

“If I should die, think only this of me”

Songs from the World at War

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Throughout human history, war has been both a plague on society and a driving influence on creativity and the arts. The wars of the twentieth century, particularly the world wars, did a great deal to show both sides of this duality on a very large scale. Fascism and communism in Europe opened the door to massive and unprecedented censorship and repression of minority groups, artists, and all dissenting points of view. Fortunately, however, the arts community responded, as it so often does, by turning large-scale disaster into beauty that resonates into the disparate corners of downtrodden societies. Many poets and composers served in battle in World War I, or in resistance movements in World War II, fighting for nationalistic identity and the right to continue practicing their craft amongst a free-thinking populous. Artistic reactions to the world wars took on many forms, from both pro- and anti-government propaganda to xenophobic caricature to solemn prayers and elegies to lost countrymen.

I have endeavored to assemble a recital program that represents a wide range of perspectives from poets and composers who had been affected by war. Included are settings of poems from the fifteenth and sixteenth century all the way through excerpts from an operetta co-written by a composer and a playwright who were both on the State Department's blacklist; there is a setting of a recollection from a Civil War battlefield and a setting of a poem about a "disappeared" artist by a poet who was later himself disappeared.

Naturally, an effort to be so broadly inclusive has presented its difficulties. In this case, with the combination of a paper and a recital, many of the problems have an extra dimension. From a writing perspective, the primary issue I have encountered is choosing a diverse representative sample of the recital program from which to draw material for

the paper. The recital is divided into four main sections and a “coda,” and I have attempted to choose one or two works from each section to examine in this paper. I wanted a cross-section of nationalities and a cross-section of types of reaction to be represented in the paper. Achieving that goal has been more difficult than I had expected. The composers and poets in the recital program, while all fascinating figures in their own right, do not all share the same level of personal connection relevant to war experience.

From a performance perspective, the difficulties have been of a very different nature. In assembling this recital, I have considered many factors. Balance is paramount in constructing a concert program. First, the singer must consider his own vocal stamina. Show-off pieces must be tempered with pieces of a less technically demanding nature. The singer must also consider the audience. In my program, which is rather lengthy and contains all twentieth-century music, I was careful to balance the less-tonal material with more neoclassical and neoromantic music. Finally, I have also attempted to balance the inevitably bleak and morose tone of much war-themed music with songs that provide some, for lack of a better term, levity (gallows humor, sarcasm, irony). On the whole, a successful performance of any concert program is a tightrope walk without a net; in order to win an audience and convey the composer’s desired message, the singer must balance confidence with pathos, and poise with emotional honesty, all without sacrificing good technique.

In the interest of focusing on the humanity of those directly affected by war, the program has been divided as follows: Before, There, Here, After, and Epilogue. In this paper the “Before” section is represented by Benjamin Britten’s setting of Michelangelo Buonarroti’s thirty-first sonnet. The “There” section is represented by Kurt Weill’s

setting of Walt Whitman's "Dirge for Two Veterans." The "Here" section is represented by Charles Ives' "They are There!" Finally, the "After" and "Epilogue" sections, since they feature similar thematic material, are represented by Gerald Finzi's cantata "Farewell to Arms," on poems by George Peele and Ralph Knevet.

At the end of the paper, I have appended a lengthy and thorough analysis of Britten's "The Children," on a poem by William Soutar. "The Children," written near the end of the composer's career, contains mature use of both neoclassical and modernist stylistic elements. In this song Britten artfully illustrates some of war's most profound horrors through vivid text painting.

Before

While Michelangelo Buonarroti's thirty-first sonnet, which begins "A che più debb'io mai l'intensa voglia" (Why should I seek to ease intense desire), does not deal directly with the topic of war, it does deal with a specific source of suffering in Michelangelo's life. Furthermore, the circumstances surrounding Britten's setting of this poem and others on similar themes by Michelangelo connect the poet rather directly to Britten and to the experience of many prominent homosexuals during World War II.

Although there is no direct evidence, Michelangelo is widely believed to have been homosexual. In addition, there are numerous references in writings from some of Michelangelo's contemporaries to his having preferred the affections of younger men and of teenage boys.¹ Having lived in Florence during the tyrannical rule of Girolamo Savonarola in the 1490s, Michelangelo surely would have feared for his life had his predilection for minor males become common knowledge. Public executions for

accusations of sodomy and pederasty were commonplace during Michelangelo's young adulthood,² and while such sexual practices appeared to have been widespread within a "don't ask, don't tell" context, the stigma associated with homosexuality did not die with Savonarola.

At age fifty-seven, in 1532, Michelangelo met and became enamored of a twenty-three-year-old Roman nobleman named Tommaso dei Cavalieri.³ Drawings Michelangelo did of Cavalieri and sonnets in which Cavalieri's name is cleverly included suggest that Michelangelo's feelings for the young man were quite strong.⁴ Correspondence from Cavalieri to Michelangelo suggests that the younger man was loyal to the older one until Michelangelo's death at age eighty-eight.⁵ In Michelangelo's thirty-first sonnet, the word "cavalier" (knight) is included in the final stanza in the following context:

If only chains and bands can make me blest,
No marvel if alone and bare I go,
An armed **knight's** captive and slave confessed.

In the second stanza, Michelangelo writes the following:

Why must my aching heart to death aspire,
When all must die? Nay death beyond belief
Unto these eyes would be both sweet and brief,
Since in my sum of woes all joys expire!⁶

Here, the poet addresses another theme common in much of his writing: spiritual questions about man's mortality. Michelangelo, having already lived a long life by sixteenth century standards, upon meeting his new muse seems to have been inspired to question the traditional Christian ideas about preparing for an afterlife in paradise. The first stanza ends, "When heaven, or late or soon, shows no relief/ To souls whom love

hath robed around with fire?” Beauty and love, to Michelangelo, were forces powerful enough to override both Christian ethos and societal mores; a sense of necessity and an aching desire convinced Michelangelo to make public, thinly veiled expressions of his ardent love for a man thirty-five years his junior.

In 1939, at the advent of World War II, Benjamin Britten and his artistic partner, the tenor Peter Pears, followed poet W.H. Auden and other European artistic luminaries on a self-imposed exile to North America.⁷ Writing to Aaron Copland, Britten notes, “A thousand reasons – mostly ‘problems’ – have brought me away, and I’ve come to stay in your continent for the Summer.”⁸ The ominous political climate in Europe in the 1930s inspired Britten, Auden and others to take public political stances in a way that was becoming dangerous, and so they sought refuge on safer shores. In addition, Britten had come to feel that his home country could not adequately support the sense of artistic duty with which he was becoming imbued.⁹

As Britten’s correspondence with Copland explains, the trip was initially only to last a few months. However, as the summer progressed and the war worsened, Britten and Pears decided to accept an offer to stay in New York in a home owned by a friend, a half-Jewish doctor who had fled Germany after being denied the right to practice.¹⁰ While Pears sometimes toured with a group called the New English Singers, leaving Britten to travel the U.S. alone, the two did remain abroad until 1942.

While living in New York in October 1940, Britten became enamored of Michelangelo’s sonnets and set seven of them as his first group of songs especially for Pears’ voice.¹¹ In this way, Britten whether knowingly or not, paralleled Michelangelo’s writing of the poem for his lover Cavalieri. Over the course of their American journey,

Britten and Pears had become lovers.¹² The Michelangelo songs were composed as a gift for Peter Pears, not just songs for him to perform.¹³ Throughout their long careers, Britten and Pears would establish a famously prolific symbiotic composer/performer relationship in addition to their lifelong romantic partnership.

Britten's setting of "A che più debb'io mai," the second song in his *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo* cycle, captures the poet's ardor wonderfully. It is not strictly tonal, but neither does its reasonably constant E flat major/C minor tonality assault the ear. The setting drives urgently along to the only real cadence at the end of the last vocal phrase. Each of the sonnet's first two stanzas is a question that begins with the word "Why," or in literal translation, "To what." Britten sets the openings of both stanzas identically, with an ascending minor sixth, followed by a four-note stepwise descent. The second musical stanza ends in a markedly different fashion from the first, however, with one of two examples of compositional editorialism in the song, the repetition of the phrase, "S'altri pur dei morir" (When all must die). The second appearance of the word "morir" is on a high A flat, which is held for two measures, which symbolizes the poet's sense of urgency in his question, "A che'l cor lass' a più morir m'invoglia/ S'altri pur dei morir?" (Why to my aching heart must death aspire, when all must die?).

The song is divided differently from the poem in terms of sections. After the line "S'altri pur dei morir," the song enters a sort of development section. Britten briefly tonicizes the keys of E major and D major before transitioning into the poetic "answer" section. The section of the poem in which Michelangelo answers his "Why" questions begins with a variation on the original ascending sixth motive, except in the new C major/A minor key signature, the parallel major key to the beginning key signature of E flat

major/ C minor. The final iteration of the ascending sixth motive on the words “A che” is a major, rather than a minor sixth. To the ear, the major sixth version of the motive resolves differently, and, indeed, appears more stable, as if answering a question.

The poem’s final line, “Resto prigion d’un cavalier armato” (An armed knight captive and slave confessed), is the second line that Britten repeats in the setting. The first time the line appears, it ends on the highest and longest sustained note in the song, an A natural held for two and-a-half measures. The second time the line appears, it finishes with the closest Britten comes to a cadence in this song, by returning to the original ascending minor sixth motive (G to E flat) that began the song. In this way, Britten reveals the earthly love vs. immortality problem as one that is cyclical within the human experience. Moreover, Britten, like Michelangelo, lived a long life under the dual unproven social stigmas of pedophilia and homosexuality and transcended the disapproval of a dangerous time and place in order to make great art in defense of their respective loves.

There

While some of Walt Whitman’s influences may seem elusive to the modern reader, the profound impact that music had on Whitman’s stylistic development are clear as day. In Whitman’s magnum opus, the 1855 collection *Leaves of Grass*, the poems are largely written in free verse, meaning that they do not adhere to traditional poetic forms and meters. However, more than forty percent of the text in *Leaves of Grass* is comprised of repetitions of words or phrases in such a way that binds the poems together like symphonic movements.¹⁴ Whitman’s poem titles often contain the words “sing,” “song,”

or other musical terminology, and Whitman once said “But for opera, I could never have written *Leaves of Grass*.”¹⁵

In terms of depth of influence, perhaps only the Civil War was as important a factor in Whitman’s writing as his love for music. Six years after *Leaves of Grass* was published, war broke out in the United States. Whitman never served in uniform, but in 1862 when his brother was injured at the Battle of Fredericksburg in Virginia, Whitman’s personal involvement in the war began; he would remain involved until after the war was over.¹⁶ Whitman was so affected by the shocking scene of the aftermath at Fredericksburg that he dedicated his next three years to serving as a wound dresser in makeshift war hospitals in Washington, D.C.¹⁷ His collection of poems entitled *Drum-Taps*, published at the end of the war in 1865, is a chronicle of the poet’s reflections after tending to the soldiers’ physical and psychological needs.

Many of the *Drum-Taps* poems are written from soldiers’ points-of-view, while others, perhaps more directly from Whitman’s experience, are written from the perspectives of wound-dressers or third-party observers watching battle or its aftermath.¹⁸ The poem “Dirge for Two Veterans” is an excellent example of the latter; its nine four-line stanzas tell the story of a funeral procession after a battle, from the perspective of an observer at the scene. The procession is for two soldiers, father and son, who fell together in battle, and the observer details the whole scene, from the drums and bugles to the double grave at the end of the funeral procession.

Whitman’s sympathy and even love for his subjects is obvious. He goes to great lengths over the first seven stanzas to paint a vivid and honest portrait of a wartime scene, but he cannot conclude without expressing how deeply he feels for the victims he came to

know. In the last two stanzas, the narrator is more obviously the poet himself. He begins really to react to what he is seeing.

O strong dead march, you please me!
O moon immense with your silvery face you soothe me!
O my soldiers twain! O my veterans passing to burial!
What I have I also give you.

The moon gives you light,
And the bugles and the drums give you music,
And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,
My heart gives you love.¹⁹

Curiously, though most of his poetic output had been completed prior to the beginning of the war, Whitman later told a friend that the war “was the very center, circumference, umbilicus of my whole career.”²⁰ It seems that Whitman utterly relished the opportunity to have taken part in helping cure a suffering nation with his poetry, much as he helped treat the wounds of soldiers on both sides of the fight. Nearing the end of his life, in his 1882 autobiography, *Specimen Days*, Whitman recalled the wartime years as “the most profound lesson of my life.”²¹

Perhaps it is the combination of the uncommon lyricism, musicality, and naked emotion in Whitman’s writing that has made him the second most often-set poet in the English language (539 songs as of 1985), behind only Shakespeare.²² In fact, although many Americans have come to regard Whitman as the quintessential American poet, many European composers in the twentieth century became enamored of Whitman’s poetry as well. At first it was mainly British composers such as Gustav Holst and Ralph Vaughan Williams who showed an interest in Whitman.²³ However, in 1919, Germany

celebrated the establishment of the so-called Weimar Republic with a new translation of *Leaves of Grass*.²⁴

After Germany's defeat in World War I, left-leaning German citizens began to ally themselves with the workers' movements that were gaining popularity in Central and Eastern Europe. Translator and writer Gustav Landauer, who was active in the revolutionary left after the war, produced particularly important Whitman translations that helped Germans to view Whitman in a spiritual and pacifist light.²⁵ German critics at the time grew fond of interpreting Whitman as an "archetypal utopian socialist," which fit nicely with the new postwar propaganda that was beginning to circulate.²⁶ Setting Whitman in German translation became a popular choice for young German composers. From 1919 to 1930, Paul Hindemith, Franz Salmhofer, Franz Schreker, and Johanna Müller-Hermann all set Whitman in German. Hindemith set far more than the others, with three voice-and-piano songs and an a capella choral arrangement.²⁷

It was not until more than twenty years later that Kurt Weill, himself formerly of the Weimar Republic, would try his hand at Whitman. Having arrived in New York in 1935, Weill, like many other central European Jewish composers at the time, became intent on establishing himself as an American.²⁸ Weill felt no sentimental ties to his former home in the Weimar Republic, a place that had become less and less tolerant of young, modernist Jewish writers and composers. When Weill applied for U.S. citizenship in 1938, he was asked his current nationality. Weill replied, "None. Formerly German."²⁹ Before long, he was self-identifying as American, even before being officially naturalized.³⁰

Despite the excitement and new American idealism, though, all was not glamorous for Weill and the new German-American émigrés. Upon arriving in the U.S., German immigrants were fingerprinted and registered as “enemy aliens,” a status that meant close monitoring and early curfews.³¹ This new crop of German-American composers had to work hard to earn the trust of the American establishment, and many of them found that the quickest way to do so was by composing for popular media such as musical theatre and Hollywood films. Weill made his mark on Broadway, working with some of the quintessential American writers of the time, including Ogden Nash, Maxwell Anderson, Ira Gershwin, and later, Langston Hughes.

In December 1941, just after the Pearl Harbor bombing, Weill began work on one of his greatest gestures of new American patriotism. He turned to his copy of *Leaves of Grass*, now updated to include *Drum-Taps*, and picked out a handful of poems to set to music as concert songs. The following month, he wrote to his wife Lotte Lenya, I’m finishing another Whitman song, which I think will be the best.” This song he was describing was the “wound dresser” poem, “Dirge for Two Veterans.”³²

In a style very characteristic of Weill’s American composing, the song has a languid, cabaret-esque feel. The setting is through composed, but with clear differentiation between stanzas. Rather than subtlety, Weill opts here for very clear text painting. The first stanza is dream-like and meditative, as the narrator observes the effect of the moonlight on the scene of the burial. The accompanying music is appropriately languorous and even bluesy, with several uses of the flatted third scale degree.

The music for the internal stanzas all display clear, sometimes-onomatopoetic text painting as well. In the second verse, the word “bugles” is set to a rising perfect fifth in

the melody. The third verse describes “great drums pounding” and “small drums steady whirring,” over a tenuto walking quarter-note bass line in the piano, punctuating sixteenth-note triplets every two beats (see Appendix, Example 2). Weill changes the mood and introduces more chromaticism and a new melody for the fourth stanza, which begins, “For the son was brought with the father, in the foremost ranks of the fierce assault they fell.” Once the funeral procession is made real by the presence of the bodies of father and son, the narrator, while still clear-eyed and obviously Whitman, narrows his focus to the bodies and the emotions they conjure in him.

In the final stanza, the narrator returns his focus to the moon, and the music returns to its original, almost “swung” sense of relaxation. Weill again employs flatted third and sixth scale degrees, giving the vocal line a fluid, jazzy feel. This intimate, reflective music lends a very tender feeling to the last two lines of text, “And my heart, o my soldiers, my veterans/ My heart gives you love.”

There

Walt Whitman has become something of an iconic figure of nineteenth century America, with his bold new ideas, fierce independence, and refusal to conform to poetic and literary archetypes. There was perhaps no one in the twentieth century American arts world more fitting to take up Whitman’s mantle than composer and insurance man Charles Edward Ives. As an insurance man, Ives was instrumental in defining the modern life insurance system; as a composer, Ives broke boundaries, employing many new compositional tools that wouldn’t be seen in the works of others for decades.³³

After a rigorous musical upbringing, between training as a composer and organist, and learning polytonal and polyrhythmic techniques from his bandleader father, Ives decided that business was the life for him. He was so successful in business that he was able to maintain a thriving amateur composition career for decades, eventually paying for the publication of a great deal of his own music.³⁴ Ives operated on his own terms for all of his adult life, bucking trends and managing to remain an innovator.

One of the closest similarities between Ives and Whitman is in their response to America at war. Whitman moved to Washington and devoted all of his time to volunteering in war hospitals. When America entered World War I in 1917, Charles Ives responded in substantial ways, as both a composer and a humanitarian. The very weekend the U.S. became involved, Ives wrote his first of several World War I songs, “In Flanders Fields.” Though Ives often wrote his own texts, for “In Flanders Fields,” he looked to an interesting source, a poem written by John McCrae, a physician who had been a colleague of Ives’ at Mutual Insurance Company.³⁵ Though little is known about McCrae, it is known that he enlisted, traveled to France to serve as a medic in the war, and died of pneumonia in France in 1918 at the age of forty-six.³⁶

In the coming months, Ives would write several other important World War I songs and volunteer for the war effort. He offered his financial expertise to the Red Cross and to the Liberty Loan appeals, even assuring that Liberty Bonds would be offered in small denominations to benefit the lower and middle classes.³⁷ In 1918, Ives volunteered to drive Red Cross ambulances, but his often-poor health stood in his way.³⁸

Perhaps the most “Ives-ian” of Ives’s World War I songs is the rousing patriotic ballad, “He is There!” set, like “Flanders,” to text by John McCrae. The story of “He is

There!” is the story of a “little yankee, with a German name,” who, like his grandfather, decides to join the American cause and fight. With four stanzas and three choruses, “He is There!” is a rather lengthy but energetic wartime tribute.

At this point in Ives’ compositional life, he was making regular use of a technique known as *patchwork*, which consists of the piecing together of segments of borrowed tunes to craft a new composite melody.³⁹ “He is There!” (and by extension “They are There!”) is a tour de force with regard to this technique. In this case, Ives strings together text and/or music from American hymn tunes (“Tenting on the Old Camp Ground,” “The Battle Hymn of the Republic”), state and national anthems (“Maryland, My Maryland,” “The Star Spangled Banner,” “La Marseillaise”), Civil War marching songs (“Dixie,” “Marching through Georgia,” “The Battle Cry of Freedom,” “Reveille”), and even one of his own pieces (“Country Band March”).⁴⁰ Ives weaves bits and pieces of these melodies simultaneously through the vocal melody, piano accompaniment, and flute/violin obbligato part. The end result is a brilliant quilt of patriotic fervor that serves as a very effective base for Ives’ earnest and intense lyric.

Ives stopped composing in 1927. As his wife reported later, he gave no reason; he only said “nothing sounded right.” However, Ives did continue to do other work and revise his previous compositions for years.⁴¹ Over the course of the 1930s, Ives became more and more vocal about his politics, arguing for the development of a worldwide democracy, one in which any possible war between nations would be put to worldwide referendum.⁴² In a move that echoes the timing of both Kurt Weill’s composing of his Whitman songs and Ives’s own composing of “In Flanders Fields,” Ives rewrote the text for “He is There!” immediately after the American entry into World War II.⁴³ This time,

the result was entitled “They are There!,” and it was a markedly shorter and more vehement and angry text than the original.

In very low-fidelity recordings that seem to have been made during the composition process, Ives was recorded playing and singing three very different takes of “They are There!” The performances on record are remarkable. They offer a rare glimpse into the mind of a master; Ives tries out many different lyrical variations and even experiments with adding a coda and modulation at the end of each verse.

Beyond the historical importance of having such a process available for public consumption, however, the *Ives Plays Ives* recordings of “They are There!” are monumentally significant for their emotional content. In these three takes, Ives is a man possessed. He wears his anger on his sleeve. Through much of the recordings, Ives pounds manically at the keyboard (so discordant even for Ives as to be obviously spontaneous). The tempi are so erratic as to suggest a degree of temporary emotional instability. He periodically inserts the phrases “goddamn thief” and “goddamn them” into the lyrics as he is moved to do so. At the end of the first take, Ives has so exhausted himself that he mutters “Oh, I have to stop” mid-chorus and turns off the tape.⁴⁴

“They are There!” consists of two verses, two choruses (although the choruses do not match lyrically), and a coda. The first verse in the rewritten version is a reworking of the third verse of the original, followed by some entirely new text. Where the third verse originally contained the line “in a world where all may have a say,” the line in the new version is changed to “in a world where all will have a say.”⁴⁵ Ives obviously took seriously the notion of worldwide democracy as the antidote to violence.

In the line “the allies beat up all the warlords,” Ives changed “warlords” to “warhogs.” In the new second verse, he declares that the war was “started by a sneaking gouger, making slaves of men.” Utterly unconcerned with such issues as rhyme scheme and scansion, Ives follows that line with, “then let all the people rise and come together in brave, kind humanity.”

Later, Ives references “a people’s world nation,” with “every honest country free to live its own native life.” The aging, ailing master took the opportunity to use the only World War II song he wrote to propose a radical new social agenda for the world. Fed up with what he viewed as unwarranted belligerence between nations, and what he called the “low dishonest decade”⁴⁶ of the 1930s, Ives was ready to see humanity come together as one to “smash all dictators to the wall,” in the interest of peace and prosperity. The enthusiasm evident in “They are There!” and in Ives’s other similarly martial music can be read as enthusiasm for his new idealism, for the end of militant nationalism and needless loss of life.

After/Epilogue

“The Nazi octopus is one of the most evil and retrograde things in the world – quite as bad as the communism is pretends to counter.” Thus wrote Gerald Raphael Finzi to his German friend William Busch in reference to the upcoming Munich Agreement, which would allow the annexation of Czechoslovakia to Germany in September, 1938.⁴⁷

A staunch pacifist throughout his life, Finzi, who was of Italian Jewish descent, naturally saw the prospect of the impending second world war as a vast and unprecedented terror.

With Britain already deep into World War II, August 1941 saw Gerald Finzi's inevitable call to compulsory national service. Finzi thought himself unfit for physical combat but agreed with the idea of mandatory service, preferably related to one's individual specialty. Having anticipated his call to service, Gerald Finzi, as a composer, set out to write a lengthy work. However, the idea of being required to compose kept him from being productive, in his words, under threat of "the sword of Damocles."⁴⁸

It was fortunate, then, that Finzi was not asked to compose for the war effort. Rather, he was offered a choice to work at either the BBC or at the Ministry of War Transport. He chose the latter, deciding that he would have an easier time in his wartime job separating himself from music entirely.⁴⁹ Finzi even found joy in this decision. In a letter to his wife Joy, he wrote, "To think that I, who wrote Proud Songsters – Dies Natalis – Farewell to Arms – am to become a Principal in the Foreign Shipping Relations Department of the Ministry of War Transport. How fantastic – how unbelievably fantastic."⁵⁰

Finzi's work at the Ministry did not, however, restrict him from composing and conducting. He was occasionally able to conduct his orchestra, the Newbury String Players, and he maintained correspondence and had occasional meetings with his friend Ralph Vaughan Williams.⁵¹ Eventually, with the help of Vaughan Williams and Herbert Howells, Finzi accomplished what may be his greatest personal wartime achievement: he got the Newbury String Players registered as a charity. This designation allowed Finzi to

bring the players to perform in troop camps, schools, and other locations where culture and entertainment were welcome, if not necessary during wartime.⁵²

A decade and a half earlier, in 1926, Finzi had set the first two stanzas of a sonnet written in 1590 by George Peele. Peele, an Elizabethan playwright about whom little is known apart from his education and published plays, had written the sonnet on the occasion of the retirement of Queen Elizabeth's Master of Armoury. The poem, appropriately enough, concerns the post-retirement life of a soldier, once the soldier's helmet "shall make a hive for bees." Finzi adopted Peele's title for the song, "Farewell to Arms." Knevet's poem begins, familiarly, "The helmet now an hive for bees becomes." Finzi's letter to Ault concerned the pronunciation of the word "ventriloquious,"⁵³ an adjective Knevet's poem connects with a drum.

Knevet's poem is a reflection and an expansion on Peele's line about the helmet's new role as a beehive. Knevet took the concept further, imagining first a long series of tools of war being converted to tools of agriculture. Knevet imagined that, "Sharp pikes may make/ Teeth for a rake;/ And the keen blade, the archenemy of life/ Shall be degraded to a pruning knife."⁵⁴

After four stanzas of these quasi-Biblical, swords-into-plowshares predictions, Knevet declares, "Now all recruits,/ But those of fruits,/ Shall be forgot." The poem continues and ends as follows: "and th'unarmed soldier/ Shall only boast of what he did whilere,/ In chimneys' ends/ Among his friends."⁵⁵ Knevet goes so far as to suggest that all that should remain from man's days of armed conflict is friendly recollections of shared days in battle.

Finzi's interest in Knevet's text finally materialized in 1944. *Farewell to Arms*, in its complete two-movement form, is set for tenor voice and small orchestra or strings. The first part, set to Knevet's text, is labeled "Introduction," and the second part, the original Peele setting, is labeled "Aria." In its final form, *Farewell* closely resembles a Baroque recitative and aria. The newer "Introduction" section features mature, exquisite text painting in such lines as "The rampires steep/ And trenches deep," and "In musket barrels/ Mice shall raise quarrels/ For their quarters."⁵⁶ Mice can be heard scampering about in a solo violin flourish. The sound of the "ventriloquious drum" is manifest in field-drum-like flams in the low strings.

While well constrained by time signatures, and therefore not traditionally recitative-like, the "Introduction" does an effective job of setting up the "Aria." Aided by connections in the poetry, Finzi, took the rather Bach-ian three-note (C sharp to B to C sharp) opening from the violins and violas in the A major "Aria" and used it to begin each of the first and second subdivisions within the F sharp minor "Introduction." The opening to the third subdivision of the "Introduction," "Now all recruits," is set to the same intervallic movement as the opening of the 6/8 "B" section of the "Aria," "But though from," which begins on C sharp 5 and then moves to E5 and finally A4. Finally, the "Introduction," which ends on the hopeful line about a soldier recalling his triumphs "among his friends" closes on an E major chord, the dominant to the A major "Aria."

Gerald Finzi's 1926 setting of Peele's "Farewell to Arms," the section later deemed "Aria," falls within what some scholars have deemed Finzi's "Bach period."⁵⁷ With the exception of an eleven-measure diversion near the end, the entire "Aria" is based on a Baroque-style ritornello in the strings. In a manner that closely resembles the

“Zion hört die Wächter singen” movement of Bach’s *Wachet auf* cantata (BWV 140), the ritornello in Finzi’s “Aria” consists of a melody based in unison violins and violas, scored rather low in both their respective ranges. Finzi establishes his modernity with his ritornello by building rhythmic patterns across bar lines and by using the violin and viola parts to help obscure the place of beat one in each phrase throughout the vocal line. In a move that shows Finzi’s own mature compositional ability, though, he managed to craft his “Aria” without a single accidental in the vocal line.

Finzi feared and hated war. In this regard, he was no different from many who have, deliberately or not, avoided serving in combat. In a rare position to observe his ancestral home of Italy under fascist rule and his Jewish brethren being killed en masse, though, Finzi expressed through *Farewell to Arms* a hopeful and utopian view of the postwar future. Much like Charles Ives’ vision of a world in which war was the rare exception rather than the rule, Finzi used Knevet and Peele to express a heartfelt desire for a future without weapons, fighting, or persecution.

In conclusion, throughout history, poets and composers have made clear their views on, and reactions to war and persecution. Some volunteered, some were compelled to serve, and some simply reacted from their respective places of relative security. Regardless of specifics, though, many writers and composers in the twentieth century worked under the specter of a world at war and allowed their specific talents to help shape the experience for them and all those who live through the frightful reality of war and persecution. Artistic interpretation of wholly negative experiences can be, for many, the only respite from the danger that is sometimes inherent in real life. One can be sure,

though, that artists and audience alike would give up such a respite in exchange for a world in which it would be unnecessary.

Appendix: Theoretical Analysis

Benjamin Britten's song "The Children," from his 1969 cycle *Who are these children?* on William Soutar poems, is a representative example of much that is great about Britten's work. "The Children" features elements of neoclassicism tempered with elements of stark modernism. It challenges, rather than alienates, the listener. It combines elements of childlike simplicity with almost incomprehensible density. And it accomplishes all of this within the traditional medium of the art song.

Considering that the cycle *Who are these children?* came quite late in Britten's career, much of his earlier tilting toward tonality is gone here. Still, though, neoclassical elements pervade. First, and most simply, "The Children" is a traditional song: an art song for voice and piano, from a song cycle, all set to poems by a single poet. The song is through composed with no alteration of the original text, characteristics that date back to Schubert lieder.

"The Children" is, while not traditionally melodic, possessed of melodic elements in a microcosmic sense. The vocal line often contains a semblance of accessible melody. However, the juxtaposition of the vocal line against a seemingly unrelated accompaniment creates alternating moments of calm and explosive violence. Another

traditional element, which is exemplified in the seemingly antagonistic relationship between voice and accompaniment, is text painting. The voice and accompaniment each have distinct roles here, with the voice mostly representing the shell-shocked children of the poem and the accompaniment representing the bombs, air-raid sirens, and occasional moments of calm between bombing raids.

The harmonic writing even has traditional elements; Britten mostly eschews clusters in favor of tertian and quartal harmonic groupings. The rhythmic and melodic writing are also heavily motivic. Britten mostly relies on a handful of motives and the same few harmonic groupings throughout the song.

Upon closer examination, however, the modernism in Britten's style comes through very clearly. The piece begins with a piano motive that is used throughout as an ostinato, albeit in several slightly different transpositions. The way in which the song is divided, primarily between alternating sections of calm and violence, is also rather untraditional.

The antagonistic roles played by the voice and accompaniment can sound rather stark at times. The song has no key signature but employs accidentals to achieve the desired harmonic and melodic effects. At first glance, Britten's harmonic language in "The Children" appears quite difficult to understand. However, taking into consideration Britten's increasing use of so-called octatonic collections, patterns begin to emerge.⁵⁸ As will be explained further, in fact, the song makes quite artful use of segments of three versions of the octatonic scale, eventually culminating in a flood of octatonic collections at the song's climax.

As stated above, “The Children” is through composed. There are clear sections, however, and they are characterized by one of two moods: calm sections, mostly featuring the ostinato piano motive that resembles an ambulance or air raid siren,⁵⁹ or more violent sections, in which the piano departs from the ostinato and the voice part is louder and usually in a higher tessitura. In every case, the more agitated sections change from the beginning meter of 2/4 to the compound duple meter of 6/8, always maintaining the quarter-note-equals-dotted-quarter-note sense of time. Ultimately, the song is dynamically symmetrical, albeit with some alteration to time; the quiet piano ostinato motive begins and ends the song, and the alternating sections of calm and heightened energy carry through from beginning to end.

Much of the music in “The Children,” in both voice and piano, falls within one of three octatonic collections. An octatonic collection is a symmetrical eight-note scale (not including the octave) that consists of alternating intervals of half step and whole step.⁶⁰ For the sake of understanding the harmony in “The Children,” it is helpful to view octatonic collections as two united diminished-seventh chords. For example, the collection that contains the pitches C, D, E flat, F, G flat, A flat, A, and B combines a C diminished-seventh chord (C, E flat, G flat, and B double flat/A) with a D diminished-seventh chord (D, F, A flat, C flat/B). It is important to note, however, that not all the harmony in the song is contained within an octatonic collection. Additionally, in this song Britten regularly uses diminished-seventh chords that belong to more than one of the octatonic collections at once.

Example 1 Measures 1-2

The musical score for Example 1, Measures 1-2, is presented in a three-staff format. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef, marked "Very slow". The middle and bottom staves are for piano accompaniment in 2/4 time, marked "pp". The right hand of the piano part features a repeating ostinato motive in the treble clef, consisting of simultaneous quarter notes on B and D, connected by grace notes of C sharp and B flat to simultaneous quarter notes on F and A flat. The left hand of the piano part enters in measure three with octaves on E, alternating between E and E-flat octaves. The score is marked "with Ped." at the bottom.

The song opens in 2/4 four meter with a *pianissimo* dynamic and a tempo marking of “Very slow.” The first octatonic collection that appears, which contains the opening piano ostinato motive, consists of the pitches C sharp, D, E, F, G, A flat, B flat, B. This octatonic collection will be referred to hereafter as O1. The opening piano motive will be referred to hereafter as the siren motive, and consists specifically of simultaneous quarter notes on B and D, connected by grace notes of C sharp and B flat to simultaneous quarter notes on F and A flat (Example 1). These six notes will be referred to as the “siren” hexachord.

For the first eight measures, the right hand of the piano part repeats the ostinato motive that opens the song. The left hand enters in measure three with octaves on E, which belong to collection O1. Through the beginning of measure nine, the left hand alternates between the E octaves and E flat octaves; E flat simply functions as a lower neighbor and is not contained within the O1 collection.

The vocal melody for the first eight measures stays within the parameters of the O1 collection, with the exception of the sustained G flat in measure four. It begins with

the same half-step and minor-third descending pattern (D, C sharp, B flat) that appears in the piano's "siren" motive. The remainder of the opening vocal melody consists of the pitches F, A flat, B, and E, all of which are members of collection O1.

Example 2 Measures 8-9

In measure nine the meter changes to 6/8, and the piano part starts with the same harmonic interval as the "siren" motive, a minor third made up of B and D. Rhythmically, though, after the first half of measure nine and throughout this 6/8 section, both hands play steady eighth notes. In the final three eighth notes of measure nine, the left hand joins in with F and A flat (Example 2), resulting in a root position F diminished-seventh chord (F, A flat, B, and D).

In measure ten the piano and vocal parts make their first real departure from the O1 collection. The B in the right hand and the A flat (now G sharp) in the left hand remain constant from measure nine. However, in the first half of the measure, the top and bottom voices expand outward to D sharp and E, respectively, resulting in an E major-seventh sonority. In the second half of the measure, the outer voices expand further to E

on top and D on the bottom. The G sharp returns to its enharmonic A flat labeling, resulting in an enharmonically labeled E major-minor-seventh sonority, in third inversion. The vocal part in this measure consists of A flat, B flat, and B, pitches that, like the piano part, lack octatonic allegiance.

Additional voices appear in both hands of the piano part in measure eleven, as the steady eighth note patterns continue to grow and expand harmonically, and crescendo dynamically. The B in the right hand remains, but the A flat in the left hand does not. The left hand begins with D and F and adds a C below the D in the second half of the measure. The right hand part consists of a B minor triad (B, D, F sharp) and does not change at all within the measure. It is in this measure that a second octatonic collection appears for the first time, but only in part. From the bottom up, the pitches contained here are C, D, F, B, and F sharp; the vocal part in this measure consists only of a sustained F sharp. The complete version of this octatonic collection (O2) contains the pitches C, D, E flat, F, G flat, A flat, A, and B (it is important to note that both O1 and O2 share the D diminished-seventh chord).

The octatonic content of measure eleven aside, Britten's goal in this first 6/8 section seems to be mainly to expand from the four-voice diminished seventh chord in measure nine to the six pitch, seven voice cluster that makes up the piano part in measure twelve. The cluster contains only pitches from the O1 collection, B, D, F, E, and G sharp. Rhythmically, the steady eighth notes stop after the first half of the measure, giving way to a quarter note and then an eighth note that ties into the following measure. The diminuendo that accompanies the rhythmic slowdown helps give the sonic effect of returning to the calm of the opening section of the piece. To complete the effect, the right

hand piano part returns immediately to a *pianissimo* dynamic and the original “siren” ostinato motive.

The first stanza of the vocal melody concludes at the beginning of measure thirteen as the piano is returning to its original motive, The voice part up to this point is representative of the stanzas that follow, not necessarily for melodic content, but for shape and relationship to the text. The form of the poem is an unusual one; each stanza contains three lines (the first two in iambic trimeter, the third in iambic pentameter), and in each case, the second and third line end with at least the same word, if not the same phrase. In the case of the first stanza, the second and third lines both end with the words “the broken stone.” Britten furthers the connection between the lines by placing the words “broken stone” on the same pitches and rhythms each time (sixteenth note on E, dotted eighth note on D, and extended quarter note, dotted or tied, on F).

From measures fourteen through nineteen, the right hand “siren” repeats in the piano part. This time, however, the left hand pitches play a slightly more important role. Rather than the original alternating octave Es and E flats, beginning in measure fourteen the left hand alternates on octaves on G and its lower neighbor F sharp. The F sharps, like the earlier E flats, do not fit within the O1 collection. However, G was the only pitch from the O1 collection that had yet to be articulated in an O1-based section.

Also interesting about the left hand part in measures fourteen through seventeen is the rhythmic development of the alternating Gs and F sharps. Whereas during the first stanza the Es and E flats appeared irregularly with no discernable pattern, the Gs and F sharps in the second stanza appear in semi-regular rhythmic diminution. The first appearance of the G octaves lasts two beats, followed by F sharps and Gs each for one-

and-a-half beats, followed by Gs on a quarter note, and finally F sharps on an eighth note. While the alternating left hand pitches continue through measure nineteen, the pattern stops after measure seventeen.

Vocally, the melody from measures fifteen through nineteen contains the pitches B, F, F sharp, E, C sharp/D flat, A flat, and G. These pitches do not all fall within one octatonic collection. The voice part in this section is more interesting from a rhythmic perspective. Unlike Britten's treatment of the first stanza, there are no rests in the first two lines of the second stanza. The melody sounds more and more like sing-songy childrens' speech patterns and features eighth note triplet patterns in three consecutive measures (seventeen through nineteen).

The second 6/8-meter section begins in measure twenty, with a sustained G in the left hand and, in the right hand, like the first 6/8 section, homophonic groupings of pitches from the piano's "siren motive" (in this case, B and D together, expanding to a root position F diminished-seventh chord). In measures twenty-one through twenty-three, as in the first 6/8 section, both hands play steady eighth note homophonic chords. This time, though, the left hand begins with only one voice, while the right hand has three. From a macro perspective, this 6/8 section does more or less what the first 6/8 section does; it begins and ends with pitches that relate to the "siren" motive and O1 collection. The measures in between get more and more harmonically tense as the chords grow outward to include more voices. Dynamically, the section begins *piano*, crescendos, and then diminuendos back to *pianissimo*.

Looking at the 6/8 section one measure at a time, there are some interesting components. Measure twenty-one begins with an F-minor triad in the right hand and an E

in the left. The chord produced, an F-minor chord with a major seventh on the bottom is a rather dissonant one, but the left hand jumps to a D flat in the second half of the measure creating a D flat major-seventh chord.

The right hand changes first in measure twenty-two, lowering its top and bottom voices to B and E. The A flat in the right hand shifts enharmonically to a G sharp, and the D flat in the bass enharmonically becomes a C sharp; the resulting sonority is a C sharp minor-seventh chord. In the second half of the measure, the only thing that changes is that the left hand's C sharp descends to a C, resulting in an augmented C triad with a major-seventh on top (C, E, G sharp, B).

In measure twenty-three, at the dynamic peak of the 6/8 section, the left hand maintains its C from the previous measure but it adds a second voice, first on a G a fourth below the C. Over the left hand's G and C, the right hand has a second position A major triad (E, A, C sharp). This combination of pitches in the two hands does not belong to either of the octatonic collections used thus far. However, in the second half of the measure, the right hand loses its top voice, the A lowers to an A flat, and the G in the bass lowers to an F; this tetrachord, F, A flat, C, E flat, belongs to the O2 collection. Since this O2 subset serves mainly in a passing function to transition to measure twenty-four, however, and considering that the pitches in the vocal part do not adhere to the O2 collection, it seems that the octatonic affiliation of the right hand tetrachord is hardly relevant.

As in measure twelve (the last measure of the first 6/8 section), the steady eighth-note pattern breaks down as the right hand begins to resume the "siren" ostinato. The outer voices remain the same as in the previous measure (A flat on top in right hand, F on

bottom in left hand), but the internal voices change considerably. The left hand now plays an F and a G, and the right hand (three voices again) plays a D diminished triad (D, F, A flat). This two-handed pentachord is contained within the O1 collection. The last notes of the measure are the B flat and C sharp grace notes that signal the return of 2/4 meter and the original right hand ostinato.

The pitches in the vocal melody in measures twenty-one through twenty-four, when looked at together, have no octatonic affiliation. However, the voice ends on a G in measure twenty-four, which is consistent with the O1 subset that is the pentachord in the piano in that measure (this is where the piano transitions back to the 2/4 “siren” ostinato). Also notable in the voice part here is that, as in the first stanza, the second and third lines of text end on the same words (“bright afternoon”); the pitches in both utterances of “bright afternoon” are also the same (E, C sharp/ D flat, A flat, G), albeit with slight rhythmic differences this time.

Example 3 Measures 28-29

p more lively

A - gain the sky is

pp

(with the voice)

Measure twenty-five brings the return of 2/4 meter and the “siren” motive in the right hand of the piano part. Though the pitches in the right hand remain what they have been in every 2/4 section thus far (B, D, C sharp, B flat, F, A flat), in measure twenty seven, the rhythm changes; it dissolves first into arpeggiated sixteenth notes at the end of measure twenty-seven, and finally into a rolled version of the “siren” hexachord (Example 3). The rolled chord continues through measure thirty-two.

The left hand reenters in the last eighth note of measure twenty-five on octave As. From here through measure thirty-two, the left hand alternates between octave As and Cs, but without any regular rhythm. For example, the left hand doesn't play at all for measures twenty-eight, twenty-nine, or thirty-one. In measures twenty-five through twenty-seven, though, the rhythm of the left hand part resembles the reverse of the rhythmic diminution that happened in the left hand part in measures fourteen through seventeen -- the first A is held for one beat (two tied eighth notes), followed by a dotted quarter note C, followed finally by half note A at the beginning of measure twenty-seven.

The vocal line during measures twenty-eight through measure thirty-two resembles the first two lines of the first stanza somewhat; both begin with descending half steps from D to C sharp, and both end on a large downward leap to G sharp/A flat before stopping halfway through for a rest. In this section of the vocal part, the pitches in the first line of the stanza (D, C sharp, E, G sharp) fall within collection O1. The pitches in the second line of the stanza (G sharp, F sharp, B, D) are members of the O2 collection; both collections share B, D, and G sharp, but only O2 contains F sharp.

The next 6/8 section begins in measure thirty-three. This section is structured differently from the previous 6/8 sections in several ways. First, it is shorter than the

others (only three measures long). Second, although it does feature homophonic groupings of at least three pitches at a time in the right hand and groupings of at least two pitches at a time in the left hand, the hands alternate at irregular intervals rather than playing two-hand chords.

In measure thirty-three, although both hands are playing the new 6/8 alternating eighth-note patterns, both hands are also playing pitches from the “siren” motive (F, B, and D in the right hand, and B flat and C sharp in the left). In this way, the 6/8 section is like its predecessors; the first measure of each 6/8 section so far has contained either all or a subset of the “siren” hexachord. The left hand maintains the C sharp and B flat combination throughout this section, all the way through measure thirty-five. In the second half of measure thirty-four, a third voice is added on E flat. The E flat disappears again after measure thirty-four.

The right hand maintains its lowest voice, F, from measure thirty-three through measure thirty-five. The upper two voices, though, change in a sometimes-staggered motion based on ascending and then descending thirds. The top two voices of the right hand initially play B and D. In measure thirty-four they begin on C and E and end on D and F. At the dynamic climax of this 6/8 section, the beginning of measure thirty-five, the top two right hand voices reach E and G, before descending stepwise in thirds back to B and D in the last eighth note of the measure.

The final line of the third stanza of the vocal part happens during the aforementioned 6/8 piano music in measures thirty-three through thirty-six. This vocal line has more of a deliberate direction than any of its predecessors thus far. Though the line moves up and down a great deal, it is the upward motion from B in measure thirty-

three to the E at the beginning of measure thirty-five and the octatonic stepwise descent back to B that are important. On each of the strong beats from the second half of thirty-three through the first beat of thirty-five, the vocal line primarily follows the middle voice of the piano in its upward ascent; the only difference is that where the piano uses Cs, the voice uses C sharps. In this way, the entire four measures of singing remain within the confines of octatonic collection O1. Also, as in the previous stanzas, Britten pays heed to the similarities at the end of the second and third lines of text and transfers them to the music. Both lines of text end on the word “stain,” and the second and third line of music end with descents from a B down to a D for the word “stain.”

This shortened 6/8 section ends at the beginning of measure thirty-six and gives way to a quiet right hand triplet pattern in the piano part on a homophonic statement of an F diminished-seventh chord; the B and D in the right hand sustain after the F and A flat cut off, in order for the “siren” motive to restart. The left hand plays octave As and then Cs, as if everything is returning to normal.

Example 4 Measures 38-40

The musical score for measures 38-40 consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line, with lyrics '- rupts the hearts of men:'. The middle staff is the right hand of the piano, featuring a triplet pattern of eighth notes. The bottom staff is the left hand of the piano, playing octave As and Cs. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, dynamics (f), and articulation marks.

However, this 2/4 section sets up the first of two dramatic climaxes in the piece. Both the piano and vocal parts have “crescendo molto” marked in measure thirty-seven.

The “siren” motive appears in several ascending transpositions in measures thirty-seven through thirty-nine. The first transposition is up a whole step from the original. The next is up a minor third from the previous one. In measure thirty-nine, a third transposition appears a whole step up from the second. Four grace notes, C sharp, D, G, and B flat, end the measure for the right hand (Example 4).

It is also in this section, beginning with measure thirty-seven, that the octatonic collections really begin to be fleshed out in greater detail. The O1 collection overlaps a new octatonic collection (O3, which contains the pitches C, C sharp, D sharp, E, F sharp, G, A, A sharp) at the C sharp and E combination in beat two of measure thirty-seven; both collections share these two pitches. The F sharp in the left hand at the end of measure thirty-seven seems to hint that the O3 collection will appear more broadly. However, the remainder of measure thirty-eight just serves to get to measure thirty-nine. With the exception of the G sharp in the left hand tied over from thirty-eight, the pitches in both hands in measure thirty-nine (B flat, D flat, C, D, E, G, F sharp, and A) make up the entirety of the newest octatonic collection, O3. Measure thirty-nine very effectively heightens tension before the *fortissimo* flood of octatonic collections that is to follow.

The left hand piano part in measures thirty-six through thirty-eight, and the vocal line in measures thirty-six through thirty-nine, are mostly unrelated to the right hand piano part (the left hand in measure thirty-nine is discussed in the previous paragraph). The pitches that appear in the left hand between thirty-six and thirty-eight (A, C, F sharp, G sharp) seem mostly unrelated to the mounting tonal chaos in the right hand, except to heighten the harmonic tension further. The pitches in the vocal line (D, C sharp, A, E, G, B flat, F, E flat, B flat, D flat) belong to no single octatonic collection and don't have the

kind of direction the previous vocal line had. Indeed, the line is only missing C and F sharp out of the entire chromatic scale.

In measure forty, things begin to come apart rhythmically. In the right hand in measures forty and forty-one, the “siren” motive is replaced by simultaneous G sharp and Bs, followed by arpeggiated sixteenth notes that spell out C sharp diminished-seventh chords (B flat, G, E, C sharp), first descending and then ascending (also Example 4). All these pitches, as well as the E, F, B flat, and B in the left hand, are contained in the O1 collection. The left hand pitches in measure forty-one, beginning with C sharp (upper neighbor to the B that ends measure forty), and moving up another step to D sharp, down a half step to D, and then up a fourth to G, are not all members of any octatonic collection.

Example 5 Measures 42-44

The musical score for Example 5, Measures 42-44, is presented in three systems. The top system shows the vocal line in treble clef with a 6/8 time signature. The lyrics are "The blood of". The piano accompaniment is in bass clef, featuring arpeggiated sixteenth notes and diminished chords. Dynamics include *ff* and *p*, with a *marked* instruction. The second system shows the vocal line with the lyrics "chil - dren cor - rupts the hearts of". The piano accompaniment continues with similar arpeggiated figures. The third system shows the vocal line with the lyrics "chil - dren cor - rupts the hearts of". The piano accompaniment concludes with a triplet figure. The score includes various performance markings such as accents, slurs, and dynamic changes.

In measures forty-two through forty-four, the beginning of another 6/8 section, both hands of the piano part explode into thirty-second note arpeggiated diminished-

seventh chords, with some pitches named enharmonically. There are several statements each of D, C sharp, and F sharp diminished-seventh chords. Each of these chords is a subset of two of the three octatonic collections in this piece (Example 5); when combined, they comprise all three complete octatonic collections. This is the only time in the piece that there are multiple complete statements of more than one collection in one section.

The diminished-seventh chords do not alternate regularly, however. Rather, beginning with the last eighth note in measure forty-two, the first pitch articulated in each chord is the same pitch being sung in the vocal line. The order of the diminished-seventh chords is clearly intended to help the singer find his pitches. This stanza also deviates from the others before it in the way it ends, but only slightly. Both the second and third lines of the stanza end with the phrase “corrupts the hearts of men.” Unlike in the previous stanzas, though, pitches at the ends of the two lines are the same but in different octaves.

By measure forty-five, still in 6/8 meter, the eighth note divisions have slowed slightly from thirty-second note duple patterns to sixteenth note triplets. By now, the piano part, which began *fortissimo* has diminuendoed to *pianissimo*. The pitches in both hands, as well as the end of the vocal phrase in this measure (E natural, C sharp, A sharp, D, B, G all belong to the original O1 collection. Starting halfway through measure forty-five and continuing through measure forty-six, the descending patterns reverse and begin ascending, while still articulating the same pitches. By measure forty-six, both hands are in treble clef, and the measure ends on an eighth note, on E and G an octave above the

staff. This eighth note ties into the next measure, which brings the return of 2/4 meter and a new version of the “siren” motive.

Example 6 Measures 47-48

Intervallically, the new “siren” is the same as the original, but it is transposed up a major twelfth, or seventeen half steps. The pitches this time are E and G, followed by grace notes on F sharp and E flat, followed by B flat and D flat (Example 6). This new transposition of the “siren” continues in the right hand all the way through the first half of measure fifty-six, always *pianissimo*, as if representing the calm after the violence of the previous 6/8 section. Interestingly, while the new transposition is not contained in the O1 collection, it is contained in the O3 collection.

When the left hand reenters in measure forty-nine, and every time it plays through measure fifty-six, it plays only octave Cs. The left hand begins with C1 and C2, then plays C2 and C3, then C3 and C4, and then C4 and C5. Rhythmically the occurrences and durations are irregular, but that complete range of octave groupings appears twice from forty-nine to fifty-six.

Triplets in the right hand at the end of measure fifty-six signal the new 6/8 section that begins in fifty-seven. As in the previous 6/8 sections, the first homophonic groupings

are based on the “siren” motive from the previous few measures. This time, however, the new transposition of the “siren” is the basis for the beginning of the 6/8 section.

This 6/8 section brings a return to the homophonic, two-hand larger chords of the first few 6/8 sections in the song. The first half of measure fifty-seven, in both hands and the vocal line, consists of pitches (C, E flat, B flat, D flat, E, G, F sharp/ G flat) that belong to collection O3, as did the new transposition of the “siren” motive. By the second half of the measure, however, using B flat and D flat as kind of “pivot” pitches, both hands and the voice return to the O1 collection, with the pitches B flat, D flat, A flat, D, and F.

In measure fifty-eight, there are no pitches carried over from the end of fifty-seven. Fifty-eight, in both hands and voice, contains only, and all of, the pitches from the O3 collection. Unlike in previous 6/8 sections, the piano harmony does not expand outward from chord to chord in this case. The chords in both hands move downward, by irregular intervals, every half-measure through measure fifty-nine. In measure fifty-nine, the O3 collection gives way to a half-measure each of subsets of the O2 and O1 collections.

Measures sixty and sixty-one begin something of a breakdown of the structure of the previous few measures and, on a larger scale, the harmonic and rhythmic structure of the piece so far. While the pitches in each of the halves of measure sixty, in both right and left hand, are subsets of octatonic collections (C, D, B, D sharp, F sharp, and A, a subset of O2 in the first half, and D, B, B flat, E, G, C sharp, a subset of O1 in the second half), measure sixty-one is entirely divorced from octatonic collections. Add to that the devolution of larger homophonic chordal blocks into one pitch per hand at a time, and the

crescendo through the measure, and the result is extremely harmonically vague in a way that sets up the next phrase quite effectively.

By measure sixty-two, both hands of the piano part are in bass clef. Although the right hand now has two voices, the top voice of the right hand and the sole voice of the left hand both begin measure sixty-two down a half step from the last sixteenth note of measure sixty-one; sixty-two begins with a B in the left hand and an A and a C in the right hand.

In addition, measures sixty-two through sixty-four share harmonic characteristics of the previous homophonic 6/8 sections and the rhythmic characteristics of the alternating right and left hand chords in measures thirty-three through thirty-five. The pitches in measure sixty-two remain the same in the right hand (A, C, D sharp, and F sharp) and in the left hand (alternating B and G sharp) remain constant throughout the measure. All six of these pitches belong to the O2 collection.

In measure sixty-three, the up-and-down alternating chord movement in both hands of the piano part continues from sixty-two. However, the right hand pitches change to C sharp, D, F sharp, and A natural, while the left hand pitches descend a half step each to B flat and G. None of the piano part in measure sixty-three is of any relevance to any the octatonic collections.

The left-hand portion of measure sixty-four continues the half-step downward progression from the previous two measures to alternating As and F sharps. The right hand plays changing combinations of thirds, first D sharp and F sharp, then A and C, then E and G in the first half of the measure. In the second three eighth notes, the right hand

alternates between A sharp and C sharp, and E and G. The piano portion of this measure all conforms to the O3 octatonic collection.

Despite it not being marked in the score, measure sixty-five is in 9/8 time; here Britten takes an extra three eighth notes to really prepare the singer and listener for the second of the song's two climaxes, which begins in measure sixty-six. The right hand of the piano part of measure sixty-five breaks from the semi-regularity of the previous two measures. It contains the pitches E, G, A sharp/ B flat, C sharp, F sharp, A, C, and D sharp, which comprise the entire O3 collection. The left hand contains the pitches G, E flat, E, C sharp, D, and B flat, which, except for the D (upper neighbor to the C sharps in the middle three beats, and which plays a prominent role in the next measure) are also all contained in the O3 collection.

In order to propel as strongly as possible into the more structured section of measures sixty-six through sixty-eight, Britten writes a two-measure crescendo that culminates in a *forte* dynamic at the beginning of measure sixty-six. Measures sixty-six through sixty-nine return, albeit in a less precise way, to the hail of octatonic subsets that made up the piano part in measures forty through forty-six. The pitches in the piano and voice in measure sixty-six (B, D, A flat, E, F, G, G sharp) amount to a subset of collection O1.

Measure sixty-seven features a left and right hand combination of ascending sixteenth-note triplet and thirty-second-note duple patterns, which begins with the same pentachord as the previous measure (B, D, A flat, E, G, all from O1). The remaining piano pitches in the measure (C sharp, E, B flat, F sharp, A, E flat, C, G) belong instead to collection O3. The one exception to the otherwise obviously affiliated pitches in this

measure is the final pitch, a B, which fits instead in the O1 collection (which governs the next measure).

Measure sixty-eight is the only other 9/8 measure in the piece (also unmarked), apart from measure sixty-five. The sixteenth-note triplet and thirty-second-note duple rhythmic pattern breaks down in the final six eighth notes of the measure, as the right hand finally returns to the original transposition of the “siren” motive. The pitches in measure sixty-eight all fall within the O1 octatonic collection in which the song began.

Example 7 Measures 66-67



The image shows a musical score for measures 66 and 67. It consists of two systems. The first system (measures 66-67) features a vocal line in the upper staff and a piano accompaniment in the lower staff. The vocal line begins with a forte 'fa' syllable. The piano part includes a sixteenth-note triplet and a thirty-second-note duple pattern. The second system (measures 68-69) continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment, with the piano part featuring a sixteenth-note triplet and a thirty-second-note duple pattern.

Over the course of measures sixty-two through sixty-eight, the vocal line, like the piano line, fades in and out of octatonic relevance. In measure sixty-two, the voice only sings an F sharp, which fits with the O2 affiliation of the piano part in that measure. Furthermore, the pitches in the voice part in measures sixty-two and sixty-three (F sharp, G, A, B flat) all fit within the O3 collection. Measures sixty-four and sixty-five of the voice part (C, D, E flat, F), when viewed together, are subsets of the O2 collection. The remainder of the vocal pitches in measures sixty-six through sixty-eight (A flat, F, C sharp, D, G, E) all fall within the original O1 collection (Example 7). While it seems that the O1 pitches in measures sixty-six through sixty-eight are deliberate and relevant, the more transient octatonic relationships that the voice and piano parts have within this 6/8

and 9/8 section seem less important to the bigger harmonic picture. The O1 harmonic bookends, in both piano and voice, seem to be the more important factors.

The piece returns to 2/4 meter in measure sixty-nine. The right hand piano part picks up where it left off with the reiteration of the original “siren” motive that began the song. The right hand continues the “siren” ostinato through measure seventy-four. In measures seventy-five through seventy-seven, the final three measures of the song, the “siren” dissolves one last time into 6/8 time with irregularly alternating right and left hand two-note groupings; all pitches in seventy-five through seventy-seven are members of “siren” hexachord O1 collection. The final measure consists of two dotted quarter notes on the same six pitches (the entire “siren” hexachord), followed by an arpeggiation of the hexachord. The left hand portion of measures seventy through seventy-four does not adhere to any octatonic collection, but in measure seventy-five, it becomes assimilated into the right hand partial arpeggiation of the “siren” hexachord.

Finally, the vocal line in measures seventy through seventy-three matches the underlying piano part harmonically. These four measures of vocal line contain the pitches G, B, D, C sharp, B flat, A flat and E, all of which match the piano part’s adherence to the O1 collection. The last stanza, like the previous stanzas, ends with some text repetition in the second and third lines. In this case, both end with the word “faces.” In addition, the pitches of the last line of the last stanza comprise the complete O1 collection. As in the previous stanza, the only tonal or rhythmic difference between the two utterances of “faces” is that the pitches are displaced by an octave.

The graph appended to the end of this paper shows on its x-axis a measure for measure breakdown of the song. On its y-axis is the list of three octatonic collections. The graph shows an interesting pattern in Britten's use of the three collections. It is almost as if they are being used as traditional "key areas." The song begins the O1 collection, and O1 is the primary collection throughout most of the song. There are brief diversions into the O2 collection, and after a section of heightened tension that employs all three collections, the O3 collection takes over as the governing collection using transposed original thematic material. The O1 and O3 collections overlap for the climactic section toward the end, and the piece closes as it opened, with the original thematic material in the original O1 collection.

Through his evocative text- and scene-painting, Britten masterfully portrays the terrors of war as experienced by children. He creates a sense of frame-by-frame experience, that is to say experience without expectation. War creates in its observers a situational way of experiencing life. Each air raid siren, each bomb blast, creates adrenaline rush, panic, resignation, adrenaline crash. The child may not grasp the gravity of the experience, however, and so in the high, quiet, floating melody lines that begin and end the song, Britten gives us the child's timid, restrained perspective.

ENDNOTES

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- ¹ *Gay & Lesbian Biography*, “Michelangelo Buonarroti” (Farmington Hills: St James Press, 1997).
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ John Addington Symonds, *The Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), p.126.
- ⁵ *Gay & Lesbian Biography*, “Michelangelo Buonarroti.”
- ⁶ Symonds, *The Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti*, p.126.
- ⁷ Suzanne Robinson, “‘An English Composer Sees America:’ Benjamin Britten and the North American Press, 1939-1942,” *American Music*, 15, no. 3 (1997), p.322 (<http://www.jstor.org.proxy-tu.researchport.umd.edu/stable/3052328>).
- ⁸ Donald Mitchell, ed., *Letters from a Life: The Selected Letters and Diaries of Benjamin Britten 1913-1976, Volume Two* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p.635.
- ⁹ Michael Kennedy, *Master Musicians: Britten* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981),p.26.
- ¹⁰ Mitchell, *Letters from a Life*, p.680.
- ¹¹ Peter Pears and Philip Reed, *The Travel Diaries of Peter Pears, 1936-1978* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 1999), p.13.
- ¹² Kennedy, *Master Musicians: Britten*, p.27.
- ¹³ Ibid, p.34.
- ¹⁴ Reinhold Brinkmann and Christoph Wolff, ed., *Driven into Paradise: The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p.195.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Jonah Lehrer, *Proust Was a Neuroscientist* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007) p.11.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1993), 235-273.
- ¹⁹ Ibid, p.264.
- ²⁰ David S. Reynolds, *Walt Whitman’s America: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1995), p.412.
- ²¹ Lehrer, *Proust Was a Neuroscientist*, p.11.
- ²² Brinkmann, ed., *Driven into Paradise*, p.195.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Ibid, p.196.
- ²⁵ Lawrence Kramer, ed., *Walt Whitman and Modern Music: War, Desire, and the Trials of Nationhood* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc, 2000) p.45.
- ²⁶ Ibid, p.196.
- ²⁷ Kramer, ed., *Walt Whitman and Modern Music*, p.48.
- ²⁸ Kim H. Kowalke, “Hin und Zurück: Kurt Weill at 90,” *The Musical Times*, 131, no. 1766 (1990), 191 (<http://www.jstor.org.proxy-tu.researchport.umd.edu/stable/966258>).
- ²⁹ Kowalke, “Hin und Zurück: Kurt Weill at 90,” p.189.

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- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Brinkmann, ed. *Driven into Paradise*, p.199.
- ³² Ibid, p.202.
- ³³ J. Peter Burkholder, et al, "Ives, Charles." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ *Contemporary Authors Online*. "John McCrae." Gale, 2008. Reproduced in *Biography Resource Center*, (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2008).
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Burkholder, "Ives, Charles."
- ³⁹ J. Peter Burkholder, *All Made of Tunes* (Binghamton, NY: Vail-Ballou Press, 1995), p.300.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid, pp.313-314.
- ⁴¹ Burkholder, "Ives, Charles."
- ⁴² Janis P. Stout, *Coming Out of War: Poetry, Grieving, and the Culture of the World Wars*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005), p.123.
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ Charles Ives, *Ives Plays Ives: The Complete Recordings of Charles Ives at the Piano* (New World Records CD 80642, ©2006), tracks 38-40.
- ⁴⁵ Stout, *Coming Out of War*, p.123.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ Diana McVeagh, *Gerald Finzi: His Life and Music* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2005), p.94.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid, p.121.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid, p.123.
- ⁵⁰ Stephen Banfield, *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1997) p.280.
- ⁵¹ McVeagh, *Gerald Finzi: His Life and Music*, 127-128.
- ⁵² Ibid, p.128.
- ⁵³ Ibid.
- ⁵⁴ Gerald Finzi, *Farewell to Arms* (London: Boosey and Hawke, 1945), p.ii.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid.
- ⁵⁷ Banfield, *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer*, p.136.
- ⁵⁸ Arnold Whittall, "Cross Currents and Convergencies: Britten, Maxwell Davies, and the Sense of Place," *Tempo*, New Series, No. 204 (Apr., 1998), p.6.
(<http://www.jstor.org/stable/944900>)
- ⁵⁹ Ibid.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid.

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