Michael Tippett’s oratorio *A Child of Our Time* was written at the beginning of the second world war as an expression of ‘man’s inhumanity to man’. It has become one of his most widely known works and one which is seen to symbolise the composer’s extra-musical concerns, both political and psychological. This study places these concerns within a wider historical and cultural context while also focusing on specific aspects of Tippett’s musical language. Central to this enquiry is Tippett’s relationship to the work of T. S. Eliot, a relationship which is seen to condition both the text and its musical representation through Tippett’s allusions to specific poetic images within the text and references to historical genres, forms and gestures within the musical dimension. Also of importance is the initial critical reception of the work, a reception which determined responses that still surround the work.

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Kenneth Gloag
For my parents
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Note on the score

References to specific bars within the score take the following form: 100 refers to the bar at figure 100 and 100: 1 refers to the first bar after the figure etc. This numbering is based on the current edition of the score (Schott study score ED 10899, reprinted November 1993). However, older copies may feature a slight variation in No. 23, with figures 99–103 placed one bar later (figure 99 = my bar 99: 1 etc.). Where occasional reference is made to, for example, ‘the sixth and seventh bars’, this refers to the sixth and seventh bars of that specific numbered section of the score (for example, No. 1 Chorus).