentieth century. Kendall specifically notes minutiae that might otherwise go unnoticed by those who were not in combat situations. As his marker, Kendall writes “that, war more than anything else, obliges individuals to address questions of nationhood,” and his selections were consciously British, choosing “to analyse poets whose attitudes to England cannot be disentangled from their portrayals of war.” Yet in an effort to understand the consciousness of a generation at war, one must explore not only the poets who wrote during those periods of conflict, but also the way the works were received by the public and other creative artists.

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1 Tippett, “Conclusion,” p. 463.
3 Tim Kendall, *Modern English War Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). One can gain perspective on the many commonalities between these poets through Kendall’s observations and exhaustive bibliography for further study. Particularly useful for the study of *The Heart’s Assurance*, is a twelve-page section devoted to Sidney Keyes, which, with Geoffrey Hill’s 2007 essay (cited below in n5), contains the most recent scholarship surrounding the twenty year-old poet; Kendall clarifies previously dubious information. His work helps to contextualize this important canon of writing.
4 *Idem.*, p. 4. Kendall also edited and introduced *The Oxford Handbook of British and Irish War Poetry*, an extensive volume that contains the important “Sidney Keyes in Historical Perspective,” by Geoffrey Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). In addition, Stout’s previously referenced *Coming Out of War: Poetry, Grieving, and the Culture of the World Wars* introduces an important cross-section of poets whose connective thread is both a direct and indirect contact with the twentieth century’s two world wars. Stout discusses some of the most significant voices—social commentators, in fact—of the twentieth century: Wilfred Owen, Robert Graves, Ivor Gurney (as both poet and composer), E. E. Cummings, W. H. Auden, Edith Sitwell, T. S. Elliot, and Dylan Thomas, to name but a few. Female poets are afforded long overdue attention, often neglected in favor of entrenched “soldier poets.”
especially composers. The inevitable result is that within a society, there will be different patterns of responses. This chapter looks at how Tippett responded to his chosen war poetry.

The Poets

For his tribute to Francesca Allinson, Tippett united the voices of two British poets: Sidney Arthur Kilworth Keyes and Alun Lewis. Both Keyes and Lewis died in the Second World War at the ages of twenty and twenty-eight, respectively. As noted above, Tippett used two poems by Keyes and three by Lewis for his cycle. The final song of the cycle uses the earliest of Keyes’s poems, “Remember Your Lovers,” dated October 1940. The second song of the cycle sets Keyes’s poem, “Song: The Heart’s Assurance,” dated July 1942. Keyes inscribed the dates of both poems. Neither poem, however, was selected for inclusion in Keyes’s debut publication, The Iron Laurel, in 1942. The poems were selected by the author prior to his premature death for inclusion in his second anthology, entitled The Cruel Solstice, published posthumously by Routledge in 1943 (Lewis was killed in action in 1943). For this volume, Keyes received the Hawthornden Prize, a prestigious British literary award established in 1919.

A little later, Michael Meyer, one of Keyes’s former Oxford college mates, published these two poems in 1945 in an edited volume of The Collected Poems of Sidney Keyes. Meyer recounts that Keyes wrote “Remember Your Lovers” in an Oxford examination room after having completed a paper. Keyes withheld the poem from its inclusion in The Iron Laurel due to what he deemed its

5 Sidney Keyes was born on 27 May 1922 in Dartford, Kent, England, and died 29 April 1943 near Sidi Abdulla, Tunisia. Alun Lewis was born on 1 July 1915 in Cwmaman, Mid-Glamorgan, South Wales, and died 5 March 1944 in the Goppe Pass, Burma.
“lush sentimentality.” It was, however, that very “sentimentality” that spoke to Tippett and led to it becoming the emotional pinnacle of the cycle. Despite the existence of these volumes, Tippett apparently drew on the anthology *For Your Tomorrow* as his source for the pair of Keyes poems.

Questioning his voice as a poet, Keyes wrote:

> I think I should have been born in the last century in Oxfordshire or Wiltshire, instead of near London between two wars, because then I might have been a good pastoral poet, instead of an uncomfortable metaphysical without roots. The trouble is, that a thing of beauty isn’t a joy for ever to me; nor am I content to imagine beauty is truth, etc. All I know is that everything in a vague sort of way means something else, and I want desperately to find out what.  

It is striking that someone who felt that their voice was neither in nor of the right time period should become such an integral part of a genre of poetry that reflected so immediately on those years and the environment of war. The realization that “everything […] means something else” to Keyes reveals such “uncomfortability,” but his search for truth and meaning would become significant in Tippett’s music.

Keyes also provides a link to Lewis. In a letter from Dovercourt, Essex, to Meyer on 1 November 1942, Keyes wrote: “Last week I met a man who…knows […] Alun Lewis. [Lewis] is at Southend. So I have written and invited [him] to visit me one weekend. No answer yet.” Meyer notes that, in the end: “Lewis had embarked for India a few days earlier,” and such a meeting was not to be.

Lewis’s poetry was published in two volumes: *Raiders’ Dawn*, 1942, and *Ha! Ha! Among the Trumpets: Poems in Transit*, published posthumously in 1945. While these volumes might have been

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6 Michael Meyer, editor, *The Collected Poems of Sidney Keyes* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1947), p. 117. This collection of poems also includes an eight-page memoir by the editor. The prefaces to both the 1945 and 1988 editions are included and contain meaningful biographical information about Sidney Keyes, who was killed in Tunisia at the age of twenty. Several previously unpublished poems are contained in its pages. In an appendix, a personal account of “Keyes as a Soldier, by his runner, James Lucas” is included and provides invaluable insight to his personality, character, and final days.


available to him, Tippett does not reveal the source of Lewis’s poetry in his correspondence. “The Dancer,” which became the fourth song of the cycle, was published in March 1942 in the former volume.10 However, in the author’s note at the front of Raiders’ Dawn, Lewis writes: “Practically all of these poems have been written since September, 1939.”11 Furthermore, Lewis dates the note: “Home Forces, September 1941” (i.e. stationed in the United Kingdom), thus placing the poem’s genesis between September 1939 and September 1941. Lewis also states that two-thirds of the poems were written while he was on active service: “They are not, therefore, a completed statement; but a soldier sees with his own eyes and nobody else’s; and they are, therefore, a personal statement.”

The subtitle of the 1945 volume, “Poems in Transit,” provides some indication of the chronology of these poems. Divided into three sections, the first includes the period of his posting in England—picking up where Raiders Dawn had ended in 1941—until his departure for India in October 1942.13 Lewis’s “Song: Oh journeyman,” which opens Tippett’s cycle, and “Compassion,” the cycle’s centerpiece, were first published in the later volume, Ha! Ha! Among the Trumpets. They were both written when the poet was still in England, in other words, before October 1942. The second and third parts of the volume are entitled “The Voyage” and “India,” respectively. In a letter to his parents dated 24 January 1944, Lewis provides some explanation for the titles:

Altogether they make 52 poems—17 written in England, 6 at sea and the remaining 30 out here. I suppose that’s pretty good for twelve months. More than I thought I’d written, for the creative side of me has been pretty circumscribed by the life and surroundings I exist in now. I’m not writing a foreword for them: they explain themselves. I’m calling the volume

10 Alun Lewis, Raiders’ Dawn and Other Poems (London: George Allen & Unwin Limited, 1942). Likewise, as noted in Chapter Two above, p. 41, an early draft of “The Dancer” was published in the Welsh Review poetry journal in July 1939. 
12 Ibid.
13 Alun Lewis, Ha! Ha! Among the Trumpets: Poems in Transit (London: George Allen & Unwin Limited, 1945). The eminent English poet and novelist Robert Graves, with whom Lewis had corresponded at length during the war, penned the six-page Foreword. Graves’s introduction frames Lewis as an important voice, citing the newspaper headlines from March 1944: ALUN LEWIS THE POET IS DEAD. Graves writes that Lewis’s final letter arrived just days before the young writer died in Arakan, India, in close proximity to the location where Graves’s eldest son had been killed.
‘Ha! Ha! Among the Trumpets’ (Job 39) sarcastic-like! I think it's quite a bright title though, don't you?14

In the end, the published volume to which he made reference in the letter to his parents contained not fifty-two poems but forty-eight. Still, the letter itself grants insight into both a sardonic wit reflecting his war-time situation and, under such circumstances, his surprise at the speed with which he wrote.

There is a synchronistic quality when considering how the lives of Keyes and Lewis intersect with that of the cycle’s dedicatee, Francesca Allinson.15 Tippett never acknowledged in his personal writings—and may indeed never have known—that like Allinson, Lewis was a probable victim of suicide. He died from a self-inflicted bullet-wound to the head. In an edited volume of Lewis’s correspondence, Gweno Lewis (his widow) suggests with some certainty that he committed suicide.16 This conclusion was shared by virtually every member of the platoon with whom he was entrenched in Burma. This was despite the official military court of inquiry that ruled it an accident.17

16 Gweno Lewis, editor, *Alun Lewis: Letters to My Wife* (Bridgend: Siren Books, 1989), pp. 7-23. The editor of this collection of letters was also their recipient. In a brief note prior to her preface, she states that this book includes nearly all of the letters her then-boyfriend had written to her from the time of his “joining up” in May 1940 until his death on 5 March 1944. The seventeen-page Preface provides firsthand biographical information, and also introduces the subject of her husband’s struggle with depression. She asserts that he was able to “exorcise” the depression in his poetry and journal entries. The book is divided chronologically by periods of Lewis’s service in the British Army. It provides an intimate portrait of his personal struggle with the War, his separation from his wife, and his observations of the world around him. A disquieting aspect from her preface hangs over the book as a whole, leaving one to wonder where her husband’s depression actually seeps into his writing. The final page of the book, her Coda, depicts her heartrending experience visiting her husband’s grave in Burma.
17 Pikoulis, pp. 265-267. In this, the first biography of Alun Lewis’s life, Pikoulis seeks to tell the poet’s story using Lewis’s words. The book is arranged in three parts, moving chronologically from his adolescence in Wales, to his military service in England, and ultimately fighting the war in India and Burma. Pikoulis includes a number of unpublished poems, portions of poems, as well as lines excluded from early drafts. These passages are often erotic and vulnerable, teeming with images of Death. In excerpts from his journals and letters, one sees the poetic influences Lewis sought to emulate, even those which haunted him. Of particular significance is the unconsummated affair with Freda Aykroyd that encompassed the last period of his life in Burma. The penultimate chapter, “Waiting For the Pistol,” observes the chain of events leading up to his death and the sense of foreboding becomes palpable. The final chapter continues this literal death knell and explores the pervasive assumption that Lewis’s death was a suicide, although his death certificate reads: “Killed as a result of an accidental revolver shot wound of head [sic].” To read Gweno Lewis’s
There is also the fact that, like Allinson, Lewis suffered from terrible bouts of depression. The war that shaped the subsequent lives of the cycle’s protagonists—Allinson, Keyes, and Lewis—also resulted in each of their relatively early deaths.

_Tippett and Song Composition_

In Tippett’s written conclusion to Denis Stevens’s _A History of Song_, the former presents a compelling discussion of the art of song composition. Curiously, several of the perspectives he relates are contentious. Tippett writes:

> The moment the composer begins to create the musical verses of his song, he destroys our appreciation of the poem as poetry, and substitutes an appreciation of his music as song. This is true of even such simple and exactly corresponding patterns of poetry and music as the endlessly repeatable verses of a folk-song. In fact, it is in my opinion the absolute [sic] of the song as a genre. It is not really a matter of the further we go away from the simplicities of folk-song towards the complexities of the songs in a _Lieder_ recital, the more we substitute appreciation of music for appreciation of poetry. As soon as we sing any poetry to a recognizable melody we have at that instant left the art of poetry for the art of music.¹⁸

Neither Tippett nor any other composer need relegate to their compositions such hyperbole to their compositions. For it may indeed be true that a composer _could_ destroy a poem’s lyricism, but it does not follow _a priori_ that music _does_ “destroy our appreciation of the poem as poetry.” However, the word _destroy_, rich with its implications, is the last verb one might expect to hear from a composer.

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¹⁸ Tippett, “Conclusion,” p. 462.
In fact, one could counter that in many ways a layer of musical composition placed on a text can actually enhance it, especially if the musical setting is deemed masterful.\textsuperscript{19} On this point Tippett notes that in the case of certain Schubert songs, while the music of the song may be much appreciated, the poem itself could be quite lacking in quality. But clearly, the lines between subjectivity and objectivity will be blurred based on the listener’s predilections and experiences.\textsuperscript{20}

Tippett plainly believes that poetry and melody are mutually exclusive. Moreover, Tippett omits to acknowledge that a thoughtful singer can effectively relay a composer’s adaptation of a poet’s text alongside a collaborative pianist’s realization of the musical accompaniment. Tippett effectively dismisses the possibility that a listener to song may be moved by text and music equally. Interestingly, Tippett writes, “We imagine sometimes that we are still appreciating the poetry when it has become a song, but I think this is illusion” [italics Tippett’s].\textsuperscript{21}

Tippett’s opinion regarding the destruction of poetry vis-à-vis the addition of melody remains problematic. As will be explored in Chapter Seven, it is conceivable that Pears’s controversial and somewhat scathing Festschrift contribution is in some measure an appraisal of Tippett’s above manifesto.\textsuperscript{22} Pears’s harsh invective, including phrases such as “mantis-like proportions,” may be in response to Tippett’s polemics.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{19} In Stephen Banfield’s “Preface” to Sensibility and English Song: Critical Studies of the Early 20th Century (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985), he notes several writers who have addressed aesthetics and song composition. Interestingly, two of the authors he points to are Tippett (in Stevens) and Pears (in the Tippett Symposium), p. ix.
\textsuperscript{20} The central concept of phenomenology is that a piece of art is experienced anew upon its every encounter; even when it is the same person interacting with the same artwork, the phenomena surrounding each occurrence will vary.
\textsuperscript{21} Tippett, “Conclusion,” p. 462.
\textsuperscript{22} Tippett was, in reality, afforded a plumb opportunity in writing the conclusion to Stevens’s A History of Song. It clarified his position as a composer in the United Kingdom and the esteem he had earned. It is perhaps helpful to compare the very words of Benjamin Britten in his plea for conscientious objectorship status with Tippett’s notion that a composer should engage in the act of destruction. Britten writes: “Since I believe that there is in every man the spirit of God, I cannot destroy, and feel it my duty to avoid helping to destroy as far as I am able, human life, however strongly I may disapprove of the individual’s actions or thoughts. The whole of my life has been devoted to acts of creation (being by profession a composer) and I cannot take part in acts of destruction,” in Letters from a Life, p. 1046.

Obviously there is a clear distinction between the destruction of human life and the destruction of poetry. Tippett’s own pacifism—to the point of imprisonment—upheld such sensibilities. However, perhaps Tippett was, by his very nature, a man of extremes. Britten and Pears were both exempted from military duty in lieu of the tribunal’s decision
Others have commented on Tippett as song-writer. Bowen argues that by the time Tippett began the composition of *The Heart's Assurance*, he was employing the text-setting techniques of Purcell. These, Bowen said, “provided confirmation of the aesthetic principles concerning relationships between words and music.”\(^{24}\) However, Bowen does not clearly define what said “principles” are, especially as they relate to Purcell. Bowen continues, asserting that such principles “became quite fundamental to Tippett’s work.”\(^{25}\) While Bowen relies on the historical associations that Tippett himself acknowledged were a part of his text-setting philosophy, the former does not specifically clarify his own terms.

He does, however, offer the following statement in Tippett’s defense: “The arts all depend for their expressive power upon metaphor: a ‘trick’ whereby the inner world of the human psyche and the outer world are made suddenly to correspond, producing a memorable image of actuality. […] The result is invariably a unique fusion of elements carrying its own intrinsic power of metaphorical expression.”\(^{26}\) Moreover, Bowen seeks to address the dubious statements that Tippett asserted in his text-setting manifesto. Bowen writes, “When words are set to music, the verbal metaphors are ‘eaten up’ by those within the music. It is almost unnecessary for the words to be heard individually: as long as the *situation* they express is embodied in the music, then all will be well.”\(^{27}\) Bowen defends Tippett’s 1960 essay in Stevens’s *History*, and plays—as had Pears—on the praying mantis metaphor. It seems as if both Tippett and Bowen are caught in an argument that is both semantic and ideological – Tippett in his definition and Bowen in Tippett’s defense.

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\(^{24}\) Bowen, *Michael Tippett*, p. 75.


\(^{26}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{27}\) *Ibid.*
Let us return for a moment to Tippett’s idea of mutual exclusivity of melody and poetry. Tippett’s argument of absolutism caves in on itself when one considers that the compositional process that has been described above conflicts with his conceit. As we have seen, and shall explore further below, *The Heart’s Assurance* grew from the texts. The melodic and harmonic structures of these songs were created with the texts in mind. One does not deny the other, nor do they stand in opposition.

Tippett asserts that music will naturally destroy the poems, yet that does not appear to be the case with *The Heart’s Assurance*. As has been discussed in relation to both the MS sketches and within Tippett’s correspondence, *The Heart’s Assurance* was inspired by the texts. Tippett’s conscious decision join the poets’ voices together as a single narrative “I,” creates a strength of cohesion that is bolstered by the accompanying vocal melodic and piano composition. Tippett penned his concluding essay for Stevens in 1960; nearly a decade after the cycle was premièred. Is it possible that something happened to Tippett that challenged his belief in the legitimacy of the text-inspired composition of the cycle in the intervening years? Or, are we to believe that Tippett himself felt he had *destroyed* the very poems he had chosen when he set them musically? Tippett maintained that the poems were his inspiration and nothing in his correspondence speaks otherwise.

The texts retain their vitality as both standalone artworks and as components of the song cycle. The poem, as poetry, may still be appreciated; likewise, its evolution musically neither exclusively diminishes nor utterly enhances such texts. As previously stated, the composer need not sacrifice one—either poetry or music—at the expense of the other. Still, the concrete nature in which Tippett defined his approach to song composition in Stevens’s *History* prompts—perhaps begs for—a rebuttal. In this instance, it is Tippett’s own music and his actual process that refute this single aspect of his written claim. In short, what he wrote for Stevens is not reflected in his own music from a decade earlier.
Tippett writes about his selection of *The Heart’s Assurance* poetry in the same essay:

I was responding to the poetry of the Second World War – to a love poetry, it seemed to me, but colored by the apprehensions of immediate mortality. I was able to discharge my personal emotion into the general poetic expression, and to select from *two* poets, Alun Lewis and Sidney Keyes, the poems that gave me an artistically satisfactory series of poems for songs. To hammer home my chief point about song as an art form, I need only state that when we listen to this song-cycle based on the work of two poets, we are completely unaware of which poet is which.28

The subsequent analysis of how Tippett set the words to music will follow his instincts and consider the poetry as emanating from a single psychological voice. In other words, the five poems of *The Heart’s Assurance* are separate representations of a protagonist’s experiences both internally and externally, five episodes within a single individual’s life or imaginings. Tippett’s singular narrative concept also secures the idea that he considered the work a song cycle, contrary to Kemp’s contention (See above, pp. 6-7).

Although further terms will be defined in what follows, some will be clarified at the outset. And, while the current study does not intend to posture as a discourse on the craft of prosody or its analysis, an exposition of its basic principles and terminology may be helpful. This will be followed by a more specific analysis of Tippett’s setting of each individual poem. Of course, one might ask: “Why is this important to know at all?” In the context of this dissertation, it helps us to understand more about genetic process from the literary point of view. Furthermore, the subchapter below displays how Tippett’s craft of word-setting plays out against his manifesto statement about the art of song writing.

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The critical art of identifying poetic rhythms is called prosody. John Lennard states that the prosody of antiquity was either quantitative or qualitative, implying that it was grounded in a vowel’s length or quantity, or in its patterns of stress or accent, respectively. However, the prosody of Modern English relies on a distribution of meaning, inflection, deconstruction, and grammatical word-order; in other words, how we understand the words we hear, and what they may or may not represent based on context. The primary mode of analysis for properly assessing contemporary English prosody is accentual-syllabic, or, an integrated form of qualitative prosody that elevates the significance of patterns of stressed and unstressed beats within a line, irrespective of syllabic lengths. Thus, in literary analysis—specifically accentual-syllabic—the building block of a poem is the line, or the verse. It is the line that differentiates poetry from prose. A line is analyzed by isolating its cadential design, or its meter.

A line’s meter is reduced to its basic arrangement of syllables that constitute a metrical unit, or a foot. Thus, the feet of a line of poetry are its essential building blocks—the syllabic stress—and are numbered in its analysis. For example, in the third poem of the cycle, “Compassion” (See Table 5.3 below), there are three feet in the first line: “She in | the hur- | ling night.”

Feet are then designated by combinations of stressed beats, the ictus, or strong cadential beat, and unstressed, or weak, beats. Thus, to continue with the previous example, the ictus is placed on the second beat of each foot: “She IN | the HUR- | ling NIGHT.” Such an example depicts iambic stress, or a two-beat foot that is unstressed / stressed; the iamb is commonly used because its natural rhythm imitates speech. There are five primary feet in English prosody: the iamb, trochee,
dactyl, anapaest, and spondee. Likewise, line-lengths are calculated from the number of feet within each line: one foot per line is a monometer, two feet per line is a dimeter, and so on, to include trimeter, tetrameter, pentameter, hexameter, heptameter, and octameter. Accordingly, the line: “She in | the hur- | ling night” contains three feet and is therefore iambic trimeter. As will be discussed below in the third poem, just because one can analyze a poem as iambic trimeter does not mean that the reader’s or composer’s renditions will follow accordingly.

Generally, poetry tends toward a consistency of pattern. Yet rendering a poem in a conventional manner that makes it sound juvenile and affected might distort or even devastate the poem’s essence. This is especially true if the intent is to delve into its deeper meaning and postulate the poet’s intent. Therefore, to accord appropriate emphases, one might read the line as: “SHE in the | HUR - ling NIGHT.” That reading would result in a combination of a forward dactyl followed by an amphimacer, or three beats in which the internal beat is unaccented. Numerous methods exist for denoting stressed and unstressed syllables in written form, thus one must clarify one’s own methodology. Rather than navigating the various symbols that are actively used within the discipline, this dissertation will follow Lennard’s straightforward “u” for unstressed, and “x” for the ictus.

It should be acknowledged that there is no definitive way to read any single poem. Alongside the poems below are this author’s interpretations of Tippett’s syllabic stresses based on his musical setting and the natural emphases produced rhythmically when singing the phrases in his composition. The stresses indicated below substantiate the argument that multiple readings are feasible in any given poem. This further illustrates that Tippett’s perceived importance of syllabic emphases may well have differed from those of Keyes and Lewis, thus highlighting the interpretative

34 The demarcation of stressed accents ranges from “/” to “)”) to “-”; unaccented syllables can be denoted as “∪” and “*” and “/”. As stated above, it is of the utmost importance to know the method employed by the analyst.
35 Lennard, p. 3.
value of poetic accentual-syllabic readings. This, too, may represent another facet of Tippett’s song-writing manifesto—the idea that he is altering the poetry.

One can understand Tippett’s reading of the poem’s rhythmic impulse from his musical setting. His textual accents are discernable through their placement on strong and weak rhythmic beats. This is also apparent through the use of *agogic* stress, or an accent produced by lengthening the time value of a note. Tippett lamented the process of composition wherein “bursts” of productivity preceded long periods of blockage, as was exhibited in the Rainier correspondence in Chapter Two. This may be a significant factor contributing to his belief that the composer destroys poem in the process of setting it musically. Apart from the four *British Library Sketches*, however, there is no additional evidence of Tippett’s work with the poems (i.e. evident experimentation of text-setting possibilities).***

The repetition of words or turns of phrase is an important aspect of how a composer sets a poem to music. In *The Heart’s Assurance*, instances of verbal repetition occur in every song, with greater incidents in the first four songs. The final song contains far more text than the previous four songs and as such, the length of the final poem appears to have minimized Tippett’s use of repetition. That is, if a poem is brief, then repetition may be a consideration in order to lengthen the poem and thus the musical composition; if a poem is extended, as in “Remember Your Lovers,” its duration might preclude the necessity of textual repetition. Thus, for largely proportional reasons, the final song within *The Heart’s Assurance* contains only one repetition of a pair of words. However, in the first four songs of the cycle, textual and phrasal repetition serves as a structural element, by both unifying and elongating each poem. These issues will be discussed below (See Tables 5.1 through 5.5, below).

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36 In an attempt to further understand Tippett’s process of text-setting, one may turn to the three sketch leaves held at the British Library for *The Midsummer Marriage*, GB-Lbl Add. MS 72026, ff. 4, 5v, and 8v. These leaves convey noticeable similarities to the *British Library Sketches* for *The Heart’s Assurance*. 
Tippett’s use of repetition is one of the ways in which he communicates the psychological aspects of the poems. It is through repetition that the reader is afforded the greatest insight into the text that was the most significant to Tippett, and thus the most syllogistically striking. This study finds that within *The Heart’s Assurance*, the technique of repetition is utilized in six different ways. Whether through the repetition of a single word or phrase, Tippett’s augmentation of the original poems falls into any combination of the following six categories; each achieves different dramatic ends: (i) the emotional emphasis the poem embodies; (ii) the location it depicts; (iii) the physical description it conveys; (iv) the warning it delivers; (v) the time to which it refers; and (vi) the action it describes. Tippett’s instances of repetition of Keyes’s and Lewis’s words are bracketed in the poems below, as are Tippett’s additions of punctuation.

*Tippett’s Response to the Poems in the Cycle*

**Table 5.1: Tippett’s Setting of Lewis’s “Song: Oh Journeyman”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Song”</th>
<th>Rhyme / Syllable</th>
<th>Accent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oh, journeyman, Oh, journeyman,</td>
<td>a / 8</td>
<td>u xuu u xuu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before this endless belt began</td>
<td>a / 8</td>
<td>ux u xu x ux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its cruel [cruel, cruel] revolutions, you and she</td>
<td>b / 10 [14]</td>
<td>x xu [xu xu] xuxu x u x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naked in Eden [in Eden] shook the apple tree.</td>
<td>b / 10 [13]</td>
<td>x u x u [u xu] x u xu x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oh soldier lad, Oh soldier lad,</td>
<td>c / 8</td>
<td>u xu u u xu u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before the soul of things turned bad,</td>
<td>c / 8</td>
<td>ux u x u x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She offered you so modestly</td>
<td>b / 8</td>
<td>x xu x x xux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A shining [shining] apple from the tree.</td>
<td>b / 8 [10]</td>
<td>u xu [xu] xu x u x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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37 The lowercase letters in the Rhyme / Syllable column in this and the four subsequent tables reflect the rhyme schemes of the individual lines of poetry, specific to each line’s ultimate syllable. The rhyme scheme is followed, after an oblique slash, by the number of syllables in each line. A bracketed number reflects Tippett’s extension of each line’s syllables through the use of repetition, which are also represented in the Accent column, by brackets.

38 The Accent column indicates this author’s impression of Tippett’s syllabic emphases in his musical setting of each line. As regards the brackets, see note above.
Table 5.1 (Continued from previous page)

Oh lonely wife, Oh lonely wife,
Before your lover left this life
He took you in his gentle arms.
How trivial then [How trivial then] were life’s alarms.

And though Death taps down every street
Familiar as the postman on his beat,
That life has trembled in a kiss
From Genesis to Genesis,

And what’s transfigured will live on
Long after Death has come and gone.

In the opening song of the cycle, aptly named “Song,” *iamb* are denoted as ux (unaccented-accented beats, or weak-strong). Lewis’s poem contains three instances of *iambic pentameter*, that is, lines of five iambic feet (lines 3, 4, and 14). Both the third and fourth lines (rhyme b) are *decasyllabic*, or ten syllables, as is the fourteenth line (rhyme f). Otherwise, the poem uniformly uses *iambic tetrameter*, or lines of four iambic feet. Prevalent within sixteen of the poem’s nineteen lines is, in fact, di-iambic stress, or paired iambics of a single unit, as in: “Oh journeyman, *ob journeyman*” or “From Genesis to Genesis,” each thus: ux ux, ux ux. However, Tippett did not follow such a reading. In Tippett’s melodic setting of the former of these two examples, he creates a crusic accent on the second syllable of each four foot pairing, thus: u xu, u xu. This is evident in: “Oh journeyman,” at 1.2.1 (See Example 5.1). The other syllables in the unit are unstressed musically, almost diminishing the presence of “Oh” in the phrase.
Such a formula, among the most common in English prosody, contains a dactyl, or a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables. Utilizing this analysis, the cry of “Oh” is effectively parenthetical (u) xuu, (u) xuu. Dactyls also mirror the falling rhythm and melodic contour that is evident in Tippett’s descending leap of a minor seventh in 1.2.1 (Example 5.1). A vital issue for a composer conscious of text-setting is deemphasizing words of lesser importance. This concept is an extension of a native speaker’s inner ear. Thus, Tippett is more or less shadowing the poet and not adjusting a great deal of the verse.

Hereafter, the end of each of the following song analyses will address the previously defined categories of repetition. Compared to the inner trio of songs, Tippett uses textual repetition minimally in the first song of the cycle. However, we should notice that Tippett’s use of repetition only follows what was already created by Lewis, who codified repetition in “Oh…” of the opening line of each of the first three quatrains, and within the internal line of the cinquain, or five line stanza, at “Remember this.” Lewis, and ergo Tippett, clarifies the subject at the start of these quatrains (e.g. “journeyman,” “soldier lad,” and “lonely wife,” respectively). Tippett repeats the word “cruel” three times in verse one, and the three utterances reinforce the idea of unending revolutions (See Example 5.2).

The accompaniment of the song’s opening phrases (Examples 5.1 and 5.2) conveys perpetuity of motion that will unify the cycle. It also underscores the emotional endlessness implicit in the poem. Tippett also emphasizes the location of the imagined journeyman’s progenitors in his repetition of “in Eden,” which, for a poem laden with the presence of Death, is paradoxical.
Continuing the Eden metaphor into the second strophe, Tippett repeats the adjective “shining,” as if to emphasize the apple of Eve’s cunning. And in verse three, Tippett emphasizes a specific moment in time through repetition. This is a moment particularly concerned with “trivial” clarifications that occurred in the past. The complete phrase that Tippett repeats is: “how trivial then” (See Example 5.3).

Example 5.3. *The Heart’s Assurance*, 4.5.1 – 4.5.2.

Lewis’s poem implores the listener not to forget via the repeated text, “Remember this, remember this,” which Tippett sets from 5.4.2 – 5.5.2 (See Example 5.4). Tippett also chooses the rhythmic pattern used for “journeyman,” “soldier lad,” and “lonely wife” for this phrase.

Example 5.4. *The Heart’s Assurance*, 5.4.2 – 5.5.2.

Tippett again takes up the use of repetition in his conclusion to the song, which presents an extended series of E-naturals—Tippett’s evocation of Britten’s *Peter Grimes*, as noted in Chapter Three—from 6.1.1 – 6.4.2 (See Example 5.5; “Remember this” in Example 5.4 immediately precedes Example 5.5). When “Death” appears in the last line of Lewis’s text, Tippett reiterates the falling minor seventh motif of the song’s opening phrase at 6.4.3, prior to the cadence from E-natural to A-natural; even in the piano’s upper voice, the A-natural persists through repetition (See the final three bars of Example 5.5).
Example 5.5. *The Heart's Assurance*, 6.1.1 – 6.5.3.
Table 5.2: Tippett’s Setting of Keyes’s “The Heart’s Assurance”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“The Heart’s Assurance”</th>
<th>Rhyme / Syllable</th>
<th>Accent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oh never [never never never] trust the heart’s assurance—</td>
<td>a / 9 [15]</td>
<td>u xu [xu xu xu] x u x u xu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust only the heart’s fear:</td>
<td>b / 6</td>
<td>x xu u x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And what I’m saying [what I’m saying] is</td>
<td>c / 13 [18]</td>
<td>u x u xu [x u xu] x u x u xu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go back, go back my lovely—</td>
<td>b / 6</td>
<td>u x u x u x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Though you will never hear.</td>
<td>b / 6</td>
<td>u x u x u x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust only pride’s distress:</td>
<td>e / 6</td>
<td>x xu x u x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The only holy limbs are the broken [the broken] fingers</td>
<td>f / 12 [15]</td>
<td>u xu xu x u u xu [u xu] xu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still raised to praise and bless.</td>
<td>e / 6</td>
<td>x x u x u x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the careless heart is bound with chains</td>
<td>g / 9</td>
<td>u u xu x u x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And terribly cast down:</td>
<td>h / 6</td>
<td>u xu u x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The beast of pride is hunted out</td>
<td>i / 8</td>
<td>u x u u x xu x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And baited through the town.</td>
<td>h / 6</td>
<td>u xu x u x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The eponymous poem of the cycle avoids any traditionally accepted format found in English poetry. “The Heart’s Assurance” has the appearance of regular quatrains, but Keyes deliberately plays with the reader’s expectations. If Keyes employed consistency it would create comfort within the form. But such consolation is not this poem’s intent. Keyes creates some cohesion by his use of punctuation and structure in the first two quatrains, specifically his use of colons to conclude the second, sixth, and tenth lines, as well as his use of rhyme for the second and fourth lines of each stanza. Likewise the first, second, and fourth lines of each quatrain contain the same number of syllabic feet, perhaps in an attempt to stabilize the entire poem. However, the instability that Keyes seeks to depict is dramatically evident in the third line of each quatrain, where he changes the line's length to be triskaidecasyllabic, or thirteen (a very rare usage), dodecasyllabic, or twelve, and octasyllabic, or eight, respectively. It is this variability that contradicts the other nominally-unified aspects of the poem’s structure.

The poem itself is an injunction that is as cynical as it is ominous: “Never trust the heart’s assurance—trust only the heart’s fear.” Tippett’s accentuation of angst in this poem is his most effective
in the cycle, and is effected by the repetition of the word “never” four times in rapid succession (See Example 5.6). In this example, one can see the finished product compared to its initial design in measure [1] and more completely in measures [9-12] in f.[2]v of the British Library Sketches (Table 4.4b, above). In an effort to convey the protagonist’s urgency to attract the attention of someone who is evidently not listening, Tippett also repeats within the phrase (without the use of a comma): “What I’m saying what I’m saying is,” from 7.4.2 – 7.4.4 (See Example 5.7).

Through the use of repetition, in an image that evokes a benediction, Tippett emphasizes in verse two that, “The only holy limbs are the broken, the broken fingers still raised to praise and bless,” from 8.4.5 – 9.1.4 (See Example 5.8) But the image is manifest as either a corpse’s outstretched arm on the battlefield reaching toward salvation, or a horribly wounded soldier who nevertheless manages to raise his broken fingers heavenward (note the rising melodic contour).
Furthermore, the melisma prolongs the emphasis on these words, thus conveying Tippett’s concession of their importance dramatically. The most evocative aspect of Tippett’s setting of the words “careless” and “beast” is in the mirrored contrary motion by which he constructs the stentorian
fioratura (See Examples 5.9 and 5.10). Thus, Tippett’s use of repetition places this song within three of the six categories defined above: visibly repeating single words and phrases for their emotional impact; physical warnings that imply both action and motion; yet primarily, to convey the poet’s warning.

Table 5.3: Tippett’s Setting of Lewis’s “Compassion”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Compassion”</th>
<th>Rhyme / Syllable</th>
<th>Accent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She in the hurling night</td>
<td>a / 6</td>
<td>x u u xu x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With lucid simple hands</td>
<td>b / 6</td>
<td>u xu xu x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stroked away his fright</td>
<td>a / 5</td>
<td>x ux x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loosed his blood-soaked bands [, blood-soaked bands].</td>
<td>b / 5 [8]</td>
<td>x u x x x [x x x]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And seriously aware</td>
<td>c / 6</td>
<td>u xuu ux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of the terror she caressed</td>
<td>d / 7 (6)</td>
<td>(u u) xu x ux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drew his matted hair</td>
<td>c / 5</td>
<td>x u xu x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gladly to her breast [, to her breast].</td>
<td>d / 5 [8]</td>
<td>xu u u x [x x x]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And he who babbled Death</td>
<td>e / 6</td>
<td>u x u xu x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shivered and grew still</td>
<td>f / 5 (6)</td>
<td>xu(u) u x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the meadows of her breath</td>
<td>e / 7 (6)</td>
<td>(u u) xu u u x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restoring his dark will [, his dark will.</td>
<td>f / 6 [9]</td>
<td>u xu u x x [x x x]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nor did she ever stir</td>
<td>g / 6</td>
<td>x u u xu x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the storm’s calm centre</td>
<td>h / 6</td>
<td>u u x x xu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To feel the tail, hooves, fur</td>
<td>g / 6</td>
<td>u x u x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of the god-faced centaur [, the god-faced centaur.</td>
<td>h / 6 [11]</td>
<td>u u x x xu [u x x xu]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Structurally, “Compassion” is a fascinating poem. A broken line that would never be accepted grammatically in prose becomes the poetic prerogative called *lineation*. Lineation often replaces punctuation, as is clear in each of the first three quatrains, none of which have any punctuation between lines. But lineation’s most eye-catching function is its visual appearance on the written page, its *mise-en-page*. When examined visually, lineation grants us access into the mind of the poet. It allows us to see the poem through the poet’s eyes, to visualize textual and emotional emphases that the poet sought to create and perhaps to suggest pauses or lifts in scansion.

The four quatrains of “Compassion” have a consistent rhyme scheme. The pair of internal quatrains demonstrate Lewis’s implied syllabification, noted parenthetically at lines six, ten, and eleven in Table 5.3. Lines six and eleven begin with a pair of unaccented words that are effectively grouped into a single beat, thus maintaining the evenness of the scheme. It seems that in line ten Lewis heard “*shivered*” in his inner ear as three syllables—thus *shiverèd*—retaining the flowing sense of three feet per line. Following that logic, one similarly could argue that Lewis might have considered “*stroked*” and “*loosed*” as bi-syllabic words, thus *strokèd* and *loosèd*.

Tippett did not, however, choose to set the text with any sense of evenness. In contrast to the seeming innocuousness of the poem’s appearance, Tippett’s setting of “Compassion” is the least regular setting in the cycle. Tippett’s manner of setting the paired phrases—“*With lucid simple hands*” and “*Loosed his blood-soaked bands*”—produces one of the song’s binding rhythmic patterns: the dotted eighth note triplet figure (See Examples 5.11 and 5.12 for measures 10.4.2 and 11.1.2). It is this figure that provides cohesion to the music of the first quatrain. A second unifying rhythmic device is prominent in each of the remaining stanzas. Each uses a syncopated figure that begins with an

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eighth note. It is found in Tippett’s setting of the phrases “Drew his matted hair / Gladly to her breast,” from 11.4.1 – 11.5.2, from the second strophe (See the box in Example 5.13) and in the third verse from 12.5.1 – 13.1.1 (See the box in Example 5.14).

The figure in Example 5.13 is extended in the final phrase: “To feel the tail, hooves, fur / Of the god-faced centaur” (Example 5.15). The same melodic arc also characterizes each phrase of Examples 5.13 and 5.15, an anacusic ascending perfect fifth from C-natural to G-natural, before occurrences of the F-sharp on “breast” and “centaur.” The elongated gesture in Example 5.15 referentially
connects the second and fourth verses, utilizing the more pronounced syncopated motives in Examples 5.13 and 5.15. However, it is the ascent to the high B-natural at “centaur” in Example 5.15—certainly the most carnal image in the song, if not the cycle—that reminds us of the pitch content (and rhythm) of the parallel phrase in Example 5.13. It is also noteworthy that this song contains the greatest use of monotone in the cycle, centered on an F-sharp that both opens and closes the song.

The central tenet expressing compassion is selflessness. In this poem, selflessness represents the dramatic building block. Therein exists a further notion: the way we empathize with the suffering of others. Lewis’s opening quatrain contains an action beginning when “she,” who in the midst of darkness and war, selflessly “stroked away his fright.” One can imagine the poet longing to be held and have his fears assuaged. “She” remains, fully conscious of the young soldier’s fright, and pulled his “blood-soaked” and “matted hair gladly to her breast.” This imagined-angel cradled the soldier’s bloody head gladly, with compassion, into the comfort of her embrace. The phrase beginning “And he who babbled Death,” emphasizes the final tremors and ramblings of fever as terror grips the protagonist. He finally “shivered and grew still,” acquiescing to death. In spite of this the “burling night” around her, “she” remained, “nor did she ever stir.”

The final quatrain of the poem contrasts the human and the erotic. “She” did not give in to the flesh. “She” never sought “to feel” anything herself. “She” continued in the “calm” eye of the storm.
to offer tenderness to him, and did not give in to her own feelings. This would have been an act of gratification rather than compassion. To bring out emotional impact, Tippett makes his most consistent use of repetition in the final line of each quatrain. He repeats the last words of these phrases to maximize the emotional delivery. They represent the location in which the action is set, the breast into which the dying soldier is pulled, the vivid corporeal image of the soldier’s wounds, and the blending of time, warning, and action implicit in the restoration of “his dark will.”

Table 5.4: Tippett’s Setting of Lewis’s “The Dancer”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“The Dancer”</th>
<th>Rhyme / Syllable</th>
<th>Accent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘He’s in his grave and on his head</td>
<td>a / 8</td>
<td>u u u x u u x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I dance, [dance,]’ the lovely dancer said,</td>
<td>a / 8 [9]</td>
<td>u x [x] u xu xu x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘My feet like fireflies [, like fireflies, fireflies] illume</td>
<td>b / 7 (8) [12]</td>
<td>u x u x(u)[u xu xu] ux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The choking blackness [, blackness] of his tomb.’</td>
<td>b / 8 [10]</td>
<td>u xu xu [xu] u u x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Had he not died we would have wed,</td>
<td>a / 8</td>
<td>u u u x u u x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And still I’d dance,’ the dancer said,</td>
<td>a / 8</td>
<td>u u u xu u x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘To keep the creeping [, creeping, creeping] sterile doom</td>
<td>b / 8 [12]</td>
<td>u u u xu [xu xu] xu x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of the darkness [, darkness] of my womb.’</td>
<td>b / 8 [10]</td>
<td>u u u xu [xu] u u x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Our love was always ringed with dread</td>
<td>a / 8</td>
<td>u x u xu xu x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of death, [death, death, of death]’ the lovely dancer said,</td>
<td>a / 8 [12]</td>
<td>u x [x x u x] u xu xu x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘And so I danced [, I danced, I danced, danced] for his delight</td>
<td>c / 8 [13]</td>
<td>u x u x [u x ux] u u ux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And scorched the blackened core of night</td>
<td>c / 8</td>
<td>u x u xu xu x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With passion bright’, the dancer said—</td>
<td>a / 8</td>
<td>u xu x u xu x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘And now I dance [, dance, dance] to earn my bread.’</td>
<td>a / 8 [10]</td>
<td>u u u x [x] u x u x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“The Dancer” is uniformly octasyllabic, though Lewis resorts to a three-syllable pronunciation of the word “fireflies” in order to produce the eighth foot. Tippett leaves it to the singer to execute choices of diction—particularly as it relates to the internal syllable of “fireflies” (See Example 5.16). Tippett’s use of textual repetition changes Lewis’s intended parity.
Mellers finds the rhythm of the song to be “a more extravagant version of the Purcellian tension between vocal inflexion and physical dance movement.” Circling in imitation of the dancer, Lewis’s narrator perpetually returns to the alternating constructions of what “the lovely dancer said” and “the dancer said.” Figuratively, the young soldier’s mind is spinning this scenario round and round. The circular motion of the accompaniment is, in fact, the underlying feature that evinces the song’s dance nature and Tippett’s obvious allusion to Purcell, even down to the use of hemiola (See Example 5.17). The contrary motion cadential pattern is repeated between each verse.

Among the most arresting features of this song that distinguish it from the rest of the cycle is the use of quoted speech by the narrator throughout the poem. Following Tippett’s ideal of a

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40 Mellers, p. 235.
single narrative voice, this poem represents a daydream—or nightmare—in which the young, entrenched soldier fears for the life of his beloved. Pitted against the narrator’s fears is a musical delicacy that evinces a stark disparity with the emotional heaviness of both this poem and the surrounding songs. This is seen most clearly in Tippett’s lilting treatment of “dance” at quite a fast tempo (See Example 5.18).

Tippett makes yet another challenging demand of the vocalist in “The Dancer” on the word “passion” at 17.3.6 – 17.3.8. This is suggestive of the Baroque gestures evident in the piano part throughout the song (See Example 5.19). Whereas Tippett’s piano writing necessitates virtuosic capabilities throughout the cycle, “passion” embodies the single occurrence of the voice being asked to sing melismatically. In this instance, the narrator—while quoting from the transient imaginings of his lover’s voice in his absence—may indeed be taking some pleasure in the memory of passionate moments that he shared with her.
This song is significant for its textual repetition, which is Tippett’s most prevalent in the cycle. He employs the device on twenty-seven occasions in single, double, triple, and quadruple repetitions of a word. Tippett leans on specific moments in the text, elevating and highlighting the weight of certain words, while also expressing the phrase differently than Lewis originally intended. Such emphases and additions serve to destabilize the formal structure of the poem that Lewis had created. As if Lewis’s scenario were not dire enough, Tippett repeats variants of “dance,” “dancer,” and “danced” twelve times, followed by decreasing numbers of statements of “fireflies,” “death,” “creeping,” “darkness,” and “blackness.” While the poem certainly depicts the locations of both the “tomb” and the dancer’s “womb,” Tippett does not choose to repeat them. Similarly, it is clear that this song is imagined in an undetermined future of the narrator’s creation, yet that future is never made explicit.

Table 5.5: Tippett’s Setting of Keyes’s “Remember Your Lovers”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Remember Your Lovers”</th>
<th>Syllable</th>
<th>Accent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young men walking the open streets</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>x x xu u xu x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of death’s republic, remember your lovers.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>u x uxu, uxu u xu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When you foresaw with vision prescient</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>u x ux u xu xu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The planet pain rising across your sky</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>u xu x xu ux u x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We fused your sight in our soft burning beauty:</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>u x u u x u x xu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We laid you down in meadows [in meadows] drunk with cowslips</td>
<td>11 [14]</td>
<td>u x u x u xu [u xu] x u xu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And led you in the ways of our bright city.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>u x u u x u x xu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young men who wander death’s vague meadows,</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>x x u x x xu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember your lovers who gave you more than flowers.</td>
<td>12 (13)</td>
<td>u xu u xu u x x u x(u)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When you woke grave chilled at midnight</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>u u x x x u xu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To pace the pavement of your bitter dream</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>u u u xu u x xu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We brought you back to bed and brought you home,</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>u x u u x u x xu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the dark antechamber of desire</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>u u x xuxu u xu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Into our lust as bright as candle-flame.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>u x u x u x xu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young men who lie in the carven beds of death,</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>x x u x u xu x u x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember your lovers who gave you more than dreams.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>u xu u xu u x x u x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the sun shelt’ring your careless head</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>u u x xu u xu x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or from the painted devil your quick eye,</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>u u u xu xu u x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We led you out of terror tenderly</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>u x u u u xu xu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And fooled you into peace with our soft words</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>u x u x u u xu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And gave you all we had and let you die.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>u x x x u u x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young men drunk with death’s unquenchable wisdom,</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>x x x u x uxu u xu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Remember your lovers who gave you more than love.                                   | 12        | u xu x xu u x x u x
The final poem of the cycle, “Remember Your Lovers,” is a series of three free-verse strophes enveloped symmetrically by closed couplets. The closed couplet, or a paired stanza that is repeated with slight variations, acts as an envelope device that structurally encloses the strophes. Formally, a description of the “young men” frames the entirety of the poem, consequently beseeching them directly to: “Remember your lovers” (See Example 5.20). Tippett then draws out the poeticus musicus of the verse in this the single most irregular poem of the cycle.

The first couplet implores the men to remember. Each of the ensuing couplets attributes to those lovers an act of abundant giving: “More than flowers … More than dreams … More than love.” Each couplet is whole unto itself: each lover’s gift alludes to its subject. For example, in the second closed couplet, the “flowers” refer back to “death’s vague meadows.” In the third, the “dreams” occur in “the carven beds of death.” Finally, in the concluding closed couplet, “love” itself looks back to the “unquenchable wisdom” bequeathed in youth’s final bacchanalia. Tippett’s setting utilizes only a single instance of repetition in the sixth line of the poem, “in meadows,” falling into the category of location-oriented echoes.
Illustrating his sense of communal loss and collective responsibility, Tippett creates a consistent motivic element at the four instances when Keyes begins a line with the pronoun “we.” The rhythmic shape is always the same: a half note on “we,” followed by an eighth-note triplet for each ensuing verb, which occurs at 19.1.1, 19.2.2, 21.2.2 (See Example 5.21), as well as at 23.3.2. In each instance Tippett makes a noticeable harmonic shift.


At the start of the song, Tippett plays with silence. The final phrase of the piano in the previous song, “The Dancer,” is an ascending compound third moving to a double-octave B-flat. Thus the initial pitch of the fifth song is ringing in the performance space, waiting for the singer to begin the conclusion of the cycle, which he or she does alone. Because there had not been moments of unaccompanied singing in the cycle until this point, the silence speaks all the more loudly.

Tippett’s repeated use of the rising perfect fifth on “Young men,” is harrowing for its pronounced reminder of the military bugle call, *The Last Post*, as mentioned in Chapter Three.
The extraordinary knowledge that its young poet had scarcely experienced the loss of love that the poem portrays adds poignancy to Tippett’s setting. It is unlikely that one could hear Keyes’s poetry and resist considering how he could write such preternaturally wise, emotional, and devastating poetry at his age. For The Heart’s Assurance, the prescience of “Remember Your Lovers” serves as the cycle’s decisive epicedium.\(^4\)

And let us not forget that this is a song cycle. The title and overarching theme of Keyes’s poem, “Remember Your Lovers,” links the cycle’s conclusion with Lewis’s opening poem, “Song: Oh journeyman.” For while Lewis’s poem addresses Death prowling through every street, Keyes’s poem acknowledges the very streets on which Death’s victims would suddenly travel. Lewis’s poem is concerned with an infinite journey and eternal transfiguration, while Keyes’s poem points to the wisdom that is only gained in dying. In other words, Tippett ends in much the same way he began. Indeed, he relates not only the texts of the poems, but also the texture of the accompaniment. The roiling virtuosity of the piano in the first piece is recalled in the final song. After the cycle’s final cadence, one can imagine the entire cycle beginning again with the introductory turns of “Song: Oh journeyman.” And, in combining the two voices of the poets in this way, linking their interrelated texts, Tippett creates a unified theme, one that is as hopeful as it is lamenting. He also emphasizes the first person narrative of the singer, by stressing the concept of remembrance. The narrative voice that Tippett creates is concerned with the fear of being forgotten, of disappearing, or of being

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\(^4\) From the Greek, meaning funeral song, an epicedium is a song of grieving in praise of a dead person and is typically sung over their corpse; Cuddon, p. 273. This is particularly relevant to the idea of calling out over the bodies lying in “death’s vague meadows” strewn across the fields of death.
voiceless. In that sense, Tippett conjoins these voices to represent an existential concern that is shared by all of humanity: our search for meaning and our desire to be remembered.42

Keyes’s and Lewis’s voices unite to bring about the promise of a future where all those lost to war, suicide, and death will experience transfiguration and live on. They will live on not just in an individual’s personal memory, but in the universal memory. Therefore, the texts combine with both the musical setting and through performance to embody an overall psychological experience. This actively allows the trauma that inspired their creation—the texts, their manipulation, and the musical response—to be incorporated into the consciousness of the participants and the audience.

Because Allinson was Tippett’s kindred spirit, her suicide was an extraordinary event in his life. The choice she made compelled Tippett to deal with its consequences in his own life. In Jungian terms, an event can cause a “shadow” to invade an individual’s consciousness and seek to be integrated.43 Jung defined the shadow as an aspect of the human personality about which an individual is unaware. The shadow resides in the subconscious. The integration of that shadow into one’s persona is the result of both an awareness of its existence and its healing.44 Tippett’s response to this event, or the “shadow” that it revealed in his own life, probably made the poetry of Keyes and Lewis all the more resonant. The cycle is therefore the product of Tippett’s struggle with his

42 John Donne expressed the concern in his Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions, the seventeenth Meditation: “All mankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated; God employs several translators; some pieces are translated by age, some by sickness, some by war, some by justice; but God’s hand is in every translation, and his hand shall bind up all our scattered leaves again for that library where every book shall lie open to one another.”


44 In 1937, Jung delivered a series of lectures that are collected in Psychology and Religion: West and East (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969). In the translation from 1969, Jung writes, “If you imagine someone who is brave enough to withdraw all his projections, then you get an individual who is conscious of a pretty thick shadow. Such a man has saddled himself with new problems and conflicts. He has become a serious problem to himself, as he is now unable to say that they do this or that, they are wrong, and they must be fought against. He lives in the ‘House of the Gathering.’ Such a man knows that whatever is wrong in the world is in himself, and if he only learns to deal with his own shadow he has done something real for the world. He has succeeded in shouldering at least an infinitesimal part of the gigantic, unsolved social problems of our day,” p. 140. Such a sentiment must have resonated with Tippett.
response to grief. This further illuminates Tippett’s choice of the subtitle for the cycle: *Love under the shadow of death*. Moreover, *The Heart's Assurance* is not a result of the *destruction* of its poetry, as Tippett had asserted. Tippett united these voices and in so doing he created an incredible musical setting for them that surely indicates he did not destroy the poetry.
Chapter 6: Early Performance History

“The sound of the songs hangs in my head as though they were someone else’s.”

At the inauguration of the Festival of Britain on 3 May 1951, King George VI proudly stated, “Two world wars have brought us grievous loss of life and treasure; and though the nation has made a splendid effort towards recovery, new burdens have fallen upon it and dark clouds still overhang the whole world. Yet this is no time for despondency. I see this Festival as a symbol of Britain’s abiding courage and vitality.”

Out of this atmosphere of war Tippett’s cycle was conceived and composed, and even its première occurred in the war’s shadow. Four days after the King’s declaration, the first performance of *The Heart’s Assurance* took place on 7 May 1951 at the Wigmore Hall, London. The recital was a part of the London Season of the Arts programming, the first of “Six Recitals of English Song,” between 7 May and 11 June of that year. The Festival of Britain resulted after years of preparation by the Labour government, who planned a nationwide Festival of the Arts. Tandem events occurred

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1 Schuttenhelm, *SLMT*, pp. 364-365; Tippett to Anna Kallin.
2 King George VI, “The King’s Faith in the Future,” *The Times*, Friday, May 4, 1951. Additionally, there are numerous video clips of King George VI and the television reporting of the Festival available on the Internet.
4 In this recital, Pears and Britten programmed: Rosseter, “When Laura Smiles”; Dowland, “In Darkness”; Campion, “Shall I Come Sweet Love”; Jones, “Love’s God is a Boy”; Campion, “The Cypress Curtain of the Night”; Dowland, “Thou Mighty God”; Britten, *Canticle No. 1: My Beloved Is Mine*; Tippett, *The Heart’s Assurance*; Bridge, “Go Not Happy Day”; Holst, “Persephone”; Vaughan Williams, “When Icicles Hang by the Wall”; Moeran, “Youth is Pleasure”; Berkeley, “Eia Mater” from his *Stabat Mater*; Britten “Fish in the Unruffled Lakes”; and, Coleridge, “Love Went A-Riding.” It is important to remember that the initial venue and occasion for the cycle’s première was to have been the Edinburgh Festival the previous year. See Appendix I of this dissertation.
in twenty of the United Kingdom’s cities. In the wake of the Second World War, the Festival committee intended to portray to the world a “unified” and powerful Britain “in need of edifying entertainment.” In this climate, Tippett’s response to war in his cycle was perfectly placed. *The Heart’s Assurance* addressed war’s realities earnestly, all the while maintaining a shred of hope for the future.

**The Creators’ Approaches from their Performance Editions**

Only a pair of performances by Pears and Britten occurred. In order to consider the early performance history of *The Heart’s Assurance*, which focuses primarily on Peter Pears, we are fortunate to have access to previously unavailable documents in the form of both Pears’s and Britten’s original copies of the published scores they used in performance. These primary source materials give us invaluable insights into the practical and interpretative considerations of singer and pianist alike.

The markings in Pears’s personal copy of the published score, which remained in his personal study in The Red House until his death in 1986, begin in his hand with a light pencil inscription of his initials on the front paper cover: “P.P.” Contained loose inside this score is a torn-out sheet containing the poetry from the program booklet for the first performance. It is possible, especially since the program is ripped and apparently not preserved as a sentimental keepsake, that Pears used it to read the poems to the audience prior to singing the cycle. There is evidence in the Bradley Collection (an extensive hand-written record of concert attendance currently held in the

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5 Lew, pp. 27-32.
6 Conekin, p. 9.
7 GB-ALh 2.9400542.
Archives of the Royal College of Music in London) that Pears read the poetry to the audience at a performance less than two years after the première. That occasion was a concert by Pears, Noel Mewton-Wood, pianist, and Dennis Brain, the eminent horn player, at the Victoria and Albert Museum on the evening of 25 January 1953. In attendance was the librarian Lionel James Herbert.

8 Dr. Paul Banks, unpublished keynote paper delivered to the Britten in Context Conference at Liverpool-Hope University, 10-12 June 2010. After hearing Dr. Banks deliver his keynote about the significance of this unusual and firsthand accounting of concert attendance in London, it seemed possible that material might exist in this collection regarding early performances of The Heart's Assurance. This was the case, in Bradley’s hand-sewn fascicle of personal notes and impressions covering 1 January – March 6, 1953. The fascinating perspective these reflections present to the researcher is not that of the erudite academic or well-schooled performer—either of whom may have had axes to grind—but insights from a well-attuned ear with no formal training. Thus Bradley’s reporting, absent any known biases, has a credibility that might not be found in reviews from periodicals or newspapers; or perhaps a genuine love of music that is sometimes lost by professionals. Bradley was an avid concertgoer and the fascicles, which range from 1936 to 1953, afford a wealth of repertoire and reception history details that are ripe for the picking. For instance, Bradley saw twenty-nine performances of Peter Grimes during a seven-year period. The Bradley Fascicles are part of the collection at the Center for Performance History and the Archives of the Royal College of Music, Hammersmith, GB-Lcm CPH.
Bradley (1898-1953), who wrote: “P.P. sang as beautifully as I have ever heard him & put the audience considerably in his debt by reciting each poem (the words not being given in the
programme) before singing it” (See Illustration II for an image from the Bradley fascicles; see Illustration III for an image of the torn-out page from the first performance).

On the whole, Pears’s copy of the music contains far more hieroglyphics than Britten’s, and there is a pervasive numbering of beats within rhythmically complicated measures. Numbering is evident throughout the score in red, turquoise-green, and lead pencil, as well as blue ballpoint. On the first page and one system of page two, Pears underlines the text in red pencil. Thereafter, the text is entirely underlined in turquoise-green pencil. Pears’s breath markings appear throughout the score in lead and turquoise-green pencil, as well as blue ballpoint. His breath markings show careful attention to the demands of the cycle, with a focus on pacing and stamina (e.g. ample allowance for breaths throughout the score). As in a conductor’s orchestral score, Pears also separates staves with double lines in blue ballpoint. Straight horizontal lines in blue ballpoint mark the strong beats within bars above the vocal line. Copious crescendi and decrescendi marks riddle the pages of the score, often in virtually every bar (See Illustration IV).

Illustration IV. Peter Pears’s Markings in His Personal Copy of the Published Score. GB-ALb 2-9400542. 4.4.1 – 4.2.2.

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9 This manner of score preparation remained consistent throughout Pears’s performance career. This is evident by an examination of his personal scores, and thus lends insight into how he learned and prepared a piece of music.
Pears obviously had a very clear idea of the mood his protagonist endeavored to create. Above the vocal line “She offered you,” in the opening song of the cycle at 3.1.1, Pears has written: “Smile!” as if to imply that the very thought of her brings joy and to reflect Tippett’s dolce marking (See Illustration V). Likewise, in the third verse at 3.4.2, Pears writes “Lonely” twice in the margin above and beside the bar, as a reminder of both the text of the repeated descending figure and the mood (See Illustration V).

Above the second song of the cycle, Pears inscribed: “Bravura” in the margin, obviously wanting to portray a stronger vocal quality. Beneath the title, he has written: “Ironic!” tapping into the very nature of the song’s bittersweet text. Over the title of the third song, we catch a glimpse of Pears the singer, writing: “Too much / wobble on low notes – ah!” Here Pears is reminding himself that if he pushes in the lower register of his voice, the result will be a tremulous wobble. Imbuing a tone with the /a/ vowel is generally accepted as a way of brightening or lightening a dark or heavy vocal mixture. The third song is a song of extremes, containing the lowest sustained singing of the cycle as well as its highest pitch, a high B-natural. Singing the opening phrases with a timbre that is too dark, hence heavier, would make the final climactic phrase of the song, “Of the god-faced centaur,” at 13.4.1, more vocally perilous than it already is. At the top of the second page of “Compassion,” Pears corrects “blood-stained” to be “blood-soaked” in blue ballpoint. As Tippett’s letter of 22 October 1952 indicates, Pears’s correction of the text likely occurred after the first performance.¹⁰

Also, in the fourth song, in the right-hand margin alongside 15.5.6, in the middle of one of the fast-moving passages on the word “dance,” Pears wrote the first phrase of 16.1.1 (See Illustration VI), presumably to facilitate either a fast or silent page turn. This type of indication

¹⁰ See Chapter Two, n4, p. 30.
Illustration VI. Peter Pears’s Markings in His Personal Copy of the Published Score. GB-ALb 2-9400542. 15.5.1 – 15.5.6 and marginalia (which is 16.1.1).

occurs again at both the top and bottom margins of 21.1.2 and 21.5.2. Both of these instances imply that Pears used this copy in performance; it was not uncommon for Pears to use music in performances. In all likelihood, Pears may have also used the music when he was recording the cycle in the studio or performing live radio broadcasts.

Before the fifth and final song of the cycle, Pears penned into the left margin: “A Woman Speaks:” (See Illustration VII). This is not to imply that someone would actually speak aloud, but may have been a conscious editorial decision by Pears, and perhaps Britten, to suggest that the voice of the narrator is that of a woman. If the narrator were to “speak” (e.g. sing) these potentially suggestive lines of text, as a man, especially the phrase “Young men… remember your lovers,” there might be an inference of homosexuality. Today it may seem an excessive precaution, but we do know what Pears, Britten, Tippett (and others), had reason to be extremely sensitive to contemporary attitudes to homosexuality and its practitioners. Considering that homosexuality was illegal in England, it was evidently unthinkable that a man should say those words. From Keyes’s published poem, however, there is no implication that the narrator is a woman. Furthermore, in a letter to Britten prior to the cycle’s première, Tippett wrote: “In the last song, ‘Remember Your Lovers,’ I seem so clearly to hear Peter calling to the young men in the fields of death, even though
formally it may be supposed to be a woman. I can’t quite tell why, but the man’s voice seems right-er – and Peter’s voice particularly.”

Clearly, Tippett did not envision a woman narrator at all, so the idea seems to have been entirely Pears’s.

An additional interpretative marking in Pears’s score marks the entrance of the voice in the final song as *mezzo forte* rather than *forte* (See Illustration VII). However, Tippett notates the unaccompanied vocal entrance *ad libitum*, thus Pears’s annotation *mezzo forte* was probably related to the dynamic pacing of the cycle and physical endurance required considering both the length of the overall cycle and its final song. Likewise, since the entrance of the piano is marked *subito fortissimo*, a singer would have to gauge what his capabilities were at that moment. If one starts too loudly, there is no room for dynamic increase, whereas a slightly softer entrance would allow for increased volume. Pears writes a *fermata* above tenuto markings flanking either side of the pickup to 18.2.2,
implying a Lüftpause between the bars, perhaps to accommodate the pianist’s appoggiatura or to emphasize the initial consonant of “lovers” (See Illustration VII).

Pears was also particularly conscious of the enunciation the song required, underscoring the phrase at 22.3.1 as: “Young men who lie in the “carven beds of death”” so as to emphasize the narrative quality (or, alternately, reminding himself of the need to elevate the diction level). Additionally, the emphases may have served to foreground the morbid allusion to sarcophagi (i.e. “carven beds of death”). At 24.4.2, Pears writes a large break in pencil following an exclamation point sketched into the previous vocal staff. This allows a dramatic crescendo into the upper passaggio, facilitating the temporal space for the piano’s left-hand appoggiatura. The fermata that has been written over the appoggiatura is equally important, ending one thought and preparing the concluding statement of the piece, underneath the text “drunk with death’s unquenchable,” at the same bar, he writes in capital letters: “SLOW.” Prior to the final utterance of “Remember,” at 24.5.1, Pears inscribes pianissimo in the accompaniment. He also strikes the mezzo piano dynamic of the vocal line in favor of piano. Lastly, Pears marks a Lüftpause between “…lovers who…” in the penultimate bar. This distinct

Illustration VIII. Peter Pears’s Markings in His Personal Copy of the Published Score. GB-ALb 2-9400542. 24.4.1 – 24.5.5.
pause further emphasizes the lovers who are to be remembered, those “who gave you more than love” (See Illustration VIII).

Benjamin Britten’s personal copy of the score also bears his initials: “B.B.” is inscribed in Britten’s hand first in pencil, and then overwritten in blue ballpoint pen. Britten’s score is rife with his pencil markings of fingerings and phrasing. There is also frequent “re-scoring” of the part indicating Britten’s practical hand distributions. This is especially true in the first song, where the unison passage of the first two bars contain Britten’s delineation separating the right hand from the left hand—a practical decision not notated in the piano score (See Illustration IX).

Illustration IX. Benjamin Britten’s Markings in His Personal Copy of the Published Score. GB-ALb 2-9400539. 1.1.1 – 1.1.2.

Britten’s annotations in the second song primarily concern pedal markings, rubato markings, a pair of decrescendo markings in the first bar, and cautionary accidentals. The third song contains eight, red-pencil breath markings, so that Britten would remember to “breathe with” Pears. Likewise, there are dynamic markings, accents, tenuto markings, and further indicators of which hand

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12 GB-ALb 2-9400539.
should carry through which parts of phrases, as well as penciling in fingerings for technically difficult phrases.

Britten also corrects a rhythmic error in the printed score at the third beat of 13.3.3 in the right hand (See Illustration X); the error has not been amended in subsequent reprintings of the score (See Example 6.1). Britten has essentially created a thirty-second note mordent to accommodate the additional unclear rhythms, over which he has written *animando*. It is conceivable that the engraver considered the third beat of the right-hand as a triplet figure. (As it relates to errors in the Schott Edition, the first page of the score still retains a textual error at 1.4.3, printing: *’you and the / Naked in Eden,”* instead of Lewis’s *’you and she / Naked in Eden.”* The underscore denotes the error.)

Illustration X. Benjamin Britten’s Markings in His Copy of the Published Score. GB-ALb 2-9400539. 13.3.3.

Example 6.1. Rhythmic error at 13.3.3 in Schott Ed. 10158.

In the fourth song of the cycle, Britten’s circular groupings of notes at 14.1.4, 14.2.4, and 14.5.1, indicate that he will play them with his left hand (See Illustration XI). While this was unnecessary in the prior two songs, it here helps to clarify his visual cue from the keyboard, and orders these figures uniformly. Britten retains this circling virtually every time the figure occurs: at 15.3.1, 15.3.6, 16.3.4, 16.4.2, and 17.1.2. As before, fingerings and slurs are penciled into the score. There is also a large breath mark inscribed in lead pencil at 17.1.1, the pickup into 17.1.2. Further “reminder” accidentals are marked in the final song, as well as *rubato* markings and fingerings. Red
pencil markings denote the breaths that Pears needed in order to deliver the song’s vulnerability and passion.

In the fifth song, at the bottom of page nineteen, Britten has written in the next full chord for 20.1.1 in the margin above the dog-eared, difficult page turn. The piano accompaniment at 20.1.1 is marked with slurs extending into the margin indicating they are to sound until the voice enters for the second “Young men…” at 20.2.1 (See Illustration XII).

An accelerando is written in at 21.1.2 and complicated vocal rhythms are aligned with the specific accompaniment with lead pencil markings in numerous places. Distinct separation of right and left hand movement is marked at 23.1.2 and 23.3.1, and Britten writes in the pickup beat for the
left hand in the margin after 23.5.2 (See Illustration XIII), anticipating the page turn to the final page of the cycle, at 24.1.1.

Illustration XIII. Benjamin Britten’s Markings in His Personal Copy of the Published Score. GB-Alb 2-9400539. 23.4.1 – 23.5.2 and marginalia.

Responding to a letter from Britten that is now lost, Tippett wrote: “Don’t fret at the accompaniment problems Ben dear. You bring such sensitive musicianship to everything you do with Peter that shifts and turns of the hand to simplify anything will mean very little.”

Unquestionably, the piano accompaniment that Tippett composed is technically difficult. Although Tippett was a pianist himself, one wonders if he could have performed his own score. None of his extant correspondence speaks further to the cycle’s accompanimental difficulties. However, Britten’s remark in a later communication may belie a sense that the piano writing was not just “difficult,” but clumsily written (See Chapter Seven). Within five weeks of the cycle’s première on 7 May 1951, Britten had ceased to accompany Pears for this work.

Britten’s second performance of the full cycle occurred at the Fourth Aldeburgh Festival of Music on 13 June 1951 in the Jubilee Hall. This was also his last performance of the complete work.

13 Schuttenhelm, SLMT, p. 203; undated letter.
Britten’s reasons for abandoning the performance of the cycle may never be known. It may have been due to the compositional responsibilities connected with his Festival of Britain commission, the opera *Billy Budd* (premièred on 1 December 1951); the upcoming Coronation opera *Gloriana* (premièred on 8 June 1953); or his distaste for maintaining the technical requirements necessary to keep the accompaniment fresh in his fingers. A number of sources attribute his departure as the cycle’s pianist to work on *Gloriana*. But the fact that he withdrew from further performances entirely and handed the role over to the Australian pianist Noel Mewton-Wood suggests a different reason: his disdain for the cycle. In previous years, Britten had almost exclusively accompanied Pears in recital. Nevertheless, Britten was destined to play the fifth song of the cycle again, in an ironic reflection of the cycle’s dedicatee—whose life was lost to suicide—for the Noel Mewton-Wood Memorial Concert at London’s Wigmore Hall on 28 January 1955. Like the cycle’s dedicatee, Francesca Allinson, Mewton-Wood was also a victim of suicide, in his case 5 December 1953.

*Other Significant Known Performances of the Cycle*

In the first three years of the cycle’s life, there were a handful of performances throughout the United Kingdom, which primarily featured Pears as the singer. In the subsequent quarter-

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14 Robert Hewison, “‘Happy Were He’: Benjamin Britten and the *Gloriana* Story,” in *Britten’s “Gloriana”: Essays and Sources*, edited by Paul Banks (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1993). “The problem, of course, was that an opera would take time to write, and Britten had a number of other projects and commitments, including concerts with Pears that Pears for one was reluctant to drop. It was this, rather than a desire for prestige, that led Britten to suggest that ‘his Coronation opera was made in some way official, not quite commanded but at least accepted as part of the celebrations,’ ” p. 11; quoting also from Lord Harewood, *The Tongs and the Bones* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), p. 135.

15 Although a thorough reception history of the early performances is beyond the scope of the current study—and would be a welcome addition to the field—one review from the October 1951 volume of *The Musical Quarterly* is of note. In it, Wilfred Mellers, who would one day extol the composition, writes: “[Tippett’s] new song cycle, *The Heart’s Assurance*, is difficult to perform, difficult to listen to, and (I find) difficult to make up one’s mind about.” Mellers continues that “while the elegiac temper [of the poetry] has obviously meant much to Tippett, I feel the voice does not
century, there was by contrast a comparative dearth of performances. The second performance of the cycle took place a fortnight later on 22 May 1951 at the London Contemporary Music Centre. This time the cycle was sung by the tenor Max Worthley, accompanied by the pianist who would become synonymous with the cycle’s pianistic interpretation in Britten’s absence, Noel Mewton-Wood. Worthley had premiered the roles of Clem and Alfred in Britten’s *The Little Sweep* on 14 June 1949 at the Jubilee Hall in Aldeburgh as part of the Second Aldeburgh Festival.

Just a month after their London performance of the cycle, Pears and Britten reprised the work for the Fourth Aldeburgh Festival. The following month, on 13 July 1951, the soprano Arda Mandikian gave the first performance of the cycle by a woman, accompanied by Margaret Kitchin at the piano. Kitchin would be the dedicatee of Tippett’s Second Piano Sonata in 1962 and in 1951 wed Howard Hartog, Tippett’s publisher at Schott’s; Mandikian created the role of Miss Jessel in Britten’s *The Turn of the Screw* on 14 September 1954 at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice. Mandikian and Kitchin’s performance was the third performance of the cycle during the Festival of Britain.

Evidence of an intended early performance that did not materialize comes from Leonard Isaacs of the BBC Music Department, who wrote an internal memo to the BBC Music Book Manager on 5 February 1952:

> For some time Michael Tippett has been looking for a suitable woman singer to sing this cycle, and has made one or two unsuccessful trials. He now tells me that Elisabeth Schwarzkopf is prepared to sing it with Margaret Kitchin at the piano. The piano part is excessively difficult. I have heard Miss Kitchin play it extremely well. We had originally left a

Hold its own against the fantastic complexity of the piano part, which achieves an extraordinarily rich sonority even when the texture is tenuous,” p. 584. Such an argument foreshadows Pears’s essay the following decade in the Tippett *Festschrift*, which alleges much the same criticism.

Still another early review in the September 1951 edition of *The Musical Times* covers Mandikian’s and Kitchin’s July performance at Friends’ House, commenting that Mandikian “interpreted *The Heart’s Assurance* not as a modern intellectual, but as a singer who cares more for good vocal phrases than for indifferent poems or subtler inner musical relationships,” p. 415. It seems obvious that the reviewer is offering a comparison between this, the fourth performance of the cycle by its third portrayer, and those that came before it: Pears and, ostensibly, Worthley. There is a clear distinction inferred between dramatic interpretation and “good vocal phrases,” e.g. a judgment on quality of voice over textual presentation; there is also an appraisal of the “indifferent poems”; and it appears that sheer voice is esteemed over any qualities associated with defining “subtler inner musical relationships”—although this last statement would seemingly imply the pronounced execution of contrapuntal piano writing more than vocal refinement.

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space for the work on Sunday March 30th, but in view of the fact that the first performance of ‘Armide’ has now to be placed that night there is no space immediately available for the Tippett cycle. I should, however, like to pre-record with Schwartzkopf and Kitchin with a view to suitable placing when the opportunity occurs, and I understand that both artists are available on March 10th, morning and afternoon, March 13th, afternoon, and March 14th and 15th any time. If you could agree to treat this work as a piece of chamber music (its only successful performance to date having been given by Pears and Britten) I should like them to be booked for one of those times.^{17}

While records indicate that the Schwartzkopf-Kitchin performance never materialized, one can only imagine what a significant document this performance would have been for the cycle’s history as well as for posterity. Isaacs’s memo also infers that Tippett had not been satisfied with Mandikian’s performance, although she remains unnamed in the memo. He does, however, comment on Kitchin’s successful interpretation of the “excessively difficult” piano part. The implication that the cycle should be handled as if it were chamber music by virtue of its “only” successful performance resulting from the Pears and Britten partnership is an interesting point. Did Isaacs mean that *The Heart’s Assurance* should be included on a broadcast alongside instrumental chamber works with voice?^{18}

On 21 May 1952, Pears and Mewton-Wood pre-recorded what was to be their only recording of the cycle for the BBC Third Programme. The performance was broadcast on 28 May 1952, as stipulated by an extant BBC Contract.^{18} In the period following the cycle’s première, between 12 July 1952 and 23 February 1953, Pears and Mewton-Wood seem to have given at least seven additional performances of the cycle. Given the complicated nature of tracing all performances of a work, the following list does not intend to represent a comprehensive history of the cycle’s performance, but it does trace an early grouping of concerts.^{19} The performances were 12

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^{17} BBC WAC, RCONT1, Michael Tippett, Composer, file 1C, 1946-55, 5 Feb 1952.
^{18} BBC WAC, RCONT1, Peter Pears, Artists, file 2, 1952-55.
^{19} These performances were culled from the Britten-Pears Foundation programmes, the BBC Written Archives, and records of recitals printed in *The Musical Times*. For an additional note of clarity, although performances of the cycle might well have occurred in conservatory settings in England, every attempt has been made to chronicle the known public performances that have been reported upon. It is interesting to observe that in the back matter of *The Musical
July 1952 in Dartington Hall, Devon; 9 October 1952, which was a broadcast of the Thursday Concert on the Home Service, on which the pianist was not specified;20 15 October 1952 in Camberwell, London; 5 November 1952 at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham; 25 January 1953 at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, the performance noted previously as having been attended by Bradley; 28 January 1953 a studio broadcast on the BBC Third Programme, on which the pianist was not specified;21 7 February 1953 in St. Peter’s Hall, Bournemouth; 20 February 1953 in the Parish Church, Milngavie, Scotland; and, 23 February 1953 in the Freemasons’ Hall, Edinburgh, Scotland. With regard to the two concerts for which a pianist was not specified in the contract, it seems logical to assume that Mewton-Wood took that role. Not only are the dates immediately proximate to other concerts on which Mewton-Wood was the pianist, but the difficulty of the accompanimental requirements also supports this assumption. In fact, copies of The Radio Times at the British Library show that Mewton-Wood was indeed the pianist on both of these concerts. For the former concert, “The Thursday Concert” was a 7:30 PM concert including the Mozart Kantate Die ihr des unermesslichen Weltalls, K. 619, Beethoven’s An die ferne Geliebte, Debussy’s Troise Ballades de François Villon, and Tippett’s The Heart’s Assurance, before an audience in the concert hall of the Broadcasting House in London.22 The second concert for which BBC WAC does not specify the other performers was also found in The Radio Times, and this time Pears was joined by the horn player Dennis Brain and again by Mewton-Wood. The concert was

Quarterly in July 1952, The Heart’s Assurance is advertised alongside other Tippett compositions as a cycle “for soprano and piano” by the New York music importers Associated Music Publishers, Inc. (In the same list, Boyhood’s End is clearly listed “for tenor and piano.”) The cycle certainly may have received further performances by women. However, it seems an effort was made to market the work to the widest consuming audience (e.g. sopranos); it is commonly accepted that the number of sopranos far exceeds the number of tenors. Sales issues aside, given the tenor for whom The Heart’s Assurance was originally composed, one might at least expect to see “for soprano or tenor and piano” in the score. The published Schott Edition denotes the cycle: “for voice and piano.”

20 BBC WAC, RCONT1, Peter Pears, Artists, file 2, 1952-55.
21 BBC WAC, RCONT1, Peter Pears, Artists, file 2, 1952-55.
broadcast at 10:00 PM on the Third Programme and included Schubert’s “Auf dem Strom” (with horn obbligato), Beethoven’s An die ferne Geliebte, Hindemith’s Sonata for horn and piano, and Tippett’s The Heart’s Assurance. The Scottish dates in February 1953 are the last known performances of the cycle by Pears and Mewton-Wood.

The Noel Mewton-Wood Memorial Concert was Pears’s next performance of the cycle. As noted above, that concert took place on 28 January 1955 at the Wigmore Hall in London and was the last performance of even a portion of the cycle—“Remember Your Lovers”—by Pears and Britten. It is fitting that the final song of Tippett’s cycle also closed the Memorial Concert. In a letter to Anna Kallin three weeks after Mewton-Wood’s death, on 28 December 1953, Tippett reflected on The Heart’s Assurance and its strong ties with Mewton-Wood:

> The sound of the songs hangs in my head as though they were someone else’s. Because the mood of death was so signally externalised. As you know, they were written to the memory of Francesca Allinson, who had meditated a long time on Virginia Woolf before she herself jumped off the bridge at Clare into an East Anglian little river. And now, after making the really beautiful record of the songs with Peter Pears, it’s Noel Mewton-Wood.

More than a decade and an ocean may well have separated that performance from the next. When Tippett was Composer in Residence at the Aspen Music Festival, the work was performed by the young tenor John McCollum, accompanied by Mary Norris, on 16 July 1965, which was clearly prepared in recognition of Tippett’s presence at the Festival. Coincidently, in the same year, Robert Tear performed The Heart’s Assurance in his recital debut in the Freemasons’ Hall at the Edinburgh Festival, the venue at which the cycle was to have had its erstwhile première in 1950; the pianist for this performance is unknown. However, Kitchin’s obituary in The Guardian on 14 July 2008 reports

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24 The Memorial Concert included first performances of Alan Bush’s Two Pieces for Horn and Piano, “Autumn Poem” and “Trent’s Broad Reaches”; Arthur Bliss’s Elegiac Sonnet, setting the poetry of Cecil Day Lewis, also penned for the occasion; and Britten’s Canticle III: Still Falls the Rain, which was dedicated to the memory of Mewton-Wood. The horn player for the Memorial Concert was Dennis Brain, who had performed in many of the Pears and Mewton-Wood recitals.

that she also accompanied Tear on the cycle, although this author has not located any data supporting such performances. Yet it may have been Kitchin who accompanied Tear in Edinburgh, as it was a part of her repertory at the time. Still another decade passed before Tear and pianist Philip Ledger performed the cycle on 18 June 1975 at the Twenty-Eighth Aldeburgh Festival and on 13 July 1975 at the Cheltenham Festival. In North America, the soprano Roxolana Roslak essayed the work accompanied by William Aide for the 1980 CBC Festival Toronto.

Thirty-one years after its première, tenor Philip Langridge performed the cycle with John Constable on 10 October 1982 for the Norwich Triennial Festival. The cycle was next given at Queen Elizabeth Hall on 28 January 1985 as part of the culmination of a series of celebratory concerts honoring Tippett’s eightieth birthday; the soprano Kathryn Harries was accompanied by pianist Meirion Bowen.26 During the week of 25 March 1985, London’s Royal Academy of Music concluded its Tippett Festival from the previous month, and The Heart’s Assurance was performed; no information has been located naming the performers. Langridge—arguably the tenor who inherited Pears’s mantle—and Constable repeated the cycle on 15 October 1986 in the Barbican Centre, London, barely six months after Pears’s death. At the Bath Festival on 6 June 1989, tenor Adrian Thompson and pianist Iain Burnside performed the cycle. The duo repeated The Heart’s Assurance in Cardiff, Wales, in May 1990.

In 1990, Tippett was the featured composer of the Cheltenham International Festival, of which he was President. On 18 July, The Heart’s Assurance was performed—alongside the Songs for Achilles—by the tenor John Mitchinson, accompanied by John Wilson. On 27 September 1990, to celebrate Tippett’s eighty-fifth birthday, the soprano Teresa Cahill premièred Meirion Bowen’s orchestrated version of The Heart’s Assurance under the baton of John Lubbock and the London

26 Schuttenhelm recounts that during the period when he worked with Bowen while preparing SLMT that he would often hear Bowen playing The Heart’s Assurance at the piano. It is as if the work that resonated so profoundly with Tippett was transferred into Bowen’s psyche.
Bach Orchestra. Cahill repeated the performance three days later in a gala for the Kent Opera—of which Tippett was also President—on 30 September at the Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury, conducted by Ivan Fischer.

The Recordings of the Cycle

Six years prior to Philip Langridge’s 1982 performance of the cycle in London, he recorded it with John Constable for release on L’Oiseau-Lyre. Langridge’s recording occurred a quarter century after the cycle had been recorded by Pears and Mewton-Wood, first for the BBC in 1952 and later for release on Decca. It would be two more decades before another commercial recording of The Heart’s Assurance appeared; this recording by the tenor Martyn Hill and pianist Andrew Ball for Hyperion UK coincided with the celebration of Tippett’s ninetieth birthday in 1995. The same year, John Mark Ainsley recorded the orchestrated version of the cycle with the City of London Sinfonia led by Richard Hickox on the Chandos label. In 1997, Margaret Field became the first woman to record the cycle for Redcliffe Recordings in Andrew Ball’s second recording of the

27 Michael Tippett, The Heart’s Assurance: Song Cycle on Poems by Sidney Keyes and Alun Lewis, orchestrated by Meirion Bowen for high voice and orchestra (1990), Schott ED 12382 (London: Schott & Co. Ltd, 1992). Bowen’s instrumentation calls for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, 4 horns, trumpet, harp, percussion (military drum, side drum, suspended cymbal, and triangle), and strings with a minimum number of players indicated as 4.4.3.3.2. Curiously, Bowen removed the dedication to Allinson and instead rededicated it to Carlos Caster; Caster’s identity has not been discovered.
28 Tippett: Song Recital, Philip Langridge, tenor; John Constable, piano, L’Oiseau-Lyre DSLO 14 (stereo), 1976. The original LP was reissued in a multi-CD format after nearly thirty-five years as Tippett, various artists and ensembles, Decca 475 7172 (ADD), 2005.
29 Pears’s 1952 recording with Mewton-Wood was twice released on LP: The Heart’s Assurance and Boyhood’s End, Peter Pears, tenor; Noel Mewton-Wood, piano, Argo RG 15 (mono), 1953; and with the addition of String Quartet No. 2 as Argo DA 34 (mono), 1965. A digitally remastered version of the 1952 recording may be found on Peter Pears: Anniversary Tribute (1910-1986), various artists and ensembles, Decca 478 2345 (ADD), 2010.
30 Songs by Michael Tippett, Martyn Hill, tenor; Andrew Ball, piano, Hyperion Records Ltd CDA66749 (digital), 1995.
31 Sir Michael Tippett: Concerto for Double String Orchestra, John Mark Ainsley, tenor; Richard Hickox, conductor; City of London Sinfonia, Chandos Records Ltd CHAN 9409 (digital), 1995.
work. The following year, soprano Sarah Leonard recorded it accompanied by pianist Malcolm Martineau for Somm Recordings. Finally, the most recent recording to date is the 2005 performance by John Mark Ainsley, this time in recital with the pianist Iain Burnside for Signum Records. Thus, there are seven extant recordings of the work, by a total of six performers.

It remains true, however, that the first recording of the cycle, by Pears and Mewton-Wood, is the benchmark by which all later performances and recordings would be measured. This study will not comment on the recordings of Langridge and Constable, Hill and Ball, Field and Ball, Leonard and Martineau, or Ainsley and Burnside; neither will it assess Bowen’s orchestral version. Suffice it to say, nonetheless, that each of the ensuing recording artists had to have made a choice in their individual performances to either follow or stray from the initial—one might say bona fide—choices recorded by Pears and Mewton-Wood. Yet while comparison invariably muddies artistic discussions in a morass of subjectivity, Pears’s voice defined a generation of British singers and tenors thereafter were faced with their personal response to the distinctive quality of his sound: they would either attempt to imitate him—as many did—or they would respond to the contrary. Interviews with both the late Philip Langridge and Neil Mackie affirm this belief.

It seems right, however, that—in albeit a subjective appraisal—the Pears and Mewton-Wood recording be commented upon. Many have used the term “unique” to describe the timbral qualities of Pears’s voice, which may have been a backhanded compliment. It is this author’s belief that the unique quality of Pears’s voice—his vocal fingerprint, if you will—is the very thing he possessed that is matchless, though indeed many have tried. A reed-like tone of great beauty, capable of equal

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32 British Song, Margaret Field, soprano; Andrew Ball, piano, Redcliffe Records RR 009 (digital), 1995.
34 Remember Your Lovers, John Mark Ainsley, tenor; Iain Burnside, piano, Signum Records Classics SIGCD066 (stereo DDD), 2005.
35 Personal interview, 25 June 2009 at his home in Brook, Surrey.
36 Personal interview, 8 June 2010 at the Royal Academy of Music in London.
measures of stentorian bravura and graceful delicacy, Pears was definitively concerned with the expression and articulation of the text. In his recording of *The Heart’s Assurance*, Pears—at forty-two years of age—is in his prime. Just as Tippett ushers the listener through vastly divergent emotional territory, Pears likewise travails the expressive poles of the cycle with exceptional ease and splendor. Pears explores the ranges of color in his voice to embody the dramatic demands of each piece, drawing out love and loss, fear and suffering.

Mewton-Woods’s virtuosic portrayal of the piano score is to be envied and under his fingertips, allegations of “inflation” seem to disappear. He enjoys a touch that is in turn: clean and crisp in the most demanding of sections, lush and romantic, with fleet articulation. One can only guess what the cycle might have sounded like with Britten at the keyboard, but the interplay between Pears and Mewton-Wood retains a fresh and spontaneous feeling despite the obvious demands of each role. The only criticism that may be leveled at the recording has only to do with the technological limitations of the era in which it was recorded; yet that also presents a marvel at the remarkable one-take recordings of these artists. One regrets, nevertheless, the range of colors that are lost in both the piano and in Pears’s voice due to the recording capabilities of the day.

As the cycle begins, Mewton-Wood imbues the cyclical rotations of “Song: Oh journeyman” with great polish, and the ensemble between piano and voice are executed flawlessly. Pears negotiates the occasionally high tessitura of the vocal line with such finesse that it sounds effortless, his vibrato free and spinning. The second song of the cycle, Pears matches the lightness of Mewton-Wood’s refined introduction with such precise diction that even the voiced opening consonants of the repeated “never” resound with a beauty that belies their caution. Pears sings the demanding *fioratura* passages with a striking exactitude that is perfectly aligned with that of Mewton-Wood.

The pair balances the requisite intensity of the innermost song with great care. Audibly, one certainly notices that Pears takes the most breaths in this piece, yet we are aware of the highest
phrase within the cycle at this song’s climax. It is at this phrase, in the third stanza, that Pears and Mewton-Wood convey the greatest range of sensitivity and use of space between words and musical gestures; while unmarked by Tippett, they build a noticeable rallentando into the penultimate phrase (at 13.3.1 – 13.3.2). Not only does this yield a clarity of silence, focusing the listener in on the unusual text—“to feel the tail, hooves, fur of the god-faced centaur”—but it is also a technically sophisticated choice by Pears, in preparation for the high B-natural, which he executes with passionate abandon.

One cannot describe the fourth song of the cycle, “The Dancer,” without commenting on the ebullient quality that Mewton-Wood establishes at its opening. It sounds as if one is listening to a moment of humor and pure giocoso, which makes the juxtaposition of the text all the more jarring. Yet Pears, too, maintains a gaiety that never betrays the bleak nature of the text creating a danse macabre that is truly disturbing. Pears sings the high A-naturals and high A-flats with great facility, as he does the Purcellian coloratura and internal accents.

The technical range of both artists displays the poignancy of the final song, combining at once the symbolism of The Last Post with the Beethovenian motifs of his Fourth Piano Concerto. Pears is afforded the opportunity to sing unaccompanied, revealing the beauty of his tone and his capability to control the decrescendo impeccably on the high F-natural—that very fifth to which the cycle would descend in its conclusion, an octave lower. Mewton-Wood is able to draw upon a piece from his solo repertoire, the Beethoven Piano Concerto No. 4, which he recorded under Walter Goehr to great acclaim. Together, Pears and Mewton-Wood create a work of such intensity that it is apparent that every phrase has been crafted with the utmost of care. The duo moves seamlessly together, yet Pears’s use of portamenti in connecting words and phrases has an extemporaneous quality. As each verse builds to a crescendo that gives way to the unaccompanied voice, again crying out in vain to the “young men,” Pears intensifies his entreaty. Vocally, Pears’s expressive capabilities
are virtually inexhaustible, and in “Remember Your Lovers,” one hears a sweeping array of such choices.

As Mewton-Wood releases the final chord with Pears, one can imagine hearing the cycle begin again from the top, enclosing the narrator and listener in perpetuity. This recording is significant for precisely that reason: it enwraps the other existing recordings in its historic embrace, casting a shadow—as only the first of something can do—over each subsequent version. Indeed, later versions may improve on many things, due in no small part to advances in recording technology, but they cannot avoid the legacy created by Pears and Mewton-Wood.
Chapter 7: A Postlude

“For Your Tomorrow.”

Pears and the Sixtieth Birthday Festschrift

Published to celebrate Tippett’s sixtieth birthday, Michael Tippett: A Symposium on His Sixtieth Birthday offers many fond remembrances and personal reflections on the composer’s life and work. The book begins with a biographical sketch by Eric Walter White and is followed by thirty-two “tributes and reminiscences” from prominent figures in music, among them Aaron Copland, Hans Werner Henze, Arthur Bliss, Nadia Boulanger, Priaulx Rainier, and Peter Maxwell Davies. Benjamin Britten’s reminiscence is first, and illustrates the longstanding friendship between the two men. While the entries are not in alphabetical order, positioning Britten at the very beginning legitimizes their friendship and national association. Positioned some halfway through the volume is Peter Pears’s contribution, a three-page essay entitled “Song and Text,” which at once praises and lambasts Tippett’s song-settings.

1 Pears’s proposed title of what would become The Heart’s Assurance, referenced in Chapter Two, above.
2 Ian Kemp, editor, Michael Tippett: A Symposium on His Sixtieth Birthday (London: Faber and Faber, 1965). A handful of the contributions are compositions for Tippett by Henze, Karl Amadeus Hartmann, Alexander Goehr, and Davies; there is also poetry by Ursula Vaughan Williams and Herbert Read. Following the personal offerings, are two final sections: The Music (comprised of seven essays, notably “The Vocal Works,” by Peter Evans), a Chronological List of Works, and Selected List of Writings. The twenty-seven-page Evans essay places the vocal works in the context of his overall output, highlighting their relation to the larger works and their interconnections. However, due to the content of Pears’s essay, Evans is compelled to respond in the manner of an apologist.
The inclusion of Britten in the Tippett *Festschrift* necessitated the inclusion of Pears, since the two were unmistakably a joint commodity in British musical culture. Ian Kemp could not have included Britten and excluded Pears. And it was appropriate to include Pears in the Tippett *Symposium*. Between their meeting in the early-1940s and 1965, Pears had performed the first performances of *Boyhood's End* (1943), *A Child of Our Time* (1944), *The Heart's Assurance* (1951), and the *Songs for Achilles* (1961), the latter of which was premièred with guitarist Julian Bream at the Aldeburgh Festival. In recital, Pears also performed Tippett’s *Songs for Ariel* (1962). But it should be noted that Peter Evans, in his essay entitled “The Vocal Works,” felt compelled to spend considerable time responding to Pears’s comments. Evans wrote in an objective attempt to evaluate Tippett’s song output and possibly to counter Pears’s obviously subjective rant.

Britten’s contribution to Tippett’s encomium came shortly after the appearance of his own *Festschrift*. To Tippett, Britten wrote:

> Now it is your turn! A year ago I had one of these ‘memorial’ years and so I know what you are in for. I am sure you will be touched by all the tributes, but I hope you won’t be too embarrassed by all the ‘evaluations’. You must not be made to feel—as I was—that you are already dead and that the musicologists are busy on the corpse! We both have a lot more notes to write yet!

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3 *Songs for Achilles* represents Tippett’s first foray into his exceptional penchant for extracting portions of his own operas and forming cycles around them. The second of the *Songs for Achilles*, “In the tent,” appeared in his opera *King Priam*. Using materials from his opera *The Knot Garden* (1966–69), Tippett would create his extended orchestral cycle, *Songs for Dov* (1969–70). Essentially, Tippett built the cycle around an excerpt from the opera, to which he re-imagines a further series of experiences for the character of Dov. The *Songs for Dov* are operatic in nature vocally and orchestrally and might well be described as monologues. A lengthy discussion of the *Songs for Achilles* and the *Songs for Dov* is warranted, as is Tippett’s extra-operatic character expansion. However, both are beyond the scope of this document.

4 *Songs for Ariel* were composed as incidental music for a 1962 production of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* at the Old Vic Theatre in London. Tippett originally scored them for a small ensemble of woodwinds, harp, timpani, bells, and harpsichord. Because an actor would sing the songs, they maintain a simplicity that allows an untrained singer to interpret them effectively and candidly. Tippett arranged the work again for performance with tenor and harpsichord (or alternately piano) as the miniature cycle, *Songs for Ariel*. This cycle was performed by Pears for the sixtieth birthday gala fêting Tippett in 1965. In the same concert, Pears and Britten performed the first work that Tippett had composed for them, the cantata *Boyhood’s End*.

Britten concluded his contribution with: “I wish your piano parts weren’t so difficult!” For Britten, a superlative pianist with unquestionable technique and facility at the keyboard, to “wish” for easier piano parts was either a “gentle nudge” between friends, or a backhanded slight. One need only listen to recordings of Britten playing Mozart’s two-piano Sonata in D major, K.448, the piano-duet Sonata in C major, K.521, or the Schubert piano-duet *Andantino varié*, D.823 (with the eminent pianist Sviatoslav Richter) to gauge Britten’s capabilities. Britten resisted repeated requests from Tippett through the years to record *The Heart’s Assurance* with Pears (the first instance is seen in the letter to Pears on 13 May 1950; see page 37 of this dissertation), when it was obvious that Tippett wanted to have Britten’s interpretation preserved for posterity alongside Mewton-Wood’s recording. But had Britten recorded the cycle, it could have prompted the opinion that he valued Tippett’s cycles as much as his own. Britten unequivocally made every attempt to record his own works immediately.

In order to assess the implications of Pears’s essay in Tippett’s sixtieth birthday *Festschrift*, his article must be read in its entirety, paying special attention to the final paragraph:

Michael Tippett, in the Conclusion which he contributed to *A History of Song*, made two principal points. ‘Response to situation is the primal gift of the song-writer. Then comes the ability to destroy all the verbal music of the poetry or prose and to substitute the music of music.’

In the copy which a friend of mine had lent me, she had written against the second proposition a clear NO. The first sentence had been allowed to pass without comment. If I were a habitual marker of books, I should be inclined to follow her example. Response to the situation behind the text is indeed the *sine qua non* of a good song-writer, and once the response has been effected the fire is lit, the musician must apply the fuel of his invention and skill. But the relationship between poet and composer must not be regarded as a destructive one. True, the words exist first and it is for the music to fertilize them and generate the song, but the composer should court the passive poem and not offer her violence. A happy marriage is the proper relationship where each respects the other and takes it in turn to dominate. There has always been and will continue to be a need for every

6 Britten in Kemp’s *Symposium*, p. 30.
7 *Britten at Aldeburgh*, Sviatoslav Richter and Benjamin Britten, piano, Decca 466 8212 (ADD), 2000. The recording also includes Debussy’s three-movement *En blanc et noir*. Britten may also be heard collaborating with violinist Yehudi Menuhin in Haydn’s Sonata for Piano and Violin in G, Hob.XV:32, Debussy’s Sonata for Violin and Piano, and Schubert’s Sonata for Violin and Piano in A major, D.574, BBCL 4083-2, 2001.
8 Pears, “Song and Text,” in Kemp’s *Symposium*, pp. 47-49.
degree of music-domination or word-communion in its proper context. We are not eternally condemned to \textit{bel canto} banalities any more than to pointillist pips. As far as Tippett is concerned, a quick look at his songs will reassure us as to how far he himself falls short of his Mantis-like propositions. 

\textit{Boyhood’s End} (1943) is a true cantata, made up of an opening Recitative (plus arioso), an allegro movement in 6/8, a slow section (mostly 2/4), a rapid scherzo (dotted quavers), and a Finale (Allegro piacevole). The very first utterance makes clear the skill with which the words are set and the depth of feeling behind them. ‘What, then, did I want?’ The query is the key to the whole work and every particle of verbal music must be extracted in presenting it; the short flat English vowels (what could an Italian make of them?), the hesitant aspirated ‘w’, the softly voiced ‘th’ and ‘d’: they are as much part of the song as the notes so aptly found for them. The lengthening of ‘what’, a naturally short syllable, increases the diffidence of the question, as the rise of a fourth on ‘want’ increases its urgency. It is fine and sensitive recitative word-setting, a difficult art as may be seen by comparing this passage or the ‘Pub Scene’ from \textit{Peter Grimes} with \textit{Sir John in Love} or \textit{The Rake’s Progress}. The little arioso (“I want only to keep what I have”) uses a different method; a growl of bewilderment, as if wordless, makes up what the composer once referred to as a ‘Wagnerian crash’. Once we have rounded that dangerous corner, we are back among more characteristic sounds, sparer and cleaner. Here one may limit oneself to pointing out a few of the felicities which the singer has been given in the use of that verbal music which the composer would destroy. 

‘To rise each morning’. The triphong [sir] of ‘rise’—for it is one—uh-ah-ih—by the natural swelling of the English sound—has a subtle rhythmic function against the 6/8 of the piano. In the corresponding passage, sixteen bars later, the words ‘To watch each June’ contribute quite a distinct pattern of consonants. Again, on the third occasion, ‘To listen, listen’ adds a sibilant tension to the pp of the accompaniment. The decoration on ‘float’ is as much a part of the music of the word as anything in Monteverdi, and though Porpora might covet the great cadenza at the end of the first movement, it is not just a Baroque gargle; it is firmly cemented to the sound and sense of good English. 

The Andante is one of Tippett’s best things, a beautiful vocal weaving around an evocative, slow, mirror-like movement, repeated four times with different modulations. The subtle colouring of the words through a wide range gives the singer, unaccompanied much of the time, chance after chance to express the finest of verbal nuances; and the moments when the piano gently pulls the voice into a new key are \textit{trouvailles} indeed. If the scherzo is not so successful, that is not so much due to the somewhat stiffer word-setting as to the piano-writing, where the dotted rhythms tend to be too dry for even the ‘hottest afternoons’. The finale returns to more pianistic sonorities and vocal melismas; the authentic exhilaration is wonderfully sustained throughout the repeated ‘shinings’, even if one may be allowed to feel that the \textit{gorgia} on ‘ecstasy’ takes something from the final cadence. 

\textit{Boyhood’s End} remains a work full of imaginative and suggestive imagery, and its elaboration of voice and piano is part of its success. It is this elaborate figuration applied to the song-form in \textit{The Heart’s Assurance} which damages it by expanding essentially simple shapes. The \textit{ur}-forms of the three slower songs are simple lyric utterances which do not need the pianistic figures which expand and blur. The fourth song is an effective and brilliant toccata (Scarlatti-like) with vocal obbligato; the second is a very original two-mooded piece where the vocal ornaments are balanced by the plain cadences. The cycle is colored with a deep warmth; it is perhaps a too strong feeling for the situation of the three big songs which has driven the music to destroy the poem—by inflation. The same inflation can be seen affecting the \textit{Songs for Achilles}. Of his later songs, it is the three exquisite little \textit{Songs for Ariel} which remind one what a marvelous song-writer Tippett is. They, with \textit{Boyhood’s End}, are the prime examples of that innocent and radiant fantasy which is at the centre of his unique contribution to our music.
It is evident that Tippett’s written views on text-setting and song composition offend Pears’s sensibilities. In the Festschrift, Pears blesses with one hand and slaps with the other. Pears allows that “the cycle is colored with a deep warmth,” yet he writes that “it is perhaps a too strong feeling for the situation of the three big songs which has driven the music to destroy the poem—by inflation.” Pears acknowledges that there will always be an interchange of dominance between words and music, but he does not accept Tippett’s “Mantis-like” conclusion.9

Much of Pears’s argument responds to the hyperbole within Tippett’s essay for Stevens’s History, opinions that Pears seeks to counter by examining Tippett’s own music. Indeed, Pears asserts that Boyhood’s End does not substantiate the claims Tippett made in the Stevens volume. In effect, Pears is advocating for simplicity of interaction between le parole and la musica, criticizing the very cycle he commissioned precisely for its lack of simple interplay.

A brief entry in The Musical Times of 1954 by Anthony Milner also made a negative appraisal of the first song of The Heart’s Assurance, “Song: Oh journeyman.” 10 Milner criticized Tippett’s text-setting and how it interacts with the underlying music in both this cycle and the cantata, Boyhood’s End. Milner points toward Bartók and Stravinsky as the source of Tippett’s “rhythmical complexities,” while identifying melodic threads that point back to plainsong and Dunstable. Milner’s article is a portent of Pears’s comments.

Pears’s essay begs the question of why someone would write such unpleasantries in a volume of celebration if they did not wish to imply a derisive tone.11 Granted, Pears is being as critical of what Tippett wrote in Stevens’s History as he is of the so-called “three big songs” in The Heart’s

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9 Pears’s adjectival use of “Mantis-like” in his analogy of Tippett’s manifesto on song composition in Steven’s History conjures the predatory nature of the insect, the (so-called “praying”) mantis.


11 A provocative question is this: if such criticisms had been made in Britten’s fiftieth-birthday Festschrift—Anthony Gishford’s Tribute to Benjamin Britten on His Fiftieth Birthday—what fury would Aldeburgh’s response have been?
Assurance. However, the character of Pears’s tribute was established in his opening sentences and predicated the crescendo to which he was building. He dismisses the emotional complexity and psychological gravity of “Song: Oh journeyman” or “Compassion” or “Remember Your Lovers” as merely “simple lyrical utterances.” Furthermore, he ignores the indisputable fact that Britten’s Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo and The Holy Sonnets of John Donne demand every bit as much pianistic virtuosity as The Heart’s Assurance. A more objective critic might well have leveled the same “inflation” alleged of the accompaniments in The Heart’s Assurance at Britten’s cycles; the Michelangelo and Donne sonnets are equally penetrating texts. Pears applies his criticism selectively. By coincidence, his fault-finding of the “odd numbered songs” of the cycle conflicts with the opinions expressed by Lionel Bradley: “I think all were good but the most striking & expressive seemed to me to be the third ‘Compassion’ (Lewis) & the fifth ‘Remember Your Lovers’ (Keyes).”

Ostensibly, Pears was voicing Britten’s complaint that the piano parts are excessively difficult and intrusive. A necessary question is not whether the piano accompaniment poses undue technical difficulties, but whether it appropriately accentuates—or conversely, obscures—the gravity of the texts. Each poetic episode is represented musically so as to differentiate their varied nature. Thus

12 It has been suggested that Pears may not have written his contribution to Kemp’s Symposium, that perhaps it was penned by Hans Keller, the Austrian-born British composer and musicologist (who specialized in musical criticism and a combination of theory and analysis). [The proposition came during the question and answer session after a paper given by this author at the North American British Music Studies Association conference in 2010.] The suggestion that it was Keller, and not Pears, who wrote the brief essay in Tippett’s Festschrift was made, in part, because of the appearance of: “The ur-forms of the three slower songs…” Indeed, the use of ur-forms—or ur-anything—may seem odd coming from anyone other than a music theorist or a Schenkerian-aware analyst.

A veritable micro-symposium was held over a period of months in 2010-11 in cyber-space. This question was posed by this author to a number of experts in the field who specialize in Britten, Pears, and Keller: Nick Clark, librarian of the Britten-Pears Foundation; Jenny Doctor, former director of the BPF and currently a faculty member at University of York; Paul Kildea, who is currently authoring a forthcoming Britten biography; Alison Garnham, the author of two monographs on Hans Keller; and Christopher Wintle of King’s College London, who has edited four volumes of Keller’s writings and is currently editing Keller’s essays on Benjamin Britten ahead of the composer’s 2013 centenary. It should be understood that Pears was part of the Britten coterie, along with Keller and Mitchell, and as such could have been exposed to the stylistic use of the “ur” prefix. None of these experts considered it possible that the phrase had come from Keller, however. For details of the E-conversations, see Appendix II.

13 The Bradley Collection, Fascicle 1 January – March 6, 1953, GB-Len CPH.
one must consider if a thinner, less substantive accompanimental texture would be as effective. In his essay in Kemp’s *Symposium*, Evans writes:

> It is easy enough to imagine (or, indeed, to re-compose) the Tippett songs in question with their proliferating undergrowth of piano figuration trimmed to the tidily pastoral. But we are at once presented with an entirely different work, still strong because of vocal lines that superbly balance intervallic and durational emphases, but no longer braced by the heroically controlled tension that is induced when the singer must assert each note as a significantly timed articulation of the piano’s endless stream of sound.\(^\text{14}\)

However, in his essay, Pears exalts *Boyhood’s End*, giving it fully half of the space of the entire essay, evidence of the value he placed on the earlier work. We might consider, however, that the cantata and the *Songs for Ariel* are esteemed because they most closely resemble Britten. *Boyhood’s End* served as the inspiration for Britten’s *Canticle I: My Beloved is Mine* (1947), which was composed as a companion piece to Tippett’s. *Canticle I* is, like Tippett’s *Boyhood’s End*, “a true cantata.” This is a definition that even Pears accepts. Yet hidden beneath Pears’s many compliments lay barbs that may only be discerned as subtext after further consideration. Such criticisms may be otherwise missed upon a cursory reading. Further, Pears’s concluding sentences are double-edged, insinuating that the audience needs to be “reminded” of “what a marvelous song-writer Tippett is” by his later *Songs for Ariel*. This statement somehow suggests that the intervening song compositions were not. The features that Pears asserts lay “at the centre of [Tippett’s] unique contribution to our music” are innocence and fantasy. Because *The Heart’s Assurance* does not purport to be either, still another rebuff is apparent. Perhaps if Tippett had opted for “the tidily pastoral,” to borrow Evans’s quip, Pears would have been pleased.

The musicologist Paul Kildea, in private correspondence with this author, has suggested that, “Tippett’s star was well and truly rising in the early 1960s, which frustrated Britten; no doubt Pears

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took umbrage on his lover’s behalf.”

Pears’s essay reveals something quite at odds with the presumed relationship between Pears and Tippett—and consequently Pears, Britten, and Tippett. It seems that Pears was behaving territorially about his partner, using Britten as the measure by which he was evaluating Tippett. Much of what Pears wrote about *The Heart’s Assurance* may need to be viewed as both personally subjectivity and as potentially axe-grinding.

Pears’s apparent dislike of the work may have led him to stop performing it altogether. His last known performance of the work was in 1955, a decade prior to his *Festschrift* essay. But the problem remains that if Pears did not feel the cycle was effective, he had many early opportunities to voice such an opinion. This is particularly evident from the correspondence reflecting his active involvement in the creative process and discussions of the work’s growth. He could have elected to drop the cycle from his repertoire, but chose instead to perform it more than a dozen times in major venues. He recorded the work commercially and sang it for the BBC Third Programme. Indeed, the final song of the cycle was what Pears and Britten performed at the Mewton-Wood memorial to represent Tippett’s offering. As the culmination of the cycle’s intensity, “Remember Your Lovers,” was an effective choice to convey the sense of communal loss felt in Mewton-Wood’s unnecessary death.

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15 E-mail correspondence with Kildea, 3 January 2011.
16 Speaking on condition of anonymity, a British tenor and protégé of Pears recounted to the author that neither Britten nor Pears enjoyed performing the cycle, stating plainly, “Pears detested the work.” Personal interview, 2010.
Michael Tippett’s ninetieth birthday gala was held at London’s Wigmore Hall on 2 January 1995. The event honored a lifetime spent in the act of creation and the retrospective moved Tippett to tears. Among the performances heard that evening was his song cycle *The Heart’s Assurance*, in the very hall where it received its première some forty-five years earlier. Seeing Tippett that evening for the last time, the English composer David Matthews recounts that Tippett “was so affected by a performance of *The Heart’s Assurance* […] that he could hardly speak.” Writing for *The Independent* after the ninetieth birthday concert, Michael White reported that, “Sir Michael Tippett stood on the Wigmore stage and wept.” Even on his ninetieth birthday concert, *The Heart’s Assurance* was centermost among Tippett’s accomplishments. After a discussion of how the cycle enthralled listeners, White went on, “An author’s tears, in front of an audience, are something else. Though potentially rather tacky, in Tippett’s case they reveal the unselfconscious candour which is one of his more engaging qualities.”

*The Heart’s Assurance* is perhaps best described as a watershed moment for Tippett. It is a windowpane that affords two distinctly different views of his compositional career, dependent entirely upon which side one happens to be standing. Looking backwards from the perspective of the post-première vantage point, one is afforded a clear view of the compositional models and composers who loomed large for Tippett both formatively and inspirationally. Two such figures include Purcell and Beethoven, as has been previously discussed. *The Heart’s Assurance* occupies a

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17 The “Listings” for January 1995 printed on the back matter of The Musical Times’ December 1994 issue notes the Wigmore Hall’s first concert of the new year: *Tribute to Sir Michael Tippett on his 90th birthday: Purcell, Tippett, Bergmann*, at 7:30 in the evening, with the artists Martyn Hill, tenor; Andrew Ball, piano; and Craig Ogden, guitar (Vol. 135, No. 1822, p. 783).
period that was predicated on the success of *Boyhood's End* (1943), his response to *Kristallnacht*, the oratorio *A Child of Our Time* (1939-41), and the Concerto for Double String Orchestra (1938-39). However, when standing on the side of that earlier, pre- and intra-compositional pane and peering forward to the forty years of composition yet to come, one sees the evolutionary trajectory of his compositional output. Tippett’s future musical directions (plurality intended) would diverge so drastically as to be nearly unrecognizable from the cycle. Consequently, situating *The Heart's Assurance* with chronological respect to these benchmarks helps to illustrate the cycle’s singular position within Tippett’s output.

The current study has offered many ideas about Tippett and his approach to music as exemplified by *The Heart's Assurance*. We have found that his poetry selection was due primarily to its resonance with his own personal experience surrounding the loss of Allinson. We can contextualize the vehemence with which he held the banner of pacifism, and which in turn highlighted his response to the losses of war. Because we are aware of the deeply intimate circumstances that compelled the cycle’s genesis—Fresca’s suicide—we can discern that the cycle’s composition was equally therapeutic, cathartic, and necessary.

In Tippett’s correspondence, we read specific references to four of the cycle’s five poems. These letters detail his desire for lyrical, non-declamatory vocal phrases, a goal that may not have been successful in the cycle. We have also seen a man who struggled with the composition of this cycle, presenting in microcosm the struggles of his whole career. In the *British Library Sketches*, we have seen examples of the creation of three out of the five songs in *The Heart's Assurance*, each of

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21 As has been established in this dissertation, the origins of *The Heart's Assurance* are bound up with the lengthy compositional period of *The Midsummer Marriage*. Yet Tippett would never again write purely for voice and piano. The composer’s musical works from the mid-1950s onward would continue to reflect Tippett’s attraction toward reinvention. The overall musical style of *The Heart's Assurance* was not imitated in any of the operas to follow, not in *King Priam* (1958-61), nor *The Knot Garden* (1966-69), nor *The Ice Break* (1973-76). *The Heart's Assurance* was composed prior to the *Fantasia Concertante on a Theme of Corelli* (1953), as well as Symphonies Two through Four (1956-57, 1970-72, and 1976-77, respectively). The cycle also comes forty years before *The Rose Lake: A Song Without Words for Orchestra* (1991-93), which he came out of retirement to compose.
which depicts a text-driven melodic composition. Contained in the *Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches* is additional evidence of Tippett’s primary focus on in text-driven melodies. Beneath those melodies, he composed the piano accompaniments, albeit with some trepidation. Between the earlier Aldeburgh MSS and the autograph MS is yet more enhanced precision about the evolving role of the piano, accompanying Tippett’s ever more assured vocal lines.

It should not seem strange—least of all to Tippett—that an examination of his work would end with as many questions as it sought to answer. Perhaps this is the case with the pursuit of all things inexpressible. But seemingly, as was the circumstance throughout Tippett’s life—indeed, perhaps in anyone’s life—there is a fine thread interconnecting everything. With a slight pull, in an effort to address one issue, ends fray that beget still more questions. It is this author’s hope, however, that the present study offers a model for assessing Tippett’s compositional process in his other vocal works. This study provides a more comprehensive view of *The Heart’s Assurance* than has previously been available. It is the author’s wish that it can serve as a guide for future performers, as well as musicologists interested in Tippett’s creative process and his music’s performance history.

Tippett divulges his own mental state immediately after Allinson’s suicide, writing to David Ayerst:

> I am too out of my mind to be very coherent just yet. Fresca seems to have reached zero point & felt herself unable to go further […] I can’t adjust to it easily. Her gaiety & gentleness & even her waywardness & her love of pretty things all seem irreplaceable values. I loved her more deeply than I knew when she was there. The memory is extremely sweet & fragrant. Her going out has turned everything topsy-turvy […] If she were cold & afraid I would or should have been there. 22

These are poignant reflections in the aftermath of Allinson’s demise. Tippett imparts the very real sense that he felt complicit in her death, acknowledging that he wished he had been able to recognize her dire intentions. For an individual like Tippett, a man who was introspective and self-}

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22 Tippett, *TTCB*, p. 186; Tippett to David Ayerst, 8 April 1945.
probing his entire life, perhaps *The Heart's Assurance* represented his realization of the regrets and aspirations expressed in Allinson’s suicide letter. Therefore, in *The Heart's Assurance*, Tippett created a work that embodied his attempt to “make a better job of living” on Allinson’s behalf and, in those remaining years left to him, to “love a bit better.” Seen through this lens, we can situate the cycle’s lifelong significance to Tippett as emblematic of his undying love for Fresca. His personal expansion of the cycle’s dedication indicates his broken heart for “all those who lost their lives and loves in the brutality of battle.” Replete with its manifold images, *The Heart's Assurance* symbolizes an ineffable moment in Tippett’s life. It is a musical composition that comments upon and responds to such brutality. Without invoking the oft-quoted trope of undue neglect, *The Heart's Assurance* occupies a necessary position within the repertoire of memorial works.

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23 See Allinson’s letter in Chapter One, p. 25.
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Alun Lewis


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Benjamin Britten


Peter Pears


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Appendix A: The Heart’s Assurance in the Festival of Britain’s “Six Recitals of English Song”

Based on six sequential issues of The Radio Times, all of the repertoire from the “Six Recitals of English Song” that occurred during the Festival of Britain in the London Season of the Arts has been transcribed below by this author.1 The Radio Times was a BBC weekly publication that included articles about previous and upcoming radio broadcast events as well as an accurate listing of programming and air timings for all BBC broadcasts. Each of the recitals in this series was aired on the BBC Third Programme’s Monday evening broadcasts. Contributing an article to The Radio Times about the inaugural week of the Festival of Britain and an overview of what was to come in the series, Harold Rutland writes: “Since the programmes are in the nature of an anthology, we shall all doubtless wonder how particular favours of our own have come to be omitted.”2 The British Broadcasting Corporation organized the concerts and Basil Douglas, a “programme builder” for the BBC Third Programme, selected each recital’s repertoire; Douglas was instrumental in creating the tradition of recital broadcasts on the Third.3

The Heart’s Assurance was a centerpiece of the first recital of the series, and it is equally noteworthy that Tippett’s new song cycle was being premièred alongside a performance of Britten’s Canticle [I]: My beloved is mine and I am his, a work that was inspired by and intended to serve as a companion piece to Tippett’s cantata Boyhood’s End. Britten was at the piano for the first

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1 The Radio Times: Journal of the BBC, BBC Programmes: May 6-12, 1951; Volume 111: No. 1434, p. 19, columns two and three; BBC Programmes: May 13-19; Volume 111: No. 1435, p. 18, column 4, p. 19, column one. BBC Programmes: May 20-26; Volume 111: No. 1436, p. 19, columns two and three; BBC Programmes: May 27-June 2; Volume 111: No. 1437, p. 19, columns two and three; BBC Programmes: June 3-9; Volume 111: No 1438, p. 19, columns two and three; BBC Programmes: June 10-16; Volume 111: No 1439, p. 19, columns two and three.

2 The Radio Times: Journal of the BBC, “Harold Rutland on the First Full Week of Festival Music,” May 4, 1951; Volume 111: No. 1433, p. 9. In the same article, Rutland assigns the term song-sequence to The Heart’s Assurance, which is the only appearance of such an idiom in relation to the cycle.

performance. Of course it is thought-provoking to view Tippett’s work as representative of the highest quality of British song composition, which was considered on par with Britten’s. Such an idea further prompts questions as to why Tippett did not maintain an affinity for song composition throughout his compositional career. Unmistakably, in 1951, Tippett was positioned to produce major contributions to the song literature repertoire for the remainder of his career, and was indeed considered to be an envoy of English song. Tippett could have matched Britten’s song output and could have continued to create original cyclical works; as we have seen, however, he did not.

Author’s Transcription of the “Six Recitals of English Song” from The Radio Times:

Opening of Six Concerts; Monday, 7 May 1951

8.0 [8:00PM] London Festival of the Arts
ENGLISH SONG
First of six recitals from the Wigmore Hall, London

Peter Pears (tenor)
Benjamin Britten (piano)

Part 1

Songs by lutenist composers:
When Laura smiles … Philip Rosseter
Awake, sweet love … John Dowland
Shall I come, sweet love … Thomas Campion
Love’s god is a boy … Robert Jones
The cypress curtain of the night … Thomas Campion

Two Divine Hymns:
Thou mighty God … John Dowland
Canticle: My beloved is mine and I am his (Francis Quarles) … Benjamin Britten

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4 The Radio Times: Journal of the BBC, BBC Programmes: May 6-12, 1951; Volume 111: No. 1434, p. 19, columns two and three.
[A talk on James Thurber by Honor Tracy, which began at 8:45 PM, comprised the pre-recorded fifteen-minute interval that played “The Claw of the Sea-Puss.” The second part of the recital began at 9:00 PM, opening with Michael Tippett’s The Heart’s Assurance.]

9.0 ENGLISH SONG
Part 2

Song-cycle: The Heart’s Assurance … Michael Tippett (first performance)
   Song: Oh, journeyman (Alun Lewis)
   Song: The heart’s assurance (Sidney Keyes)
   Compassion (Alun Lewis)
   The dancer (Alun Lewis)
   Remember your lovers (Sidney Keyes)

Go not, happy day (Tennyson) … Frank Bridge
Persephone (Humbert Wolfe) … Gustav Holst
In youth is pleasure (Robert Wever) … E. J. Moeran
Fish in the unruffled lakes (W. H. Auden) … Benjamin Britten
Love went a-riding (Mary E. Coleridge) … Frank Bridge

These six recitals of English Song, to be given at the Wigmore Hall on successive Mondays, will all be broadcast in the Third Programme. Next week’s recital will be given by Joan Cross, Peter Pears, George James, Benjamin Britten, and John Ireland. The programme will include songs of Purcell realised by Britten; the song-cycle ‘The Land of the Lost Content’ and Songs Sacred and Profane by Ireland; and folk songs arranged by Britten. Harold Rutland writes in this issue.

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Second of Six Concerts; Monday, 14 May 1951

8.0 London Festival of the Arts
ENGLISH SONG
Second of six recitals from the Wigmore Hall, London

Joan Cross (soprano)
Peter Pears (tenor)
George James (bass)
Benjamin Britten (piano)
John Ireland (piano)

Part 1

Songs … Purcell
   realised Benjamin Britten

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Man is for the woman made
Celemene
Lost is my quiet
Mad Bess
There’s not a swain
What can we poor females do?
Sound the trumpet
Saul and the witch at Endor

Song-cycle: The Land of Lost Content (A. E. Housman) … John Ireland
  The lent lily
  Ladslove
  Goal and wicket
  The vain desire
  The encounter
  Epilogue

9.0 ENGLISH SONG
Part 2

Songs Sacred and Profane … John Ireland
  The Advent (Alice Maynell)
  Hymn for a child (Sylvia Townsend Warner)
  My fair (Alice Maynell)
  The Salley Gardens (W. B. Yeats)
  The soldier’s return (Sylvia Townsend Warner)
  The scapegoat (Sylvia Townsend Warner)

Folk Songs … arr. Benjamin Britten
  The ash grove (Welsh)
  The trees they grow so high (Somerset)
  Come you not from Newcastle (English)
  The ploughboy (tune by W. Shield)
  The miller of Dee (English)
  O waly, waly (Somerset)
  O can ye sew cushions (Scottish)
  There’s none to soothe (Scottish)
  Sweet Polly Oliver (English)

Programme arranged by Basil Douglas

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Third of Six Concerts; Monday, 21 May 1951*

8.0 London Festival of the Arts
ENGLISH SONG
Third of six recitals from the Wigmore Hall, London

Margaret Ritchie (soprano)
René Soames (tenor)
Bruce Boyce (baritone)
Frederick Stone (piano)

Part 1

Elizabethan and Jacobean Ayres … arr. Peter Warlock

When May is in his prime … Richard Edwards
Sweet Kate … Robert Jones
Willow, willow … anon.
It was a lover and his lass … Thomas Morley
Fain would I change that note … Tobias Hume
Down in a valley … Michael Cavendish
There is a garden in her face … Thomas Campion
Whither runneth my sweetheart? … John Bartlet

O ravishing delight … Thomas Arne
The self-banished (Edmund Waller) … John Blow
The song of Momus to Mars (Dryden) … William Boyce
Hush ev’ry breeze … James Hook
To Anthea (Herrick) … John Hatton
Bid me discourse (Shakespeare) … Henry Bishop

9.0 ENGLISH SONG
Part 2

Songs … Vaughan Williams
The water mill (Fredegond Shove)
The new ghost (Fredegond Shove)
Let beauty awake (R. L. Stevenson)

Songs … Peter Warlock
Passing by (anon.)
Sleep (John Fletcher)
The baily beareth the bell away (anon.)
Piggesnie (anon., 16th century)

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Mr. Belloc’s fancy (J. C. Squire)
And wilt thou leave me thus (Thomas Wyatt)
Pretty ring time (Shakespeare)
The fox (Bruce Blunt)
The countryman (John Chalkhill)
The passionate shepherd (Marlowe)
Captain Stratton’s fancy (John Masefield)

Programme arranged by Basil Douglas

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Fourth of Six Concerts; Monday, 28 May 1951

8.0 London Festival of the Arts
ENGLISH SONG
Fourth of six recitals from the Wigmore Hall, London

Alfred Deller (counter-tenor)
Heddle Nash (tenor)
Henry Cummings (baritone)
Desmond Dupré (lute and guitar)
The New London Quartet:
   Erich Gruenberg (violin)
   Lionel Bentley (violin)
   Keith Cummings (viola)
   Douglas Cameron (cello)
Ernest Lush (piano)

Part 1

Song-cycle: Love Blows as the Wind Blows, for baritone and string quartet
   (poems by W. E. Henley) … George Butterworth
   In the year that’s come and gone
   Life in her creaking shoes
   Fill a glass with golden wine
   On the way to Kew

Songs by lutenist composers:

Fine knacks for ladies … John Dowland
Can she excuse my wrongs? … John Dowland
In darkness let me dwell … John Dowland

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7 The Radio Times: Journal of the BBC, BBC Programmes: May 27-June 2; Volume 111: No. 1437; p. 19, columns two and three.
What then is love but mourning? … Philip Rosseter
Will ye buy a fine dog … Thomas Morley

Amoretti: five sonnets by Edmund Spenser, for tenor and string orchestra … Edmund Rubbra
Lackyng my love
Fresh spring
Lyke as the culver
What guile is this
Mark when she smiles

9.0 ENGLISH SONG
Part 2

Seven Poems by James Joyce … E. J. Moeran
Strings in the earth and air
The merry green wood
Bright cap
The pleasant valley
Donnycarney
Rain has fallen
Now, O now, in this brown land

Song-cycle: On Wenlock Edge, for tenor, piano, and string quartet … Vaughan Williams
On Wenlock Edge (poems by A. E. Housman)
From far, from eve and morning
Is my team ploughing?
Oh, when I was in love with you
Bredon Hill
Clun

Programme arranged by Basil Douglas

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Fifth of Six Concerts; Monday, 4 June 1951

8.0 London Festival of the Arts
ENGLISH SONG
Fifth of six recitals from the Wigmore Hall, London

Isobel Baillie (soprano)
Anne Wood (contralto)
Richard Lewis (tenor)
Gordon Clinton (baritone)
Frederick Stone (piano)

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8 The Radio Times: Journal of the BBC, BBC Programmes: June 3-9; Volume 111, No 1438; p. 19, columns two and three.
Part 1

Songs by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century composers:

Now Phoebus sinking in the west (Milton) … Thomas Arne
Thou soft-flowing Avon (David Garrick) … Thomas Arne
Under the greenwood tree (Shakespeare) … Thomas Arne
Where the bee sucks (Shakespeare) … Thomas Arne
Night and day (Henry Carew) … Henry Lawes
The fair lover and his black mistress (anon.) … John Blow
Advice … Richard Leveridge
The jolly, jolly breeze … John Eccles
O bid your faithful Ariel fly (Dr. Laurence) … Thomas Linley

Songs … Hubert Parry
   Love is a bable (anon.)
   If thou wouldst ease thine heart (Beddoes)
   Crabbed age and youth (Shakespeare)
   To Althea from prison (Lovelace)

Songs … Ivor Gurney
   Epitaph (Walter de la Mare)
   Spring (Thomas Nashe)
   Sleep (John Fletcher)
   Hawk and buckle (John Boyle)

9.10 ENGLISH SONG
Part 2

Four Songs from A Shropshire Lad (A. E. Housman)
   Loveliest of trees … Arthur Somervell
   Loveliest of trees … George Butterworth
   When I was one-and-twenty
   Is my team ploughing?

Three Songs … Roger Quilter
   Blow, blow thou winter wind (Shakespeare)
   Go, lovely rose (Edmund Waller)
   Love’s Philosophy (Shelley)

Love’s Philosophy … Frederick Delius
I heard a piper piping (Joseph Campbell) … Arnold Bax
Herrin’s in the bay (Elizabeth Shane) … Hamilton Harty

Three Poems of Humbert Wolfe … Gustav Holst
   A little music
   Betelgeuse
   Rhyme
Gavotte (Newbolt) … *Herbert Howells*
Sweet Suffolk owl (Thomas Vautor) … *Elizabeth Poston*
The impatient lover (Herrick) … *Geoffrey Bush*
Here, where the earth is quiet (Swinburne) … *Ivor Walsworth*

Two poems by John Fletcher … *Alan Rawsthorne*
    Away, delights!
    God Lyaeus

Programme arranged by Basil Douglas

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Last of Six Concerts; Monday, 11 June 1951

8.0 London Festival of the Arts
ENGLISH SONG
Last of six recitals from the Wigmore Hall, London

Ena Mitchell (soprano)
Marjorie Thomas (contralto)
William Herbert (tenor)
William Parsons (bass-baritone)
Ernest Lush (piano)

Part 1

Songs … *C. V. Stanford*
    The monkey’s carol (W. M. Letts)
    Heraclitus (W. J. Cory)
    Cuttin’ rushes (Moira O’Neill)
    The fairy lough (Moira O’Neill)
    La belle dame sans merci (Keats)

*Songs by contemporary composers:*

Silver (de la Mare) … *Armstrong Gibbs*
Five eyes (de la Mare) … *Armstrong Gibbs*
Three songs from ‘Earth and Air and Rain’ (Hardy) … *Gerald Finzi*
    When I set out for Lyonesse
    To Lizbie Brown
    Proud songsters
Go, and catch a falling star (Donne) … *Bernard Stevens*
The falcon (anon., 15th century) … *Phyllis Tate*

9 The Radio Times: Journal of the BBC, BBC Programmes: June 10-16; Volume 111, No 1439; p. 19, columns two and three.
The cock (anon., 14th century) … Phyllis Tate
How love came in (Herrick) … Lennox Berkeley
Silver (de la Mare) … Lennox Berkeley

9.5 [Either 9:05 or 9:30; “9.5” is printed twice and is likely to have been an error] ENGLISH SONG
Part 2

Seven American Poems … Arthur Bliss
    Gone, gone again is summer
    Siege
    Feast
    Little elegy
    Rain comes down
    Fair Annet’s song
    Being young and green

Folk Songs:
Six dukes went a-fishin’ (Lincoln) … arr. Percy Grainger
O no John! (Somerset) … arr. Cecil Sharp
I will give my love an apple (Dorset) … arr. Vaughan Williams
Over the mountains … arr. Roger Quilter
Seventeen come Sunday (Sussex) … arr. George Butterworth
Lonely waters (Norfolk) … arr. E. J. Moeran
Nutting time (Suffolk) … arr. E. J. Moeran
Bobbie Shaftoe … arr. W. G. Whittaker
The water of Tyne … arr. W. G. Whittaker
The Keel Row … arr. W. G. Whittaker

Programme arranged by Basil Douglas
Appendix B: Peter Pears or Hans Keller?

As noted in Chapter Seven, n12, the following Britten, Pears, and Keller experts weighed in on the suggestion that Hans Keller penned Peter Pears’s contribution, “Song and Text,” to Michael Tippett: A Symposium on His Sixtieth Birthday, edited by Ian Kemp. What follows is a digest of their views.

Nick Clark feels certain that Pears wrote the essay, noting that he “was a very fine author in his own right,” but more so, that “Pears would have had the courage of his conviction” to write such an essay (E-mail, 3 August 2010). No draft or typescript exists at the BPF.

One needs to step back from the printed content of the Tippett Festschrift in order to further understand the increasingly complicated relationship between Tippett, Pears, and Britten — accepting that each relationship was independent, despite the obvious connectivity. That relationship, especially by the 1960s, was much changed from the two decades earlier when they all met each other. Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that a biographical study of Peter Pears has not occurred since Christopher Headington’s Peter Pears: A Biography (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), so there has been no further exploration of the nature of his relationships.

It may be that attacking Tippett — even marginalizing his work, as Pears may have done with this essay — was a means of shielding Britten. Mindful of the circle of acolytes who sheltered Britten, Doctor writes, “Pears was certainly in that camp, and he did so personally as well as in print” (E-mail, 3 January 2011). Doctor continues, “Hans Keller was of course a great protector, too, though there was eventually a falling out with Britten and Pears (as there was inevitably with almost everyone) — though that hadn’t yet happened in 1965.”

Based solely on style, Kildea suggested that Pears may have been imitating — and thus ridiculing — Tippett’s manner of speech because “the language is clipped and didactic.” (E-mail, 3
January 2011). Kildea extends the idea that because Pears had considerable input on the writings that were published in Britten’s name, and feels it is possible Pears might have sought editorial input from Keller. However, Kildea noted, “I can’t imagine [Pears] having no input [i.e. allowing it to be ghostwritten]; words were his thing, he liked to think.” Doctor asserts, “The clue must be in the style, because [Pears’s] written style is so very different from that of Keller.”

Garnham echoes the doubts regarding Keller’s involvement, writing succinctly: “Hans Keller didn’t write this! Not his style, nor his subject” (E-mail, 8 January 2011).1 Wintle states that he thinks Keller “would have jumped up at such a term [ur-form]” (E-mail, 7 January 2011).2 Wintle recognizes, “Pears was a cultured musician [who] would surely have been capable of producing the neologism ur-form”; a neologism is a newly created term or expression. But Wintle doubts Pears’s conceptual “difference between ‘form’ and ‘basic form,’” Wintle writes, “I have no memory of [Keller] using such a term; more to the point, I’d be surprised if he did!” Noting the curious shading of Pears’s handling of both the “term” and its context—i.e. the Festschrift—Wintle queries, “Is it wicked to suggest that Sir Peter was being a shade pretentious?!” Wintle suggests that, “What [Pears] means are the ‘formal outlines’ of the songs in question. The style of the [written] passage […] has nothing whatever to do with Keller’s!”

Of course, Pears put his name on the essay; ipso facto, he sanctioned its content and published it under his name. Prior to appealing to the above scholars for their expertise, this author’s intuition was that Pears did, in fact, write the essay; their insights further substantiate this. Finally, we should turn to the younger composer himself. Britten had decamped to Venice for six weeks in early 1964 to work on the composition of his first church parable, Curlew River, op. 71. In a 5 February letter to Donald Mitchell, Britten writes: “Peter’s been working hard on translations, & writing about Michael

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Tippett, as well as cooking one pasta meal a day.”3 In other words, Pears was seemingly authoring the essay. One might also note that Tippett must have taken all of the business of the Festschrift in stride—allowing it to neither bolster nor bruise his ego. In the end, of course, Pears and Britten fêted Tippett at a concert at Morley College on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday, 2 January 1965, singing the very cycle that Tippett wrote for the duo in 1943, Boyhood’s End, and not The Heart’s Assurance.

3 Philip Reed and Mervyn Cooke, editors, Letters from a Life: The Selected Letters of Benjamin Britten, Volume Five: 1958-1965 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), pp. 551-552. The letter from Britten to Mitchell stands out for its significant final sentence: “I occasionally dream of Faber + Faber – music publishers!” This appears to be the first mention of the branch of Faber that Mitchell would one day head, publishing Curlew River as one of its first major Britten publications after his separation from Boosey & Hawkes.
Appendix C: Facsimile of the *Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches* MS, GB-ALb 2-9400780

By the kind permission of the Trustees of the Tippett Estate, the following facsimile of the *Aldeburgh Drafts and Sketches* is made available for further research and study of the composer’s work. This level of transparency will benefit those who cannot travel to the archive at the Britten-Pears Library in Aldeburgh and presents one of the few facsimiles of Tippett’s MSS available for wide perusal. There are twenty-four MS pages in addition to the cover page.

*The Heart’s Assurance – f.1r.*
The Heart's Assurance – f.2v.
The Heart's Assurance – f.4v.
The Heart's Assurance – f.8v.
The Heart's Assurance – f.12v.
The Heart's Assurance – f.14r.
Author’s Biography

Justin Vickers, American lyric tenor, has an operatic repertoire of more than thirty leading roles including Idomeneo, Tamino in Die Zauberflöte, Belmonte in Die Entführung aus dem Serail, Don Ottavio in Don Giovanni, Alfredo in La traviata, Rodolfo in La bohème, Rinuccio in Gianni Schicchi, Italian Tenor in Der Rosenkavalier, Alfredo and Eisenstein in Die Fledermaus, and Gounod’s Roméo, as well as numerous world premières. In 2010 he premièred Alexander Zhurbin’s Fourth Symphony, City of the Plague, under Maestro Valery Polyansky with the Moscow State Symphony Capella in Moscow’s International House of Music. Vickers also premièred Zhurbin’s Three Shakespeare Madrigals in the Bolshoi Sal of the Central House of the Actor in the 2010 Festival of Alexander Zhurbin, accompanied by the composer. Since his Carnegie Hall debut in 1999 in the North American première of Donizetti’s Adélia, he has returned there with Maestro Eve Queler and the Opera Orchestra of New York for subsequent performances of Lucrezia Borgia alongside Renée Fleming, Meyerbeer’s Les Huguenots with Marcello Giordani, and prior to Carlo Bergonzi’s Otello at Carnegie Hall, Vickers performed the role of Cassio with Maestro Queler in Mexico City. The tenor later assumed the role of Gennaro in Lucrezia Borgia for Opera Boston; from that, The Washington National Opera invited him to cover Gennaro at the last minute for Vittorio Grigolo in their 2008-2009 performances of Lucrezia Borgia, again with Renée Fleming, under the baton of Maestro Plácido Domingo. Also for The Washington National Opera, Vickers has enjoyed assignments as Ferrando in Così fan tutte and as Lennie in Carlisle Floyd’s Of Mice and Men. His premières have included Giovanni in Daniel Catán’s revised version of La hija de Rappaccini, including a world première aria composed for the occasion; the title role of Italian painter Amedeo “Dedo” Modigliani in Jerrold Morgulas’s Anna and Dedo in Moscow; the title role of Mario in Francis Thorne’s Mario and the Magician (released by Albany Records) for the Center for Contemporary Opera; and for Encompass
New Opera Theatre, he has created the roles of Leo Stein in William Banfield’s *Gertrude Stein Creates a Leap Early On*; and the comic leading role of Tom Cobb in Seymour Barab’s *A Perfect Plan*.

With Philip Langridge, Vickers prepared the title role of Britten’s *Peter Grimes*, as well as Britten’s *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo* and *Winter Words*. The tenor enjoys a varied recital career performing works ranging from Marian antiphons to Arnold Schoenberg, the obscure French mélodie of Jean Cras to Czech song, the English song repertory of Ralph Vaughan Williams to Michael Tippett. Vickers is especially dedicated to the song literature of Benjamin Britten, and in addition to Britten’s cycles, his most frequent performances include the *Canticles* and the *Serenade for Tenor, Horn, and Strings*. His recordings of Joseph Summer’s modern Shakespeare settings for voice and string quartet, and the title role in *Hamlet*, are forthcoming on multiple CDs for Albany Records. Vickers is the dedicatee and première performer of the song cycle *War Wedding*, by the American composer Tony Solitro, based on the poetry of the same name by Alun Lewis.

The tenor’s international concert performances have repeatedly taken him to England, Austria, Germany, Spain, Russia, Albania, Mexico, and the South Pacific; as well as multiple tours throughout China culminating in sold-out performances at Beijing’s Forbidden City Concert Hall and Shenyang’s Grande Theatre. He has returned to Carnegie Hall for performances of Handel’s *Messiah* with John Rutter, Bruckner’s *Te Deum*, and Mozart’s *Grand Mass*; beyond the United States, his notable oratorio performances have taken him to the Bergkirche in Eisenstadt, Austria, and Vienna’s Stephansdom.

Vickers is a prizewinner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Competition, the George London Foundation, and the National Opera Association; he has been a recipient of the Presser Music Award in the United States; and he has received career grants from the San Francisco Opera Center and the Bagby Foundation for the Musical Arts in New York City.
Vickers received his Bachelor of Music in Voice Performance from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (1996), and his Master of Music in Voice Performance from the University of Kentucky (2000). In addition to an active performance career, Vickers balances his time with teaching, giving masterclasses, and writing. He was recently appointed to the voice faculty of the Illinois Wesleyan University School of Music in Bloomington, Illinois. The tenor is currently a candidate for the PhD in Musicology at the University of Illinois; his dissertation focuses on Benjamin Britten’s Aldeburgh and the history of the English Opera Group, 1947-1980. His additional research interests include the commission power of Peter Pears and the twentieth-century composers and artists with whom Pears collaborated. Vickers is currently editing a volume of the selected correspondence of Peter Pears.

Vickers is a native of Danville, Illinois. For updates, please visit justinvickers.com.