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***Instruments of the Orchestra (1946): Music Education in Postwar
Britain***

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Instruments of the Orchestra (1946): Music Education in Postwar Britain

In the winter of 1955/56, *Tempo* magazine published a short polemic by secondary school music teacher Alan Fluck, which posed an “Invitation or Challenge?” to composers: to become more involved in school music-making.¹ Fluck’s grievance was the repertoire of school orchestras and choirs, whose focus on the classics – Haydn Minuets, Handel Gavottes, Bach and Mozart – and folk song had led to a shortage of “real music” by “real modern composers.” The “real modern composer,” he explained, did not refer to “school music masters, church organists, or ‘educational’ composers who at this minute doubtless are turning out another uplifting song for massed unison voices,” but rather to “those who are sometimes in evidence on the Third Programme and at the Cheltenham Festival.” If the author’s concern reflected a desire for a broader musical education, it was also founded on commercial pragmatism: young people were the audiences of the future, who would only pay for music they wanted to hear. As things stood, “modern” music’s odds were not good: “a large-scale modern work,” he reminded readers, “will almost certainly be a guarantee of an empty hall while even a small one, slyly popped in, will reduce attendance.” In contrast, as was demonstrated yearly at the Proms, the classics attracted huge crowds. They did so, Fluck claimed, because the public’s “enlightened musical education” had enabled them to appreciate this idiom: familiarity was the key to understanding. To strengthen this claim, the author recounted his personal experience of preparing various works by Benjamin Britten, including the *Ceremony of Carols* (1942) and *Let’s Make an Opera* (1949), for performance at

his secondary school. Pupils had come to love the music so much that they sang 'whole chunks' of it on coach journeys to football matches, while sixth-formers could "listen to *The Turn of the Screw* without turning a hair." Britten's music here served as an exemplar of how the barriers to writing music for schools might be overcome. Echoing a sentiment widely shared by contemporary critics, Fluck praised Britten for being "willing and able to adapt his technique to suit limited resources and ability" without having to "sacrifice his style."

Fluck's desire to broaden access to elite culture was far from unique. Having gained force throughout the first decades of the twentieth century (of which more later), the idea of democratizing high art held a particular significance in postwar Britain, where the rise of the welfare state promised finally to undermine long-standing social and cultural divisions. The challenge that reformers – for the most part, left-leaning politicians, intellectuals and philanthropists – faced was how culture might be used to help bring about the radical transformation of society that they envisaged. From the outset, education was afforded a central position in their plans: it promised a means to correct the public's inclination towards what intellectuals perceived to be the lowest common denominator. The question that proved harder to answer was how to broaden access to elite culture without degrading it. At the heart of this concern was a pervasive uncertainty about what a democratized culture would look like in practice.

For some, the benchmark of democracy was amateur participation, a trend that had increased with the blossoming of the arts widely reported during the war.² At the same time, music's appropriation to discourses of citizenship fostered a new sensitivity to children's musical potential. In postwar Britain,

these concerns converged in what education historian Stephanie Pitts describes as “a growing determination to include performance amongst school opportunities.”³ They were also reflected in the expansion of extra-curricula music activities by pioneers such as Ruth Railton, who founded the National Youth Orchestra in 1948, and the trustees of the School Music Association (SMA), who organized the SMA’s second national festival in the Albert Hall as part of the 1951 Festival of Britain.⁴ What is more, a heightened interest in music pedagogy encouraged composers, concert organizers, record producers and broadcasters to view children as a distinctive sub-section of the market – one with its own needs and preferences.⁵ So, while the composition of music for educational purposes was obviously not new to the twentieth century, the degree of interest in music specifically for children was. The emergence of this new consumer group brought with it creative and commercial opportunities; the foregrounding of music pedagogy increasingly attracted the attention of well-established composers: Béla Bartók, Zoltán Kodály, Aaron Copland, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Britten are notable examples.

However, the “Invitation or Challenge” of increasing performance opportunities for young people could offer, at best, only a partial solution in the quest to realize a common culture. If training young people to play an active role in cultural production suited democratic principles, when it came to generating demand for the best that elite culture had to offer, this approach raised serious problems. Not least was the question of whether the experience of performing contemporary music would draw audiences into the concert hall. To put it another way, reformers wanted to create a public that would consume, as well as produce, elite culture. It was with this in mind that in 1944 the Ministry of

Education embarked on an unusual project: the production of *Instruments of the Orchestra* (1946), to my knowledge, the first purpose-made music education film in Britain. For this film, a score was commissioned from Britten, music that subsequently became better known in its concert version, *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra: Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell*. Britten's score has, for obvious reasons, often been counted among his music for young people – a categorization that obscures an important distinction: *Instruments of the Orchestra* featured music for children to appreciate, not perform. The slippage between these two categories was something that contemporary writers, not least Fluck, tended to reproduce in an attempt to resolve conflicting visions for postwar British culture.⁶ Teasing these agendas apart might offer an insight into why the democratization of high art proved so problematic for mid-century British intellectuals, especially for those involved in the creation and dissemination of art music. To this end, this article seeks to use *Instruments of the Orchestra* as a lens onto the broader culture of music education in postwar Britain. In particular, it aims to shed light on how intellectuals imagined that cultural participation might extend from practitioners to audiences; and on what this agenda revealed about music's place within emerging ideals for citizenship.

Film at School

The time must come (and, indeed, there are marked indications of its coming) when the film will be acknowledged the supreme apostle of education.²

In March 1944, representatives of the Ministry of Education (MoE) contacted the Ministry of Information's (MoI) Film Division with a proposition: the MoE

wanted to commission a “series of experimental Visual Units.”⁸ Their initial plan was to make five films on subjects that did not have commercial appeal, but that would “have a direct bearing on the growth and development of present-day society:” “Local Study,” “The House You Live In,” “Beginning of History,” “Water Supply” and “Instruments of the Orchestra.”⁹ By the autumn, the MoE had decided that these films should be supplemented by “exhibitions, wall panels, film strips and teachers’ notes;” by August 1945, they had approached the Films Division with plans for an additional five visual units addressing the “History of Writing,” “Development of Printing,” “Ships and Seafaring,” “History of the English Wool Trade” and “Science in the Orchestra,” the last of which would eventually include three films.¹⁰ The MoE initially planned to produce just 20 copies of each visual unit and then delegate responsibility for circulation and appraisal to Local Education Authorities (LEAs), which would work in partnership with Her Majesty’s Inspectorate and the MoI.

On many levels, this was a remarkable venture. For one thing, the number of schools equipped with projection technology was prohibitively small, despite the fact that the use of film in schools had been possible since the 1920s when the 16mm. projector and non-inflammable film were invented.¹¹ A study by the British Film Institute revealed that, by 1937, barely more than two per cent of schools and colleges in Britain had projectors; of those that did, a minority had the facilities to play sound films.¹² At the same time, the decision to commission a series of films marked a change in attitude: throughout the 1930s, the Board of Education had maintained that the creation of educational films should be the responsibility of private enterprise – an assertion that reflected a broader reluctance on the part of the British government to create a state-run cinema.¹³

But the increased use of educational and instructional films during wartime made both producers and audiences more aware of the medium's potential. By the early 1940s, pressure on the government to sponsor the production of educational films was mounting.¹⁴ Although the MoE would not develop its own policy of visual education until after the war, the Butler Education Act (1944) stipulated that schools must have "arrangements for film projection and the use of episcope."¹⁵ Technological advances and social change thus converged in the MoE's commitment to develop film's potential as an educational medium. The perceived importance of its Visual Units enterprise was reflected in the sizeable budget that the Treasury made available, in spite of postwar austerity: the first five units alone cost more than £60,000.¹⁶

That a musical film was one of the first to be produced was probably thanks to Muir Mathieson. Mathieson was heavily involved with the Crown Film Unit (prior to 1941, known as the General Post Office Unit), which produced *Instruments of the Orchestra*.¹⁷ A group of documentary filmmakers, the Unit had put themselves in the service of the MoI following the outbreak of war and had consequently established themselves as the first port of call for government-sponsored films.¹⁸ One of Mathieson's aims in life was "to open the doors of music to children and to return to them some of the delight that it had brought to his own life."¹⁹ He also believed that, if "old-fashioned prejudices" could be overlooked, cinema would be uniquely positioned to accomplish this: it promised access to an unprecedentedly large and diverse audience. A film exploring "how the orchestra works" also suited the MoE's desire not to replicate the work of commercial producers: to date, music had inspired almost no interest as a subject for educational films, particularly in Britain.²⁰ Where music

films did exist, they were frequently compilations – messy collages of clips from recent films that featured musicians.²¹ Redressing this imbalance, *Instruments of the Orchestra* would expound a foundational aspect of elite musical culture: “the character and purpose of the individual instruments of the orchestra, and of the way in which they can be combined to produce symphonic effects.”²²

When it came to finding a composer, Britten was an obvious choice. First, he was well-known to the Crown Film Unit: initially employed in May 1935 to provide music for a documentary entitled *The King's Stamp*, by the end of the decade, Britten had composed music for nearly twenty of the Unit's films.²³ During this time, he had come to share the broad political aspirations of the Unit's left-leaning members, who believed that documentary film could stimulate the public to play an active part in society.²⁴ Furthermore, he had recently embarked on what became a life-long campaign to increase the provision of music for children – a mission that began in 1935, when he composed *Friday Afternoons*, the collection of songs written for the boys of Clive House, Prestatyn, where his brother was headmaster. Five years later, while in the U.S., he published an article in *Tempo* exhorting American composers to write more music for schools.²⁵ Around this time, he himself also took up this challenge with W.H. Auden's assistance in *Paul Bunyan* (1941), a work that began as an experiment in opera for high school students.²⁶ Few composers, then, could have rivaled Britten's suitability to the MoE's film project.²⁷

A draft scenario in the Britten Pears Library suggests that Britten was involved in the planning from early on: the scenario shows that a basic outline of the film was in place as early as February 1945 and that Britten was planning to write a new theme on which to base his variations.²⁸ In the event, however, the

score – which instead uses the Rondeau theme from Henry Purcell’s *Abdelazer* (1695) – was not actually completed until New Year’s Eve of that year: in the meantime, he had been preoccupied with, among other things, *The Rape of Lucretia*. The soundtrack was recorded soon after the score’s completion on 28 March 1946 in Watford Town Hall and the shooting scheduled for 14-17 May at Denham Studios.²⁹ It was probably between these two production sessions that the commentary for the film was finalized, although it remains unclear quite how this came about. It was agreed at a meeting in early March 1946 that Britten would provide Malcolm Sargent (who appears in the film as the conductor) with a draft script – and the composer certainly had an opinion about what it should entail: “nice facts” about the instruments and how they are played, rather than the free-flowing discussion typical of the “Brains Trust.”³⁰ The film, however, attributes the script to Montagu Slater. At the same time, a pamphlet of teachers’ notes, along with a set of gramophone records, was prepared for distribution to schools; however, the original plans for film strips showing the strings, percussion and wind and for “twelve wall panels on the history of the instruments of the orchestra” appear not to have been followed through at this stage.³¹

If the idea of composing music for children to appreciate was relatively new to Britain, the film nonetheless owed a great deal to established music pedagogy. Illustrating the instruments of the orchestra was an obvious route into art music – one of which music educators had long been making use.³² For example, the BBC’s radio broadcasts of orchestral concerts for schools frequently included an introductory explanation, during which individual instruments played themes from the works about to be heard.³³ Britten’s choice of form –

theme and variations – meant that the music could easily be broken down into short, coherent, sections and interspersed with didactic narration – a technique similar to that used in Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* (1936), and one of which the creators of *Tubby the Tuba* (1947) also availed themselves.³⁴ Using a theme and variation form also allowed Britten to provide varied repetitions of the same musical material, giving the uninitiated listener a chance to become familiar with the main subject. To this end, his score opens with six different statements of Purcell's theme, which also serve to highlight the sections of the orchestra: tutti, woodwind, brass, strings, percussion, tutti (Example 1). Next, 13 variations enable the conductor to introduce each instrument individually (or, as in Variation A: flutes and piccolo, Variation L: trombones and tuba and Variation M: percussion, similar instruments; Examples 2 and 3). In the film, these "aural close-ups" were complemented by visual close-ups on screen: viewers could watch the leader "visibly tighten his mind (and bow)," the double basses "having fun" with their glissandi, and the "pantomimical comedietta" of the tuba trying "to be self-important."³⁵ With the usual changes in mood, meter, tempo and key, the form enabled Britten to characterize each instrument distinctively and, as far as one can tell from the teachers' notes, promised an easy way into discussions of the film for teachers and pupils alike – a facet of the piece that would have had added significance at a time when many, if not most, music teachers were non-music specialists.³⁶ The lay-out of the orchestra was also stylized for the film to add clarity: each section of the strings was placed on its own raised platform, while the elevated wind and brass sections were arranged in a long line, meaning that they could be clearly distinguished from one another during aerial shots.

If such traits drew on pedagogical techniques designed to maximize accessibility for young audiences, there was also scope for the film to “be used for more advanced music teaching through the study of the music itself.”³² Points of interest for the musically proficient included the tonal structure of the work, which, having begun in D minor, ventured into a number of unexpected keys, including Db major (Variation I) and E major (Variation L). Aligning musical knowledge with maturity, one commentator also observed that: “[g]rown-up children who already know the difference between a violin and a trombone will enjoy it for the fugue” on a theme by Britten, during which Sargent puts “the great musical box” back together again. The piece’s conclusion (Example 4), where a final statement of Purcell’s opening theme in the brass is set poly-rhythmically against material from Britten’s fugue, provided further opportunity for advanced analysis along the lines established by the pioneers of music appreciation.

The potential for teachers to engage with Britten’s music on a variety of levels made it an ideal teaching resource. But the question remains: how could a film help to realize a democratic culture? Or, given the shortage of projection equipment in schools, what was it about this medium that appealed to education officials’ agendas? To answer these questions, I turn now to the broader historical context in which the film was produced. In particular, I want to explore the significance of the film’s original target audience: 11 to 14 year old pupils attending the new secondary modern schools.

“The Problem of Leisure”³⁸

The taste of man is developed during his school days.

The cinema is a force which may make or unmake him.³⁹

3 August 1944 was widely lauded as a propitious day in British history. It marked the moment when the Butler Education Act was granted Royal assent, inaugurating secondary modern schools and, in so doing, realizing the expanded provision of state education that had previously been stalled by the outbreak of war.⁴⁰ In the past, secondary education had been a privilege of the elite; but now, for the first time in British history, every child was guaranteed access to a secondary education funded by the state. Considered by many to be “the greatest single advancement in the development of English education,” the Act thus promised the increased access to education that intellectuals felt was fundamental to a fairer postwar Britain.⁴¹ The secondary modern pupil, then, was an unprecedented phenomenon – one that required a reconceptualization of “secondary” education. Traditionally this term had not just denoted education for older children, but had also implied an academic training that might lead to university, a trajectory that was considered superior to that promised by a more basic, ‘elementary’ education. Educators faced the challenge of adapting traditional teaching methods to meet the perceived ability and need of this new audience. Developing educational films augured well: the medium’s popularity with the general public was firmly established and it promised to satisfy contemporary desires to align culture with entertainment as well as edification.⁴² What is more, pioneering research into education films in the 1930s had suggested that film’s didactic potential was particularly suited to less able

students – precisely those for whom the secondary modern school was designed to cater.⁴³

The potential of an expanded education system to encourage social mobility, in particular by sowing the seeds of healthy living during life's most impressionable years, had been recognized from early in the reform process. In 1926, William Hadow's seminal report, *The Education of the Adolescent*, proposed that, in addition to offering vocational training, "modern" schools should also develop character, teaching

boys and girls to delight in pursuits and rejoice in accomplishments – work in music and art; work in wood and metals; work in literature and the record of human history – which may become the recreations and the ornaments of leisure in maturer years.⁴⁴

Schools had been providing more than an academic training since the turn of the century: in 1906 the Education (Provision of Meals) Act had empowered LEAs to provide food for children whose education was being affected by inadequate nourishment; a year later another act was passed to enable the provision of physical and health checks for children. The alliance between social welfare and education had quickly become "more or less synonymous."⁴⁵ But, in the spirit of earlier reformers, Hadow's vision went beyond this: in a newly democratic Britain, education would furnish the public with a life-long love of culture: even in leisure they would remain productive citizens.⁴⁶

The idea that education might inform leisure was, of course, far from new. It had its roots in the Victorian era, which had witnessed a growing concern in elite circles about poverty, especially in the ever more densely populated urban

centers that industrialization had produced. In particular, high crime rates, poor health and excessive alcohol consumption were seen as evidence of physical and moral depravity. For reformers, many of whom were inspired by Christian socialism, attempts to alleviate material problems were only worthwhile when accompanied by moral reform. One means of promoting this was self-improvement through “rational recreation” – an idea founded on the belief that “intellectual and artistic pursuits as well as ‘beauty and harmony’ were essential to maintain the physical improvements of the ‘mass of people’ and their surroundings.”⁴⁷ Leisure time well spent was indicative of a civilized society. The problem, as reformers saw it, was that the general public was not naturally drawn towards the right sorts of leisure pursuits: education was needed to transform their desire for superficial amusements into a love of high culture.⁴⁸ It is worth noting here that the education of children at school and the edification of public leisure were closely intertwined in reformers’ aspirations: as the Hadow citation above implies, it was hoped that good schooling would foster an interest in learning and self-improvement; and that this in turn would have a life-long impact on how the masses spent their free time. Based on a strong ideological association between social reform, education (both at school and beyond), productive leisure time and the arts, this philosophy set the tone for subsequent developments.⁴⁹

From the outset, however, this reform agenda was complicated by the emergence of an alternative discourse that asserted an antithetical distinction between mass and elite culture – one defined by a series of unstable dualisms, such as low/ high, popular/ elite, political/ apolitical, commercial/ noncommercial.⁵⁰ This “Great Divide” – as Andreas Huyssen would have it –

posed a problem for reformers because the process of making art accessible to the masses now threatened to undermine the very premises on which “art” was defined.⁵¹ The situation was only complicated by the expansion of radio and cinema during the interwar period and resulting rise of mass culture. Left-leaning intellectuals struggled to balance their desire to use these new media to disseminate high culture with their concerns about how this involvement might impact on their art. For their opponents, using commercial networks threatened to be the first step on the slippery slope from high to low. T.S. Eliot, for example, was among those who feared that the “headlong rush to educate everybody” would lower standards, “destroying our ancient edifices to make ready the ground upon which the barbarian nomads of the future will encamp in their mechanized caravans.”⁵² Nonetheless, the more democratically minded continued to seek productive engagement with new technologies. As D.L. LeMahieu has suggested, although anxious about complying with a system that rated popularity above aesthetic merit, the liberal Left nonetheless hoped that “socialism would permit the wider dissemination of traditional elite culture that commercialism, with its emphasis on the box-office, excluded.”⁵³

The problem with mass culture, however, was not just what the public consumed, but how they supposedly consumed it: in a mindless fashion. By the mid-1930s, this “problem of leisure” had become a party political issue: as historian Jeff Hill explains, intellectuals feared that mind-numbing leisure activities instilled “‘capitalist values’, not least among which was an inertia and indolence of mind on the part of the very workers whose support the socialist movement was seeking.”⁵⁴ With its picture-perfect people, fantastical worlds and darkened theatres, cinema seemed to pose the greatest “threat to the

development of a constructive sense of citizenship.”⁵⁵ In their desire to combat this unfortunate situation inspired, left-leaning intellectuals placed a new importance on art’s potential to inspire a critical engagement with society – a mindset that subtly narrowed the distinction between educational and artistic fare. W.H. Auden, for example, argued in a 1935 paper that there were two types of art: “escape-art,” which prompted people to disengage from the shortcomings of their lives, and “parable-art, that art which shall teach man to unlearn hatred and learn love.”⁵⁶ The latter’s teaching method was not dogmatic, but rather suggestive: by raising awareness of higher ideals, parable-art would encourage the public to reflect critically on their existence and, in so doing, equip them to make better life choices. Auden’s ideas were shared by the pioneers of the documentary film movement (with whom he was involved in the mid-1930s): as Paul Rotha explained, by “bringing to life” familiar subjects and places, documentary film would inspire audiences to make an “honest assessment” of modern society.⁵⁷

The pervasive dissatisfaction with contemporary life was also expressed in nostalgia for an idealized, pre-industrial past, in which (it was believed) the people had played an active role in the construction of culture. F.R. Leavis’s words are typical: “Folk-songs, folk-dances, Cotswold cottages and handicraft products are signs and expressions of something more: an art of life, a way of living, ordered and patterned [...] growing out of immemorial experience.”⁵⁸ The ideal of a “lived culture” was no longer attainable, but Leavis maintained that literary criticism could go some way to salvaging “a worthy idea of satisfactory living’ by teaching the public ‘to discriminate and to resist.” As war grew nearer, such ideas gained a timely political edge. Britain wanted to distance itself from

its Fascist enemies; seeing British willingness to develop their public's critical thinking skill against German brainwashed conformity provided a useful point of contrast. It also served as a counter-balance to the unprecedented degree of state intervention in 1940s Britain – a mode of governance whose proximity to totalitarianism caused anxiety.⁵⁹ The authorities toed a precarious line, seeking to promote positive models of citizenship without provoking accusations of cultural indoctrination.

Following the outbreak of war, the practical constraints of wartime life made educational reform only more urgent. First, as noted, the war stalled the implementation of a new Education Act – a delay that, if accepted as necessary, was nonetheless thought far from ideal. Within a matter of days, war's unprecedented disruption of children's lives had begun. While traditionally children fell with women into the non-combatant group, the Second World War was a total war, in which the normal divisions between soldiers and civilians became blurred.⁶⁰ Besides the general disruption caused by rationing, bombs, conscription, etc., evacuation brought significant change to many children's lives.⁶¹ On top of the domestic complications caused by the encounter between city and country life, attempts to adjust the school system proved disastrous. In reception areas (i.e., those receiving evacuees), plans were made for schooling children in shifts – sometimes up to three a day. Meanwhile, many of those who remained in or returned to the cities found that their schools had been shut down. The chaos was reflected in reduced attendance figures: a survey carried out in early 1940 revealed that, of elementary school-aged children, more than a quarter were “receiving no schooling at all,” while a similar percentage were being taught at home.⁶² The disruption heightened existing concerns about child

welfare – concerns that were only antagonized by reports of a marked increase in juvenile crime.⁶³ If worrying statistics exacerbated what historian Colin Heywood describes as the “generalized unease [...] over the physical and moral condition of populations living in an advanced, but ‘fatigued and sensual,’ civilization,” they also heightened concern about child welfare and misspent leisure.⁶⁴

When discussions about rebuilding the nation – both literally and metaphorically – began, access to the arts was a central concern. Especially for Britain’s vocal left, the arts’ appropriation to the ideology of the “people’s war,” and subsequent to that of the emergent welfare state, added force to calls for democratization: in a more equal postwar world, art would be everyone’s prerogative.⁶⁵ From the outset, children were afforded an important role in postwar imaginings, as guardians of the future.⁶⁶ Unlike wartime experiences of childhood, postwar childhood would be safeguarded as an investment. An expanded program of state education rendered school an important forum in which the next generation could be prepared for the duties and rights of citizenship: a process that demanded the cultivation of children’s minds and spirits, as well as their bodies. As Noel V. Hale, the music organizer for Bournemouth, explained, if, in failing to teach “things of the heart besides those of the head,” education did not lead to “spiritual growth as well as to intellectual progress and physical fitness,” it was “incomplete.”⁶⁷ What is more, for the government, the promotion of constructive leisure activities was “now, as never before” a concern.⁶⁸ When war ended, the public would have more free time; if well spent, this might help maintain a civilized nation.

By the mid-1940s, then, there was a variety of arguments to support a more participatory approach to culture. Nonetheless, this ideal remained highly problematic. Despite the widespread consensus about the need to combat the mind-numbing influence of mass culture, unthinking consumption posed a serious threat to the democratization agenda: if the public's perceived propensity for the mindless reception of commodities was frequently given as evidence of mass culture's inferior status, democratization ran the risk of tainting high culture with similar connotations. In other words, reformers did not want their elite culture to be reduced to just another vehicle for public escapism. However, it was not obvious how to give the public an active role in the production, let alone the reception, of culture. Whether because the conditions of urban life were not conducive, or because their elitist nature made it impossible, most intellectuals agreed that the masses would be unable to make a significant contribution to the production of high culture. The challenge, then, was how to train the public such that their consumption of culture would be an active process.

When it came to music, this question raised a particular set of problems. Music had long held an "ill-defined [...] precarious and uncomfortable" place in the education system.⁶⁹ As BBC employee and musicologist John Horton explained, its uncertain status reflected a common view that music was "something one does (or lets one's womenfolk do) when one isn't too busy fighting or making money."⁷⁰ Where schools had had the facility and inclination to teach music, the emphasis had tended to be on practical musicianship: in state schools, this usually meant singing; in public schools it also encompassed an array of instrumental activity. Since the feasibility of scaling this model for use in

secondary modern schools was limited, and since relatively few people would manage to sustain a performance-based engagement with art music into adulthood, music educationists had to imagine an alternative form of participatory culture.

“Synthetic Listening:” Music Education

[T]he function of music teaching in school should be to provide for its continuous development as a means of expression and source of enjoyment throughout life. It should furnish all children with healthy tastes, most children with simple vocal skill and many with instrumental practice; and the exceptionally gifted should be afforded suitable facilities and teaching up to any degree of proficiency. Only so can music become a natural and welcome ingredient in adolescent and adult life and make its proper contribution to the enlightened leisure of the whole nation.²¹

In 1942, the government commissioned an investigation into the “supply, recruitment and training of teachers and youth leaders,” the findings of which were published two years later in *The McNair Report*.²² Citing the recently published *Norwood Report* (1944), the authors observed that, as a latecomer to the curriculum, music had too often been taught as an “extra” or “spare time activity.”²³ Grouping music with “the more academic studies such as history, French and science, under the heading of ‘general subjects’”, they proposed that music should instead be treated as a “normal” subject. As noted, music’s uncertain place in the curriculum was hardly new: as early as 1873, John Curwen had published a pamphlet about *The Present Crisis of Music in Schools*, following

the removal of music from the Educational Code.²⁴ More recently, The Hadow Report (1926) had recommended that secondary schools allocate two periods a week to music: one for practical music-making and one for music appreciation. But despite repeated calls to make it a compulsory subject, music remained on the periphery of most schools' curricula: the only change effected by the 1944 Education Act was to elevate music to a School Certificate subject – a development that many music lovers felt actually undermined music's potential educational significance.²⁵

In a now well-established tradition, the *McNair Report* framed school music teaching as a vehicle for cultivating good citizenship – a means by which the wider public might master “the art of living.”²⁶ (A similar idea was expressed by Britten in his address to Kesgrave Heath School, Ipswich: praising the school for encouraging its pupils' involvement in *Noye's Fludde*, he asserted that “it's awfully important that at school one should learn lots of different kinds of things. [...] Why? Because the most complete people – the most useful people in society [...] are the ones who know about most things.”²⁷) Whether in the hands of Socialists or others, however, ideas about what constituted “good” citizenship continued, as David Matless explains, to be “bound up with assertions of cultural authority.”²⁸ When it came to music, the segregation of culture into high and low provided an obvious framework for mapping musical preferences onto ideals for citizenship. Even the democratically minded Left for the most part upheld a musical hierarchy: although they promoted equality, they also maintained that not all cultural forms were equal. Music educators were united in projecting this ideology onto school music: Hale spoke for many when he asserted that the primary aim of music teaching should be “the ‘formation of taste’ – the

discrimination of wheat from chaff.”⁷⁹ If it failed to accomplish this, the consequences would be grave:

It is plain that, unless something more profound has been instilled, this ‘amusement,’ given full rope in the adolescent and adult world of music outside, reappears in a guise which was never anticipated.

Absolute nonsense is mistaken for humour, gaudy display for artistry, square and tawdry time-beats for rhythm.⁸⁰

Quite where “enlightened leisure” ended and “amusement” began – if, that is, they were not in fact the same thing – was unclear; but Hale was certain that promoting the latter limited not just musical enjoyment but personal development more generally: “[e]motional experience may then never reach further than weak sentiment, or music beyond mere notes.”

The notion that education might foster a love of good music at once reinforced and undermined the distinction between high and low. The intellectualization of music appreciation served to strengthen the idea that art music, unlike popular music, was complicated, that the depths of the composer’s genius could only be realized through academic study. The difficulty in translating such principles into teaching method, however, lay in the materiality of musical culture: most children would leave school unable to read a score or play an instrument.⁸¹ Another obstacle was the uncertainty about the extent to which an ability to appreciate music could be acquired through study. On the one hand, the democratic mindset of mid-century Britain had encouraged educationists to re-conceptualize musicality as a universal characteristic; on the other hand, developments in psychology – a field that had burgeoned during the

1930s and 1940s – were simultaneously inspiring a new emphasis on the differentiation of children according to musical ability. As Pitts has observed, this “urge to classify children” added force to the idea that musicality was not just learnt but inherited, a notion that contradicted the “egalitarian philosophy” increasingly advocated by contemporary pedagogues.⁸² Either way, the fact remained that some children exhibited a greater talent for music than others. The politics of catering for a range of supposedly innate abilities were only complicated by the recent expansion in state education. The reality was that children from poor backgrounds usually displayed less of this allegedly natural skill than those from well-off families. Music educators worried that attempts to meet everyone’s needs might result in a lowering of standards.

From the early twentieth century, technological advances promised a solution. The emergence of the gramophone and subsequently radio inspired a new culture of music pedagogy centered on listening – one that loosely converged under the banner of “music appreciation.”⁸³ In one of the earliest publications dedicated to *The Musical Education of the Child* (1918), music appreciation pioneer Stewart MacPherson highlighted the problem with current education methods, which left children unable to appreciate “the higher forms of music:”

so long as we persist in teaching our boys and girls to play, without giving them this essential education in the vital facts of music, we are simply giving them a possibly useful course of finger and hand gymnastics, with, in some cases, a certain amount of emotional development; but we are *not* training them to become intelligent

listeners, or enabling them to make in their after life any acquaintance with that great literature of music which should be open to all.⁸⁴

The music appreciation movement was founded on the belief that the “normal listener” would appreciate “good” music (i.e., Western art music) more if they approached it with a knowledge of the rudiments of music theory and interpretation.⁸⁵ Put another way – in the words of Percy Scholes, another of the movement’s pioneers – music appreciation was “a form of educational training designed to cultivate in the pupil an ability to listen to seriously conceived music without bewilderment, and to hear with pleasure music of different periods and schools and varying degrees of complexity.”⁸⁶ While “the pupil” could be anyone of any age, “the importance of accustoming youth to the better kinds of music and weaning it from the worse” formed a central part of “the appreciationists’s programme” from the outset.⁸⁷ Reaching a height of popularity during the interwar years, the music appreciation movement played a significant part in expanding the focus of school music teaching: the traditional focus on practical musicianship (note the *McNair Report*’s reference to “vocal skill” and “instrumental practice”) was increasingly complemented by a new emphasis on equipping children to be “intelligent listeners.”⁸⁸

Central to the movement’s success in Britain was the BBC – an organization whose foundational values broadly overlapped with those of MacPherson and Scholes, largely thanks to its first Director General, John Reith.⁸⁹ Profoundly influenced by the paternalistic values of his father (a minister in the Free Church of Scotland), Reith believed that to exploit “so great a scientific invention [as the radio] for the purpose and pursuit of ‘entertainment’ alone” amounted to “a prostitution of its powers and an insult to the character and

intelligence of the people.”⁹⁰ Instead, he aimed for broadcasting to combine entertainment with edification and enlightenment, so that the BBC would pave the way for public education on a hitherto unimaginable scale. In part, he hoped to achieve this by the careful selection of appropriate programs; but hand-in-hand with this went an onus on the listener to listen “correctly:” “to discriminate in what they listen to, and to listen with their mind as well as their ears.”⁹¹ Just as people were picky about what they watched at the theatre, so, Reith argued, they should be selective about the broadcasts to which they listened.

If the “art of listening” was to be applied to radio in general, it was particularly pertinent when it came to art music, the broadcasting of which caused considerable controversy. From the outset, music (of all kinds) comprised a significant part of the BBC’s schedule; but what percentage of this should be allotted to art music remained a contentious issue.⁹² While certain members of the public complained about the amount of air-time given to highbrow music, Reith maintained that it was the BBC’s duty to give the public what they needed, not what they thought that they wanted. Moreover, he believed that, if they were suitably educated, the public would gradually come to appreciate the higher forms of art. To this end, the BBC used its organs the *Radio Times* and the *Listener* to provide written accounts of upcoming music broadcasts, as well as scheduling instructional talks teaching music appreciation. For example, in April 1924 – barely a year and a half after the foundation of the BBC – Walford Davies began an experimental series of music broadcasts for schools; by September the following year, he was also delivering a weekly half-hour talk for adults; and from the early 1930s, “explanatory talks” were increasingly scheduled before important musical broadcasts.⁹³

When it came to school music teaching, however, “intelligent listening” continued to have a problematic relationship with performance-based learning. Scholes, for example, claimed that “the *foundation* of musical appreciation work in school may be said to lie in the singing class, the eurhythmics class, piano lessons, the school orchestra, and similar activities.” He continued to place a high value on skills traditionally associated with performing: good intonation, rhythmic understanding and a basic ability to read staff notation. But at the same time, he maintained that “it is an error to suppose [...] that any full appreciation *necessarily* comes by ‘doing’,” not least because children’s “capacity for enjoyment” was “always in advance of the capacity to perform.”⁹⁴ Walford Davies’s schools’ broadcasts exhibited a similar confusion. While giving weight to the singing and reading of music, Davies thought that “only when musical construction and design were addressed would ‘the full Hamlet’ be achieved.”⁹⁵ To this end, a part of his broadcasts was dedicated to getting children to compose melodies – the musical equivalent to essay writing. The aim, however, was expressly not to produce composers, but to enhance children’s ability to appreciate music. In its most extreme form, the slippage between music appreciation and music performance paradoxically allowed education theorists to afford listeners the same status as performers. For example, working from the premise that the making of and listening to music were “of equal importance,” music educator and cultural politician Leo Kestenberg concluded that “recognition of the fact that work [i.e., listening or performing] itself may be an intense and fructifying experience relegates the passive, purely sensuous, unthinking sort of musical ‘enjoyment’ to its proper place.”⁹⁶ In so doing, it allowed a new type of relationship to form between “the creator, the performer,

and the listener:” one based on “active participation” through “conscious, synthetic listening.”

But bad listening habits were not just a product of mass culture. As Kestenberg explained, intelligent listening “exercize[d] a healthy, sobering, and clarifying influence after the art-for-art’s sake attitude of musical instruction in the Romantic period.” The risks of mindless listening extended even to elite culture. Art music’s appropriation for film scores had only exacerbated the problem. If cinema aroused huge anxiety about passive consumption among intellectuals, the use of music for dramatic effect threatened to implicate art music in this escapism – unless, that is, it could be made to interact with the visuals in such a way as to foster a participatory relationship between film and audience. So, how exactly did the producers of *Instruments of the Orchestra* envisage that this film would help people to develop the right sort of listening habits?

“Via the Foothills, to the Peaks:” *Instruments of the Orchestra*⁹⁷

It is excellent that education, a name which frightens the average Briton, should be associated with entertainment and with the performance and enjoyment of the arts as well as with the study of them. There is an ugly gap in British life between schooling in the arts and their subsequent pursuit and appreciation; often that gap is never bridged.⁹⁸

The UK premiere of *Instruments of the Orchestra* took place on 29 November 1946 at the Empire Theatre, Leicester Square, London.⁹⁹ Although it was not uncommon for educational films to be shown in cinemas, for the first screening

to be afforded the status of a premiere was unusual.¹⁰⁰ What is more, *Instruments of the Orchestra* had been intended “primarily for nontheatrical distribution:” it was only because MGM liked the film that it was also widely distributed as a short.¹⁰¹ The Central Office of Information (COI) managed to secure a contract with MGM, giving the latter exclusive rights to theatrical distribution, while, in an exceptional case, the former reserved the right to distribute the film “in any *bona fide* educational establishment including Schools, Schools of Music, Technical Colleges, Universities, and Teachers’ Training Colleges, as part of the educational curriculum.”¹⁰² The COI’s arrangement with MGM caused some consternation at the MoE, whose employees resented the limits on non-theatrical distribution imposed by the contract, which prevented the film from being shown, for example, in youth clubs and music societies for the first nine months.¹⁰³ The MoE’s belief that commercial interests should not take priority over educational ones, however, was not shared by the Treasury, who stood to gain 65 per cent of profits. Takings turned out to be higher than the COI anticipated for a film of such a “highbrow” nature: by December 1947, the film had been booked 702 times and was “still booking well.”¹⁰⁴ Quantifying the film’s distribution in schools, however, is harder. Exactly when the Visual Unit began its trial circulation is unclear: a memorandum from November 1946 predicted a release date of October 1947, but it may have been available sooner.¹⁰⁵ Nor has any record survived of how many schools used it, although plans relating to the first unit, “Houses in History,” reveal that the MoE aimed for a geographically representative sample, encompassing schools from Northumberland to Pembrokeshire and Exeter.¹⁰⁶

As well as benefitting from a successful cinema run, the music for *Instruments of the Orchestra* also reached the public via another medium: the composer's concert-hall adaption, *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, which was premiered before the film on 15 October 1946 in Liverpool by the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, with Sargent conducting.¹⁰⁷ By the 1940s, it was not unusual for film music to be transformed into concert music. In the case of this score, relatively little adaptation was necessary: the alternative title was complemented by a new, optional commentary by Eric Crozier.¹⁰⁸ The dedication in the score – “to the children of John and Jean Maud: Humphrey, Pamela, Caroline and Virginia, *for their edification and entertainment*” – suggests that the composer not only endorsed the film's educational agenda, but also hoped that his adaptation might serve a similar purpose.¹⁰⁹ Of the MoE's Visual Units, then, *Instruments of the Orchestra* was unique in the scale and methods of its distribution. The variety of outlets exposed the music to a larger and more diverse audience than it would have met in the classroom alone, which can only have helped to realize its pedagogic potential.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, by employing such varied methods of dissemination, the producers enacted the fluid transition between school education and edifying leisure pursuits that intellectuals had long been trying to foster. While the accompanying teachers' notes give an insight into how the film was used in the classroom, critics' reviews of the relatively high-profile premieres provide the main insight into the score's contemporary reception.

Cinema, concert-hall and school audiences were guided through the performance by a commentary that provided a brief, factual introduction to the various “blowing,” “scraping” and “banging” instruments.¹¹¹ “More complete

appreciation,” however, was only possible in the classroom, where teachers’ notes could facilitate extended discussion.¹¹² Here, technical explanations of how instruments work (for example, that flautists blow across the top of their mouthpieces) were accompanied by a biography of Britten and a history of the Theme and Variations form, both of which explicitly set the music and its composer in a nationalist context. In particular, Britten’s decision to use a theme by Purcell – most likely inspired by the 250th anniversary year – enabled the author to set the former alongside the latter in a lineage of great British composers.¹¹³ Where once critics had predicted that “sheer technique and ability would stultify [Britten’s] depth of thought and true inspiration,” this work “especially in the dignified treatment of Purcell’s theme [showed] the composer as a genuine and mature artist.”¹¹⁴ Using an analogy from art history, the teachers’ notes referred to the variations as a series of “portraits” revealing different aspects of the ancient composer, for example: “Britten lights up the music of Purcell’s tune with a glowing and fiery display of the violin’s qualities;” or “[i]t is through the combination of martial vigour and quiet tenderness that Britten makes [the bassoons] present their picture of Purcell.” But while pictures hang ever-present in a gallery, the process of performing music added vitality to this re-enactment of the past – a vitality that the writer, somewhat paradoxically, felt was preserved in the film:

when we see Dr. Sargent conducting the final presentation of the great Theme in all its modern glory, we can think of Purcell’s brooding figure in the background and Britten’s portrait of him; Dr. Sargent and the London Symphony Orchestra are bringing the thoughts of these two composers to glowing life.¹¹⁵

Borrowing a theme from elsewhere might have incited criticism of uninspired, derivative thought; but the author made it grounds for praise – at once a tribute to Purcell and evidence of the young master’s skill.

While the complement of score, visuals and teaching notes drew on pedagogical techniques designed to impart knowledge that intellectuals believed to be crucial to “intelligent” or “synthetic” listening, the film’s documentary-inspired style was also fundamental to achieving its didactic aims. Where entertainment films used music to enhance escapism, here, as Mathieson explained, music’s appeal to the emotions provided an important counter-balance for the intellectual nature of the film: in the absence of stars and technicolor, documentary lacked the “superficial appeal” ordinarily used to attract audiences; as a humanizing counterpoint to the visuals, music could compensate.¹¹⁶ Mathieson’s claim resonated with film advocates’ attempts to salvage educational films from the medium’s potentially negative connotations. A Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, for instance, argued that “films used in teaching have an important and wider function than the immediately instructional. They may provide the mental and spiritual stimulation of a work of art.”¹¹⁷ If any educational film could inspire intellectual engagement, it was surely one about a “serious” piece of music.

Despite such claims, however, this educational experiment was not an unmitigated success. Although the Crown Film Unit had taken special measures to improve the 16mm. film’s sound quality, for cinema audiences – and, one might hazard a guess, for classroom audiences too – technical limitations resulted in a recording that Desmond Shawe-Taylor described as “muzzy and feeble in volume and so lacking in the higher frequencies that much of the

individual tang and colour of each instrument was lost.”¹¹⁸ Hans Keller for one was so concerned about this “serious obstacle in the way of adequate appreciation” that he paid multiple trips to the Curzon Cinema in an attempt to identify the source of the problem. He eventually concluded that, even on the better days, the sound quality “remained filmy to a damaging extent.”¹¹⁹

Beyond the practical difficulties of reproducing art music in the cinema, the film’s reception also highlighted an anxiety among critics that the music was at risk of being too entertaining. Britten maintained that he had not simplified his style on account of the educational context and target audience: “I never really worried that it was too sophisticated for kids – it is difficult to be that for the little blighters!” he told Basil Wright.¹²⁰ But critics displayed a clear need to defend the music against the potentially negative connotations of its production context. The BBC, for example, was reluctant to refer to the work by its full title: announcers preferred the sub-title *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Henry Purcell*. Donald Mitchell suggests that this tradition was started by Sargent, who “may have thought the proper title altogether too frivolous in the context of concert performances.”¹²¹ But Britten had other ideas: the music had been “written for an educational film and was not meant to serve any other purpose” and the composer was adamant that it should remain *The Young Person’s Guide* “so that the reference to its origin always remains preserved.”¹²² Coming to Britten’s defence, Erwin Stein asserted that the “brilliant” music’s “lighter vein” should not be a source of embarrassment: “it is a blessing that we have, for once,” he proclaimed, “a composer who is not always only dead serious.”¹²³ Stein went further, adding that “[i]t might be justified to censure the present work if it bore the pretentious title ‘Variations & Fugue on a Theme of Purcell.’”

Meanwhile, *Penguin Music Magazine*'s Scott Goddard wrote that Britten's music "combines education with entertainment in such a way that neither is weakened. To have done that is a triumph of tact and skill."¹²⁴ He went on to offer the concert version as proof of just how clever the composer was: "It is a unique example of music that is precisely suited to film uses and yet can stand alone as a consecutive and self-sufficient work of art." Somewhat more cautiously, Keller, having remarked on the range of "serious" and "frivolous" variations, suggested that it was "the serious aspect of the work that has, I think, been a little neglected." Attempting to redress this, he explained that "the composition is not only brilliant and witty, but also – beautiful. Needless to say, it is among the best music that has ever been written for the cinema."¹²⁵

Britten's advocates also sought to undermine the potentially negative connotations of the target audience by underlining the film's broad appeal. While Keller asserted that the "'Young Person's Guide' itself has, at last, produced a film that is fit for adult audiences," a few years later, in Mitchell and Keller's edited volume championing the composer's music, Imogen Holst commended Britten for not thinking of "youth as a 'problem' demanding special measures in education: the Young Person for whom he wrote his Guide to the Orchestra," she declared, "might just as well have been eight or eighteen or eighty."¹²⁶ If the music's accessibility was well suited to the democratic rhetoric of postwar England, critics used this as grounds to redeem what might otherwise have been dismissed as second-rate children's fare. However, the irony behind such comments was that, while critics celebrated the new possibilities for educational music that Britten's score promised, they also undermined the prospects of other composers building on his legacy: in their attempts to salvage Britten's music

from the polarizing discourse of high and low, critics ended up reaffirming this divide, presenting the composer as an exception to the rule, a rule that they implicitly asserted as true. Nevertheless – and positive or otherwise – through engaging critically with the film, reviewers practised precisely the sort of active reception that the producers had hoped to inspire. But one would expect no less: showing the film to critics was like preaching to the converted. To what extent *Instruments of the Orchestra* fostered synthetic listening habits more widely is impossible to say.

What the film does suggest however, is that when politicians, educationists and intellectuals found themselves in conflict over the arts' importance for school curricula, there was more than children's welfare at stake. The debate spoke to broader uncertainties about the arts' possible role in postwar Britain – about how they might shape and define the nation. These concerns were, of course, far from new; but in the mid-1940s, the return to peace and Labour's landslide victory gave them a heightened significance: having finally secured power, it was in the Labour government's interest to demonstrate that it could realize its promises for a better postwar life. The democratization of high culture remained an important part of this, a means to a public that was spiritually healthy and socially productive. In Heather Wiebe's words, the foregrounding of cultural concerns emphasizes how "the idea of the 'immaterial' continued to hover around the question of material improvement."¹²⁷ At the same time, however, contemporary debates about music education reveal that anxiety about the aesthetic and ideological ramifications of broadening access to art remained widespread. When discussions turned from abstract rhetoric to actual cultural products – books, films, pieces of music – even advocates of the Left

were uncertain about how their ideals might translate into practice; and no more so than when it came to questions of public participation.

While definitions of art had historically been premised on a categorical opposition of high and low, democratization threatened to undermine this dualism, dragging art into an unstable middle ground between the two. The ideal of a participatory, living culture promised at once to alleviate and to compound this problem. On the one hand, reformers hoped that, by imagining a more active role for the public in the production of culture, they might ameliorate the masses' supposed tendency to indolent consumption – something that was vital if the burgeoning audience for elite culture was not to taint highbrow fare with the same dubious connotations. On the other hand, amateur involvement in the arts threatened to lower performance standards and to limit the market for complex new works that were as difficult to play as they were unpopular to listen to. Perhaps the most problematic question of all, then, was how intellectuals' participatory ideals might translate into audience reception. A lesson in the active reception of art music, *Instruments of the Orchestra* was an attempt to resolve the ideological tensions inherent in the desire for a democratized culture. In the tradition of the documentary film movement, the producers sought not only to endorse the high art canon's alleged superiority, but to do so in such a way as to further social reform.

Britten's involvement aided this agenda: following the success of *Peter Grimes* (1945), he was considered by many to be the great hope of British music; yet his compositional aesthetic did not need to be compromised to make it accessible.¹²⁸ On the contrary, as we saw earlier, critics argued that his score complemented the film's educational program by allowing for listeners to engage

with the music on a variety of levels, depending on their individual experience and knowledge. One might even go further and suggest that the music's trajectory mirrored the journey on which pedagogues hoped to take the public: from repeated statements of a memorable theme, through variations introducing greater melodic and harmonic complexity, to the concluding fugue (the section that critics considered most suitable for advanced analysis), the score mapped out students' desired progress. Through such music, the producers sought to build a nation of intelligent listeners. Yet the film's agenda arguably reveals more about the limits of democracy than its accomplishments. The apparent need to control the reception of art exposed the paradoxes of a participatory culture in which only certain types of participation and certain responses to elite culture were recognized. Only the high road, it seemed, could lead to "artful living."

Endnotes

¹I am grateful to Tamsin Alexander, Christopher Chowrimootoo, Ross Cole, Mark Everist, Daniel Grimley, Roger Parker, Laura Tunbridge and Heather Wiebe for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this work.

Alan Fluck, "Invitation or Challenge?" *Tempo* 38 (Winter 1955-6): 21-3. The author was probably the same Alan Fluck who taught music at Farnham Grammar School, organized the first Farnham Festival in 1961 and was subsequently spotted by Robert Mayer, who made him artistic director of the organization Youth and Music. Michael Tumelty, "Alan Fluck," *Herald Scotland* (10 January 1998).

²Nick Hayes explores the veracity of claims about the democratization of culture during the Second World War in "More Than 'Music-While-You-Eat'? Factory and Hostel Concerts, 'Good Culture' and the Workers," in "*Millions Like Us*?" *British Culture in the Second World War*, eds. Hayes and Jeff Hill (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 209-35.

³Stephanie Pitts, *A Century of Change in Music Education: Historical Perspectives on Contemporary Practice in British Secondary School Music* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 41.

⁴The SMA was founded and held its first national festival in 1938. "Schools Music Association," *Oxford Music Online*. Available at <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/25058>> [accessed 8 May 2013].

⁵This reflects a broader trend that historians of childhood have detected in nineteenth-century Britain: the growing distinction between childhood and adulthood, as legislative reforms projected the elite's ideas about childhood onto the nation at large. Harry Hendrick, "Constructions and Reconstructions of British Childhood: An Interpretative Survey, 1800 to the Present," in *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, eds. Allison James and Alan Prout (London: Falmer Press, 1997), 34-62; 46.

⁶Fluck, for example, claimed that adult audiences' inability to appreciate modern music would be "less acute" if they had "learnt the idiom" through rehearsing and performing such music during childhood: "Invitation or Challenge," 22.

⁷D. Charles Ottley, *The Cinema in Education: A Handbook for Teachers* (London: Routledge, 1935), ix.

[8](#)H. de M., [Untitled Draft], 27 August 1946, The National Archives, ED121/547: Board of Education Film Programme 1945-1946: Suggestions for subjects. Financial arrangements (hereafter ED121/547). National Archive materials are reproduced in accordance with the Open Government License. Available at <<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/2/>> [accessed 16 December 2013].

[9](#)MoE, Draft of Letter to Local Education Authorities [undated], The National Archives, ED121/549: Arrangements for distribution and loan of Ministry of Education visual units (hereafter ED121/549).

[10](#)The three ten-minute films, *Hearing the Orchestra*, *Exploring the Instruments* and *Looking at Sounds*, were produced by the Realist Film Unit and released in 1950. Draft scenarios can be found in The National Archives, ED121/559: "Instruments of the Orchestra" visual unit: scenarios and correspondence about finance (hereafter ED121/559). The success of *Instruments of the Orchestra* also inspired the British Council to commission *Steps of the Ballet* (1948), in which Robert Helpmann explained how a ballet is produced.

[11](#)Arts Enquiry, *The Factual Film* (London: Cumberlege and Oxford University Press, 1947), 105. Economic factors were a significant part of the problem: the 1930s was a decade of austerity and projection equipment was, for many schools, prohibitively expensive. Even where LEAs had projectors for hire, teachers were put off by unfamiliarity with the equipment, which was far from easy to use. There was also a shortage of suitable films: many of those billed as "educational" had been shot with general cinema audiences in mind and so were of limited use in the classroom. For many rural schools, lack of electricity prevented the use of film altogether. Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, *The Film in National Life* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1932), 58-69.

[12](#)Rachael Low, *The History of British Film 1929-1939: Documentary and Educational Films of the 1930s* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1997), 40. With over 30 per cent of schools in Germany and over 12 per cent of schools in the United States having projectors, Britain lagged behind.

[13](#)Arts Enquiry, *The Factual Film*, 115. Despite this attitude, the potential for using film, particularly documentary, for official ends had been recognized early on by the Department of Overseas Trade and the Travel and Industrial Development Association, which provided a source

of patronage for documentary film makers, initially under the auspices of Empire Marketing Board (EMB). The EMB was replaced by the General Post Office Film Unit (GPO) in 1933.

[14](#)For example, the Arts Enquiry concluded that: “Only Government sponsorship can make possible the production of films of real educational value for all teaching purposes.” *The Factual Film*, 117.

[15](#)S.J. Curtis, *History of Education in Great Britain* (London: University Tutorial Press, 1953), 390. The MoE set up a Visual Unit Committee in early 1940: Letter from Joan Yates to Mrs. J. Hawkes, 11 February 1946, The National Archive, ED121/548: Correspondence with Ministry of Information Visual Units Committee (hereafter ED121/548). In 1946, the Preparatory Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also set up a Section for Media of Mass Communication. Arts Enquiry, *The Factual Film*, 9-10.

[16](#)Central Office of Information (COI), Budget (21 October 1946), ED121/547.

[17](#)In their biography, S.J. Hetherington and Mark Brownrigg suggest that the inspiration for the project came from Mathieson. Hetherington and Brownrigg, *Muir Mathieson: A Life in Film Music* (Dalkeith: Scottish Cultural Press, 2006), 97-8. Mathieson had been involved in the film industry since 1933, when he secured the position of deputy Musical Director at Korda’s London Film Productions. Following the departure of the Musical Director a year later, Mathieson was promoted. Mathieson was called up during the war, but the MoI successfully requested for his to be listed as a “reserved occupation,” so that he could continue his work in film music. He acted as Musical Director for the Army, Navy and Air Force film units, and was involved in the Crown Film Unit. *Ibid.*, 32-42; 80-9.

[18](#)The Crown Film Unit produced two of the five initial films, *Instruments of the Orchestra* and *Beginning of History*. Its involvement was one reason for the project’s steep cost: during the war, the Unit had become accustomed to working on a high budget. A budget from 1946 suggests that the combined cost of its two films totaled almost £40,000, while the three other films, which were contracted out, cost just over £16,000. COI, Budget.

[19](#)Hetherington and Brownrigg, *Muir Mathieson*, 97-8.

[20](#)According to a survey carried out by the British Film Institute (hereafter BFI) in 1937, there were 2,250 teaching films available in the United Kingdom, of which only 80 related to history and the arts. Arts Enquiry, *The Factual Film*, 107-8. The lack of interest in music was particularly

acute among British film makers: a *Handbook on 16mm. Films for Music Education*, produced in 1952 for the American Music Educators National Conference and detailing hundreds of music education films, lists fewer than 15 British films on music and ballet, all of which were produced after 1946. Lilla Belle Pitts, *Handbook on 16mm. Films for Music Education*, BFI Special Collections.

[21](#)For example, three ten-minute films were reportedly made from *Moonlight Sonata*. Kurtz Myers, "Audio-Visual Matters," *Notes* 4, 2 (March 1947): 244-50.

[22](#)Letter from Nicolas Bentley to Malcolm Sargent (8 January 1946), *Poetry in Sound: The Music of Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)*, British Library Exhibition (2013).

[23](#)During this time, he also produced around ten scores for various collateral organizations, such as Strand Films and the Realist Film Unit. Kildea, *Benjamin Britten*, 101-18; Mitchell, "Sound-tracks," in *Britten and Auden in the Thirties: The Year 1936* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), 57-102.

[24](#)How this ideology impacted on *Instruments of the Orchestra* is discussed below: 23. For a broader critique of how documentarists sought to achieve this, see Lara Feigel, *Literature, Cinema and Politics, 1930-1945* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 17-62. The person who had perhaps the strongest ideological influence on Britten during this period was poet and critic W.H. Auden, who, at the time, held a passionate belief in art's potential to improve humanity: see below, 12. Auden became known to Britten through their mutual involvement with *Coal Face* (1935). While Auden was at the Unit, they also collaborated on *Negroes*, released with the title *God's Chillun* (1935), *Night Mail* (1936) and *The Way to the Sea* (1936). The partnership subsequently inspired a significant number of radio, theatre and concert productions, the most notable including *Our Hunting Fathers* (1936) and *The Ascent of F6* (1937).

[25](#)Britten, "An English Composer Sees America," *Tempo* 1, 2 (April 1940), cited in *Britten on Music*, ed. Kildea, 24-7.

[26](#)Donald Mitchell and Philip Reed, eds., *Letters from a Life: The Selected Letters and Diaries of Benjamin Britten 1913-1976*, 6 vols. (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), ii: 1939-1945, 707-8; 711-2. The operetta was commissioned by Max Winkler of Boosey and Hawkes in October 1939. Although not intended to be educational in the same way, *Paul Bunyan* was influenced by

Copland's school opera *The Second Hurricane*, which had made a profound impression on Britten when he first encountered it at the 1938 International Society for Contemporary Music Festival.

[27](#)The late 1940s also saw the composition of a cantata for Lancing College, *Saint Nicolas* (1948) and a children's opera for the second Aldeburgh Festival, *The Little Sweep* (1949); some time later, *Noye's Fludde* (1957) was added to the collection.

[28](#)Britten received his commission from Wright. The draft sketches the film, from the conductor's opening explanation to the final fugue. Donald Mitchell, Philip Reed and Mervyn Cooke, eds., *Letters from a Life: The Selected Letters of Benjamin Britten 1913-1976*, 6 vols. (London: Faber and Faber, 2004), iii: 1946-1951, 172-4. The whereabouts of the original sketches was unknown until 2011, when they turned up at for auction at Sotheby's. Formerly in the possession of Britten's secretary, they were purchased for the British Library collections.

[29](#)*Ibid.*, 174; Basil Wright, "Britten and Documentary," *The Musical Times* 104 (November 1963): 779-80.

[30](#)Britten, Letter to Basil Wright (1 April 1946), in *Letters from a Life*, eds. Mitchell, Reed and Cooke, iii, 171. See also the reference to "Note of a Meeting held in Mr Slater's Room, M.O.I. at 5.30 pm on 8th March 1946 to discuss details of the C.F.U. Film 'Orchestra,'" in *ibid.*, 174. Mitchell et al. speculate that perhaps Britten's preoccupation with *Lucretia* prevented him from completing this task.

[31](#)Responsibility for the panels fell to the Exhibitions Division, who, by the times the first films were ready for distribution, had done almost nothing towards the other resources: Minute Paper 81/312 [undated], ED121/548. A letter from Jacquetta Hawkes to Mr. Gibbs Smith (8 October 1948) suggests that, even at this later stage, the supplementary materials for *Instruments of the Orchestra* had not yet been made: ED121/559. Draft scripts in INF6/1975 suggest that film strips about the instruments and their histories were probably made by the Realist Film Unit in 1949/1950 (i.e., at the same time as the "Science in the Orchestra" films), although, to my knowledge, the strips have not survived. The National Archives, INF6/1975: Science in the orchestra. Copies of the teachers' notes, however, can be found in the BFI Special Collections: "Teachers' Notes for 'Instruments of the Orchestra' (Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell) by Benjamin Britten," in The Technique of Film Music Collection, Items 2-6; and in The National Archives, INF6/380: Instruments of the Orchestra 1946. For information about the gramophone

records, see John Huntley, "British Film Music and World Markets," *Sight and Sound* 15, 60 (Winter 1946/47): 135.

[32](#)There are many examples of books featuring a guide to the orchestra. For example, Harold C. Hind, *The Orchestra and Its Instruments* (London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1936); Percy Scholes, *Everybody's Guide to Radio Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926); Stewart MacPherson, *Music and Its Appreciation, Or, The Foundations of True Listening* (London: Joseph Williams, 1910), 136-47. Britten may also have been aware of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* (1936), which was available on record in Britain from 1939: Philip Miller, "Quarterly Record-List," *The Musical Quarterly* 25, 4 (October 1939): 528-33. Prokofiev's piece also had a didactic function: the composer hoped that the technique of associating each character with an instrument, and each instrument with a frequently recurring leitmotif would help children learn "to recognize the timbre of the instruments," which was "the educational purpose of the story." Edward Morgan, "Recollections of a Collaboration: Natalia Sats and Sergei Prokofiev," *Three Oranges Journal* 12 (November 2006): 10-16; 10.

[33](#)"Report on School Music Broadcasts" (1941-2), BBC WAC, R16/438/2: Education: General: Schools Programmes – Music. File 2 1941-42. For a more extended discussion of the BBC's significance, see below: 18.

[34](#)In the final scene of *Tubby*, the tuba's melody becomes a theme and variations, as other instruments in the orchestra – first violins, then xylophone, trombone, celeste and flute – ask to "sing his song too."

[35](#)Hans Keller, "A Film Analysis of the Orchestra," *Sight and Sound* 16, 61 (Spring 1947): 30-1.

[36](#)Concern about the shortage of specialist music teachers was raised in both the *Norwood Report* and *McNair Report*. Noel Hale, *Education for Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), 213, 217-20.

[37](#)"Teachers' Notes," 1.

[38](#)A commonly occurring phrase in the 1930s, this was also the title of a book by H. Durant (London: Routledge, 1938).

[39](#)Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, *The Film in National Life*, 77.

[40](#)A similar act had been due to come into force on 1 September 1939.

[41](#)Curtis, *History of Education*, 386. Whether it was in fact such a “great” achievement, or rather a begrudging Tory concession that ultimately protected elitist interests, remains a contentious subject. The arguments for and against each of these perspectives are recounted in Brian Simon, *Education and the Social Order: British Education Since 1944*, 2nd ed. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1999), 73-91.

[42](#)Richard Weight argues that postwar reformers wanted to get away from the idea that the arts were simply a “palliative for social evils or a branch of welfare work.” Weight, “‘Building a New British Culture’: The Arts Centre Movement, 1945-53,” in *“The Right to Belong”: Citizenship and National Identity in Britain, 1930-1960*, eds. Weight and Abigail Beach (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 157-80; 170. Despite this, the discourse of the welfare agenda remained strong.

[43](#)Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, *The Film in National Life*, 68.

[44](#)*The Education of the Adolescent*, cited in Curtis, *History of Education*, 349. The report also suggested that the word “elementary” should be replaced with ‘primary’ and that this phase of education should end at the age of 12. “Primary” was defined more by the age of pupils than the level of education. Aside from his pioneering work as an educational reformer, William Henry Hadow was also a keen musicologist, composer, champion of eurhythmics and onetime editor of *The Oxford History of Music*.

[45](#)Hale, *Education for Music*, 8.

[46](#)Hendrick argues that the idea that children were “of the Nation” gained currency around the turn of the century. Initially, education’s contribution to the ‘national interest’ centered on improving children’s physical state; but the popularization of psychology in the interwar years shifted the focus towards their mental wellbeing. Hendrick, “Constructions,” 49. For the growing interest in psychology, see Brian Foss, *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain, 1939-1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 65-7; Denise Riley, *War in the Nursery: Theories of the Child and Mother* (London: Virago Press, 1983).

[47](#)Susie Gilbert, *Opera for Everybody: The Story of English National Opera* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 1-6; 4. Matthew Arnold was an important pioneer of this ideology: Richard Weight, *Patriots: National Identity in Britain, 1940-2000* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002), 16.

[48](#)Exemplary of this holistic approach to social reform was the work of Emma Cons. In addition to purchasing and improving slum housing in London, Cons pioneered the establishment of tee-

total Coffee Taverns in deprived areas as an alternative recreational space to pubs. Subsequently realizing “the need not merely for temperance cafes, but for temperance entertainment,” she opened the Royal Victoria Coffee Hall in 1880 as a wholesome alternative to licentious music halls. Within a few years, wealthy philanthropist Samuel Morley came alongside Cons to develop an extensive programme of adult education. This remarkable venture sowed the seeds from which Morley College, the Sadler’s Wells and the Old Vic would eventually flourish. Dennis Richards, *Offspring of the Vic: A History of Morley College* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), 37-41.

[49](#)Louis Althusser and Pierre Bourdieu were among the first to theorise schooling’s role in the reproduction of state ideology: Geoffrey Whitty, “Education, Economy and National Culture,” in *Social and Cultural Forms of Modernity*, eds. Robert Bocoock and Kenneth Thompson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 267-320.

[50](#)Lawrence Rainey suggests that, during the last three decades of the nineteenth century, Britain witnessed a “profound transformation” of the novel, as it “gradually acquired a class structure analogous to that of the social world surrounding it.” Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 1-2. See also D.L. LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy: Mass Communication and the Cultivated Mind in Britain Between the Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 2-3; Andreas Huyssen, *After The Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), vii-x; Whitty, “Education,” 268-9.

[51](#)Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*.

[52](#)T.S. Eliot, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (London: Faber and Faber, 1949), 108.

[53](#)LeMahieu, *A Culture*, 312.

[54](#)Jeff Hill, “‘When Work is Over’: Labour, Leisure and Culture in Wartime Britain,” in *Millions Like Us*, eds. Hayes and Hill, 236-60; 239.

[55](#)Weight, “Building A New British Culture,” 164.

[56](#)W.H. Auden, “Psychology and Art To-Day,” in *The Arts To-Day*, ed. Geoffrey Grigson (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1935), 1-24; 18-19. As is well known, by the end of the decade Auden had become completely disillusioned with such lofty ideals. Their impact on Britten, in contrast, was life-long: see, for example, Britten, “The Artist – to the People (1963),” in *Britten on*

Music, ed. Kildea, 233-5; and “The Moral Responsibility of the Artist Towards his Fellow Man (1968),” in *ibid.*, 311-12.

[57](#)Paul Rotha, *Documentary Film*, 3rd ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), 26.

[58](#)F.R. Leavis and Denys Thompson, *Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1933), 1-2.

[59](#)State intervention in social and educational reform had been steadily growing over the previous century, as an ever-increasing number of Acts were passed in an attempt to ameliorate the working and living conditions of the poorest members of society. Curtis, *History of Education*, 336-69.

[60](#)Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig argue that British children consequently expected to play a more active role in war than previous generations ever had, a trend reflected in children’s wartime literature. Cadogan and Craig, *Women and Children First: The Fiction of Two World Wars* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1978), 213.

[61](#)Historians have debated the relationship between evacuation and the 1944 Education Act. While some argue that evacuation, by making the public more aware of the diversity of living standards, played a crucial role in the advancement of social welfare state, others suggest that it ultimately encouraged the entrenchment of conservative opinion. Roy Lowe, *Education and the Second World War: Studies in Schooling and Social Change* (London: Falmer, 1992), 4-8.

[62](#)Lowe, *Education*, 9. Hendrick provides a useful summary of changes to educational provision during the Second World War in *Child Welfare: England 1872-1928* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 194-207.

[63](#)Foss cites contemporary surveys which reveal that the first years of the war saw a huge rise in “malicious damage and petty stealing” among minors: 70 per cent in England and 200 per cent in Wales, and more than a 30 per cent increase in juvenile convictions. Foss, *War Paint*, 68.

[64](#)Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times* (London: Polity Press, 2001), 29.

[65](#)For the impact of the “people’s war” discourse on the arts, see Christina Baade, “‘Sincerely Yours, Vera Lynn’: Performing Class, Sentiment, and Femininity in the ‘People’s War,’” *Atlantis: A Women’s Studies Journal* 30, 2 (2006), 36-49; *ibid.*, *Victory through Harmony: The BBC and Popular Music in World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), especially 3-14; and Nick

Hayes, "More Than 'Music-While-You-Eat'? Factory and Hostel Concerts, 'Good Culture' and the Workers," in *"Millions Like Us"?*, eds. Hayes and Hill, 209-35.

[66](#)Children's centrality to the nation's future was captured by the front cover of a *Picture Post* special issue entitled "Changing Britain:" a photo of an anonymous baby girl "who has never known peace" offered a symbol of "the changes that have happened and are happening, and of the opportunity that lies ahead." *Picture Post* 18, 12 (January 1943), 3.

[67](#)Hale, *Education for Music*, 8.

[68](#)*Ibid.*

[69](#)Herbert Wiseman, "The Future of Music in Education," *Tempo* 11 (June 1945): 9-11; 9.

[70](#)John Horton, "Mr. Palmer's Memorandum" (16 September 1943), BBC WAC, R16/438/3: Education: General: Schools Programmes – Music. File 3 1943.

[71](#)*The McNair Report* (1944), cited in Hale, *Education for Music*, 217.

[72](#)With its timely significance, a sub-committee of education (but not music) specialists was set up to consider music teaching. The other areas addressed by the commission were art and crafts, physical education and domestic subjects. *The McNair Report*. Available at <<http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/mcnair/mcnair07.html>> [accessed 12 June 2013].

[73](#)*The Norwood Report* contained recommendations arising from an investigation into "Curriculum and Examinations in Secondary Schools." It advised that music should be compulsory for lower secondary forms and available as one of a number of optional arts subjects for higher forms. Although this report focused exclusively on secondary education, its recommendation that music be compulsory for lower forms was taken to imply that music should also be compulsory for the duration of primary school. Wiseman, "The Future," 9-10.

[74](#)Gordon Cox, *Living Music in Schools 1923-1999* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 1.

[75](#)There was widespread concern that the way music was assessed reflected the values of an educational system based in utilitarianism – an ideology that obscured music's real value as a thing of the spirit. See, for example, Kenneth Simpson, "School Certificate Music," *Music and Letters* 28, 2 (April 1947): 108-14.

[76](#)Music had long been co-opted to altruistic ends, as Catherine Dale explains: "The Victorian philanthropists held firmly to the belief that moral and cultural purpose were considered

synonymous, and the symbiotic relationship they enjoyed throughout the nineteenth century emphasised further the link between social and intellectual improvement and music that owed its origin in part to the period's resolve to reform church music." Reformers consequently placed a strong emphasis on singing, on the grounds that the repetition of moralizing texts might inculcate positive values. This was reflected in the government's decision to make singing a compulsory activity for schools in the 1870 Education Act. Dale, *Music Analysis in Britain in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 9.

[77](#)Britten, "68. Address to Kesgrave Heath School, Ipswich (1963)," in *Britten on Music*, ed. Kildea, 241-3.

[78](#)David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), 251.

[79](#)Hale, *Education*, 17.

[80](#)*Ibid.*

[81](#)In the nineteenth century, tonic sol-fa, which was easier to read than staff notation, was widely used both pedagogically and in printed scores. However, by the end of the century its limitations as a method caused a decline in popularity. Dale, *Music Analysis*, 13-21.

[82](#)Pitts, *A Century of Change*, 44.

[83](#)From its early days, the gramophone was appropriated for educational ends: shortly before the First World War, the American Victor Phonograph Company set up its own educational department, charged with the production of educational records – an idea that British companies copied some years later.

[84](#)Stewart MacPherson, *The Musical Education of the Child: Some Thoughts and Suggestions for Teachers, Parents and Schools* (London: Joseph Williams, 1915), 25.

[85](#)Richard Witts has suggested that the advent of music appreciation was, in part, a response to changes in British concert-going habits: during the 1890s the British elite began to favor private concerts over public ones, leaving a gap in the market that was filled by a new, mass audience. *The Essay: The Music Appreciation Movement: Episode 1* [radio broadcast]. BBC Radio 3, 22 August 2011 11.45-11.00pm. Available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b013m49b/The_Essay_The_Music_Appreciation_Movement_Episode_1/ [accessed 25 February 2013].

[86](#)Percy A. Scholes, "Appreciation of Music," in *The Oxford Companion to Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), 42-4; 42.

[87](#)*Ibid.*, 47. McPherson's concern for children's education inspired him to found the Music Teachers' Association in 1908.

[88](#)Pitts, *A Century of Change*, 11. The popularity of the music appreciation movement is evidenced by the fact that Scholes's *Oxford Companion*, first published in 1938, went through its first seven editions in under a decade.

[89](#)The shared interest also led to Scholes's involvement with the delivery of instructional talks for the BBC.

[90](#)John Reith cited in Jenny Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922-1936: Shaping a Nation's Tastes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 27. A very similar sentiment was expressed by Rotha some years later in relation to documentary film: "it is absurd to suggest that cinema, with its powers to enlarge the public's social conscience, to create new standards of culture, to stir mental apathies, to build new understandings and, by virtues inherent in its form, to become the most powerful of all modern preachers – it is absurd to suggest that it can be left in the hands of commercial speculators to be used as a vehicle for purposeless fictional stories. There must be a world outside that represented by the entertainment film [...] There is – the world of propaganda and education." *Documentary Film*, 69.

[91](#)Filson Young cited in *ibid.*, 35-6. The 1930 *BBC Handbook* even advised listeners to turn the lights off to help focus their attention on the radio.

[92](#)Doctor calculates that in 1925 67 per cent of broadcasting time was taken up with music, of which about one-fifth was classical; by 1929 this had marginally decreased to 60 per cent. *Ibid.*, 39.

[93](#)*Ibid.*, 66-86.

[94](#)Scholes, "Appreciation of Music," 43.

[95](#)Cited in Cox, *Living Music*, 34.

[96](#)Leo Kestenberg, "Music Education Goes Its Own Way," trans. Arthur Mendel, *The Musical Quarterly* 25, 4 (October 1939): 442-54; 445.

[97](#)Mary Somerville, "Dr. Browne's Views on 'The Piper'" (11 February 1944), BBC WAC, R16/438/4: Education: General: Schools Programmes – Music. File 4 1944-46.

[98](#)Ivor Brown, "A Plan for the Arts," in *Homes, Towns and Countryside: A Practical Plan for Britain*, eds. Gilbert McAllister and Elizabeth Glen (London: Batsford, 1945), 133-42; 141-2.

[99](#)An article by John Huntley records that *Instruments of the Orchestra* had been entered for the September 1946 Cannes Film Festival as one of the Crown Film Unit's educational films. Although Huntley does not make it explicit that it was actually screened there, it seems likely that it would have been. Huntley, "British Film Music," 135.

[100](#)Cinema owners were reluctant to subject their audiences to instructional films, fearing that they diminished satisfaction. One contemporary writer spoke for many when he stated: "It is fantastic to suppose that children can be educated or improved in the cinema by methods which they can recognize as educational. The slightest flavor of the schoolroom in an entertainment programme provokes boredom or, more likely, vociferous reaction and dislike." Richard Ford, *Children in the Cinema* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1939), 197. Similar arguments were made about instructional documentaries and propaganda films: Paul Swann, *The British Documentary Film Movement 1926-1946* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 166.

[101](#)Letter from the Ministry of Information to Malcolm Sargent (8 January 1946), British Library. Available at <<http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/music/2012/11/cataloguing-the-malcolm-sargent-collection.html>> [accessed 2 January 2014]. See also Muir Mathieson, "Music for the Crown," *Hollywood Quarterly* 3, 3 (April 1948): 323-6; 325. Producing films solely for use in schools had not yet become commercially viable, so producers could only break even if they made films that could also be screened in cinemas.

[102](#)Letter from C.A. Maitland to C. Bussey (1 November 1946), The National Archives, INF12/97: Production of COI shorts and features: "Instruments of the Orchestra" (hereafter INF12/97).

[103](#)Letter from W.R. Richardson to B.C. Sendall (22 October 1946), INF12/97.

[104](#)Letter to Mr. Watson from Mr. Bussey (9 January 1948), INF12/97.

[105](#)Ministry of Education, "Memorandum on the Distribution of Visual Material for Experimental Use" (16 November 1946), ED121/549.

[106](#)*Ibid.*

[107](#)Mitchell and Reed, eds., *Letters from a Life*, ii: 1939-1945, 1289-90. In 1955, the music was appropriated for yet another medium, when Frederick Ashton used it to choreograph his

Variations on a Theme of Purcell. Ashton's ballet was premiered by the Sadler's Wells at Covent Garden on 6 January. White, *Benjamin Britten*, 81.

[108](#)Crozier's commentary is very similar in style and content to that used in the film. Although the score states that the piece "should be performed" with narration, a version without spoken commentary was also included to encourage performance; Britten provided two options for the links between variations – longer ones for when the narration was used, often achieved by a "repeat ad lib.," and shorter ones for when it was not.

[109](#)The emphasis is mine. John Maud was the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Education from 1945 and a personal friend of Britten.

[110](#)Although the film was classified as a U, when it was shown at the Curzon Cinema in early 1947 – and quite possibly at other venues – it was screened before the A-rated feature *La Symphonie Pastorale*, which, contrary to what its title might suggest, was not about music. *La Symphonie*, based on Andre Gide's novel of the same name, told the story of a blind orphan, who is taken in by a pastor. The film had won three prizes in the 1946 Cannes Film Festival, one of which was for Georges Auric's score, which perhaps explains why it was paired with *Instruments of the Orchestra*. *Curzon Cinema Programme* (January 1947), BFI Special Collections.

[111](#)As noted above in fn.108, Britten allowed for the concert version to be performed without commentary; however, reviews suggest that it was generally included in early performances. A few weeks after the world premier, Britten himself delivered the commentary in a performance by the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. *Letters from a Life*, eds. Mitchell, Reed and Cooke, iii, 245-53.

[112](#)Keller suggested that "leaflets on the film ought to be issued" for cinema audiences too, but it seems doubtful that this ever happened. Keller, "A Film Analysis," 30-1.

[113](#)1945 was the 250th anniversary of Purcell's death. Britten regarded Purcell as "the last important international figure of English music" and, prior to composing *The Young Person's Guide*, had already arranged two Purcell concerts at the Wigmore Hall and another at the National Gallery, as well as composing his String Quartet No.2 and *The Holy Sonnets of John Donne* in honour of the deceased. Britten, "250th Anniversary of the Death of Henry Purcell," in *Britten on Music*, ed. Kildea, 52. Kildea, *Benjamin Britten*, 260-2.

[114](#)"Teachers' Notes," 1.

[115](#)*Ibid.*, 14.

[116](#)Mathieson, "Music for the Crown," 325.

[117](#)Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, *The Film in National Life*, 58; Arts Enquiry, *The Factual Film*, 105.

[118](#)Desmond Shawe-Taylor, "The Arts and Entertainment: Music," *The New Statesman and Nation* (1 February 1947), 92-3. The Unit re-recorded the sound track on 16mm negative: Letter to Mrs Hawkes (16 December 1946), ED121/549.

[119](#)Keller, "A Film Analysis," 30-1.

[120](#)Letter from Britten to Basil Wright (1 April 1946), BFI Special Collections, BCW/5/1/1.

[121](#)Mitchell and Reed, eds., *Letters from a Life*, ii, 1290.

[122](#)Letter from Erwin Stein to K.A. Wright (10 December 1946), BBC WAC, RCONT 1: Composer: Benjamin Britten: File 1b: 1945-1950.

[123](#)*Ibid.*

[124](#)Scott Goddard, "Music on Film," *Penguin Music Magazine* 3 (1947), 64-6; 64.

[125](#)Keller, "A Film Analysis," 30-1.

[126](#)*Ibid.*; Imogen Holst, "Britten and the Young," in *Benjamin Britten: A Commentary On His Works From a Group Of Specialists*, eds. Keller and Mitchell (London: Rockliff, 1952), 276-86; 276.

[127](#)Heather Wiebe, *Britten's Unquiet Pasts: Sound and Memory in Postwar Reconstruction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 2.

[128](#)Britten's part in this project offers further evidence of what Heather Wiebe describes as the composer's "investments in British society" – a commitment that Britten scholarship has tended to overlook. Wiebe, *Britten's Unquiet Pasts*, 10.

Musical Examples

Allegro maestoso e largamente

Woodwinds:
Piccolo: *f*, *marc.*
Flutes I & II: *f*, *a2*
Oboes I & II: *f*
Clarinets in B \flat I & II: *f*
Bassoons I & II: *f*, *a2*

Brass:
Horns in F I & II: *f*
Horns in F III & IV: *f*
Trumpets in C I & II: *f*, *fp*
Trombones I & II: *f*
Trombones III (Bass) & Tuba: *f*

Percussion:
Timpani: *f*
Xylo.: *f*
B.D.: *f*, *fp*
S.D.: *f*, *marc.*
Cym.: *f*

Harp:
Harp: *f*, *sonoro.*

Strings:
Violin I: *f*
Violin II: *f*
Viola: *f*
Cello: *f*
Bass: *f*, *f div.*

Oboes I & II

Timpani

Viola

Cello div.

Bass

Lento

pp espress.

cresc.

ff

largamente

p

f

pp

f

pp

f

Oboes I & II

Timp.

Vla.

Cello div.

Bass

p

pp

(a tempo) poco

f pizz.

poco

pp

p

pp

pp

pp

pp

Brillante alla polacca

a 2

Bassoons I & II

I & II
Horns in F

III & IV

Trumpet II in C

I & II
Trombones

III (Bass) & Tuba

Bass Drum

Violin I

Violin II

f

f stacc.

f

f stacc.

f stacc.

f

mf

ff con forza

ff con forza

The musical score is for a piece titled 'Brillante alla polacca' in 3/4 time, marked 'a 2'. The score is arranged for a full orchestra. The woodwind section includes Bassoons I & II, Horns in F (I & II, III & IV), and Trumpet II in C. The brass section includes Trombones (I & II) and III (Bass) & Tuba. The percussion section features a Bass Drum. The string section includes Violin I and Violin II. The score begins with a dynamic marking of *f* for the woodwinds and *mf* for the Bass Drum. The brass instruments (Horns, Trumpet, Trombones) play a staccato accompaniment. The strings enter with a *ff con forza* dynamic, playing a rhythmic pattern. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Con slancio (l'istesso tempo)

Piccolo
ff
a2

Flutes I & II
ff
a2

Oboes I & II
ff
a2

Clarinets in B \flat
I & II
ff
a2

Bassoons I & II
f
a2

I & II
Horns in F
f
a2

III & IV
f
a2

Trumpets in C
I & II
f

I & II
Trombones
f sost.

III (Bass) & Tuba
f sost.

Harp
ff marc. tiss.

Violin I
Con slancio (l'istesso tempo)
ff

Violin II
ff

Viola
ff

Cello and Bass
ff sost.

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for a symphony orchestra. The score is written in 3/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (D major). The tempo and performance instruction is 'Con slancio (l'istesso tempo)'. The woodwind section includes Piccolo, Flutes I & II, Oboes I & II, Clarinets in B-flat I & II, and Bassoons I & II. The brass section includes Horns in F (I & II, III & IV), Trumpets in C (I & II), and Trombones (I & II, III Bass & Tuba). The harp part is marked 'ff marc. tiss.'. The string section includes Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello and Bass. Dynamics range from 'ff' (fortissimo) to 'f sost.' (fornostato). The score shows three measures of music for each instrument part.

Picc.

Fls. I & II

Oboes
I & II

Clts. in B \flat
I & II

Bsns. I & II

I & II
Hns. in F

III & IV

Tpts. in C
I & II

I & II
Trombs.

III & Tuba

Harp

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Cello
& Bass

8va

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for a symphony. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with multiple staves. The woodwind section includes Piccolo, Flutes I & II, Oboes I & II, Clarinets in B-flat I & II, Bassoons I & II, Horns in F I & II, Horns in F III & IV, Trumpets in C I & II, and Trombones I & II, Trombones III & Tuba. The string section includes Violins I, Violins II, Viola, Cello, and Bass. A Harp is also present. The score is in a key signature of two sharps (D major or F# minor) and a 4/4 time signature. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. There are various musical markings such as accents, slurs, and dynamic markings like 'f'. A '8va' marking is present in the Harp part, indicating an octave shift. The score is divided into three measures, with the Harp part having a long note in the third measure that is marked '8va'.

Example Captions

Example 1. Benjamin Britten, *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra: Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell* Op.34 (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1946), Theme A, 1-4.

Example 2. Benjamin Britten, *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, Variation B: Lento, 1-4.

Example 3. Benjamin Britten, *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, Variation E: Brillante: alla polacca, 1-4.

Example 4. Benjamin Britten, *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, L'istesso tempo, 1-6.