

Abstracts

Meinhard Saremba: »There is a dark side even to perfection«. Ideal, Loss of Innocence and Ambivalence in Britten's Work

According to Britten's mentor Wystan Hugh Auden there are two kinds of art: escapist-art, for man needs escape as he needs food and deep sleep, and parable-art, that which teaches man to unlearn hatred and learn love. From his operas to his small-scale works Benjamin Britten's compositions are parable-art. As in his *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid* for solo oboe, op. 49, the vast majority of Britten's output offers metamorphoses of recurring topics such as innocence and loss, the longing for a lost primal state, nocturnal moods and darker shades of light, suffering and conciliation. He adopted Auden's opinion that at least one moral may be drawn from archaeology, namely that all our school textbooks lie. What they call history, the writer said, »is nothing to vaunt of, being made, as it is, by the criminal in us: goodness is timeless«. Asked by a BBC reporter what he still tried to achieve, Britten replied that he wanted to write better music. However, there was also a dark side to his striving for perfection that was revealed in hypersensitivity, dark undertones in his seemingly pleasing music and his decreasing readiness to accept jokes or irreverence in relation to himself, his work, or Peter Pears. But, as Michael Tippett observed, he »never betrayed his sense of vocation or his artistic integrity«.

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Kerstin Schüssler-Bach: »In peace I have found my image«. Britten's Pacifism in his Work

Britten's pacifism was significant to many of his compositions. In the 1930s he turned to antifacist convictions under the influence of W. H. Auden and the Spanish Civil War. The songs *Rats Away!* and *Dance of Death* in *Our Hunting Fathers* convey a subtle political message, *Ballad of Heroes* is even a left propaganda piece. When Britten accepted a commission from the Nazi-allied Japanese Government in 1939, the *Sinfonia da Requiem* did not meet the Japanese expectations. With *War Requiem* and *Children's Crusade* (after Brecht) he wrote explicitly anti-war pieces. His operas also include pacifist statements, most notably in *Owen Wingrave* in which Owen's monologue portrays Britten's more private pacifist ideals of his later years.

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Norbert Abels: »The Poetry is in the Pity«. On Benjamin Britten's Literary World

Benjamin Britten was a passionate reader from an early age. Literature has an high impact on his works, among others, especially those of W. H. Auden. The composer was not only interested in a broad range of literary genres, but also in various cultures and habits. On his journeys he had made striking acquaintances with numerous artists and poets. Any of those experiences turn up again in his songs and operas, in which words and melody amalgamate to very noteworthy arrangements.

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Sarah-Lisa Beier: The Tonal Language of the Outsiders. Benjamin Britten's Compositional Technique, explained by the Example of the Operas *Peter Grimes* and *Owen Wingrave*

All of his life, Britten's main passion as a composer was musical communication through the human voice. His numerous vocal works are a testimony to the importance he placed on it – earning it a special place in his oeuvre – to convey emotions. The varied voices which can be heard especially in Britten's operas enter into a dialogue with the dramatic setting, shedding light on existential conflicts: They speak of being an outsider, of violent crimes, of (childhood) traumata while posing questions of guilt but also of redemptive hope. The following paper provides a comparative analysis of »Peter Grimes« and »Owen Wingrave«, discussing how Britten handles these motifs in these two operas. It reveals an astonishing amount of similarities regarding the musical and dramatic elements employed by the composer in these works.

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Florian Csizmadia: Extra-European Influences in the Work of Benjamin Britten

Extra-European influences have always been an important part of Britten's creative work and range from his first contact with Balinese music around 1940 to his last stage work, *Death in Venice* (1973). Impacts and achievements resulting from Britten's engagement with Far Eastern culture can be found in different contexts and implementations throughout his work: From the usage of Balinese sounds in the ballet *The Prince of the Pagodas* to the combining of elements of Japanese music and theatre culture with those of the English mystery play in his church parables to the dramatically legitimized application of exotic sounds in the operas. Thereby one can always observe that they are not mere imitations

of models but amalgamations of different influences and their integration into Britten's personal style.

Übersetzung: Jerome P. Schäfer

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Guido Heldt: *The New Operator*. Benjamin Britten as a Composer for Film, Radio und Theatre

After his studies at the Royal College of Music, the young Benjamin Britten was for a few years heavily involved in making music in contexts that were very different from those we associate with the important opera composer and national musical icon: music for public-information films by the General Post Office Film Unit; music for experimental theatre productions and political plays; music for radio plays and features. The article traces his path through these new fields of work and considers what they may have meant for the musical, cultural and political education of a budding composer.