

Tippett Studies

Michael Tippett (1905–1998) was one of the major figures of British music in the twentieth century. This collection of studies is the first completely new, internationally available book on the composer to appear for over a decade and includes the thinking of established scholars and new commentators. Detailed analyses of individual works are counterpointed against critical investigations of contextual issues, such as the composer's relationship to the past, his 'Englishness', his fascination with ancient Greece and his pursuit of the visionary. The book covers all of Tippett's style periods and many of the key genres within his *œuvre*. What transpires is a rich portrait of an artist whose work reflects the century's triumphs and tragedies with particular intensity and who is upheld by younger generations of composers as a source of inspiration and example.

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Tippett Studies

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To Ian Kemp

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Preface

In the late 1990s little justification is needed for a book on Michael Tippett – a composer who in his own lifetime attained a canonical position in British music and prominence internationally. However, it is perhaps surprising that despite the levels of institutional recognition accorded him, Tippett (1905–98) has not been the subject of more widespread scholarly attention. For example, while the period between approximately his seventy-fifth and eightieth birthday years saw the publication of what still remain key texts on the composer – including most notably Ian Kemp's substantial monograph, Arnold Whittall's extensive technical investigation of Tippett's (as well as Britten's) *œuvre* and Meirion Bowen's introductory volume¹ – no new comparable book-length studies materialised as the composer approached and entered his nineties.² Against this background, then, *Tippett Studies* will, I hope, be seen as a timely venture. The essays below, the work both of established commentators and of new contributors to discourse on Tippett, can be claimed collectively to represent a significant expansion of research on the composer. Many of the studies were originally presented as papers at the Newcastle University International Tippett Conference in 1995, and the volume as a whole continues the philosophy of that event: to offer new perspectives on Tippett, while re-assessing and building on existing scholarship.

In a heterogeneous compilation such as this it would of course be gratuitous to make claims for a neat overall structure. That said, across essays

- 1 Ian Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and his Music* (London, Eulenburg Books, 1984); Arnold Whittall, *The Music of Tippett and Britten: Studies in Themes and Techniques* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Meirion Bowen, *Michael Tippett* (London: Robson Books, 1982).
- 2 Notwithstanding two less widely available books published in the intervening period: Margaret Scheppach's *Dramatic Parallels in Michael Tippett's Operas: Analytical Essays on the Musico-Dramatic Techniques* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), and my *Language, Form, and Structure in the Music of Michael Tippett*, 2 vols. (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1989). Additionally, Kemp's, Whittall's and Bowen's studies have been re-published in further editions (either reprinted or revised).

which encompass a range of genres and style periods a number of recurring themes may be detected. Their appearance may to some extent have been a matter of synchronicity, but together they invite a network of narratives such that the volume as a whole can with some justification be considered to be greater than the sum of its parts.

One such narrative has to do with attempts to tease out connections, or homologies, between biographical knowledge and musical inquiry. In the first two chapters, Anthony Pople and I seek to identify specific features of the character of the tonal language of Tippett's earlier style in relation to possible formative influences at the time of his apprenticeship: respectively the tutelage of R. O. Morris in the case of the *Fantasia Concertante*, and discourses around folk music in the case of the Concerto for Double String Orchestra. The concern of these studies to engage with details of musical language is also characteristic of many of the ensuing essays – a concern pursued sometimes in relation to questions of context, sometimes from a more purely immanent standpoint. This is surely a welcome development, given that in the past only a few have made sustained attempts in this direction. The recalcitrance of the music itself to analysis is no doubt a potential deterrent (one sometimes wonders whether Tippett through his quasi-intuitive creative temperament did not inoculate himself against music analysis), but, as a number of the contributors here demonstrate, that recalcitrance is best dealt with not by attempting to subvert it, but by embracing it. For example, Arnold Whittall's subtle analysis of possible parallels between technical musical strategies and dramatic content in *King Priam* demonstrates the importance of remaining alert to the tension between the specificity of musical particulars and the reductiveness inherent in the conceptual categories of analytical inquiry. As Whittall reminds us, analytical tactics should function as a trigger to thought, not as their own self-reproducing ends. And perhaps the fact that Tippett's music does not permit analysis to stop at reinforcing its own terms of operation is another index of its value.

That said, the analysis of this music still calls for rigour and precision if it is to advance beyond mere descriptive platitudes: formalised methodologies still have their role. While some readers will be more sympathetic than others to certain of the approaches taken here, I have no doubt that the demands of close reading entailed by the studies in question will bring their

own rewards. One recurring issue within the analytical seam of this book is the hybrid nature of Tippett's language, which even at its atonal extremes retains vestiges of its earlier tonal character, and even at its most tonal contains organisational features that prefigure its later, post-tonal attributes. This prompts commensurable pragmatism from contributors, though what is significant (and perhaps unexpected) is the extent to which Allen Forte's set-theoretical methodology has been productively applied. Those less familiar with the principles of Forte's theory of pitch-class sets might want to consult his primary text, *The Structure of Atonal Music*.³ By and large, however, contributors have sought to incorporate explanation of their various applications; and to ease the way further, I have incorporated a glossary of some of the main theoretical terms from this methodology as an appendix to the present volume.

Another leitmotiv that surfaces in the following pages is Tippett's relationship to the musical past. This will perhaps increasingly provide the key to a fuller understanding of his music, and might well be seen in the light of the insistence of his one-time mentor T. S. Eliot on the importance of tradition in the forging of the new. Indeed, Tippett's shifts of style – his changing modernisms, one might say – could be construed in terms of the shifting nature of his relationship to different pasts. Such an assertion would seem to be corroborated by contributions below. Kenneth Gloag, for example, suggests that the neoclassical practice enshrined in a key work concerned with stylistic change, Tippett's Second Symphony, can be interpreted as a double play of defamiliarisation: a critical distancing from a Stravinskian neoclassicism which is itself defined by a processes of defamiliarisation from its own invoked pasts. In a not dissimilar vein, Christopher Mark independently suggests that the sequential treatment and patterns of transposition common to much of Tippett's music could be considered as metaphorical: as 'standing for' their counterparts received from the historical practices of Western tonal music. This implicitly throws different light on the 'recalcitrance question' of Tippett's language, for such musical gestures should be read, on this view, not in terms of their organic linkages to the work as a whole, but for their connotation of earlier stylistic patterns. And Alastair Borthwick arrives at a similar conclusion in his

3 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973.)

analysis of tonal voice-leading figures in Tippett's decidedly extended-tonal Third Piano Sonata. These melodic entities signify primarily through reference to their 'historical archetypes', rather than themselves aggregating organically into sustained middleground structures as their traditional counterparts would have done.

A different gloss on Tippett's relationship to the past is provided in chapters by Stephen Collisson and Peter Wright. Collisson investigates the relationship between the Triple Concerto and the past represented by Tippett's own *œuvre*, while Wright explores the composer's return in his Fifth String Quartet to his beloved Beethoven, who was such a powerful influence in his earlier stylistic period. What both these commentaries suggest is that the *rapprochement* between Tippett's late works and his earlier period is not just a matter of style-reference, but also has to do with a re-adoption of a more organicist aesthetic. This stance need not necessarily be seen to conflict with the positions of Borthwick and Mark, since the works in question issue, broadly speaking, from a different, later moment in Tippett's *œuvre*; but in any case, the purpose of this account is not to render invisible potentially profitable differences of perspective.

Connections can also be made between Collisson's account of the transcendental in the Triple Concerto and Rowena Pollard and David Clarke's discussion of a related issue in *King Priam*. The latter essay likewise has a past connection, only this time the more ancient past of classical Greece, with which Tippett has an expressed (implicitly humanist) affinity. In addition to tracing the textual mediations whereby the composer reinvents the aesthetic of Greek tragedy, our intention is also to consider how this can be achieved through a modernist musical language. Like Collisson, we find that the transcendental – one of Tippett's abiding concerns – is conveyed not (or not just) as an immanent aspect of a particular kind of musical language, but through the strategic context in which those linguistic features are situated; interestingly Peter Wright makes a similar point with regard to the 'visionary moment' of heterophony that bursts into the development section of the first movement of the Fifth String Quartet.

My comments at the outset of this Preface alluded to the intertextual background against which *Tippett Studies* is set. In its widest sense that background is discourse about Tippett's music at large: a discourse which constitutes the reception history which, I would say, is assumed in one way

or another in all writings on the composer, even if such a history has still to be formally written. The final two chapters of this book relate to that history in a more explicit way. Wilfrid Mellers's deeply felt personal memoir might in the best of senses already be considered a historical document, for a number of reasons. Most obvious is the case made by Mellers himself, that his account is told from the standpoint of a near-contemporary and one-time close associate of the composer himself. Secondly, Mellers represents a point of contact between the present book and the earlier anthology *Michael Tippett: A Symposium on his 60th Birthday*⁴ – a volume to which Mellers contributed, which Ian Kemp edited, and which, as the first full-length book on the composer, surely marked an important stage in the reception of Tippett as an artist of stature. Thirdly, Mellers's stance in his memoir is typical of many within the reception history of Tippett's music: one which asserts that the early works are the stronger ones; that the music written after *King Priam* is not quite of the same calibre. Although Mellers also admits qualification to his basic premise, others have been more explicitly polemical, not least the late Derrick Puffett on the occasion of the composer's ninetieth birthday.⁵ In the final chapter of this volume, Peter Wright picks up the gauntlet, arguing that the Fifth String Quartet refutes any claim that Tippett's creative powers might have dwindled in his later years. In dedicating his essay to his former teacher's memory, Wright makes the point that Puffett's views (and those of others like him) need to be taken seriously, but at the same time contends that the force of any counter-argument comes through close, thoughtful reference to the music itself. And in effect Wright's is not a lone voice in this volume, given that a number of chapters consider Tippett's later works in the kind of detail and with the kind of incisiveness that has not always accompanied negative critiques made elsewhere. If in its own way *Tippett Studies* adds to the level of informed debate about Tippett's music, and begins to effect a shift in perceptions of it, then the contributors' purpose will have been served.

As ever, a project such as this could not have been undertaken unaided. My thanks go to Penny Souster and Arnold Whittall for their support, especially in the planning stages; to Schott & Co. Ltd for kind per-

4 (London: Faber & Faber, 1965.)

5 'Tippett and the retreat from mythology', *The Musical Times* 136, no. 1823 (January 1995), 6–14.

mission to quote from Tippett's and Stravinsky's works; to Meirion Bowen for various points of consultation; to Grove's Dictionaries of Music, *Music Analysis*, the Society for Music Analysis, The Royal Musical Association, the Vice-Chancellor's Office, Arts Faculty and Music Department of Newcastle University, all of whom gave financial support to Newcastle University International Tippett Conference 1995, papers from which form the basis of much of this book; to Susan Lloyd, Frances Hopkins and Leo Nelson for unburdening me of some of the more onerous aspects of producing the typescript; to Gavin Warrender and Tim Poolan for assistance with various of the music examples; and to David Robinson for his forbearance at my rather too lengthy absences while editing this book.

And one final but important acknowledgement: there is no question that this venture would have not been possible without the achievement of previous scholarship. In particular, students of Tippett's music continue to owe a major debt to Ian Kemp. The significance of his *Symposium* celebrating Tippett's sixtieth birthday has already been mentioned; but his own life-and-works study, *Tippett: The Composer and his Music*, continues to be a mine of information and wisdom on its subject, and if the number of references to this work in what follows is anything to go by, its status will remain definitive for a long time to come. In dedicating our book to him, we contributors celebrate his seminal role in the enterprise of Tippett studies.

Sadly, Sir Michael Tippett died shortly before *Tippett Studies* was due to go to press. However unwished, his passing establishes a kind of closure – in effect a historical vantage point – which was absent when these essays were written (notwithstanding the fact that the composer's *œuvre* had by then already been declared complete). This is to suggest that the experience of reading what follows will inevitably be a subtly different one from that originally envisaged, given the significant change of biographical context. That the book was not consciously intended as a retrospective (one can only speculate how the contents might have differed if it had been) will not undo the fact that it might nevertheless now be read as such. But since the serious-minded engagement of the authors in any case always constituted its own implicit testimony to Tippett's music, it is indeed fitting here by way of memorial to underline the tribute paid by these studies to a remarkable artistic creator.

DAVID CLARKE

References to Tippett's scores and essays

With few exceptions Tippett's scores tend to employ rehearsal figures rather than bar numbers. Score references in this volume are accordingly made using the term 'Fig.', with suffixes where necessary to designate points a given number of bars before or after any such figure. Thus, for example, 'Fig. 4⁺³' means 'three bars after Figure 4', or 'the third bar of Figure 4' (taking the first bar to be that in which the figure itself appears); while, conversely, 'Fig. 8⁻¹' means 'one bar before Figure 8'.

Bar numbers are used only for references to the opening of a piece, before the appearance of the first rehearsal figure, or on the rare occasions when a score does not employ rehearsal figures at all.

Most of Tippett's essays were originally compiled in the now out-of-print collections *Moving into Aquarius* (2nd edn, St Albans: Paladin Books, 1974) and *Music of the Angels: Essays and Sketchbooks*, ed. Meirion Bowen (London: Eulenburg Books, 1980). Many, though not all, of these writings are included alongside others (some new) in the more recent *Tippett on Music*, ed. Meirion Bowen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995). When an essay appearing in one of the earlier anthologies and *Tippett on Music* is cited, footnote references will be given to both volumes, though any quoted material will normally be from the earlier version of the text if there is any variation.

1 'Only half rebelling': tonal strategies, folksong and 'Englishness' in Tippett's Concerto for Double String Orchestra

DAVID CLARKE

One of the greatest challenges facing musicologists is that of adequately interpreting the interpenetration of a composer's life and works. As the division of labour between music analysts and music historians makes plain (notwithstanding the potential deconstruction of this order by the emerging 'new' or 'critical' musicologies), explanation of the precise arrangement of actual notes and sounds in a musical work and reconstruction of the historical and biographical contingencies of its composition tend to resist conflation into a single narrative activity. I raise this dichotomy less to resolve than to explore it, in relation to Tippett's Concerto for Double String Orchestra (1938–9) and its status as the first work in the composer's *œuvre* to reveal his full creative stature. Decisive in the piece's aesthetic merit – happily reflected in its continuing popularity with audiences – is its cogent synthesis of a variety of musical influences that impinged on Tippett during the long process of his artistic maturation. Yet the dynamics of these musical forces, played out in the abstract inner space of an autonomous musical work, have their external counterpart in Tippett's socially rooted encounters with individual people – whom he knew either directly or through their writings – and with debates that shaped English musical culture at the time of his student years and the decade or so thereafter. In what follows I examine aspects of both the musical language of the Double Concerto and the historical and biographical context from which it emerged, in the belief that these separate accounts may be mutually illuminating. But the two resulting narratives will want to remain exactly that. Hence while I shall venture to examine possible points of contact between them, their discreteness will also need to be respected.

A potential interrelationship between these stories is none the less suggested by a cluster of issues that motivates the telling of both. These centre around Tippett's attitude towards folksong and towards the exponents of a pastoral aesthetic within the so-called English 'musical renaissance' in the first part of the twentieth century. The movement, of which Vaughan Williams was the figurehead, is known for having commandeered both folksong and a legacy of Tudor music as part of a discourse around 'Englishness' fuelled by anxieties over the hegemony of the Austro-German tradition within British musical life. It might be tempting to dismiss the influence on Tippett of the pastoral inclinations of his forebears. After all, he is known as a figure of more cosmopolitan leanings who learned German in order to read Goethe, who succumbed entirely to the music of Beethoven in his younger days, and whose later style reflects a receptiveness to the soundworlds of European modernism. Yet nearly all principal commentators on Tippett at some point confirm the view that, in Stephen Banfield's words, the composer was 'only half rebelling against Vaughan Williams and Holst in the 1930s':¹ both Ian Kemp and Arnold Whittall, for example, draw attention to folk-related elements in the Concerto for Double String Orchestra.² In this essay I shall attempt to investigate further Tippett's ambiguous connection with English pastoralism and the folksong traditions of the British Isles, and evaluate its implications for his compositional practice in the period of his first maturity.³ Although there will not be space

1 Stephen Banfield, Introduction to *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain: The Twentieth Century*, ed. Stephen Banfield (Oxford, and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1995), 3.

2 See Ian Kemp, *Tippett: The Composer and his Music* (London: Eulenburg Books, 1984), 138, 142–3, 146; Arnold Whittall, *The Music of Britten and Tippett: Studies in Themes and Techniques* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 54.

3 This account needs also to be seen in the context of a broader musicological reassessment of English pastoralism and the folksong revival. For example, a timely essay which sets the agenda for a re-evaluation of Vaughan Williams can be found in Alain Frogley's 'Constructing Englishness in music: national character and the reception of Ralph Vaughan Williams', in *Vaughan Williams Studies*, ed. Alain Frogley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1–22; see also the chapters by Hugh Cobbe, Julian Onderdonk and Anthony Pople in the same volume. Paul Harrington's 'Holst and Vaughan Williams: radical pastoral', in *Music and the Politics of Culture*, ed. Christopher Norris (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1989), 106–27, addresses the influence of William Morris's socialism on both composers. Frogley underlines the role of this essay and others in offering a potential corrective to the casting of Vaughan Williams 'as a cosy Establishment figure playing opposite the left-wing young bloods of

to pursue all relevant avenues of inquiry, I hope nevertheless to introduce some new perspectives on the matter, both by piecing together items of evidence available from Tippett's own writings and elsewhere, and through an analysis of certain tonal strategies adopted within the Concerto for Double String Orchestra. To focus on tonality is not to belittle the relevance of other facets of the work, not least the originality of its rhythmic structures and their relationship to the English madrigal and consort fantasia styles; but as these have been discussed elsewhere, I will confine my argument to the less well explored issue of the Concerto's refashioning of a diatonic language. First, however, to matters of context.

I

At least five protagonists ought properly to feature in the complete historical account of Tippett's relationship with English pastoralism. Two of these, Vaughan Williams and Holst, were prominent figures on the staff of the Royal College of Music (one of the key institutions associated with the English musical renaissance) when Tippett was a student there between 1923 and 1928.⁴ Two others, Francesca Allinson and Jeffrey Mark, were personal friends also dating back to his student days. They had strong interests in folk music of the British Isles, and it is probably not coincidental that they were the dedicatees of the two early published works by Tippett that feature folk-type material: the Sonata No. 1 for Piano (1936–8) and the Concerto for Double String Orchestra respectively. The fifth protagonist, Cecil Sharp, is significant because aspects of his construction (to use today's language) of English folk music were challenged in research by Allinson with which Tippett was also associated. Limitations of space, however, mean that not all these figures will receive their due here. Perhaps perversely, I will say little about the Percy Grainger-like figure of Jeffrey Mark, precisely because his significance for Tippett requires far fuller com-

Tippett and Britten in the 1930s' (Frogley, 'Constructing Englishness', 13). The present study attempts to demonstrate the need for a complementary reappraisal on Tippett's side of this perceived divide. For a recent reconsideration of Britten's stance towards English pastoralism see Philip Brett, 'Toeing the line', *The Musical Times* 137, No. 1843 (September 1996), 7–13.

- 4 See Robert Stradling and Meirion Hughes's account of the place of the RCM in the cultural politics of the time, in their book, *The English Musical Renaissance 1860–1940: Construction and Deconstruction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), especially part I, 'The history and politics of renaissance', 11–92.

mentary than is possible in this essay. Suffice it to say for now that his researches into Northumbrian and Scottish folk music, as well as his related activities as a composer and his belief in having found ‘a new model for diatonicism’, were in various ways influential on the composition of the Concerto for Double String Orchestra.⁵

Vaughan Williams and Holst also warrant greater coverage than is possible here, though what does call for comment is the way in which Tippett seemed to have projected onto them the different aspects of a personal ambivalence towards Englishness and English music. On the one hand, Vaughan Williams was a focus of anxious sentiments, possibly because of his position as a key figure of the contemporary cultural establishment. Tippett writes in his autobiography, ‘at the RCM and subsequently, in English musical life in general, I found an anti-intellectualism which disturbed and irritated me. The Vaughan Williams School was a part of this.’⁶ Tippett avoided studying composition with Vaughan Williams both for this reason and because ‘his pupils simply wrote feeble, watered down V. W.’⁷ This association of Englishness with intellectual and technical laxity is reinforced when Tippett later writes of his own development: ‘it’s the technical equipment that is growing intellectually maturer & consequently un-English, as per Bax – V. W. & Ireland etc.’⁸ On the other hand, Holst is a figure whom Tippett admired with less reservation, perhaps because the former shared with Stravinsky a ‘rootedness in national and European traditions.’⁹ Tippett’s enthusiastic comments about *The Hymn of Jesus*, in which he sang as a student, also reveal that he was attuned to the

5 See Michael Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues: An Autobiography* (London: Hutchinson, 1991), 45–6; and Kemp, *Tippett*, 488–9 n. 12.

6 Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues*, 16. 7 Ibid., 15.

8 Letter to Francesca Allinson, dated March 1941; quoted in *ibid.*, 136 (emphasis mine). It is important to add the caveat that Tippett’s self-distancing from Vaughan Williams on an artistic level does not seem to have been matched by any personal antipathy. Kemp (*Tippett*, 44) states that ‘in general Vaughan Williams was a warm and fatherly figure with whom [Tippett] got on well enough’ – evidenced, one might surmise, by the fact that Vaughan Williams spoke up for Tippett at the latter’s trial as a conscientious objector in 1943. Nor should it be overlooked that Tippett mounted Vaughan Williams’s opera *The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains* as his first music-theatrical venture at Oxted in 1927.

9 Michael Tippett, ‘Holst’, in *Tippett on Music*, ed. Meirion Bowen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 75 (emphasis added). This essay is closely modelled on an earlier article by Tippett, ‘Holst: figure of our time’, *The Listener* 60 (1958), 800.

cultural vibrancy of the period: 'for those of us embarking on a musical career at that time, it was all part of the exciting spectrum of English musical life – later to be described as a "second Renaissance" in English music'.¹⁰

Tippett's stance towards these various aspects of English musical culture was in fact far from one of rejection. We might surmise that his reservations were directed less to the actual sound the music made, so to speak, than to its perceived technical limitations and ideological connotations.¹¹ Regarding folk music in particular, he seems to have reached a position during the course of the 1930s where both its potential for integration into a high-art aesthetic and its socio-cultural meanings could be reassessed and implemented. It is in this latter respect that his liaison with Francesca Allinson was important, and for this reason that she will become a focus for this study. Allinson, whom Tippett first came to know through his cousin, Phyllis Kemp, was a musician and aspirant writer, and although for a while she had a significant role in the composer's personal life,¹² it is her researches into folk music that are a more direct concern for our present purposes. Two further, related elements also feature in this story: a genre and a book. The genre was ballad opera, in which Tippett was involved practically as a composer and arranger in the late 1920s and 1930s; the book was a monograph by Allinson entitled *The Irish Contribution to English Traditional Tunes*, left uncompleted at the time of her tragic suicide in 1945.¹³

10 Tippett, 'Holst', in *Tippett on Music*, 71. 11 See Kemp, *Tippett*, 68–70.

12 For more details see: *ibid.*, 25; Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues*, 17, 41–2, 56, 163–87; and my 'Tippett in and out of "Those Twentieth Century Blues": the context and significance of an autobiography', *Music & Letters* 74/3 (1993), 399–411.

13 The monograph is briefly mentioned by Kemp (see *Tippett*, 69, 488 n. 2), but much of the following discussion is based on direct consultation of the original manuscript of the unpublished text, lodged in the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library of the English Folk Dance and Song Society. The MS comprises three sections, all unfoliated: (1) an exchange of six letters between Tippett and Maud Karpeles (dated between 17 November 1964 and 28 January 1965), which documents the process that led to Allinson's manuscript being unearthed and presented to the library; (2) a looseleaf typescript of sections of the monograph itself, bearing the annotation 'master copy'; (3) a music MS book comprising groups of folk tunes to which Allinson refers in the text.

As implied, the typescript is incomplete. A table of contents lists seven chapters, but only the first two, accounting for a substantial part of the document, are presented in their entirety; extracts from the remaining chapters

A number of Tippett's early musico-dramatic ventures, all of which entail grass-roots community involvement, adopt ballad opera as their basic model. In this preoccupation *The Beggar's Opera* looms large. Tippett knew the work from his early days in London, and when he wanted to produce a ballad opera for his second season at Oxted he sought out an eighteenth-century edition of an opera in the same genre, *The Village Opera*. He made his own version of the piece, significantly recomposing part of it. Other ballad or folksong operas followed, with varying degrees of original compositional involvement. *The Beggar's Opera* itself and *Robin Hood* were produced at the Boosbeck work-camps in 1933 and 1934 respectively, and Allinson sang the role of Lucy in the former. *Robert of Sicily* was a play for children produced in 1938, for which Allinson 'helped . . . find the right [folk] tunes'¹⁴ (a sequel, *Seven at One Stroke*, followed the next year, but appears to have been musically less consequential¹⁵).

The fact that ballad opera was the chief outlet for Tippett's interest in folk music might raise the question of whether the songs purveyed by the genre constituted 'authentic' folk material. However, the assumptions behind such reservations were exactly part of what Tippett and Allinson wanted to challenge, refuting certain ideological notions of purity that were at the heart of the English folksong revival, as most prominently promulgated by Cecil Sharp and Vaughan Williams. Sharp, in his seminal book *English Folk-song: Some Conclusions*, dismissed the folksongs which appear in *The Beggar's Opera* as 'well-nigh worthless' because of the 'devastating

form the rest of the typescript. In his correspondence with Karpeles, Tippett mentions the possible existence of a further copy which he describes as 'cleaner' and 'perhaps more definitive', but at that time it seems not to have come to light. A further collection of papers relating to the monograph was found during Tippett's final house-move; at the time of writing this study the supplementary material was still privately held, and I am indebted to Meirion Bowen for making it available to me. Unfortunately the newly surfaced material does little to fill in the gaps in the main MS: there are a few, non-consecutive pages of the seventh chapter, earlier drafts of fragments of chapters found in the main MS, another version of the tune book, and an index of tunes cited. More significant, however, are three differently typed transcriptions of comments on the book made by Vaughan Williams, and two letters from Oxford University Press: one to Allinson (dated 19 September 1944), and one to Tippett (dated 4 November 1947). From this correspondence it is clear that Allinson had sent a draft of at least part of the monograph for consideration for publication, and that Tippett did begin to follow up the process after her death, albeit to no avail.

14 Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues*, 57. 15 See Kemp, *Tippett*, 84.

hand of the editing musician'.¹⁶ This was indicative of a more general aversion to traditional songs transmitted through the published page, which he contrasted against a putatively more authentic folksong transmitted entirely orally – an opposition which idealised both folksong and folk-singer. Although Sharp later slightly qualified his original formulation of this opposition as a difference between urban and rural cultures (in the light of comments from Vaughan Williams, as it turns out), he nevertheless retained the romantic notion of the unlettered peasant artist:

Strictly speaking . . . the real antithesis is not between the music of the town and that of the country, but between that which is the product of the spontaneous and intuitive exercise of untrained faculties, and that which is due to the conscious and intentional use of faculties which have been especially cultivated and developed for the purpose.¹⁷

In her monograph *The Irish Contribution to English Traditional Tunes* – a project onto which Tippett was in some way co-opted – Allinson counters Sharp's claim that the edited, published tunes of the early English tradition are any less 'authentic' than those transmitted orally: 'we may be thankful', she writes, 'that cultivated society in general, pu[bl]ishers and makers of ballad opera in particular, valued our traditional tunes and knew how to put them to active use – a problem which we to-day are hard set to solve'.¹⁸ The presence of such published songs within the traditional repertory is seen by her not as corruption of a pure 'peasant' song, but rather as indicating that 'they were sung by all classes of people and not by the peasantry alone'.¹⁹ Whereas Sharp distinguished between earlier published collections of traditional tunes, such as William Chappell's *Popular Music of the Olden Time*, and the songs he collected in the field, Allinson makes an alternative interpretative demarcation, which in fact constitutes her book's main thesis. She holds that a distinction obtains *within* the collections made by late nineteenth-century collectors such as Sharp: a distinction between tunes 'that faithfully carry on the old tradition' (i.e. of the published song-book and ballad opera) and those characterised by 'the strangeness of their melodic line, of their form and of the emotions that they evoke'.²⁰ In short,

16 Cecil Sharp, *English Folk-song: Some Conclusions*, 1st edn (London: Simpkin/Novello, 1907), 114, 116; also quoted in chapter 2 of Allinson's monograph. 17 Sharp, *English Folk-song*, 4. 18 Allinson, chapter 2.
19 Ibid. 20 Ibid.

she construes the latter group as being of fundamentally different, specifically Irish, provenance, having entered the repertory during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when large numbers of Irish labourers emigrated to England. Technically, this distinction is manifested, in Allinson's view, in the modal characteristics of the tunes as well as their tendency to fall into ABBA or ABBC form.²¹ Thus, she argues not only that one portion of the peasant songs collected by Sharp and others provides a living stylistic link with the tunes published in previous centuries, but also that the complementary portion develops from a Celtic tradition. Her challenge to Sharp's beliefs (and the whole nationalist edifice built on it) that these songs represented pure, quintessential Englishness is therefore forthright.²²

Quite how far Tippet's role in Allinson's investigation extended is a matter of conjecture. In a letter to Maud Karpeles²³ he retrospectively describes himself as having been 'a kind of sitting collaborator' – which is probably accurate. On the one hand, it seems unlikely that he participated in the actual writing process. None of the annotations on Allinson's typescript is in his hand; indeed work on the text probably took place during the years of the Second World War, when Allinson moved out of London and the two kept in touch largely by letter.²⁴ On the other hand, Tippet was clearly interested in the issues and the manner of their argument: certain of his letters to Allinson include suggestions regarding both the content and the form of the monograph, as well as references to both 'our contention' and 'our book'²⁵ – all of which suggest at least a measure of identification with the project. The latter comment might indicate an intention to become more actively involved in the book's production, and

21 The question of the tunes' form is also reported by Kemp (*Tippet*, 69), who additionally recounts Allinson's refutation of Sharp's assertion that quintuple and septuple metres constituted essential features of English folksong. For references to both these features in Tippet's correspondence see Tippet, *Those Twentieth Century Blues*, 127, 148.

22 Vaughan Williams certainly seemed to have thought so. His comments on the draft monograph (found with the supplementary portion of the MS – see note 13 above) begin: 'this is not a merely academic question, the whole edifice of English music depends on it'. He continues: 'we cannot view this matter in a calm, detached manner, our very musical life seems to depend on it'.

23 Part of the exchange described in n. 13 above.

24 The address on the manuscript tune book accompanying the typescript is that of the Mill House, West Wickham, where Allinson is mentioned as residing in letters dating from the 1940s; see Tippet, *Those Twentieth Century Blues*, 141, 152. 25 *Ibid.*, 127, 129 (emphasis added).

from Allinson's request in her final letter to Tippett to 'give it the finishing touches & see it into print'²⁶ we may infer a level of familiarity with its contents and progress. As is known, however, he never did complete it: in the end (that is, after twenty years) he presented the unfinished manuscript to the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library in Cecil Sharp House, London – the ironies of which have not been lost in accounts of the story.²⁷

Whether Allinson's thesis regarding the provenance of English folk tunes was indeed correct is a moot point. In his correspondence with Karpeles, Tippett retrospectively admits to being persuaded that the theory was wrong (although, in mitigation, Karpeles's response stresses the problems of studying the folk music of a bilingual country).²⁸ What remains noteworthy none the less is the monograph's questioning of Sharp's romanticised view of folk music, and hence, implicitly, the entire hegemony of the English folk revival²⁹ and its associated school of composing. It is significant, though, that the Allinson–Tippett critique entails not a dismissal of the folksong enterprise, but an attempt to reconceive it from within. This finds a parallel in Tippett's attitude towards English musical traditions, which are not to be rejected in favour of some kind of internationalist agenda, but to be embraced without specious, nostalgic distinctions between urban and rural cultures. He defines his stance in a letter written to Allinson in 1941 regarding the folksong monograph:

we shall probably eventually get a sort of ladder – the roots in romantic, immediate expression – what Sharp went to find – & the heaven of the ladder will be the classical, artistic, turned, articulated stuff. And what we shall seek to show is the elements wh[ich] were at work to form it: such as

26 Ibid., 185.

27 See *ibid.*, 57. Although Tippett admitted to being 'rather dilatory about it', the correspondence found in the supplementary portion of the MS (see n. 13 above) suggests that he did at least make an attempt to follow up the possibilities for publication. Given the incomplete nature of the MS, it may well have been a case of providing rather more than 'finishing touches'.

28 Tippett–Karpeles correspondence (see n. 13 above), 25 and 28 January 1965.

29 Perhaps anticipating aspects of more recent critical studies, for example: Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology and the English Folk Revival* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993); Dave Harker, *Fakesong: The Manufacture of British 'Folksong' – 1700 to the Present Day* (Milton Keynes and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1985); and Stradling and Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance*.

the necessary formulation of dancing, the influence of poetic forms, the artistic feeling in the composer. The B[eggars] O[pera] is a good English work of art because it faces both ways – it protests against the excessive influence of the foreigner & the romantic inchoate expressiveness of the Sharp ‘natural’ peasant. Hence again we erect it (& it doesn’t matter altogether how factual all this is) as a standard for our day. There *must* be cross-currents in art & tension – & again now there are 2 ways to face (if not 3!) – against the German *Schwermut*, against the jazz-nostalgia, against the Celtic Twilight. Positively, on the other hand, for roots in the ‘town’ & ‘country’ streams of English tradition, for balance between them, for full artistic integrity – & a historical immediate sense of the good models.

... It is not the ‘country’, as such, that we define against the ‘town’. It is the nostalgic, vague hovering with the excellent quality of folk-expressiveness, as opposed to the *consciously* artistic articulation of it. Sharp was probably stymied before it. It got him on his weak, undeveloped side – so he either toned it up with jokey fortes, or tried to present it under the guise of the irrational peasant. We show, if we can, that in an articulated mastered form, it is just good, English, & highly presentable, differing in no necessary inferiority, or superiority, from the gay stuff. What we refuse is inchoate subjectiveness (except as folklore) & Sharp’s subterfuges & lack of integrity, let alone maturity.³⁰

Despite its obscurities, this statement gives a strong indication of where Tippett sees himself in relation to certain of the dominant discourses of contemporary English musical culture. On the one hand his is a position of non-alignment with any prevailing ideology: Sharp is castigated for his suspect view of the ‘natural’ peasant (no doubt for Tippett a further example of English intellectual flaccidity); Germanic modes of expression (a reference perhaps to Elgar and Richard Strauss) are also to be resisted; but ‘jazz-nostalgia’ (Walton and Lambert are presumably intended here) and the ‘Celtic twilight’ (Bax) are not seen as viable alternatives either. On the other hand, Tippett’s position is still defined in relation to, rather than avoidance of, these ideologies – the key phrase is ‘tension against’. His metaphor of a ladder as a mediating notion between orally transmitted folksong and ‘classical, artistic, turned, articulated’ musical material in fact suggests a value placed on a synthesis, emerging perhaps from the ‘cross-currents’ and ‘tension’ to which he refers. Particularly significant in this respect is his representation of *The Beggars’ Opera* as an ideal model, exemplifying a dis-

30 Tippett, *Those Twentieth Century Blues*, 128 (original emphases).

tinctive Englishness – where 'English' does not equal naive, inchoate or lacking integrity.

II

Such a synthesis, I would contend, is exactly what Tippett achieves in his Concerto for Double String Orchestra. Adapting his reading of *The Beggar's Opera*, we may observe similar characteristics in the Concerto: it protests against a 'romantic inchoate' folk-expressiveness attributable to the English pastoral idiom, but nevertheless draws on its expressive immediacy within an interplay of materials serving the higher goal of a 'turned, articulate', quasi-symphonic artwork. But if folk-materials are immanently subjected to the critical rigour of a quintessentially Beethovenian formal archetype, the opposite tendency also obtains. The Concerto 'protests against the excessive influence of the foreigner' in a critique both of 'German *Schwermut*' (suggesting an aesthetic of *gravitas*, related perhaps to a post-Wagnerian chromatic vocabulary) and of totalising Germanic conceptions of tonal unity.

Tracing the operation of these processes brings us to our second, technically orientated narrative, whose contents, as indicated at the outset, will need to follow their own course if they are to establish any meaningful relationship with the first. That said, we may begin (as we hope to end) with the matter of the connection between technical strategies and national musical characteristics. Apposite here is a comment by Yehudi Menuhin, citing the hypothesis of an unnamed Scandinavian musicologist that

the English nature during the two centuries of tonic-dominant supremacy (*Teutonic*-dominant-domination in short?) never came to terms with these fixed tonal positions. Unlike the rest of Europe, they never surrendered their soul to this rigid principle which, served and adulated by *gleichgeschaltete* millions with no distinction between rural and urban, had produced by the nineteenth century such a giant as Beethoven.³¹

Tippett gives a clue to how the Double Concerto resists the notion of a single, all-embracing tonic when, having stated 'we don't use tonality by

31 Yehudi Menuhin, in 'Tributes and reminiscences', in Ian Kemp (ed.), *Michael Tippett: A Symposium on his 60th Birthday* (London: Faber & Faber, 1965), 60.

setting out to write a piece in a set key. We use it much more for colour', he continues:

[The Concerto] is mostly in A to start with, a kind of model [sic.: modal?] A minor. The middle movement is in a kind of D. In the last movement, the normal way of ending would have been to end in A, but I deliberately turned the music towards the tonality of C, just because I wanted this broader sound.³²

The peculiar sonic properties of a tonality are thus posited as subverting the unifying relational principle of a governing tonal order. Interestingly, Tippett relates this strategy to two other works, both of which have their place in the English musical renaissance: Tallis's forty-part motet, *Spem in alium* and Holst's *The Hymn of Jesus*. His comment that both works 'play with musical space'³³ could, if read literally, be taken to refer simply to the handling of their polychoral forces. However, it may also allude to a mediation between spatial play in the real, physical performing environment and a play in phenomenological space whereby a triadic sonority may strive for emancipation by claiming territory outside that defined by the governing tonality. This is certainly so in *Spem in alium* where at the word 'respite' a massive A major chord for all forty voices breaks free of the 'tonic' Mixolydian G: a decisive moment of structural articulation.³⁴ In *The Hymn of Jesus* a similar gesture can be typically found at the beginning of the second section: when the chorus sing 'Glory to thee, Father' the prevailing tonality of C is dramatically supplanted by a chord of E major. In both examples the foreign harmony is not available for resolution into the overall governing tonality by way of a conventional functional progression predicated on the circle of fifths. In the case of Tallis and his contemporaries this arises from the ambivalent relationship of triads to modes (a conflict between a harmonic lexicon and an essentially melodic syntax) whose sonic effects clearly became attractive to composers of the second English musical renaissance.

The tonal strategy employed by Tippett at the end of his Double

32 Michael Tippett, 'The composer speaks' (Tippett in interview with Ian Kemp and Malcolm Rayment), *Audio and Record Review* (February 1963), 27.

33 Tippett, 'Holst', in *Tippett on Music*, 75.

34 This is probably the passage Tippett had in mind in his not entirely accurately recalled description in 'The composer speaks', 27.

Concerto can perhaps be seen as a projection of the principles described here onto the wider canvas of a complete piece. The closing, C major passage (beginning at Fig. 40⁺⁷; the principal melody is quoted in Ex. 1.3(c), below) has a richness and depth contrasting with the brighter, more intense soundworld of A and its relatives which is initially in the ascendant. Here again we have a conflation of the categories of space and sonority as the resonant close claims different terrain in the work's tonal topography. However, Tippett's statement that he 'turned the music towards the tonality of C, just because [he] wanted this broader sound' is a touch disingenuous if this is intended to imply some absolute sonic quality of C major itself. While sonority functions – both in this work and in Tippett's music at large – as an agent of emancipation from the totalising impulse that is often a concomitant of the will to structure, these two tendencies are in fact mediated here. On the one hand, Tippett indeed exploits string sonorities that are quasi-inherent to particular keys: the shift from A to C could almost be construed as an exchange of the characteristic sonic qualities of the upper strings of the violin for those of the lower strings of the viola and cello. On the other hand, much of the significance of the final swerve to C derives from the meaning that this tonality acquires when perceived *in relation to A*. Furthermore, the gesture does not come out of the blue. It is the consummation of an interplay between sonorities in and around C and A that is ingrained into the piece, amounting in effect to a double tonal structure.³⁵

- 35 The association or polarisation of these particular tonalities assumes a virtually archetypal significance within Tippett's *œuvre*, most notably in the final act of *The Midsummer Marriage*, in the Second Symphony, and in *Byzantium*. See Whittall, *The Music of Britten and Tippett*, 140; Whittall, 'Byzantium: Tippett, Yeats and the limitations of affinity', *Music & Letters* 74/3 (1993), 395–7; and my *Language, Form, and Structure in the Music of Michael Tippett*, 2 vols. (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1989), vol. I, 81–2.

In a much larger context, double tonicity has been an increasingly conspicuous subject of analytical inquiry, particularly in relation to nineteenth-century music. See, for example: Robert Bailey, 'An analytical study of the sketches and drafts', in his *Wagner: Prelude and Transfiguration from Tristan and Isolde*, Norton Critical Scores (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1985), 113–46; Edward Cone, 'Ambiguity and reinterpretation in Chopin', in *Chopin Studies 2*, ed. John Rink and Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 140–60; William Kinderman, 'Dramatic recapitulation in Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*', *19th Century Music* 4/2 (1980), 101–12; Harald Krebs, 'Alternatives to monotonicity in early nineteenth-century music', *Journal of*

This tonal dualism is especially active in the outer sections of the Concerto's sonata-form first movement. Specifically, it obtains between two tonal constellations or systems, one based on A, E and D, the other on C, G and F. The polarity thus established creates a tension against – or a critique of – the concept of unity inherent in classical tonality and its basis in the circle of fifths. This polarity is prefigured in the very first phrase of the movement,³⁶ and is graphed in Ex. 1.1. As Ex. 1.1(a) shows, if octave doublings an octave higher and lower are disregarded, the opening eight bars can be seen to comprise a two-voice texture, and although the formidable rhythmic and contrapuntal independence of the lines renders any notion of unequivocal harmonic 'progression' somewhat specious, it is nevertheless possible to discern indicators of harmonic functions which, however ambiguously implied and allusively executed, remain essential to the overall coherence of the material. These are shown in Ex. 1.1(b) and (c) – analyses stratified so as to reveal the discrete operation of the A–E–D and C–G–F constellations.

In the first of these analyses, A is shown to be asserted by an implied overall I–V–I motion articulated at the beginning, middle and end of the complete phrase; the linear descent in the treble, which fills in the melodic gap from A to E of bars 1–2, reinforces this harmonic allusion, even if it does not quite mesh in with it contrapuntally. The initial, generative treble motion from tonic to dominant pitches is mirrored by the entry of the second orchestra on the subdominant of A, which makes a momentary tonal allusion to D. It seems quite likely that this reflects Tippett's implementation of d'Indy's model of tonality, in which motion sharpwards around the circle of fifths, 'vers la clarté' is seen as complemented by motion

Music Theory 25/1 (1981), 1–16; Christopher Lewis, 'Mirrors and metaphors: reflections on Schoenberg and nineteenth-century tonality', *19th Century Music* 11/1 (Summer 1987), 26–42; and David Loeb, 'Dual-key movements', in *Schenker Studies*, ed. Hedi Siegel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 76–83. While it would be overly essentialist to construe the various instances of 'non-monotonicity' discussed in these (and a number of other) studies as representatives of an identical phenomenon, the picture developed through this literature nevertheless suggests that tonal processes had begun to be significantly unshackled from a unifying imperative in certain areas of the repertory following Beethoven.

- 36 As indeed are many other facets of the movement's content and structure. For a fuller account of this, and of the Concerto's tonal structure see chapter 1 of Clarke, *Language, Form, and Structure*, vol. I, 23–47.

Ex. 1.1 Concerto for Double String Orchestra, first movement, bars 1–8

Allegro con brio ($\text{♩} = \text{c.110}$)

Orch. I *f marcato* [Doublings 8ve higher and lower omitted] *f marcato* Orch. II *f espr.*

(a)

A-E-D system

(b)

C-G-F system

(c)

Subdominant orientation

(d)

flatwards, 'vers l'obscurité'.³⁷ But in a manoeuvre that is entirely idiosyncratic, Tippett extends the subdominant orientation in a process charted in Ex. 1.1(d). This effectively generates the C–G–F constellation, whose tonalities are, appropriately, often plagally inferred, as shown in Ex. 1.1(c). (In general, the tonal centre D seems to play a mediating role between the two systems – as shown here, and as reflected by its function as the tonic of the work's central movement.)

While the discreteness of these strata is still embryonic at this stage (palpable mainly as a tension arising from such vertical non-congruences as the treble motion C–F in the second four-bar subphrase against the prolonged V–I motion of A underneath), it is soon made more overtly manifest. The G major second group, beginning at Fig. 2⁺⁷, could be seen as a representative of the C–G–F system, posited against the A–E–D system in a manner analogous to, though more complex than, the polarisation between single tonalities in a classical sonata-form exposition. Evidence for this conception comes immediately after the second group (Fig. 4⁺²), when the return of the opening material of the movement, transposed to E, is felt as wrenching back to the earlier soundworld – and hence to the previous system – only now more intensely voiced, due to the transposition sharpwards.

The use of sonorous qualities to highlight the contrast between the different systems is important. The more strongly the second group projects its identity, the more it tends to eschew the sparser, linear textures of its predecessor in favour of a deeper, more resonant and harmonically orientated soundworld. Its character exemplifies most fully the *Allegro con brio* tempo designation of the movement as a whole, whereas the more austere identity of the opening first-group material is perhaps more appropriately described by the original, but subsequently deleted *Allegro con fuoco* marking found in the pencil manuscript of the score.³⁸ Significantly, the coda (Fig. 13⁺⁵ onwards), alternating between harmonic representatives of both tonal systems, synthesises both qualities – a moment of equilibrium in a process which aptly illustrates Tippett's reference to the 'play on images and tones that was in my forebears'.³⁹

37 The importance of d'Indy's *Cours de composition musicale* (3 vols. (Paris: Durand, 1909)) for Tippett's understanding of tonality is discussed by Kemp: see *Tippett*, 89–90, 146–7. 38 British Library Add. MS 61750.

39 Tippett, 'The composer speaks', 27.

If A is the governing tonic of the A–E–D system, it would be tempting to attribute an analogous role to C in relation to its system. Such an interpretation is certainly supported by the tonal progress of the work as a whole, although in the first movement G is the predominant representative of the flatter system. Since it is most strongly asserted in the second group of the exposition, however, it would be elegant to interpret this as a dominant – of the C- rather than the A-based system. This reading could be supported by a number of moments elsewhere in the movement, where C is subtly allied with A in a manner that suggests the two centres as parallel tonics. Three examples will suffice. First, in the counterstatement succeeding the initial statement, A and C act as complementary melodic centres from which the headmotif of the opening theme is developed antiphonally and in contrary motion (Ex. 1.2(a)). Secondly, having initially asserted A major, the jubilant passage immediately before Fig. 1 is pulled towards C's orbit: Ex. 1.2(b) fictitiously shows the implied arrival in C, which in the actual music is subverted by a sudden *sforzando* deflection towards V of E. Thirdly, A's return at the recapitulation (Fig. 8⁻¹) is prefaced by a strong prolongation of a bass C (Ex. 1.2(c)), whose function hovers ambiguously between that of a putative tonic (with a root position status denied to A itself at the recapitulation proper) and a prolonged secondary dominant within a harmonic progression back to A. While the equivocation surrounding C's status in these last two examples might seem to weaken its claim to any kind of tonic function, it might conversely be argued that this is exactly what enables it to be characterised as the tonic of a world running parallel to the A system, rather than occupying the same plane. Through being implied rather than overtly stated as a tonic, C is able to side-step claims made upon it by A as a prolongation within a uni-dimensional hierarchy of relationships based on the circle of fifths. Seen in this context, the potency of C's eventual radically more corporeal presentation of the end of the work can be more fully understood.

III

As we have seen, the tonal procedures described above relate to principles Tippett himself observed in the music of both his sixteenth- and twentieth-century English forebears. I would also argue that the com-

Ex. 1.2 Association of pitch centres A and C (octave doublings omitted)

(a) **[Allegro con brio]**

Vn. I (Orch. I) b. 9

Va. (Orch. I)

[hairpins omitted]

Vn. I (Orch. II)

Va. (Orch. II)

(b)

Vns. (Orch. I)

Vns. (Orch. II)

ff

1

(* = fictitious continuation)

(c)

7 + 9 Vn. I (Orch. II)

[poco a poco cresc.]

Va. (Orch. I) [hairpins omitted]

[poco a poco cresc.]

Vc. (Orch. II)

[poco a poco cresc.]

(RECAPITULATION)

8

Vn. I (Orch. I)

Vn. II (Orch. II)

ff

TIPPETT'S CONCERTO FOR DOUBLE STRING ORCHESTRA

Ex. 1.3 Unifying function of pentatonic set (dynamics, expression markings and octave doublings omitted)

(a) First movement: beginning of first group

Allegro con brio
Vn. I & II, Va. (Orch. I)

Source set: 5-35 (t = 7)
[0, 2, 4, 7, 9]

(b) First movement: beginning of second group

$\boxed{2} + 7$ Vn. I (Orch. II)

Source set: 5-35 (t = 7)
[0, 2, 4, 7, 9]

(c) Third movement: final section

[Allegro molto (♩ = 180)]
 $\boxed{40} + 7$ Vn. I & II, Va. (Orch. I)
+ Va. (Orch. II)

Source set: 5-35 (t = 0)
[0, 2, 4, 7, 9]

poser's tactic, which has fundamentally to do with the application of aspects of a modal harmonic system to dissolve and reconceive a tonal one, has a comparable relationship with folksong materials. However, if in this respect Tippett invokes the traditions of English pastoralism, the execution of his strategy yields a rather different end-product, due both to the more radical and thoroughgoing structural exploitation of the materials, and to the different ideological disposition which drives it.

Although only two themes within the Double Concerto explicitly adopt folksong models (the main theme of the slow movement, and the C major tune that closes the entire piece), many of its remaining thematic constituents are based on related melodic configurations, whose common source is the pentatonic scale. One vital contribution made by the pentatonic set to the work's larger-scale structure is its mediation of the dual tonal constellations outlined above. This becomes especially clear in the relationship between the principal themes of the first and second groups, demonstrated in Ex. 1.3. Part (a) of this example shows how the opening four-bar phrase of the treble draws its pitch classes from the pentachord A–B–D–E–G: the pitch-class set [0,2,4,7,9], or 5-35 in Allen Forte's inventory.⁴⁰ Significantly, the pcs 'missing' from the full seven-note diatonic collection, C or C#, and F or F#, are those necessary to define the major/minor modality of the tonic A. This ambiguity is exploited to the full in all the other components of the phrase (namely, the bass voice of bars 1-4 and both voices of bars 5-8, as is evident in Ex. 1.1 (a)), and allows for the generation of the tonal dualism. But it is the actual, rather than the absent elements of the set which bind together the first- and second-group themes, and thus interlock the tonal constellations. As Ex. 1.3(b) demonstrates, the second-group theme draws not only on the same set, but also on the same pcs – an invariant principle particularly evident in the final segment, which has an identical motivic profile (labelled *x*) to that of the first-group theme. (The added C in the second theme, functioning as an unaccented passing note, does not decisively alter the essentially pentatonic disposition, though it could be seen to represent a slight shift of balance in a dialectic between pentatonicism and diatonicism whose significance will be touched on

40 Allen Forte, *The Structure of Atonal Music* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973). For a glossary of some of the terminology used in Forte's pitch-class set theory see the Appendix to the present volume, pp. 223–4.

presently.) In short, the two themes are unified by an identical pentatonic pc collection, but the tonal centre, or modal final, is different for each, thus changing the meaning of the elements of each set in relation to one another.

The set [0,2,4,7,9] and subsets taken from it permeate the thematic content of the Double Concerto,⁴¹ but perhaps one of the most significant manifestations is in the final C major theme. As Ex. 1.3(c) reveals, with the exception of a single unaccented passing note, this tune draws on the same pentatonic set as the two themes just discussed, only transposed down a fifth. If these successive transposition levels are seen as an analogue of a large-scale dominant–tonic motion,⁴² this perhaps explains why the final theme is imbued with such a strong sense of arrival home. And this connection also makes it clear just how early is the journey's starting point, namely at the very opening of the work, where the 'dominant' pentatonic set of the C system is embedded into the tonic theme of the A system.

Just as we may assume that Tippett was unlikely to have marshalled this pentatonic material out of thin air, so we may also speculate whether the exploitation of its structural properties – that is, as a resource of syntax as well as vocabulary – is related to an attitude of active inquiry towards folksong that would have been fostered by his collaborative work with Francesca Allinson. Significantly, the pentatonic scale does feature in Allinson's monograph: she identifies it as one of the distinctive features of Irish tunes, and it thus becomes a crucial marker in her argument about the Irish provenance of certain English traditional melodies. She describes two features of the 'Gaelic sequence' (her term for the pentatonic scale) as especially pertinent: 'firstly, the omission of the 6th and 3rd degree, and secondly, the tension which the interval of the 4th exerts'. The latter

operates between every other note of the gaelic sequence, between C & G, B♭ & F, G & D, F & C. Thus the tension of the interval of the 4th and also that of the flattened 7th (which consists of two joined 4ths) dominates tunes where the gaelic sequence is much in evidence. The overwhelming impression of

41 For a fuller discussion and further illustrations of this point see Clarke, *Language, Form and Structure*, vol. I, 36–8; vol. II, 6–8.

42 The theoretical notion adopted here has a connection with the far more extended analysis of transposition levels of diatonic (or extended diatonic) sets in emulation of tonal principles, given in Anthony Pople's analysis of Tippett's *Fantasia Concertante on a Theme of Corelli* on pp. 48–51 of the present volume.

melancholy and yearning which the Irish tunes make is largely due to this tension of the 4th.

As we have observed, both these features are exploited for their generative potential in the opening theme of the Double Concerto: the absent third and sixth scale degrees open up a space for both tonal constellations, while a chain of perfect fourths (or interval class 5) leads into the C–G–F region. Moreover, as if to underline its structural function, this interval class is distilled in the crotchet countermelody that accompanies the theme at the recapitulation, beginning at Fig. 8⁻¹ (see Ex. 1.2(c)).

Aspects of Allinson's argument are modelled on an account of the pentatonic scale in Scottish Highland music given in Annie Gilchrist's article of 1911, 'Note on the modal system of Gaelic tunes'.⁴³ In particular, Allinson adapts Gilchrist's hypothesis that Gaelic Highland tunes which fill in the gaps of their pentatonic structure to form six- or seven-note modes do so in part under the influence of Lowland music, which in turn 'approximates in its seven-note construction to the folk-music of England'.⁴⁴ Following suit, Allinson describes the metamorphosis of pentatonic Irish tunes into the diatonic profile of English traditional melodies 'built upon the structure of the common chord', and explores in some detail the anglicisation of the characteristic turns of phrase of the original melodies.

In this context the contrast between certain melodies in the Double Concerto might be given a new reading. Nowhere is the distinction between pentatonic and diatonic structures more sharply pronounced than in the last movement, between the closing C major theme (Ex. 1.3(c)) and the lyrical second-group melody which first appears in the cellos in A \flat major at Fig. 25⁻⁶ (Ex. 1.4). Essential to the latter are melodic features 'built upon the structure of the common chord': the interval of a sixth, linear scalar figuration, and a strong polarity between tonic and sharpened leading note. Could it be that Tippett is here playing out an opposition between two principles of melodic organisation which he encountered – either directly or vicariously – through his association with Allinson's research? A further tantalising connection is suggested in the Gilchrist article to which Allinson makes reference. Gilchrist in effect describes how the same pentatonic

43 *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* 4/3, No. 16 (1911), 150–3.

44 Gilchrist, 'Note on the modal system', 150; see also p. 152.

TIPPETT'S CONCERTO FOR DOUBLE STRING ORCHESTRA

Ex. 1.4 Third movement: diatonically constructed second-group theme

[Allegro molto]

dolce

Cellos (Orch. I & II)

p

25

cresc.

f

dim. *poco* *a*

poco *p*

collection can be rotated to produce five modes each with a different tonic or final. This kind of possibility is exactly that exploited by Tippett between first and second groups at the beginning of the Double Concerto; indeed Gilchrist's tabulation of the various modal permutations around a single pentatonic set, together with their various 'filled-in' diatonic counterparts, could almost have functioned as a resource for the tonal/modal organisation of the work.⁴⁵

IV

Paradoxically, these potentially most direct of connections between aspects of the Concerto's immanent structure and discourses external to it are also the most conjectural. There is no direct evidence that Tippett read

45 I refer here to a tabulated diagram in *ibid.*, facing p. 152.

Gilchrist's article through his association with Allinson's work. We do not even know whether he discussed issues such as the 'Gaelic sequence' and its properties with her, let alone whether these might have been consciously adapted within a compositional strategy. Added to this are questions of chronology. Given that Allinson was probably engaged in writing her monograph during the years of the war, it would clearly be questionable to impute to it any causal influence on a work composed by Tippett in the late 1930s. Nevertheless, we may assume that the formation of Allinson's ideas, and her probable discussion of these with Tippett, extended back some time before the text itself of the monograph was begun – perhaps at least as far back as Tippett's production of *The Beggar's Opera* at Boosbeck in the early 1930s.⁴⁶ It is quite plausible that through this process, and through his own work using folksong (in other words, through praxis), Tippett may have developed a generalised, or syncretistic understanding of the technical construction of folk-melody, which when mediated in later compositional practice yielded details of content comparable with facets of Allinson's research.

Even if it were the case that such points of contact were the fortuitous result of independent thought by both parties, the connections none the less remain open to meaningful interpretation – in the same way that Tippett retrospectively draws a significant link between his tonal strategies in the Double Concerto and the play of tonal spaces in Tallis's *Spem in alium*, a piece which he conducted at Morley College in the early 1940s (that is, post-dating the completion of the former); or in the same way that other commentators have endorsed a connection between the cross-rhythmic fantasia style of the Concerto and the fantasias of Gibbons, which Tippett only came to know subsequently. In all cases these are more than abstract or formal comparisons. They situate the piece within a hermeneutic network of mutually illuminating historical and cultural interpretants, and open up the possibility of further readings.

One such reading pertains to the changed socio-cultural significance of the folk-materials applied in the Double Concerto, as compared with those of Tippett's ballad opera praxis. Whereas the folk-music content of the latter was presumably strongly bound up with the social and practical

46 Kemp (*Tippett*, 69) cites the 1930s as the period when this research took place.

contingencies of particular performing contexts, such as the Boosbeck work camps or the village community of Oxted, the folk-material in the Concerto is drawn into an interplay of musical materials within a more abstract symphonic framework (a shift of emphasis probably not unrelated to the sea-change in Tippett's political stance during the 1930s, from, broadly speaking, active involvement on the communist left to a pacifism detached from party-political alignment). The resulting synthesis in the Concerto could be construed as projecting a utopian vision where social differences (such as those between 'town' and 'country', or between 'turned, articulate' art music, and folk music) may be seen not as grounds for social division, but as cross-fertilising forces within an integrated whole. Nowhere does this point come across more strongly than in the final C major tune, where song, perhaps representing the collective voice of a community, finds its structurally salient place within the complex totality of the autonomous artwork. This is a different kind of folksong/art-music synthesis from that found in, say, the works of Bartók. Where Bartók uses such materials for their 'power of alienation' (to borrow Adorno's words),⁴⁷ Tippett's C major song is a potent gesture of a renewal: a renewal immanent in its very structural function as the consummative moment of a remodelled diatonicism. What Tippett shares with Bartók, however, is the adoption, or adaptation, of folk-material for the purposes of 'inner-musical cultural criticism', rather than 'nationalistic reaction' (again, Adorno's words).⁴⁸ Unlike the pastoral ruminations of Tippett's English forebears, often associated with a nostalgic searching for a rural idyll, the synthesis of the Double Concerto presents an image of a social order where 'cross-currents' between its constitutive forces make for an image of an invigorated future rather than a mythologised past. Yet what is also clear is that the critique of pastoralism within the piece entails a dialectical mediation rather than a wholesale rejection of the object of critique. To describe this as a kind of English *Aufhebung* would not be inappropriate to the cross-cultural currents involved – essentially the playing-off of national hegemonies against each other. Thus Tippett's moment of maturity as a composer – which is also the moment in which he finds his authentic identity – arrives when he

47 See Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Bloomster (London: Sheed & Ward, 1973 (paperback edn, 1987)), 35–6 n. 5. 48 Ibid.

is able to re-articulate his Englishness (an Englishness no more or less bourgeois than modernism itself) through the galvanising forces of Austro-German musical thought processes, while making the Germanic his own through the critical distance afforded by being English. Here, then, we have not so much a half-rebellion as an extremely fruitful double one.