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PEGGY GLANVILLE-HICKS' OPERA
SAPPHO -
A CRITICAL EXAMINATION

BY

Fiona Campbell B.Mus.

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Award of

Master of Music

at the Western Australian Conservatorium of Music,

Academy of Performing Arts

Edith Cowan University

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USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

ABSRTACT

Over the past ten years there has been a considerable amount of renewed interest in the life and work of Australian-born composer Peggy Glanville-Hicks who wrote five operas and a substantial body of chamber music. Although most of her career as a composer was accomplished abroad, her works were a significant contribution to the development of Australian opera. There is a growing body of literature written about Peggy Glanville-Hicks, but nothing substantial has been written about her last great work, *Sappho*. The purpose of this minor thesis, therefore, is to examine this last grand, yet unperformed opera. This thesis will present the composer's background, musical training and her philosophies on music and give an overview of her musical style. It will include a descriptive analysis of *Sappho* paying particular attention to the use of instrumentation, vocal writing and dramatic content. Transcripts of correspondence between the composer and her contemporaries will expose the reasons for the opera never having been performed. *Sappho* will be placed in the context of her other works, particularly the operas *The Transposed Heads* and *Nausicaa*. This will serve to show Glanville-Hicks' maturity and ability as an opera composer who was able to integrate her own unique style with the traditions of grand opera. Perhaps most importantly, it is hoped that this research will assist with the regeneration of interest in this fascinating composer's last major work, which in turn may lead to a performing edition of *Sappho* and ultimately public performances.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4

| | Page |
|---|------|
| Abstract | 2 |
| Declaration | 3 |
| CHAPTER 1 | |
| - Short biography of Peggy Glanville-Hicks. | 5 |
| - Critical Reception of Peggy Glanville-Hicks. | 14 |
| - An overview of her musical style and development. | 23 |
| CHAPTER 2 | |
| - Previous operas related to the development of <i>Sappho</i> | 29 |
| - The writing of <i>Sappho</i> . | 33 |
| - The place of <i>Sappho</i> in opera writing of the twentieth century | 42 |
| CHAPTER 3 | |
| - Synopsis of the opera. | 49 |
| - The evolution of the libretto from the original play. | 54 |
| - Descriptive analysis of the music. | 61 |
| CHAPTER 4 | |
| - Interpretation and conclusions. | 89 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 92 |
| APPENDIX 1 | 101 |

CHAPTER 1

BIOGRAPHY

Peggy Glanville-Hicks was born in Melbourne on 29th December 1912 and brought up in an affluent, conservative, middle-class environment. At the age of twelve she was sent to boarding school at the fashionable girl's college, Clyde. She was unhappy in this setting, and this probably contributed to her perception of a lack of affection from her parents. At her insistence she was removed from this school and enrolled in the Albert Street Conservatorium, the home of Dame Nellie Melba's singing school. The Conservatorium at that time reflected the "English" culture of Melbourne society. Glanville-Hicks' first training in composition there was from Fritz Hart (1874 - 1949) in 1927. Hart had trained in England and wrote over twenty operas that were performed by students at the Conservatorium. His compositional style was largely based on the English choral tradition using the contours, rhythm and melodic shapes of English folk song. According to Glanville-Hicks, he was a "master of setting words (to music) in a natural way" (Hayes, 1990 p.2). Glanville-Hicks' first composition, *Ireland* was composed and performed in 1931 by the Ladies' Choir at the Conservatorium.

In order to further her studies Glanville-Hicks followed the traditional young artists' path of moving to London where she won the Carlotta Rowe Scholarship to the Royal College of Music. She studied there until 1935 with Ralph Vaughan Williams (composition), Arthur Benjamin (piano), Constant Lambert and Malcolm Sargent (conducting), R. O. Morris and C. Kitson (harmony and counterpoint), and Gordon Jacob (orchestration). Vaughan Williams, as well as engaging in many other activities, was a key figure in the twentieth century revival of English music (Ottaway, 19). Glanville-Hicks' was employed to copy music for Vaughan Williams and for three months lived and worked with him and his family (Beckett, 1992 p.25). She became not only extremely familiar with his compositional style but also with his philosophical outlook on society, which in turn influenced her life long musical and spiritual journey as well as her view on composing music for the people.

In 1933 an event of some significance occurred when she met the young Indira Gandhi. Together they travelled to India. Her introduction to Indian culture, and in particular Indian music, by such a fervent, highly educated patriot as Indira Gandhi made an enormous impression on Glanville-Hicks, confirming her already developing interest in non-European musical idioms.

Glanville-Hicks won an Octavia Travelling Scholarship in 1936 for two years, which enabled her to study in Vienna with Egon Wellesz

and with Nadia Boulanger in Paris.

In 1937 she wrote the *Choral Suite* which was published by *Editions de l'Oiseau-Lyre* in Paris and was responsible for Glanville-Hicks' first major performance. Two movements of the work were performed at the London Festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) in June 1938, conducted by Sir Adrian Boult at the BBC Concert Hall and recorded by *Oiseau-Lyre*. She was the first Australian to have a work performed at this renowned Festival.

By 1939 she had written twenty six works including her first opera, *Caedmon*. On the 7th November in the same year she married the composer and pianist Stanley Bate. The marriage, which lasted for approximately eight years, saw her own compositional career go into something of a hiatus as she devoted most of her time and energy in promoting her husband's career. The relationship, by any standard, was dysfunctional in the extreme due mainly to Bate's alcoholism. Nevertheless, Glanville-Hicks made valuable contacts and learned many marketing skills through the promotion of Bate's music. These contacts and skills were then used for the re-establishment of her own career.

The couple lived in America from 1942, and Glanville-Hicks gained American citizenship in 1948. In New York she became a member of the League of Composers in 1943 which was an organisation

that supported new music by American composers. During this time she became heavily involved in organising concerts and actively supported a variety of musicians. In the 1950s she also joined the American Composers Alliance (ACA). She started composing again in the mid 1940s and continued until 1948 completing what was seen as the first stage of her career as a composer. This was largely a transitional stage as a composer because she had been exposed to a greater variety of compositional styles since working in New York.

The next period in her life, 1950 - 1954, saw her establish an individual style, clearly influenced by ancient and non-western traditions. Between 1947 - 1955 she was a critic for the *New York Herald Tribune* reviewing, during this time, hundreds of concerts. This position not only provided her with a living, it enabled her to monitor a large percentage of contemporary music being written and performed. She became highly respected for her detailed and insightful critiques on contemporary music.

The opera *The Transposed Heads* was commissioned in 1953 by the Louisville Philharmonic Society under a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. Her compositional intention was to develop what she called the melody - rhythm structure (Hayes, 1992 p.379) into an effective and expressive medium for opera. The 1958 production in New York brought many highly favourable reviews. This year also saw the death of her mother. Glanville-Hicks

was in transit to Australia when her mother died. Little information is available about the emotional impact of this event; what is known however, is that the inheritance she received provided her with some financial security.

By 1954 at 41 years of age, Glanville-Hicks had built a significant work list of forty-five compositions, and had received a number of awards, most notably the major award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, as well as the important Louisville commission for *The Transposed Heads*. Her music had been performed by major artists and reviewed by influential critics. She had also been the subject of two important articles, Eric Blom's article in *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and George Antheil's article in the *ACA Bulletin*.

She received two Guggenheim Fellowships and in the years 1956 - 1958 she researched Greek folk music while in New York and Washington. She then travelled to the Aegean and Athens where she had access to archives at the Academy of Athens, the Institut Francais and other sources. She also collected folk music from several regions in Greece.

In 1956 she wrote her next opera *The Glittering Gate* and went to the island of Mallorca to orchestrate it. *The Glittering Gate* was based on the play of the same name by Lord Dunsany, an Irish author, who was attracting attention in New York at the time. It is a

short, one-act opera telling the story of two burglars safe-cracking their way through the gates of heaven. Also at this time MGM issued several recordings of her 1950s' works for which she wrote most of the liner notes, making them reliable sources of information on her compositional styles and intentions. She had been commissioned to compose the ballets *The Masque of the Wild Man* and *Triad* for the Spoleto Festival of Two Worlds and in June 1958 she travelled to Italy to see them performed.

From the early 1950s she had been searching for a Greek subject for her next opera. Eventually she came upon *Nausicaa*, the name of the heroine from Robert Graves' novel *Homer's Daughter*. The composer and author spent several months in the summer of 1956 working on the libretto together. The text was completed in 1957 and revised the following year when the music and the entire form of the piece shaped itself into a three act opera. The world premiere performance took place at the Athens Festival in August 1961. It was a grand occasion and had been well publicised, especially since it was Robert Graves' first visit to Greece. Various reports (Athens Festival Pamphlet, 1961) estimate that there were between 3000 to 4800 people at the performance for opening night and similar numbers for the subsequent two performances.

†

In 1961 she was awarded a Rockefeller grant for travel and research in the Middle and Far East and a Fulbright Fellowship awarded for two years to support further research in Aegean

Demotic music. During this period she developed the outline of *Sappho*, an opera based on a play in verse by Lawrence Durrell. She was already experiencing difficulty with her eyesight and feared that this could be her last chance to write such a substantial work. Understandably she was determined to make it her best. In 1963 she received a commission from the San Francisco Opera to write *Sappho* with the assistance of a Ford Foundation grant. The opera was submitted to Kurt Adler the General Manager of the San Francisco Opera in December 1963. Shortly afterwards Glanville-Hicks received the devastating news of its rejection. The ensuing months were filled with lengthy, fruitless negotiations between Glanville-Hicks, Adler and her publisher Franco Colombo. In December she wrote to Adler for the last time intimating that it was unlikely that various suggested revisions would produce a work satisfactory to either of them. *Sappho* has never been performed as will be discussed later.

The remainder of the year was probably spent working on commissions for the Harkness Ballet, *Tragic Celebration* (1966) and *A Season in Hell* (1967) in collaboration with the choreographer John Butler. Her eyesight continued to deteriorate until it was discovered in 1967 that she had a brain tumour which required surgical removal. The surgery was extremely dangerous with only a thirty percent success rate. A section of skull was removed and replaced with a plastic section which she called her "famous plastic skull". The surgery was successful and greatly improved her vision,

but she was told that she only had five years to live. She was advised to return to Greece and to enjoy the sun. She returned to Athens and travelled to London several times in the next few years for more surgery. It became apparent to her that she was going to live longer than five years. Although enjoying the Greek lifestyle she missed the mental stimulation of the music scene in places like New York and London. Eventually, in 1970, she was encouraged to return to Australia by close friends James Murdoch, National Director of the Australian Music Centre and Joyce McGrath, Senior Librarian at the State Library of Victoria.

In 1975 the Australian Music Centre invited Glanville-Hicks to give a series of lectures on Asian music. This was a part-time position which provided her with a semi-retirement role and kept her active in the Australian music scene. It was also designed to promote awareness of her return to Australia and to make her wealth of knowledge and experience available to other Australian composers.

During the 1970's and 1980's she was interviewed many times and often discussed her lack of recognition in Australia and her uniqueness as a woman composer, especially in the field of opera. She did not compose any significant works after the brain surgery, only a three minute piece *Girondelle for Giraffes* (1978) to accompany a Giraffe sculpture at an art exhibition, and in 1989 she began work on another opera *Beckett*. It has been suggested that

this work was intended only to keep her occupied as her health deteriorated, as the work was never completed.

There have been many performances of her work in Australia, including a programme in the 1982 Festival of Sydney entitled "A Salute to Peggy Glanville-Hicks" and a productions of *The Transposed Heads* and *The Glittering Gate* in the 1986 Adelaide Festival. She also had a number of programmes and interviews broadcast on ABC FM. Before this in 1983 she travelled to Bombay as the honoured guest at the official opening of a Performing Arts Centre and in 1984 she was invited to Perth, to attend a new recording and broadcast of *The Transposed Heads* with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra. In May of 1987 she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Sydney. She died in Sydney on 25th June 1990. In keeping with her life long support and encouragement of composers, in her will she established a foundation for young composers to live expense free in her house for a period of twelve months.

CRITICAL RECEPTION OF PEGGY GLANVILLE-HICKS

Although now acknowledged as a significant Australian composer, Peggy Glanville-Hicks' most productive years were spent in England and America, where she established herself as a composer and critic. A large body of literature was published about her in American magazines and musical bulletins in the 1950s but very little of it appeared in Australia.

Glanville-Hicks' compositions were received, on the whole, favourably, enthusiastically and on occasion even ecstatically. Since the first public performances of her works there has been an immediate acceptance of her charming and 'organic' style of writing that reflects her warm and vibrant personality. It is made very clear in the enormous amount of correspondence between Glanville-Hicks and people such as, Yehudi Menuhin, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Thornton Wild, Robert Graves, Thomas Mann, George Antheil, Virgil Thomson, Lawrence Durrell, Anais Nin and many others, that over and above being an extremely talented composer

and critic, she was considered a very kind, motivated, hard working, passionate person, who was greatly loved and admired.

One of the earliest reviews Glanville-Hicks received was of a concert she gave just prior to departing for London. She played a movement of a Mozart piano concerto and three of her early compositions were performed. The review commented on the friendly reaction from the audience and noticed that her intuitive method of composition stemmed from an emotional spontaneity as opposed to a strictly technical approach (The Age, 1932).

The first major international exposure of her work, was the *Choral Suite* at the ISCM Festival in 1938. It was her *Concertino da Camera* for flute, clarinet, bassoon and piano, performed at the ISCM festival in Amsterdam in 1948, which received mixed reactions. One paper commented on the French compositional style in her writing: "Clarity, lightness, concision and simplicity" (Hayes 1992 p.378). Another, evidently preferred atonalism and disliked the Boulanger school reflected in the composition. A third critic did not consider the work modern enough for the festival but did note that it was a success with the audience. Ten years later, Glanville-Hicks described it as her 1946 "swan-song" for the "Paris neo-classic schoolroom" (Hayes, 1992).

The 1950s were some of her most productive years as a composer and critic. She was continuously busy in the promotion of young

American composers. The concerts that she organised, also gave the opportunity to have her own works performed, which increased her public profile and advanced her own career. The person she spent a considerable amount of time with, during this period, was her employer at the *Herald Tribune*, Virgil Thomson. In his autobiography, he described her as "thin, passionate, tireless and insistent," someone who was, at times a difficult person, but nevertheless, "an indispensable colleague." He was impressed with the originality of her operatic compositions and in his own words, she "remains a memorable composer." (Thomson, 1966 p.344).

Deborah Hayes believed that although Glanville-Hicks' years as a critic imposed on her compositional time, it was a considerable learning experience, that nurtured her own philosophies and abilities as a composer and heightened her perception and understanding of other composers. It is true that she only found time for her own compositions outside of the New York concert seasons, as she found it impossible for her own ideas to emerge, while she was concentrating, absorbing and commenting on those of other people.

During the early 1950s she wrote ninety-eight articles on current American composers for *The Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Her work for the dictionary "helped confirm the importance of American music, as inclusion in Grove's was a gauge of a musician's importance" (Hayes, 1990 p.17). Unfortunately she

included very few entries on women composers despite the fact that there were important women composers working around her at the time, including Miriam Gideon, Dame Ethyl Smythe and Esther Williamson Ballou, to name a few. Glanville-Hicks constantly laid claim to being the first woman composer to have achieved such distinction, especially in the field of opera. There was never gender-inclusive writing in articles that she wrote and in interviews and publicity about herself she cultivated the idea that she was unique as a female composer, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. There is no question that the music scene was male dominated and she was the only woman in a team of thirteen music critics working at the *Herald Tribune*, but she often reviewed concerts of new music that included works by women composers. According to Virgil Thomson "She believed, upon some evidence, that the world was out to crush women composers" (Thomson, 1966 p.344) and so she associated herself with the men, even dressed as a man because she was determined to be judged equally as a composer alongside her male counterparts. She refused to be associated exclusively with women composing groups and concerts because she feared that once all women composers were together in a category the men could neatly push them aside and conveniently forget about them. Ironically though, the first scholarship she received at the Royal College of Music was the Carlotta Rowe Scholarship, specifically set aside for female composers. The thing to be said in her defence, as Deborah Hayes (1992) so aptly writes, is that Glanville-Hicks "did not invent the bias

against women, only reflected it."

Glanville-Hicks had two major articles written about her in the mid-1950s. Eric Blom included her in the *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. The other article by George Antheil, published in the *ACA Bulletin*, seems to have been written in collaboration with Glanville-Hicks because he discusses her compositional principles under six general topics:

1. "integration" of expressive aims and material means.
2. "simplification for increased clarity and intensity."
3. Regard for the "melody-rhythm patterns of antiquity" and of "Eastern places".
4. A "fusion" of Oriental sound and Western (harmonic) style through use of "neutral materials" as well as actual folk melody.
5. Invention of new forms instead of reliance on traditional "classic" forms.
6. Avoidance of dissonance, especially constant "obligatory" dissonance.

These principles and terms were used by her to assess and describe other composer's work in her critiques and articles.

Her *The Transposed Heads* received a considerable amount of publicity at the New York premiere in the *Times*, *Herald Tribune*, *New York Post*, *Opera News* and others. Glanville-Hicks was

particularly pleased with Robert Evett's remarks in *The New Republic*;

"Transposed Heads....is one of the richest outpourings of unencumbered music in recent years.....While 'originality' may be an over-valued quality, it is the quality that Miss Glanville-Hick's has developed, and the results have been most distinguished. Her opera is the only one I have seen recently that is likely to have any large or long-term significance." (Brochure, 1969).

In spite of the composer's careful explanation of her melody-rhythm structure, a number of the reviews challenged the idea that she had revolutionised music by disposing of harmony. Most of them however, enjoyed the opera, and found the wedding and temple scenes particularly successful, dramatically.

Her other great success, in terms of press coverage was, of course, *Nausicaa*. Virgil Thomson wrote to her prior to the opening after he had heard part of a soloist's rehearsal, and told her how wonderful he thought it was. "With no harmony, it does not tire the ear, and with everybody singing *ff* all the time, the effect is monumental and a fine evocation of ancient times" (Thomson, 1961). Evidently, the international press agreed and the opera received rave reviews. In America *Time Magazine* described the work as "bony and strong like the Greek landscape. An idiom unique of its kind." *Variety* magazine said the opera received "A ten minute standing ovation.....

The cast of 150 won eight curtain calls from the capacity crowd of 4800 which overflowed into the aisles..... The plot is a natural for grand opera." The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in Germany observed,

"Style and subject in this opera seem in an odd way timeless, while the sound of the orchestra reveals a master of the modern composer's profession. It is an opera with an individuality all of its own - a work opening vistas to new modern roads in ancient spirit never trodden before."

Le Figaro in France had a half- inch headline reading, "An unforgettable Nausicaa" and they went on to say that if there was to be renewed interest by the public in lyric theatre then *Nausicaa* was the work to do it. Britain's *The Manchester Guardian* considered the premiere to be the highlight of the festival, "it is immediately appealing.....and deserves to be heard elsewhere." Perhaps the most discerning critic was Mr Arkadinos who reviewed the work for the Athens paper *I Avgi*;

"The significant fact [of musical style used in *Nausicaa*] is that she did not simply use the Greek modes, writing a fantastic music of pseudo-ancient type..... but used living examples, or cast her music in the mould of Demotiki [folk] music and sometimes of Byzantine types. Thus the opera blossoms with quite a number of dances of Kalamata, Epirus

and other island types of melody. The still more significant fact is that this material has not been used by Peggy Glanville-Hicks simply as an ornamental factor, but she has synthesised it within the opera so that it becomes an inseparable organic part of the work."

On her return to Australia in 1970, *Sydney Morning Herald* announced her arrival. Most of the articles for the remainder of the decade, however, reflected her lamentations at the fact that she was not acknowledged in her own country. The Adelaide Festival presented *The Transposed Heads* and *The Glittering Gate* in 1986, but due to less than satisfactory productions, were not well received. It was James Murdoch's article in *Australia's Contemporary Composers* that highlighted the benefits of having such an experienced composer working in the Australian music industry. He also noted her return coinciding with an increasing interest among young Australian composers in non-western music. The 1980s saw a gradual awakening in the community's awareness of her and a growing number of serious articles, heralding her importance, began to surface. In the article "Peggy Glanville-Hicks: A Composer of Note" Peter Sculthorpe described her as a "mother figure" to Australian music and a visionary composer whom "we can look up to, respect and admire."

Today her importance as a composer is being more widely acknowledged and is discussed in association with other important

artists. For example, James Koehne (1992), in his *Quadrant* article, discusses the significant influence Vaughan Williams had on many Australian composers, including Arthur Benjamin, Dorian Le Gallienne, Malcolm Williamson, Nigel Butterley and Margaret Sutherland. He argues that the supposed indulgence in nostalgia that many of these composers were accused of, was perhaps instead a response to a profound human and musical message. He specifically mentions "The richness of the vein of musical pastoralism is suggested in works like Peggy Glanville-Hicks'

Sinfonia da Pacifica, which genuinely-transplants pastoralism's philosophical spirit to our corner of the world."

MUSICAL STYLE

During the course of her career as a composer, Glanville-Hicks developed an interesting and distinctive style that reflected her ethnomusicological interests. Her upbringing, schooling in colleges for girls, and involvement in choirs and operas at the Conservatorium, were important in establishing her life-long interest in vocal music. Her training with Hart and Vaughan Williams secured an affinity with English choral sound, consonant harmonies, modal melodies, especially traditional or folk melodies. These two composition teachers were important figures in the revival of English, Welsh and Irish folk music. This encouraged the young composer to explore antique sources.

Glanville-Hicks was fortunate enough to learn first hand the two twentieth-century musical styles that came to dominate music in the middle of the century. Egon Wellesz taught her the Schoenberg school of dodecaphony, but the whole concept of atonalism was alien to her. It seemed entirely too mathematical and certainly not spiritual enough for her. She left Wellesz' studio after two months.

and continued on to Paris where she studied Stravinskian neo-classicism with Nadia Boulanger. Boulanger was an excellent teacher, interested in giving her students a good compositional technique and encouraging their individual creativity instead of insisting they write in one given style. Glanville-Hicks reached the conclusion and thereafter firmly believed, that dissonance and the twelve-tone technique was not the future of music and that dodecaphony and neo-classicism were merely a reaction against nineteenth-century romanticism, neither styles promising new direction. She continued to believe that twentieth century music would find renewed inspiration in ancient, more authentic sources (Glanville-Hicks, 1966, p.209). She took her direction, she has explained (Ritch, 1983), from Bela Bartok, who researched and collected the music of Rumanian and Hungarian folk materials and used them as a basis for his own compositions, in a similar way to Vaughan William's use of English folk materials. She listened to tapes of folkloric music from Rumania, Yugoslavia, Hungary and finally Greece. She decided that Greek music's melodic and highly rhythmic line was exactly what she was looking for. "It's not pop, not classical, it's music of the people..... Rhythm takes the place of harmony." (Murdoch, 1983 p.67)

She began to compose using what she called a *melody - rhythm* structure. Her study of ancient and folk music developed in her a belief that the universal elements in music were melody and rhythm, and that harmony developing through Western European musicians

was only incidental in music's historical development. She believed that by eliminating harmony, melody gravitates naturally towards modality. Tonality is present in her music, but freed from the restraints of a specific key and dissonance is therefore neutralised. Glanville-Hicks' re-focussing of her compositional technique, led to a revision in her orchestral layout. Her basic ensemble became a body of three instrumental groups. Strings, winds and percussion having equal status, with percussion no longer being "merely a decorative garnish." (Murdoch, 1975, p.104). Having arrived at this *melody - rhythm* structure, she felt able to use musical ideas from various cultures without destroying their unique character and without completely changing her own writing method.

Glanville-Hicks explained her *melody-rhythm* structure in modern American architectural terms, in which melody is supported by, and in fact springs from rhythm, not harmony. She likened the tonal system to the arch of medieval cathedrals which are supported from the ground. In her opinion Schoenberg abandoned the principle of the arch for the principle of horizontality, producing a sound which she considered dreadful. Atonality at first seemed to be a way out of the collapsing building of tonality but, instead, she felt it produced totally featureless buildings. She also accused neo-classicism of pointlessly decorating perfectly proportioned old buildings just to make them look different. The *melody - rhythm* principle however was like "the cantilever of modern architecture, which produces an organic structure that seemingly without support, rises into the air on

it's own energy (Hayes, 1990, p.13).

She continued to experiment with music from various cultures and in the early 1950s completed several works which integrated her own and other styles successfully. She also looked for instrumental combinations that would give her scope for developing her *melody - rhythm* structure. *Sonata for Harp* (1950) is now part of the standard harp repertoire and contains Spanish rhythms and guitar effects throughout. *Sonata for Piano and Percussion* (1951) is for piano and four percussionists, the melodic material coming from the Watuzzi tribe of Africa. *Sinfonia da Pacifica* (1952) uses the same percussion group as her 1951 sonata, without the piano and with single wind, brass and strings. She must have found this particular combination satisfying, because she used it again in the following three compositions. *Letters from Morocco* for tenor and chamber ensemble (1952) uses North African melodic and rhythmic colourings. *The Transposed Heads* (1953) was largely influenced by the Indian raga-tala structure and the *Etruscan Concerto* (1954) was written to evoke the Etruscan Tombs of Tarquinia. *Three Gymnopedies* (1953) for small instrumental ensemble is based on the slow dance of ancient Greece used to install grace in athletes. Although Glanville-Hicks turned her back on much of the 'avant garde', she was not adverse to some experimentation. In *The Transposed Heads*, she used electronic sounds on a prerecorded tape to produce the effect of 'unearthly laughter' which, according to James Murdoch " was one of the first examples of the use of

electronic elements in opera" (Murdoch, 1975, p.102 - 107).

A fundamental element of Glanville-Hicks' thought is integration between technique and inspiration. In her 1949 essay about Paul Bowles, she used the word 'integration' to describe an artist maintaining contact with his or her inspiration and emotion. She was concerned with the lack of thought about the psychological, emotional and spiritual states of the artist and the amount of thought about the technical aspects of music. In the 1958 edition of the *Juilliard Review*, she published an article entitled *Technique and Inspiration* which explained her own compositional philosophy in detail and defined the terms she had been using for years. For her, technique included materials and analytical factors, while inspiration included expression and instinctive factors. She believed that extended meditation allowed a composer to integrate the conscious and unconscious elements of their music into one fully cohesive piece. She considered this integration to be the critical feature which distinguished the creative composer from the purely technical composer or the talented but undisciplined student.

From 1955 onwards her work became more personally expressive or romantic, which seemed naturally to coincide with her spiritual journey. For example her *Concerto Romantico* (1956) embodies this sense of romance. Percussion is omitted because it would drown out the viola, and the rhythm instead is driven by unison playing in

the strings. She became increasingly drawn to Greece, as the place where she was able to find the peace and quiet necessary for composition. In 1959 she left New York and based herself in Greece. It made sense that her next two operas had Greek subjects. She found everything about Greece, the landscape, the Greek temperament, the light, the ever changing sea, an endless source of inspiration and Greek materials perfect for integrating with her own style. Consequently, her love of and immersion in all things Greek found a perfect vehicle for expression in *Nausicaa* and was then developed further in *Sappho*. Aspects of this will be shown in the following chapters.

Glanville-Hicks attempted to establish some new element in each composition; a new subject, a different source, varied ensemble combinations, or even a modern view on an old story. Her point was to shed a new and different light on ancient sources and to express her own constant and continuously developing spirituality, through organic compositions. Her work has a unique style, her compositions were an integral part of her being and not mere mathematical equations. The integrity of her work lies in the fact that while maintaining her basic melodic-rythmic structure, it manages to combine interesting backgrounds, drama and humour into a pleasurable integrated aural experience.

CHAPTER TWO

PREVIOUS OPERAS RELATED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF *SAPPHO*.

Glanville-Hicks was deeply involved in every aspect of her operas. She was tireless in her search for funding and sponsorship, and constantly involved in the promotion, marketing, production and design. Working in and around the musical environment of cities where she lived, essentially made her a "talent scout" and enabled her to work with musicians, directors and designers of her choice. She was always interested in composing for the theatre and always chose fashionable and/or famous authors. Like all intelligent composers, she understood that good literary sources could not guarantee a good opera, but they did ensure a libretto with some ideas worked into it.

In her opera *The Transposed Heads* her aim was to develop the *melody - rhythm* structure into an effective and expressive medium for opera. She insisted that her use of Hindu folk themes combined with her own writing method had evolved into a structure very similar to musical patterns of the antique world. It is interesting however, that the terminology she chose to describe the opera was often neo-classical. This was contrary to the modernistic styles she

was trying to avoid. Her intention was "to create grand opera on a chamber music scale," and she explained that the form and pacing of the work came, "from the vocal element, just as the shape of a baroque concerto comes from the solo elaboration." (Liner notes, 1955). She turned her back on serialism, but to some degree she extended the principles of neo-classicism in her orchestration. The instrumentation is practically the same ensemble used in the *Letters From Morocco* and the *Etruscan Concerto*. It consists of a small chamber orchestra: timpani, four percussionists (triangle, three gongs, suspended cymbal, tam tam, tom tom, xylophone, bass drum) harp and strings. In keeping with the Hindu associations and her compositional principles, the percussion is of equal importance to the strings and winds. Glanville-Hicks constructed the opera's libretto into six scenes herself, from the English translation of a story by Thomas Mann based on a Hindu legend. There are elements of many literary categories in this story: realism, fantasy, humour and metaphysics. Glanville-Hicks was attracted to the timelessness of the story, handled with the awareness of modern psychology. She describes Sita's inadvertent transposition of her lover's heads as "The greatest Freudian slip of all time." (Liner notes, 1984)

Nausicaa was undoubtedly the pinnacle of Glanville-Hicks career as a composer. After her months spent in the Aegean, she had embraced Greek culture, temperament and landscape, so the choice of libretto for *Nausicaa* was a natural progression. Many creative liberties were taken with the original *Odyssey* story and the

synopsis suggests it might have been termed "variation on a theme by Homer" (Liner notes, 1964).

"The characters of Penelope and Nausicaa become merged into one, Odysseus becomes Atheon - a shipwrecked Cretan nobleman, the incident of Penelope's fifty lovers with the shooting contest in the courtyard becomes the challenge for Nausicaa's hand. A charming secondary plot is woven around Robert Graves' idea that the *Odyssey* was not written by Homer at all, but by a woman - The princess Nausicaa being that authoress. Her story reveals how and why she came to write it."

The production was an enormous undertaking, with a principal cast of ten characters performed by young Greek-American singers, a young Teresa Stratas singing the title role, large chorus consisting of Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass and large orchestra, about sixty players, conducted by Carlos Surinach. John Butler was the stage director and the sets and costumes were designed by Andreas Nomikos. The entire production and indeed the main point of the opera was influenced by the idea of opera in the round and designed specifically for the ancient, restored Herod Atticus Theatre where it was performed (Glanville-Hicks, 1961). Once again, Glanville-Hicks was involved in every aspect of the production. As well as writing the work and helping to compile the libretto, she initiated the premiere to be held in an international spotlight. She

sought sponsorship, organised the cast and the recording, which proved to be a nightmare of negotiations with the local union and she was an integral part of the design and direction. It is no wonder she was tempted to write to a friend, "Ambushes of every kind surround one when one is intrepid enough to embark on major productions with temperamental, individualist and procrastinating Greeks as one's collaborators. But oh, how charming they all are!" (Glanville-Hicks, 1961).

It was reviewed internationally and declared everywhere to be a major work and huge success. Glanville-Hicks was ecstatic at the response to the opera. She had worked hard throughout the production to achieve this acclaim. It was fraught with technical problems, union disputes, sponsorship disasters at the last minute, which resulted in a personal loss of \$5000 for her. She coped with all of this, on top of the usual amount of strain placed on a composer when facing a world premiere of a major work, at an important international festival. She must have been especially pleased with the astute observation and appreciation of her musical style, as it was her intention to have folkloric tunes from various regions recognised as well as the distinct "flavour" of Greece felt throughout the score. "It is this flavour, together with considerations of musical malleability for extended development that has guided my choice and use of material." (Liner notes on CRI Recording)

THE WRITING OF SAPPHO

Filled with confidence, after the success of *Nausicaa*, she chose another Greek subject for her next opera, again with a beautiful and famous woman as the main character. There is no question about Glanville-Hicks' premeditated attempt to make *Sappho* as great, if not a greater success than *Nausicaa*. She was already experiencing difficulty with her eyesight and suspected that this could be her last chance to write such a substantial work and was therefore, understandably determined to make it her best. Once again she chose a famous author, Lawrence Durrell, to write the libretto from one of his own works. She had already decided on the designer and director and wrote the title role for Maria Callas to make her triumphant return to the stage. She first wrote to Kurt Adler, General Director of the San Francisco Opera, in July 1962. She had already obtained the rights to Durrell's play, though not indefinitely and had made the first draft of the libretto. Accompanying the letter to Adler was a recording and score of *Nausicaa* so that he could familiarise himself with her compositional style. She made him aware of her deteriorating eyesight and the

fact that she needed to complete the opera within a certain amount of time, to retain exclusive use of the text. She also mentioned that she was still \$5000 out of pocket from the *Nausicaa* production and made it clear that "The Ford Foundation opera commissions through the American opera houses are, at the present time almost the only circumstance under which a known composer can embark on a big work." (Glanville-Hicks, 1962). In his reply, Adler is very interested in the new work and suggests they recommend it for a Ford Foundation Grant (Adler, 1962), and according to Glanville-Hicks' publisher "He sounded quite confident that you would present him with an excellent opera for his theatre." (Colombo, 1963).

In December 1962 Adler still had not confirmed whether or not Glanville-Hicks could go ahead with the grant application. He seemed to be concerned with the libretto due to the apparent lack of action and excessive wordiness. She was anxious to know his decision because she had to return to Athens in mid-January and so she attempted to set his mind at rest by explaining her intent with the story in detail:

"I am deeply involved in this opera already, deeply identified with the Sappho personality as Durrell has created her. I carved out the libretto myself from the excessive wordiness of the play, taking lines in accordance with a dramatico - musical form held already in mind." Using a choreographic approach to "scenes like the opening one with

the maids, the chorus welcoming Pittakos, the Sybils in their temple; a productional fantasy surrounding the whole of scene 22 with it's symposium, dream - state transitions and love scene.....are activities for the eye: The real action in real opera lies in the vocal roles themselves, in that built-in histrionic dimension only the real opera composer can do. And having assessed my own powers, I chose the Sappho script deliberately for this potential. In previous operas - "The Transposed Heads" and "Nausicaa" (works in what one might term allegorical, and heroic realism respectively) the story was self evident on the physically acted plane; thus when the first was produced in almost no[h] play simplicity, the latter in austerity of ancient Greek theatre, they stood well without aid of trappings.

In the Sappho I want to do something different, to deepen the personal, emotional quotient, to - to depict the devastating dramatic states of the inward drama that are, surely, the true realm of music." (Glanville-Hicks, 1962).

In the ensuing months Glanville-Hicks returned to Athens, received the grant , a total of \$7000 for her and \$1000 for Durrell and began work on her new opera. She and Durrell continued to correspond and discuss different ideas of the characters in the play. She believed Durrell's portrayal of Sappho to be "exactly the kind of woman it must have been who wrote those ecstatically frugal lines. All except perhaps the 'revenge' note in the play ending, which - as

you'll have seen I deleted from the opera. Could she have become that - in Corinth?" (Glanville-Hicks, 1963). He replied on the 14th March that "In the Greek world with its 'heroic' postures you get a kind of total response on the love - hate plane, and that great love can and does become equally implacable hate?". Durrell and Glanville-Hicks met in June 1963 to fill in the lines of the libretto and complete the text. She wrote to Adler in September 1963 keeping him up to date with the progress of the opera and explained that she was continually having to leash in the music to ensure that all the text would be heard and insists that when casting, the "choice of singers, impeccable diction and a subtle acting ability.....[are] paramount, even perhaps above sheer splendour of voice sound." (Glanville-Hicks, 1963). By this stage she knew exactly what she wanted for the performance and exactly what was needed by the performers to make the inner tension of the plot be felt by the audience. Remember that until this time, Maria Callas was a rare breed of opera singer who was also a brilliant actor and all-round performer. Singers were not required or expected to be able to 'act' as well as sing, having a spectacular sound was the most important requirement. Glanville-Hicks had a love for and understanding of drama and wrote in a way which encouraged and expected singers to become involved in the text.

She submitted the opera to San Francisco Opera and to her astonishment, it was rejected. Adler wrote to her on December 21st 1963 acknowledging receipt of the entire vocal score of *Sappho*

and giving reasons for not accepting the opera in its present form. "The music certainly has a distinct quality and beauty, there is nothing cheap about it. The mood of the words is expressed with flair and dignity and the English declamation is good." He mentions specifically the love duet at the end of the first act, the Pittakos aria, the short intermezzo in Act three, page 115 and the final aria.

"An all important drawback is your abundant use of modal tonality which caused lack of contrasts and even monotony. Furthermore interludes between sentences are altogether missing - answers follow immediately, not giving the opportunity for musical expression or action of the singers. Your approach does not conceive the visual and practical necessities of a stage performance, for instance postludes for exits of your characters or for the curtains at the end of scenes are missing.

The dramatic timing decisive for the success of a performance, was not acceptable to any of the stage directors or conductors." (Adler, 1963).

Adler's remarks go against any logic at this stage in the proceedings, considering he was familiar with her use of modality and dramatic style from the score and recording he had of *Nausicaa*. It was common knowledge that the Ford Foundation Grants were only given to known composers and Glanville-Hicks was not a novice opera composer by any means, having written and

been involved in every aspect of the productions of her four operas, the most recent having been acclaimed internationally. She was devastated by Adler's rejection of the opera, but nevertheless, was able to defend herself and her work. In her reply to Adler January 15th, 1964 she states that his comments regarding the boring effect of modality were from hearing the piano reduction and the monophonic structure that prevails because the piano is specifically suited to harmonic writing. *Sappho*, as in *Nausicaa* and *The Transposed Heads*, has "melodic structure almost devoid of harmony in the chordal sense." The full score however creates lush orchestral sounds and an enormous gamut of dynamics and colour. "Those bony monotonous lines gain vast variety when, one moment they sound single or duo winds, the next in total tutti, and when wind strings and percussion are dramatised by separate antiphonal use." She assures him that in this style of writing, volume can remain high without drowning voices and diction, whereas with harmonic writing, "especially the modern dissonant kind, voices and words are apt to become victims of voltage, and at best emerge as struggling top lines of symphonic competition from below the footlights!"

Adler's second criticism regarding pacing and interlude sections upset her more, because the rapid sequence of sentences and absence of interlude connective-tissue were among the most consciously planned factors in the opera, and were part of an overall concept for the piece. She wanted the text to be heard throughout, and found that due to the magnificence of the poetry,

there was almost no excess verbiage that could be discarded under musical high tides.

"I wanted - because of the urgency of the inner psychological story - a fast pacing and a sense of restlessness that the character Sappho carries, a pacingnaturalistic as in a play rather than the stylised leisureliness of standard operatic movement - the which I wanted to make a built-in impossibility!

I wanted characters to enter and exit ON their lines, to act IN their vocalised phrases - avoiding that eyes-front-during-arias and action-in-between approach that singers are all too apt to fall into. "

She was prepared to take a new look at Sappho and perhaps alter things to fit into specific technical hazards on the San Fransisco stage that she was not aware of, but she did not want to alter the tension scheme. "I am not one of those composers who - having found a pattern that is successful, can go on repeating in it. Always I want to go one step further in the direction of my thinking, and that is what I have done in 'Sappho'." She realised they would probably have preferred *Nausicaa* because it was a known success.

"But I also realised that I'd chosen the 'Sappho' text specifically in order to do just what I've done with it, and that it did not lend itself to other treatment, - could not convincingly have been made over into an extrovert work like 'Nausicaa'.

The best thing therefore, seemed to write it just as I'd conceived it, and hope that it carried its own kind of conviction. Perhaps it does, and you are wrong! perhaps it doesn't and you are right! Perhaps we shall never know. But in any case, thank you again for having enabled me to progress one step further in my chosen direction."

She concluded by asking for the remaining \$2000 she was owed because she had worked exclusively on *Sappho* in the previous year, earning no other money "and that balance must become my sustenance while I revise and orchestrate." (Glanville-Hicks, 1964).

Durrell wrote to her in February, commiserated with the trouble that *Sappho* had run into and told her not to change a thing unless she felt it that way herself. Her publisher Franco Colombo wrote to her a month later with much the same content in his letter and discussed the possibility of Adler producing *Nausicaa*. It seems however that the ensuing months were filled with procrastination and messy negotiations which led to Glanville-Hicks writing to Colombo in September. By this time she is outraged at his apparent two-sided behaviour, disgusted at his lack of effort in promoting *Nausicaa* and therefore, very upset that *Nausicaa*,

"after so brilliant a debut has not moved out into the big beautiful world. I have perhaps a unique handicap in being a

woman in a field where to date, there is no precedent for major magnitude. However, anyone who'll give a moments thought to it , will realise that I didn't get anywhere by being 'as good' as my male competitors; I had to be a whole lot better!" (Glanville-Hicks, 1964).

In December she wrote to Adler regarding *Sappho* for the last time.

"With the perspective that time alone bestows I see clearly the price that was paid in meeting that impossible deadline. It was our mutual error - yours in suggesting it, mine in attempting to meet it - and I wonder if 'revisions' either of the kind you suggested or those I myself had held in mind - will make of 'Sappho' a work either of us will approve." (Glanville-Hicks, 1964).

She continued to revise and orchestrate *Sappho* , until she had to start work on ballet commissions. Her eyesight and general health continued to deteriorate and she lost the strength and the will to push for another production of the work. Other attempts have been made to resurrect *Sappho* but none have eventuated and the work, in its entirety, remains unperformed.

THE PLACE OF SAPPHO IN OPERA WRITING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

When Glanville-Hicks arrived in America in the 1940s she joined nearly three generations of American composers who had been to Paris and studied with Nadia Boulanger. She found the American scene welcoming and settled in quickly with very little difficulty (Ritch, 1983). There was a strong American style, with composers like Aaron Copland, Charles Ives and Leonard Bernstein, using elements of American folk and jazz in their music. There was also a strong following of the European schools of writing in the style of Stravinsky and Schoenberg, with composers like Elliott Carter and Louise Talma. Glanville-Hicks always actively supported and encouraged the unique style of American music.

There was a large amount of experimental music in America at that time. Edgar Varese was experimenting with percussion and new sonorities, and was joined by other composers, like John Cage, in the exploration of electronic and computer music. Even though there seemed to be a greater variety of compositional styles in

America among her contemporaries, Glanville-Hicks' style and subject matter was still unique and not exactly fashionable. The neo-classicism of Stravinsky was fashionable and certain folk idioms were being used, but Glanville-Hicks was composing in a very spiritual way, which in itself, contradicted the dominant aesthetic of the day, because neo-classicism pursued the intellect and was removed from emotional affectations. Stravinsky did not have the same amount of success in opera that he achieved in ballet. Perhaps it was because his approach to the voice was too clinical, which is fundamentally opposed to the natural characteristics of the voice. One of the operas in which he did succeed was *The Rake's Progress*. This work is almost three times as long as any of the other works he composed. This length in itself gives a more realistic time frame for the singers to express themselves. A dancer is able to project emotions faster with their body than a singer is able to express emotions with their voice. *The Rake's Progress* is made up of recitatives and arias, and the story is like a morality play combined with a fairytale. In her compositions, Glanville-Hicks was not so much reacting to the situation that music had arrived at by the use of neo-classical means, but rather, she was searching for ways to renew hope and direction in music written for the theatre.

Many of Glanville-Hicks' compositions were written for the theatre and she was fascinated by the inner workings of drama. The emergence of psychoanalysis in the first quarter of the century,

stemming principally from Sigmund Freud (1856 - 1939) made a most significant impact on the dramatic direction of opera. Opera was able to access this new science more readily than other art forms, because of its unusual ability to express more than one idea at the same time. That is, the orchestra is able to contradict a singer's expressed thoughts, or indicate subconscious fears and desires. In her opera *Sappho*, Glanville-Hicks chose the text because of the inner psychology of the characters. She specifically set the text in a style more like a play than in traditional opera, in order to keep a fast pace in the drama. She kept the underlying tension in the story ever present in the orchestra, with her use of rhythmic ostinatos. While embracing many aspects of this new dramatic expression evolving under the influence of psychoanalysis, Glanville-Hicks did not fully embrace the accompanying musical styles of other composers. She had a strong aversion to the use of serialism, especially in a genre like opera, believing that audience and singers alike have a natural and physiological desire to hear the words set in accordance with a particular emotion and not restrained within, what she considered to be rigid mathematical equations.

Of course there have been great operatic works which have employed the use of serialism, such as Alban Berg's opera *Wozzeck* (1921), a truly profound work. Berg made the row lyrical and only used it as a departure point, not adhering to Schoenberg's strict rules. Perhaps this accounts for the work's success. The

tragedy of *Wozzeck* was presented in a way that was to become a fairly typical portrayal of twentieth century tragedy, (with the audience being made to feel responsible for the failure of an ordinary man). Berg's other great work *Lulu* (1935) is primarily a psychiatric case history. Lulu is just a character who personifies female sex, her life is uncontrolled and is without responsibility. The crucial difference between *Wozzeck* and *Lulu* is that the audience does not feel sympathy for the death of Lulu. She does not suffer in the same way as *Wozzeck*, and consequently the audience watches her with interest as opposed to feeling responsible for her death.

Other composers who worked in the area of psychological studies included Claude Debussy, Bela Bartok and Benjamin Britten. In Debussy's opera *Pelleas et Melisande* (1902) the characters seem to have no will of their own and drift around in a vague, half real world with the drama taking place in the character's inner life. Bartok carried the style further still, in his opera *Bluebeard's Castle* (1918). There is little action at all in this opera with the characters standing in a castle hall. One by one, seven doors open, each door exposing a different aspect of the character Bluebeard. The drama lies in the changing relationship between the married couple which ultimately ends in its destruction. These two operas typify the development of introspective dramatic themes in the twentieth century.

Britten's operas were based on excellent literary sources such as

Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and, Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*. Here was another composer whose choice of stories had religious or psychological overtones. He wrote with small orchestral ensembles and used individual instruments to create fantastic theatrical effects. Many composers throughout this century reduced the size of the orchestra. This was most likely a response to the high cost of personnel and a reaction against the large symphonic writing in the late nineteenth century of composers such as Wagner and Strauss.

Not all operatic compositions in the twentieth century were obsessed with psychoanalysis. Leos Janacek in his opera *Jenufa* (1904), was influenced by another style of opera that began in the nineteenth century and continued strongly into the first quarter of the twentieth century, *verismo* opera. The composers of *verismo* opera claimed to present life as it truly was. Janacek spent fifteen years collecting and analysing songs and dances of the Moravian peasants. *Jenufa* is set within this culture and the music is made up almost entirely of elements from the peasant songs. Most of the accompaniment to the vocal lines in the opera is short phrases similar to or even identical with the singer's phrases (Martin, 1979).

One of the great composer / librettist combinations of the twentieth century, was Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht. Their collaboration in *The Threepenny Opera* (1928) and *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahogony* (1930) took the idea of theatre within opera, to new

heights. In *The Threepenny Opera*, the work is almost as much a play as it is an opera, with the roles often taken by actors rather than singers. This was a radical approach to opera, as prior to this, sheer vocal splendour had been of principal concern to the composer. Brecht wrote political and highly controversial plays, designed to make society take a long hard look at itself, often resulting in a direct insult at the audience. They kept the music within a popular idiom and the libretto extremely witty. Weill employed unusual instruments like the accordion, banjo, saxophone and bass guitar, in the orchestra, which generally sounded like a 1920s jazz band (Martin, 1979, p.428). The duo separated because Brecht found the element of romanticism in music contradicted his theories on Epic Theatre. Brecht was anti-romantic, and wanted his theatre to be self-effacing, functional, popular and decision provoking (Whittall, 1977, p.99).

Glanville-Hicks was not concerned with writing political or highly controversial operas. Her approach was not radical, however, she did recognise the power of naturalistic theatre within opera and wrote in a style which demanded a commitment to the text from the singers. She employed the use of symbols in *Sappho*, resembling those used in French literature, where the characters symbolise traits of human nature and the real drama occurs in the mind of the characters. She used theatrical effects in the orchestra, which in some ways were similar to Benjamin Britten's orchestration, although she did not use the serial technique.

Consequently, Glanville-Hicks was able to select elements from her contemporaries and integrate them with her own style and subject matter, to create powerful drama and music for the people.

CHAPTER THREE

SYNOPSIS OF THE OPERA

Sappho is an opera in three acts with the libretto taken from the play in verse of the same name by Lawrence Durrell, published in 1950.

Characters

| | | |
|----------|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| SAPPHO | Famous Poet, and Oracle | MezzoSoprano |
| PHAON | Diver and Lover of Sappho | Lyric Tenor |
| PITTAKOS | General and Twin Brother of Phaon | Dramatic Tenor |
| MINOS | Friend and Tutor of Sappho | Bass Baritone |
| DIOMEDES | Court Poet and Drunk | Baritone |
| KREON | Elderly Husband of Sappho | Bass |
| CHLOE | Servant | Soprano |
| JOY | Servant | Soprano |
| DORIS | Servant | Mezzo-Soprano |

| | |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Chorus of men and women | SAATBB |
| An Alexandrian | Tenor |
| Three Sybils | SSA |
| Two Children | Mute |

Time and Place

The island of Lesbos, circa 650 B.C.

Orchestration

2 Flutes (Piccolo),
2 Oboes (Cor anglais),
2 Clarinets in Bb (Bass Clarinet),
2 Bassoons (Contrabassoon),
4 Horns in F,
3 Trumpets,
3 Trombones,
Percussion (Tam Tam, Cymbals),
Timpani,
Harp,
Violin I & II,
Viola,
Violoncello,
Double Bass.

Act 1

Scene 1 The spacious room of a rich Greek family, opening on to a courtyard. It is early morning.

The servants are busily tidying and trying to remove Diomedes before their lady, Sappho arrives. Sappho and Minos enter, they discuss her discontentment in life and with Kreon. Kreon enters and announces that he has hired a diver, Phaon, to find the family tablets (records), which had been submerged many years before in an earthquake and in whose ruins the child Sappho had been found. Phaon, the twin brother of Pittakos was thought to be dead, but had in fact spent several years on an island in isolation, recovering from leprosy. He is invited to the symposium to be held that evening.

Scene 2 The Symposium. The room is the same as in scene 1, but set with a banquet and lit for night time.

Phaon and Sappho discover that they are kindred spirits and she sings his poem at the symposium. A debate between Minos and the drunken poet Diomedes ends in disagreement, which leaves Sappho and Phaon alone to declare their love.

Act 2

Scene 3 A headland overlooking the sea.

Phaon tells Sappho that he has found the tablets and must now leave. Minos enters and tells of the death of Diomedes' son. Sappho goes to comfort Diomedes.

Scene 4 Sappho's house as in scene 1. The room is decorated with torchlights to receive the General.

A great crowd welcomes the victorious General Pittakos. Pittakos is delighted to see his brother again and offers him an administrative post in Attica, which Phaon refuses, but they part on good terms. Sappho enters and Pittakos reveals that he killed Diomedes' son for cowardice. Sappho is furious and she tells him to retire from public life. He resolves to consult the Oracle, she scoffs at this and attempts to kill him. Minos enters and tells them that Diomedes has taken poison.

Scene 5 Diomedes' farmhouse.

Diomedes explains to Sappho that he is dying of shame, because he coveted his son's young wife, Chloe. He knows that Sappho is the Oracle. She confesses that it was she, pretending to be under the Oracle's drug-induced trance, who sent Pittakos away to war

because she was tired of his onerous affections. Thus she blames herself for the death of Diomedes' son and she begs his forgiveness, but he has already died.

Act 3

Scene 6 The cave of the Oracle.

Sappho prepares to assume the role of the Oracle. Kreon enters and reveals that one of the tablets recovered was an unfinished letter from his dead wife, speaking of a child, possibly their daughter, Sappho. He believes that he may have married his own daughter. The penalty is the confiscation of all his possessions and either banishment or the sword, according to the people's vote. Sappho will share this fate.

Scene 7 The room in Sappho's house as in scene 1.

The vote is for exile. Pittakos keeps Sappho's children as hostages, so that she will do his bidding and act as a spy for him in Corinth. Sappho, after thinking there was nothing left for her to feel, is now devastated at having to leave her children. She is left alone to prepare for banishment and contemplate her fate.

STRUCTURE OF THE LIBRETTO AND ITS EVOLUTION FROM THE ORIGINAL PLAY.

The style of language used in Durrell's play is very fluid, eloquent and lyrical. It asks to be delivered in a heightened and rhythmical manner which in theory, should lend itself well to being set to music. Glanville-Hicks was extremely skilled at setting words to music and chose to set the poetic language in a naturalistic style. The sheer amount of language and the beauty of this particular text, however, made it difficult for her to decide what, if anything, could be discarded. Durrell himself had been concerned with the excessive length of his play, but wrote it with the purpose of synthesising pace, plot and poetry (Durrell, 1969). Indeed the play includes several of Sappho's original poems, one of them contained in the last aria of the opera:

*How soon will all my lovely days be over,
and I no more be found beneath the sun,
neither beside the many-murmuring sea,
nor where the plain winds whisper to the reeds,*

*nor in the tall beech woods among the hills
where roam the bright-lipped Oreads, nor along
the pasture sides where berry-pickers stray
and harmless shepherds pipe their sheep to fold*

*For I am eager, and the flame of life
burns quickly in the fragile lamp of clay.
passion and love and longing and hot tears
consume this mortal Sappho, and too soon
a great wind from the dark will blow upon me,
and I be no more found in the fair world,
for all the search of the revolving moon
and patient shine of everlasting stars.*

This question of extreme wordiness was one of the issues raised by Adler with regard to the difficulty of staging the opera. Glanville-Hicks was aware of this and omitted large parts of the original play, partly to reduce the length of the libretto and partly for dramatic purposes as will be discussed later in this chapter.

The play recreates the atmosphere of a lost civilisation. Durrell used his knowledge of ancient Greek history and modern Greek character (Fraser, 1968) to develop a fictional scenario using actual historical figures. The fate of the characters' actions seems to be

controlled by an outside force. Within the play characters are often introspective, highly symbolic and two dimensional. Each character is, in a sense, on their own island, a key symbol being the nameless cave, on the tiny, nameless island, in a nameless bay, where Phaon chooses to live. The opera appears to make the characters more three dimensional, possibly due to the nature of the opera libretto. Often the poetic language is minimalised to accommodate the musical phrase, making the characters deliver their lines more naturalistically.

The parts of the play which are included in the libretto follow the original plot fairly closely, except for the occasional difference in the setting of a scene or in the change of a character delivering lines. One such change occurs at the end of the symposium, the second scene of the opera, all the guests leave for example as opposed to falling asleep at the feet of Phaon and Sappho. This leaves the two lovers completely alone, focussing the attention entirely on them and drawing the audience into the scene on a much more intimate level. In the cave of the Oracle, Act three, scene six of the opera, Kreon is admitted immediately, without Minos and tells his story and interpretation of the tablets. Pittakos' question of whether or not he should be the tyrant, is not mentioned, whereas in the play, there are quite lengthy deliberations over this question. By the time the Oracle is to be consulted, there is a huge crowd gathered at the entrance to the cave, with cries of "Pittakos for tyrant".

The remainder of the story as it unfolds in the play, is that Sappho is sent to Corinth to undermine the leadership there and sway the policy in the direction of Pittakos. He promises to bring her back within a year, but the years pass and her children are still being held as hostages, to control her behaviour. The scene changes and finds Pittakos seeking refuge on Phaon's island. Fifteen years have passed and Pittakos' empire has been overthrown by Corinth, led by Sappho! He explains to Phaon, that more evidence was found in the ruins of Lesbos, which proved Sappho was not Kreon's daughter after all and it had all been a terrible mistake. He goes on to explain, that while out riding, with Sappho's son one day, they became involved in a fight with some pirates and an arrow struck the boy in the throat. After the news of the death of her son, Sappho sought revenge and used her power in Corinth to turn the tribes against Lesbos and destroy it. In the final scene, Sappho is in the ruins of her old house at Lesbos, a soldier enters and tells her they have killed Pittakos and Phaon. She is left to contemplate the futility of the politics in which she has been involved and the waste of life. She is reunited with her daughter Kleis and the play finishes with Kleis weeping in Sappho's lap;

*Weep, little Kleis. You shall weep for both of us,
For the whole world if you have tears enough,
And for yourself long after you imagine
There are no tears left in the world to weep with.*

*Then perhaps you may be blessed,
only perhaps.
Out of its murderous armament time
May select a single grace for you to live by:
But that we dare not hope for yet: Weep, child,
Weep, Weep, Weep.*

Glanville-Hicks chose to end the opera very differently. In the final scene, Sappho is left alone after she is told that she is to be exiled but that her children are to remain. She ceases sobbing and is drained of all feeling, when she commences the final aria:

*now everything is silence and remoteness
except for the bubbling of the water-clocks
drinking our time into their soft throats of sand,*

As she ends the aria, she walks through the doors and into the night. This is a powerful and dramatic scene, filled with the tragedy at the loss of her children and the uncertainty of life for her, beyond the darkness.

In the form adopted by Glanville-Hicks, the libretto has a far greater simplicity and structure than the somewhat unwieldy play. She rightly questioned Durrell, as was shown in chapter two, about the necessity of Sappho's revenge. Arguably, the most tragic event for a

woman, would be to lose or be separated from her children. Glanville-Hicks' decision to end the opera where she did, highlights her decision to evoke the more tragic elements of the story. Durrell, on the other hand, continues the story with Sappho's revenge, which ends the play with a feeling of emptiness and complete futility.

The crucial difference between the libretto and the play, is that the play has many superfluous elements which detract from the real tragedy. The discovery of more evidence that proved Sappho was not Kreon's daughter, for example, and especially the long and ultimately futile revenge of Sappho, only serve to add confusion to an already complex story. It is interesting to note that Durrell, in an attempt to shorten to his lengthy play, suggested cuts that would omit the character of Diomedes (Durrell, 1969 pp2.). Glanville-Hicks realised that Diomedes was not only a colourful character, but was in fact an integral part of Sappho's tragic fate, with his suicide acting as a reminder of the sins in her past. For these reasons, Diomedes remains in the opera.

The opera genuinely reflects Greek tragedy in its starkness and simplicity of plot. It opens with the sumptuous rooms of a wealthy Greek family and ends with the disaster of Sappho's banishment and separation from her children. In the best tradition of Greek theatre, the hero Sappho, reveals a "tragic flaw" in the proceedings of the play, by her corruption of the Oracle, using deception to send

Pittakos to war. Such abuse of power rebounds inevitably on its originator, who suffers the consequences in the chain of events caused by the death of Diomedes' son and Diomedes' own suicide. The timing of Kreon's announcement that Sappho may be his daughter, could be regarded as the inexorable response of fate, coming as it does when she is in the state of the Oracle.

In ending the opera at the crucial moment of Sappho's banishment and separation from Phaon and her children, Glanville-Hicks remains true to the classical Greek tragedy, which is based essentially upon the fall from grace of the hero. Terminating the story here means that the usual cycle of death, destruction and so on, is not completed in the manner of the original play. It does however, create a more satisfying tragedy and the entire story becomes balanced.

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE MUSIC

Ancient Greek music was almost always associated with words or dancing, its melody and rhythm being connected to the melody and rhythm of poetry or a particular dance for a specific occasion (Grout, 1970). *Sappho* is written in a dramatico-musical form. Each musical and rhythmical theme is intimately connected to the corresponding drama, and to the overall dramatic structure of the work.

There are different melodic themes based on the same notes of the aeolian mode, but representing different characters and emotions. Modality and tonality are juxtaposed so that there is harmonic freedom and ambiguity. Glanville-Hicks is able to move freely from one tonal centre to another. This allows the thematic material to have variation and yet remain cohesive to the whole, and is an effective device to show that the lives and fates of all the characters are entwined.

Glanville-Hicks chose to set the text naturalistically, to reflect the fast pacing and sense of restlessness inherent in the play. Each

character has a distinct theme and these themes also have subliminal significance in the opera, representing larger issues such as love, war and tragedy. Most of these motifs are established in the overture. The opening of the overture is the theme associated with the character Pittakos, and is also the 'Fate' theme [Example 1].

Example 1. Act 1 Overture.

It is used again at the arrival of General Pittakos, for a full military effect. Pittakos represents war, conflict and ultimately, destruction. The triplet figure used in this theme frequently appears in sections of other phrases; it keeps the sense of the inevitable tragedy ever present. It is Pittakos who devastates Sappho by suggesting to the senate that he keep her children as a good behaviour bond. Pittakos' character is raw and strong on the outside as the theme suggests. However when he begins to sing, his vocal line is quite scattered, he speaks hurriedly, with large intervallic leaps and the tessitura sits relentlessly high. [Example 2]

Example 2. Act 2 Scene 4.

This writing suggests that he is, in fact, extremely insecure and is only able to deal with situations using aggression, which also explains his unquenchable thirst for power. When conflict arises between Sappho and himself, he invites her to kill him. When Diomedes's son tries to desert the army because he is afraid, Pittakos kills him without a thought of the years of friendship they had shared together. When he cannot control Sappho, or make her love him, he forces her to do his will by taking her children as hostages.

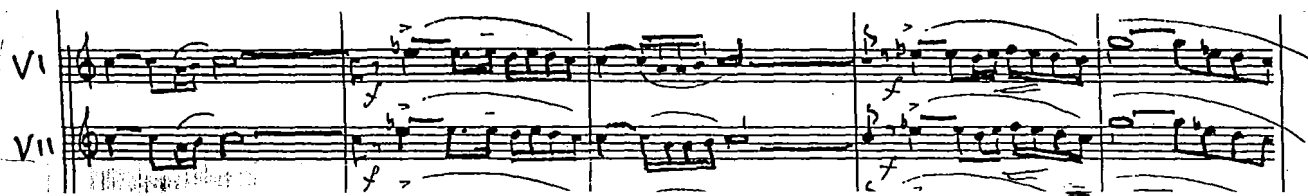
Pittakos is the antithesis of his twin brother Phaon, who is a calm being, a great philosopher, a man at peace with himself. He has compassion and understanding where Pittakos has none. Pittakos is trying to rule the world, through aggression and Phaon is trying to repair the world through spirituality. This aspect is reflected by Phaon's calm and fluid vocal lines [Example 3]. He wins the love of Sappho without asking for it.

Example 3. Act 1 Scene 1.

Handwritten musical score for Example 3, Act 1 Scene 1. The score is written on five staves. The top staff is for the vocal line (Pk) with lyrics: "It must have seemed like that to us, It did to me - I lissa fo". The second staff is for the piano accompaniment (p) with markings "poco rit." and "mp". The third staff is for the violin (V). The fourth and fifth staves are for the viola (V). The bottom staff is for the vocal line (Pk) with lyrics: "SEVEN YEARS a-love upon an Is-land so small it had no name -". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

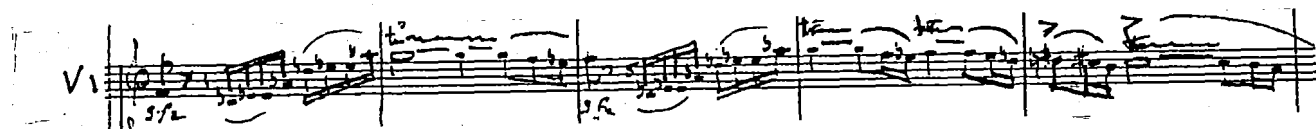
They are kindred spirits and his theme is derived from Sappho's
[Example 4]

Example 4. Act 1 Overture.



The theme for Kreon is derived from Pittakos' theme. This is because Kreon is also responsible for Sappho's tragedy, through his greed for money and power. [Example 5]

Example 5. Act 1 Scene 1.



Minos is the philosopher and he represents wisdom. He warns Kreon at the very beginning not to search through the ruins of Lesbos as he predicts "nothing good will come of it." Minos' theme comes from the Eb major scale which is announced very early on in the overture. [Example 6]

Example 6. Act 1 Overture.

The image shows a musical score for two staves, labeled 'vi' and 'vii'. The notation is handwritten and includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'p' and 'f'. The staves are connected by a brace on the left side.

Here is an example of a particular scale representing a character as well as symbolising something greater, in this instance, wisdom. This is illustrated again when Pittakos asks Phaon to be a part of his empire and says that together they will rebuild the world, Phaon refuses instantly, saying instead that they will pull it down, and that he is rebuilding the world in his own way. Phaon shows great wisdom at this moment, and Glanville-Hicks sets his vocal line in Eb Major [Example 7p300].

Example 7. Act 2 Scene

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line, labeled 'Ph.' on the left. The notation is handwritten and includes lyrics written below the notes. The lyrics are: "How can we pull it any lower than it is?" followed by "I am re-building it, I am re-build-ing it, in my own way." The score includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Sappho's theme appears as the second theme in the overture [Example 8].

Example 8. Act 1 Overture.



This theme is heard at different times throughout the opera, and is played by different instruments. The character of Sappho displays a spectrum of emotions and her vocal writing is extremely expressive and lyrical. At times, as in her first aria, she is introspective and her melody is confined within certain notes of the mode. [Example 9].

Example 9. Act 1 Scene 1.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line. The music is written in a key with one flat (B-flat major or D minor) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is simple and lyrical, consisting of a series of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are: "Others de-avour their with la-lish kisses mine I sing left handily". The music is marked with dynamics such as *mf* and *f*. The score is divided into four measures by vertical bar lines.

During the Symposium she is asked to sing and as she is famous for her singing, Glanville-Hicks writes her a simple and beautiful melody. [Example 10].

Example 10. Act 1 Scene 2.



Sappho's music is frequently dramatic and sometimes even becomes hysterical, when she is fighting with Pittakos, for example [Example 11].

Example 11. Act 2 Scene 4.



When she sings as the Oracle, the aeolian mode in the notes, B, A, G, F#, E, appears in descending crochets. She speaks slowly and without emotion as she is under the influence of the drug used to induce the priestess. Her final aria contains some of the most achingly beautiful moments in the opera. Glanville-Hicks combines the declamatory style with bel canto, to create dramatic sweeping phrases in the vocal line.[Example 12]

Example 12. Act 3 Scene 7.

Sappho

this mortal
 -sumes
 Sappho! this
 Mortal Sappho, and
 Her — too soon
 Ah too soon a
 So ble Wind
 from the South

One of Kurt Adler's criticisms of the opera was that there was never enough time in between scenes for the singers to act or express themselves, and yet Glanville-Hick displays natural expression in every phrase. Furthermore, when it is called for, she makes time in the score at the appropriate moment to create exactly the right atmosphere. Nowhere is this more obvious perhaps than at the beginning of Sappho's last aria. As everyone leaves and she is left alone, everything is still, with long sustained chords in the orchestra [Example 13]. This time allows the singer to mentally prepare for the aria, and at the same time, it creates an atmosphere that will produce the maximum dramatic effect .

Example 13. Act 3 Scene 7.

Now Everything is silence & restlessness except for the bubbling of the waterlocks, drinking their own time into

There are intervals throughout that are associated with particular themes or are used to signify the connection between two characters. One of the most significant intervals is a minor second. It is almost always used when Sappho's name is mentioned [Example 14] This interval is often played when the character is being talked to directly or discussed.

Example 14. Act 1 Scene 1.

love-ly, love-ly, lone-ly... famous and dis-con-ten-ted Sappho!

Sappho sings Phaon's name in a minor second or similarly, whenever Phaon is discussed [Example 15], this interval is used to signify the fact that these two characters are soulmates.

Example 15. Act 2 Scene 3.



The interval of a minor sixth is often heard throughout the score. It makes a significant impact towards the end of the overture [Example 16] and it appears most frequently associated with discontentment or anxiety as seen in example 14. Minos sings a minor sixth, when he uses the word "discontented" to describe Sappho.

Example 16. Act 1 Scene 1.

The other most significant interval is the perfect fifth, which is used in Pittakos' theme, Sappho's theme and appears constantly in the score. It creates a sound of emptiness, evoking the starkness of the Greek landscape. In terms of combining the modality with tonality, a

perfect fifth also has the finality of a cadence. This interval is used at the beginning and it ends the entire opera.

The chorus in this opera often sing homophonically. They effectively replicate a chorus as they would have appeared in ancient Greek plays, representing appropriate groups according to the scene. Although the chorus only appear twice in this opera, their contribution heightens the overall sense of theatre and spectacle. They act as guests at the symposium singing the chorus to Sappho's song in a chorale style [Example 17].

Example 17. Act 1 Scene 1.

The image shows a musical score for four voices: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The music is written in a single system with four staves. The lyrics are: "A water Nymph idle as innocence professed / woven in the hum of the hairy hive". The score includes musical notation such as notes, rests, and bar lines, along with some performance markings like "1" and "2".

Their comments interject throughout the symposium and mostly they sing in unison or in gender groups [Example 18].

Example 18. Act 1 Scene 2.

Handwritten musical score for Example 18, Act 1 Scene 2. The score is written for Tenor (T), Bass (B), and Violin (VI). The lyrics are:

T: Drunk! Drunk! Drunk! Drunk! Drunk! He is quite drunk!

B: Drunk! Drunk! Drunk! Drunk! Drunk! He is quite drunk!

VI: (Instrumental accompaniment)

Below this, there is a continuation of the score for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The lyrics are:

S: Sit down! Sit down! Sit down!

A: Sit down! Sit down! Sit down!

T: (Instrumental accompaniment)

B: (Instrumental accompaniment)

At the bottom, there are two staves for Soprano (S) and Bass (B) with the lyrics: "Si - lence! Si - lence!"

They become the crowd at the welcoming of General Pittakos. The presentation is powerful, with the chorus singing fortissimo and the result produces a raw energy in the crowd scene [Example 19].

Example 19. Act 2 Scene 4.

Handwritten musical score for Example 19, Act 2 Scene 4. The score is written for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), Bass (B), and Violin (VI). The lyrics are:

S: Sea begotten Heroes.

A: Sea and flint begotten Warriors, Sea begotten Heroes.

T: Sea and flint begotten Warriors, Sea begotten Heroes.

B: Sea and flint begotten Warriors, Sea begotten Heroes.

VI: (Instrumental accompaniment)

Sappho is set mostly in a declamatory style with the occasional aria or ensemble. The text is set very naturalistically and there is no need for the traditional style of recitative. Glanville-Hicks is able to move the libretto swiftly from a conversation between characters to an ensemble or single aria. [Example 20] In this example, *Sappho* is deeply involved in her own thoughts about her life and the reasons she is dissatisfied. She is grateful for her children but she fears they do not love her because she gives them too much freedom. At this moment, she surfaces from her inner thoughts and asks *Minos* if she is a bad mother, to which he replies "of course not!". Immediately *Sappho* continues the aria, once again immersed in her own thoughts. The naturalistic style of writing does not interrupt the flow of the drama and this in turn, achieves greater realism and momentum.

Example 20. Act 1 Scene 1.

The musical score consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes staves for Sappho (S), Minos (M), and Viola (VI). The second system includes staves for Sappho (S), Minos (M), and Viola (VI). The lyrics are written below the vocal staves.

System 1:

- S:** why? I won-der why? Am I a bad mother for these two, Minos?
- M:** Of course not!

System 2:

- S:** Others de-vour their young with la-vish kisses Mine more leftlatively
- M:** of course not!
- VI:** *80* *max pizz* *arco*

Glanville-Hicks displays some of her most impressive abilities as a composer for the voice in the arias and ensembles. She is careful to cater for the appropriate range and style of each voice type, which ensures that each voice is clearly heard and the ensemble is well balanced. In the first scene, [Example 21] Chloe, Joy and Doris sing as a trio and Diomedes interjects with his remarks. When they are saying different things at the same time, individual lines are heard by the natural rhythms of their speech being juxtaposed and the mood of their lively chatter is portrayed.

Example 21. Act 1 Scene 1.

The musical score for Example 21, Act 1 Scene 1, is presented in two systems. The first system features three vocal staves labeled C, J, and D, and a piano accompaniment staff labeled P. The lyrics for the vocal parts are: "Come my dears, come... my dears, it's the only way it's the only way... Hoppa! Hoppa! Hoppa!". The piano accompaniment provides a rhythmic accompaniment with a steady eighth-note pattern. The second system continues the vocal lines with the lyrics: "way it's the only way it's the only way... Hoppa! Hoppa! Hoppa!". The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern.

At the beginning of the love duet between Sappho and Phaon, each character is saying different things. Sappho believes that Phaon does not love her and Phaon is trying to calm her down and comfort her. Accordingly, Sappho's vocal line is agitated whereas Phaon sings long, sustained notes and does not have many words, so that both lines are easily heard. [Example 22]

Example 22. Act 1 Scene 2.

Pl *pld!* My love — ly love — ly Sappho

Sa sider me unworthy of our mad friendship, we worthy of our love — i live mad friend ship... a...

Pl Sappho Sappho my love — ly love

Sa ... in this Barbarian world we give the lie to which, and from... because we're weak we both are refu-

In the second section of the duet, they express their love for one another. Their lines interweave and the entire melody is woven around the pitches F, G, Ab, C, Db, with the rest of the orchestra filling out the remainder of the aeolian mode [Example 23].

Example 23. Act 1 Scene 2.

Pl May but al - ways and for ev - er like quick

Sa May, but al - ways for - ev - er like the bending yellow grain or quick water in a

In terms of the orchestration, Glanville-Hicks writes mainly in family groups of instruments, that is, Winds, Brass, Percussion and Strings. Colour and texture is achieved by the groups of instruments dropping in and out of the musical phrase. Strings play for the entire duration of the opera, acting as a melodic and rhythmic base to the orchestration. Groups of winds, brass and percussion are then balanced on top of the constant string sound. Variety is achieved through the melodic and rhythmic invention. Glanville-Hicks does not adhere strictly to specific groups playing in unison, but changes combinations according to the desired orchestral colour.

In the opening of Act Three, for example, all treble sections, treble winds, trumpets, strings and viola, are in unison with each other as are the bassoons, trombones and bass strings[Example 24]. In the next phrase, the sections change so that the treble strings are in unison with the bass winds and the horns alternate their allegiance to any given section. Individual instruments or sections are sometimes added or removed in the middle of a phrase to enhance colour or texture at any given moment. In example 24 at figure 452, the flute joins the strings for one descending phrase which adds a burst of colour for that instant.

Example 24. Act 3 Scene 7.

453

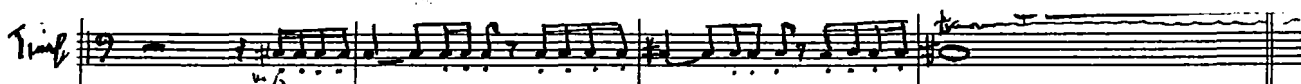
Handwritten musical score for measures 453-457. The score is written on ten staves. The instruments are labeled as follows: Flute 1 (Fl 1), Flute 2 (Fl 2), Oboe 1 (Ob 1), Oboe 2 (Ob 2), Bassoon (Bsn), Clarinet 1 (Cl 1), Clarinet 2 (Cl 2), Trumpet 1 (Tr 1), Trumpet 2 (Tr 2), Trombone 1 (Tbn 1), Trombone 2 (Tbn 2), Trombone 3 (Tbn 3), Horns (Hrns), and Harp (Hp). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, slurs, and dynamic markings. A 'p' (piano) marking is visible in the Clarinet 1 part. The score is densely written with many notes and rests.

457

Handwritten musical score for measures 458-462. The score is written on ten staves, continuing the instrumentation from the previous page: Flute 1 (Fl 1), Flute 2 (Fl 2), Oboe 1 (Ob 1), Oboe 2 (Ob 2), Bassoon (Bsn), Clarinet 1 (Cl 1), Clarinet 2 (Cl 2), Trumpet 1 (Tr 1), Trumpet 2 (Tr 2), Trombone 1 (Tbn 1), Trombone 2 (Tbn 2), Trombone 3 (Tbn 3), Horns (Hrns), and Harp (Hp). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, slurs, and dynamic markings. A 'p' (piano) marking is visible in the Clarinet 1 part. The score is densely written with many notes and rests.

The percussion is used for colour, rhythmic purposes and as a tonal centre. The cymbals and tam tam are mainly used to colour the orchestration and to add atmosphere to scenes [see example 32 below]. The timpani are used not only for adding rhythmic impetus to a given section [Example 25] but they play an important role by frequently bringing a tonal focus to the music.

Example 25. Act 2 Scene 4.



This of course, has always been a common practice by composers who accentuate the tonic and dominant chords with the timpani, and Glanville-Hicks is no exception. She does, however take this use of timpani one step further in *Sappho*, by working the tonal focus into the score with greater subtlety. [Example 26]

Example 26. Act 1 Scene 1.



The brass section is largely used for harmonic purposes and for adding colour and texture to the score. Each group frequently moves in homophonically, although at times their harmony and rhythm are quite independent. [Example 27].

Example 27. Act 1 Scene 1.

Musical score for Example 27, Act 1 Scene 1. The score is written for a brass section (Trumpets I and II, Trombones I and II, and Basses) and woodwinds (Cornets I and II). The music is in 2/4 time and features a homophonic texture. The brass section plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, while the woodwinds play a melodic line. Dynamics include *mf* and *f*.

Occasionally the brass section becomes the most predominant group in the orchestra, this is usually reserved for the most dramatic moments, and a fine instance occurs in Sappho's last aria. [Example 28].

Example 28. Act 3 Scene 7.

Musical score for Example 28, Act 3 Scene 7. The score is written for a brass section (Trumpets I, II, and III, and Trombones I, II, and III) and woodwinds (Cornets I, II, and III). The music is in 2/4 time and features a homophonic texture. The brass section plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, while the woodwinds play a melodic line. Dynamics include *mf* and *f*.

The trumpets project mostly during the fanfare moments, such as the arrival of General Pittakos. The Trombones more often than not sustain a note on the bottom of the chord or sometimes double the bassoon or bass strings. The horns are used to sustain chords, especially over long sections of text. They frequently change their allegiance from the winds to the strings depending upon where the texture is needed.

Glanville-Hicks was very concerned with the text being heard clearly, as it was an essential element in the overall understanding of the inner drama. The size of the orchestra in relation to the amount of text being delivered worried her and so she adopted certain rules in the orchestration to overcome this problem. One of the common devices used is when a singer has a large passage of text to deliver over a short space of time, the orchestra sustains chords over the number of bars required. [Example 29]

Example 29. Act 2 Scene 4.

Pit. *You think I do not feel? I do, I do - BS /izes us, but I also knew what quality measures itself against us in the guilt of action.*

Fl. *pp*

Ob. *pp*

Cl. *pp*

Bs. *pp*

Tr. *pp*

Tbn. *pp*

Glanville-Hicks also provides support for the singers by using individual instruments to play the notes of the mode or scale at the same time or shortly before or after a particular phrase. [Example 30]

Example 30. Act 1 Scene 1.

The musical score for Example 30, Act 1 Scene 1, consists of four staves. The top staff is the vocal line (S) with the lyrics: "Others do - you'r thair with la - ish Kisses - Mine - tiary [affektively]". The lyrics are written in a cursive hand. The second staff is for Violin I (VI), the third for Violin II (V II), and the fourth for Viola (Vb). The string staves contain musical notation with various markings: "pizz" (pizzicato) and "arco" (arco) are used to indicate when the instruments play. There are also some handwritten notes like "gu" and "pizz" above the VI staff. The score is written in a single system with a common time signature.

Glanville-Hicks employs a number of theatrical effects in the orchestration, which heighten the drama on stage. For example, in the very first scene the servants are rushing around, trying to tidy the house before Sappho arrives. This is supported by a continuous semiquaver movement in the orchestration which enhances the hectic activity seen on stage [Example 31].

Example 31. Act 1 Scene 1.

Chloe
Joy
Doris
Vi
Vii

f Hurry, Joy, - - - Hurry!
f I AM hurrying,

At the end of the love duet in Act 1, Glanville-Hicks uses harmonics in the strings with piccolo in unison, and a tam tam on the last chord, to create an intimate and mystical atmosphere[Example 32].

Example 32. Act 1 Scene 2.

Pic
Tam
Vi
Vii
Vla

Pic
286
ppp
pp
p

— END OF ACT I —

In the argument between Pittakos and Sappho, the tension begins with an oscillating semiquaver figure in the strings, which is intermittently joined by other solo instruments [Example 33]. As Sappho becomes angrier, the semiquaver figure ascends in rapid scales and the orchestration builds, until there are mainly two accented chords per bar.

Example 33. Act 2 Scene 2.

2. *boy like that, bound to us all by long ties of affection!*

Earlier in their conversation regarding the Oracle, another tension building device is created by a menacing, rhythmic ostinato [Example 34], which starts in the strings and is then swapped with and overlapped by other groups of instruments, which then increases in volume and intensity as Sappho jeers at Pittakos' naivety.

Example 34. Act 2 Scene 2.

Pith.
Sapho
Pississis, mullering Markus sandy Takker - through the
f Sapho! That's Blasphemy!
sf
sfz

Throughout Diomedes' death scene [Example 35], the composer uses glissandi effects intermittently in the strings and harp. This creates the numbing and dizzying sensations Diomedes' is experiencing as the poison takes effect.

Example 35. Act 2 Scene 5.

392 353

Fl.
Ob.
Bsn.
Harp
T
Tr.
Vi
Vii
Vla
Vcl
Db
gliss
mp
p
mf
p
mf
mp
mp
mp

Although most of the orchestra plays the majority of the time, there are places where single or doubled instruments, or smaller ensembles are the focus. This is illustrated in the introduction into the symposium which begins with two flutes in unison, followed by the wind section which are then joined by the strings [Example 36].

Example 36. Act 1 Scene 2.

The image displays a musical score for Example 36, Act 1 Scene 2. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes two Flute (Fl.) staves, Clarinet (Cl.) staves, Oboe (Ob.) staves, and Bassoon (Bsn.) staves. The second system includes Flute (Fl.) staves, Clarinet (Cl.) staves, Oboe (Ob.) staves, Bassoon (Bsn.) staves, and Cello/Double Bass (Cello/Bass) staves. The score is marked with measure numbers 176, 177, and 178. The music features a variety of notes, rests, and dynamic markings, including a *p* (piano) marking. The notation is in a standard musical format with clefs, time signatures, and various musical symbols.

Often a solo instrument mimics or plays a very similar line before, during, or after the voice has sung it, while the strings act as accompaniment [Example 37]. The second section of the love duet in Act 1, is made up of a gentle pastorale like accompaniment in 3/4 in the harp and strings, with a single flute and a single oboe playing

the vocal lines of Sappho and Phaon respectively.

Example 37. Act 1 Scene 2.

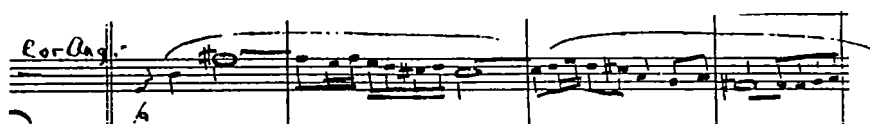
The musical score for Example 37, Act 1 Scene 2, consists of several staves. At the top, there are staves for Flute (Fl) and Clarinet (Cl). Below these are the vocal staves for Sappho (Sa) and Phaon (Ph). The vocal lines include lyrics: "May but al-ways and for Ev" and "like quick". The instrumental parts include a cymbal part and a piccolo part. The score is written in a key signature of one flat and a time signature of 6/8.

The remainder of the duet is a perfect example of how Glanville-Hicks gradually builds layer upon layer of colour, in the orchestration. Firstly, she adds the clarinets and bassoons to the string accompaniment. The flute and oboe are then doubled and at the same time a soft, sustained chord is introduced in the horns. As the lovers describe "the unseen breath in power like a great wind from the sea." a cymbal begins to sound at intermittent bars. It sustains a shimmering sound until the voices fade. The time signature changes to 6/8 and a piccolo joins the first and second violins, playing harmonics, in the last phrase which ends with the

interval of a minor second. The last chord is played by tutti strings on the note C, and they are joined by the tam tam playing *ppp*.

In Sappho's final aria, a solo plaintive cor anglais plays the theme as she contemplates her fate [Example 38].

Example 38. Act 3 Scene 7.



The orchestration gradually builds up phrase by phrase as the strings are added, followed by the winds, then the horns, brass and percussion until finally she cries out in her anguish at leaving the island that she loves [Example 39].

Example 39. Act 3 Scene 7.

Cor Angl. 3

Fl. 3

Horn 3

Cym

Tam-tam

Horn 2

Sappho

This Mortal Sappho! This Mortal Sappho, and Hh. — Too soon Ah too soon a Sable wind from the South, a.

Sappho walks out into the darkness.

This descriptive analysis of *Sappho*, has attempted to demonstrate Glanville-Hicks' very strong ideas on the shape of the drama and the way in which she wanted to convey this to the audience. She chose a motivic style of composition so that individual characters and larger dramatic themes were clearly recognisable. Her great understanding of each voice type, meant that she was able to compose in an extremely expressive manner, which resulted in the utmost dramatic and emotional effect.

The melody-rhythm elements were derived from the Greek counterparts: repetition of motives, five note scales, rhythm driven by unison playing in the melody, chanting style of the chorus and evocative orchestration. The Western elements are evident in the vocal style and timbre and tonality with the sensation of four part harmony, key relationships and cadences. In these ways, she successfully combined the authenticity of ancient Greece with her own compositional style through the use of modes and tonality.

She synthesised her knowledge of modern orchestral techniques and dramatic conventions to produce what should have been a powerful operatic tragedy. However, no matter how impressive or cohesive a score may appear on paper, it is not until it has endured the catharsis of a fully-staged production, that its true artistic merit can be judged.

CHAPTER 4

Interpretation and Conclusions

Peggy Glanville-Hicks was a dramatic person, both personally and musically. She was renowned as a witty, interesting conversationalist, someone who enjoyed making an impact, who wore suits, ostensibly to minimise her female persona yet she interacted in an extremely feminine manner. Her forte was writing for the theatre, ballet, and especially opera. Most of her compositions had some element of extra musical associations, often being derived from text. She was fascinated by the music and traditions of other cultures, particularly ancient and non-western ones.

Peggy Glanville-Hicks set out to gain recognition for herself as a composer. She wanted to contribute to the development of twentieth

century music, as well as to inspire and encourage other composers. She did not agree with many of the popular philosophies concerning the direction of contemporary music, and chose to utilise the fundamental elements she believed were common throughout the world. She disassociated herself from the neo-classical school of Stravinsky, where music became a pursuit of the intellect removed from emotional affectations. She was in effect, a true classicist, following principles in the style of antiquity, where art and drama were instigated by a desire to express the emotions with music that was simple, effective and often improvisatory. She discovered many subtleties in the melodies of Eastern traditions which suited her compositional desires and spirituality.

Sappho was a result of this eclectic approach to musical styles and cultures. The opera was written with an ancient topic and the dramatic convention of theatre in the round. It is a highly thematic work, set in a timeless story, but presented with a modernistic view, the real drama revolving around the inner psychology of Sappho's character.

In this way Glanville-Hicks was able to successfully integrate all those elements she considered essential to the creation of a true work of art. It is ironic that the tragic theme of *Sappho*, a woman losing everything she holds dear reflects the reality of Glanville-Hicks' life. This opera, the culmination of her creative

development, would prove to be her last operatic composition due to serious health problems. It is an indictment of the lack of vision and support of the operatic management of that period that this valuable work was not presented to the public.

This lack of production in no way detracts from the intrinsic value of *Sappho*. The quality and integrity of Peggy Glanville-Hicks' compositions establish her position as an outstanding Australian composer and should ensure continuing public exposure of her works.

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A transcript of Peggy Glanville-Hicks interviewed by Joyce McGrath in 1970.

APPENDIX I

LIST OF WORKS

Ballets

| | |
|------------------------------------|------|
| <i>Hylas and the Nymphs</i> | 1935 |
| <i>Postman's Knock</i> | 1938 |
| <i>Killer-of-Enemies</i> | 1946 |
| <i>The Masque of the Wild Man</i> | 1958 |
| <i>Triad</i> | 1958 |
| <i>Saul and the Witch of Endor</i> | 1959 |
| <i>A Season in Hell</i> | 1965 |
| <i>Tragic Celebration</i> | 1966 |

Choral Works

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------|
| <i>Ireland</i> | 1931 |
| <i>Pastorale</i> | 1932 |
| <i>Poem for Chorus and Orchestra</i> | 1933 |

Song in Summer 1935

Choral Suite 1937

Aria Concertante 1945

Concertos

Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra 1936

Concerto for Flute and Orchestra 1937

Etruscan Concerto 1954

Concerto Romantico 1956

Film Music

The Robot 1936

Clouds 1938

Glacier 1938

Tulsa 1949

Tel 1950

The African Story 1956

A Scary Time 1958

Instrumental Chamber Works

Instrumental Pieces 1932

Trio for Pipes 1934

Spanish Suite 1934

String Quartet 1937

Sonatina for Flute or Recorder with Piano 1939

| | |
|--|------|
| <i>Sonatina for Piano</i> | 1939 |
| <i>Concertino da Camera</i> | 1946 |
| <i>Sonata for Harp, Flute and Horn</i> | 1950 |
| <i>Sonata for Harp</i> | 1951 |
| <i>Sonata for Piano and Percussion</i> | 1951 |
| <i>Three Gymnopedies</i> | 1953 |
| <i>Concertino Antico</i> | 1955 |
| <i>Musica Antiqua No. 1</i> | 1957 |
| <i>Presto for Ancient American Instruments</i> | 1957 |
| <i>Prelude for a Pensive Pupil</i> | 1958 |
| <i>Girondelle for Giraffes</i> | 1978 |
| <i>Froggyana</i> | 1989 |
| (unfinished) | |

Operas

| | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| <i>Caedmon</i> | 1933 |
| <i>The Transposed Heads</i> | 1953 |
| <i>The Glittering Gate</i> | 1956 |
| <i>Nausicaa</i> | 1960 |
| <i>Sappho</i> | 1963 |
| <i>Beckett</i> | 1989 |
| (Unfinished) | |

Orchestral Works

| | |
|--------------------------|------|
| <i>Meditation</i> | 1933 |
| <i>Sinfonietta No. 1</i> | 1934 |

| | |
|-------------------------------|------|
| <i>Prelude and Scherzo</i> | 1937 |
| <i>Sinfonietta No. 2</i> | 1938 |
| <i>Sinfonia da Pacifica</i> | 1953 |
| <i>Tapestry for Orchestra</i> | 1958 |
| <i>Drama for Orchestra</i> | 1959 |

Solo Vocal Works With Instrumental Ensemble

| | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| <i>In Midwood Silence</i> | 1935 |
| <i>Dance Cantata</i> | 1947 |
| <i>Thomsoniana</i> | 1949 |
| <i>Letters from Morocco</i> | 1952 |

Solo Vocal Works With Piano

| | |
|--|------|
| <i>Be Still You Little Leaves</i> | 1934 |
| <i>Come Sleep</i> | 1934 |
| <i>Frolic</i> | 1934 |
| <i>Rest</i> | 1934 |
| <i>Five Songs</i> | 1944 |
| <i>Ballade</i> | 1945 |
| <i>Profiles from China</i> | 1945 |
| <i>Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird</i> | 1947 |