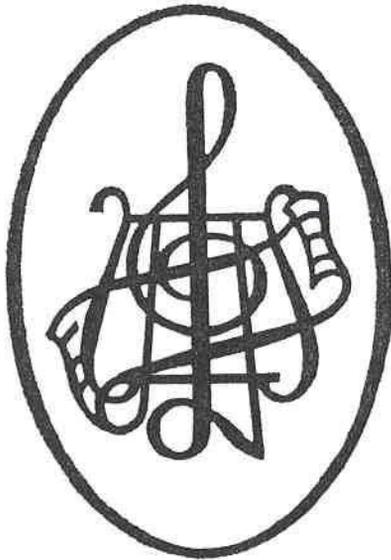


Background information about the  
Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra  
to accompany the  
Klassic Haus Restorations  
release of  
Tippett and Ives  
conducted by  
Sir Michael Tippett  
Peter Fletcher  
and  
Stuart Johnson



Leicestershire  
County School of Music

# Sir Michael Tippett's *The Shires Suite*

## Some recollections of rehearsals and performances

### Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra

John Whitmore, June 1999

From the mid-1960s until the early 1970s, Sir Michael Tippett had a close relationship with the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra, regularly conducting them in the UK and on tour in Europe and generally supporting the state-funded musical education programme which had produced an orchestra of such high standards. He conducted the LSSO almost exclusively in twentieth-century music - from Holst's *The Planets* to Charles Ives's *Three Places in New England*, Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, Hindemith's *Symphonic Metamorphoses* and many new works by English composers. Under Tippett, the LSSO, an orchestra of ordinary secondary school children aged 14 to 18, regularly performed on BBC radio and TV, made commercial gramophone records and established new standards for music-making in an educational context. Many leading British performers had their first experience of orchestral music in the LSSO under Tippett.

Sir Michael first became involved with the Leicestershire County School of Music in 1965 when he became patron of the Schools Music Festival and conducted two concerts at the De Montfort Hall, Leicester. The logistical problems in actually rehearsing for this festival were overcome by the orchestra travelling down to Corsham, close to Sir Michael's home, and taking up residence in a local school for a full week during the Easter holidays. This enabled Michael to work with the orchestra after his usual day's schedule. In this way, his composing routine was not disrupted but perhaps more importantly, from an LSSO perspective, there was substantial rehearsal time for the players and Michael to get to know each other. In the mid 1960's ABC Television ran an Arts programme called *Tempo* and the week's events at Corsham were filmed for an edition entitled *Overture with Beginners*. Sir Michael proved to be great fun and a rapport was immediately established.

The 1965 festival included a specially commissioned symphony by Alan Ridout, Elgar *Cockaigne*, Holst's *Planets*, Michael's own *Concerto for Double String Orchestra* and *Child of Our Time*. He also composed two new pieces for the occasion: *Prologue* and *Epilogue*.

These were performed to open and close the festival.

The *Prologue* is a setting of *Soomer is i-coomen in*:

Soomer is i-coomen in,

Loode sing cuckoo

Groweth sayd and bloweth mayd and springth the wood-e new.

Sing cuc-koo

A-we blay-teth after lamb.

Lowth after calve coo

Bullock stair-teth book-e-vair-teth.

Mirry sing cuckoo,

Cuc-koo, cuc-koo,

Well sing-es thoo, cuckoo,

Nay sweek thoo nay-ver noo.

The *Epilogue* has real significance for the LSSO because it is a setting of *Non Nobis Domine* by William Byrd and Michael heard this performed *a capella* by the orchestra during the visit to Corsham.

Non nobis, Domine, non nobis,  
Sed nomini tuo, da gloriam.

(This used to be sung in the state schools of Leicestershire as a Grace.)

The *Prologue* and *Epilogue* would eventually become the opening and closing movements of a new suite that was written for the LSSO between 1965 and 1970. On its completion, this became known as the *Shires Suite*.

After the 1965 festival, Sir Michael's appearances with the orchestra included a wonderful *Enigma Variations* televised live in Brussels (1966), a second Schools Festival (1967) and a gramophone recording of his *Suite in D* for the now defunct Pye Golden Guinea label.

In 1969 the second phase of the *Shires Suite* was unveiled at the LSSO Easter residential course in Cirencester. Orchestral parts, in manuscript, for *Interlude II* turned up at sectional rehearsals one morning. The first full orchestral rehearsals for *Interlude II* were directed by Norman Del Mar. Sir Michael joined us later in the week and a BBC television crew also arrived to film him conducting *Interlude II* and Ives' *Putnam's Camp* for a BBC-2 programme called *Music Now*. The television recording was somewhat disrupted by the Red Arrows flying above the school but a personal telephone call from Michael to the Red Arrows H.Q. soon put a stop to the noise. I am reliably informed that this was the first time in history that the Red Arrows had been 'grounded' in such a manner. Looking back, the rehearsals for *Interlude II* were absolutely riotous mainly due to the scruffy hand written orchestral parts and the novel inclusion of an electric guitar. The purely orchestral *Interlude II* is based on the music which introduces the characters Dov and Mel at their entry in Act I of Tippett's opera, *The Knot Garden*, which was written at the same time (1966-69) as this Suite. *Interlude II* also incorporates the canon '*Great Tom is Cast*' which appears three times, scored first for 3 trumpets and finally trumpets and trombones in octaves.

The new trilogy of *Prologue*, *Interlude II* and *Epilogue* received its first public performance at the Bath Festival on June 21st 1969 where the LSSO was conducted by Sir Michael. In a press review of the concert, one eminent critic '*...failed to detect the promised part for electric guitar...*' The guitar part, played by David Abbott, was nigh on deafening from where I was sitting in the 2nd fiddles. That's critics for you, I suppose.

Overall, 1969 was a great year for the orchestra. Michael and the LSSO played a memorable concert in the Philharmonie, Berlin which included *Prologue*, *Interlude II* and *Epilogue*, Ives' *Putnam's Camp*, Copland's *Quiet City* and *Brigg Fair* by Delius. Richard Rodney Bennett was the soloist in *Rhapsody in Blue*. We also spent some time with Sir John Barbirolli who attended the afternoon rehearsals of *Brigg Fair*. The night after our concert he was performing Tchaikovsky's 4th with the Berlin Philharmonic. The orchestra were hailed as Britain's best cultural export but most of us also had the feeling that our programme was rather alien to a German public weaned on Brahms and Beethoven. The sounds of Charles Ives must have been a shock, let alone *Interlude II*.

The 1970 Easter course was held at Oxford. Yet another week of sleeping on camp beds in a school and being rehearsed by Sir Arthur Bliss, Bryan Kelly, Herbert Chappell and Sir Michael. The preparations this time were focused on rehearsing for an appearance at the Cheltenham Festival in July and a new gramophone record for Argo, which would include the *Introduction and Allegro* by Bliss, conducted by the composer and Tippett conducting his own *Interlude II and Epilogue*. During this week at Oxford, Michael introduced the final two movements of the *Shires Suite* - *Interlude I* and *Cantata*.

The slow, purely orchestral *Interlude I* is a kind of chorale prelude, based on the canon '*The Silver Swan*'. The three melodic lines of the canon are presented at different speeds: Trumpet and trombone (normal speed), strings (decorated and much transformed, twice as slow) and bells and woodwind (clusters, one-a-half times as slow).

The *Cantata* is a setting of three canons, before each of which the choir sings, 'Come let us sing you a song in canon.'

First comes a hunting canon by William Byrd:

Hey, ho, to the Greenwood  
Now let us go,  
Sing heave and ho  
And there shall we find  
Both buck and doe  
Sing heave and ho  
The hart and hind  
And the little pretty doe  
Sing heave and ho

Second, a drinking catch by Purcell to the words:

'Fie, nay prithe, John  
Do not quarrel man,  
Let us be merry and drink about.'

'You're a rogue, you cheated me,  
I'll prove before this company,  
I caren't a farthing, Sir, for all you are so stout.'

'Sir, you lie, I scorn your word,  
Or any man that wears a sword,  
For all your huff, who cares a fig or who cares for you?'

Third, a canon by Alexander Goehr to an epigram of William Blake, presented to the composer as a 60th birthday present. The words are:

The sword sung on the barren heath,  
The sickle on the fruitful field:  
The sword he sang a song of death,  
But could not make the sickle yield.

By 1970, Michael had made some close friendships at the County School of Music and he kept in regular contact by telephone. On one famous occasion he was chatting to the orchestra's PR manager, Jack Richards about the problems he was having with the percussion scoring in the *Cantata* of the *Shires Suite*. Jack's miniscule office was situated next door to the school canteen and as the conversation progressed a careless dinner lady dropped a tray of cutlery. This sparked the composer's imagination and Jack spent the next quarter of an hour or so dropping various combinations of forks and spoons onto the floor from different heights until the correct sound was achieved to the satisfaction of the composer. Who suggested the title given to the completed work? Jack Richards.

The Cheltenham Festival concert took place in the Town Hall on July 8th and the podium was shared by Sir Arthur Bliss, who conducted his own *Piano Concerto* with Frank Wibaut as soloist and Sir Michael, who directed Ives' riotous *Circus Band* a rather scrappy *Rhapsody in Blue* and the first public performance of the *Shires Suite*. It must be mentioned that in the early hours of July 8th, Michael was involved, as a passenger, in a serious road traffic accident whilst he was travelling from the Queen Elizabeth Hall. Despite this he continued his journey to Cheltenham, took a three hour rehearsal in the afternoon and then directed the concert in the evening. Even 30 years after the event I can still vividly recall the electric atmosphere at this concert, which received wide critical acclaim from the national press. Sir Arthur referred to the concert as the best one of the 1970 festival. Later that evening Jack Richards appeared on the orchestra's coach after the concert wearing a huge grin and clutching a reel-to-reel tape of the *Shires Suite*.

*Interlude II* and *Epilogue* were recorded by Sir Michael and the LSSO on August 31st, 1970 for Argo Records. The session took place in Decca Studio No.3, West Hampstead and the disc was released in April 1971. The sound quality and performance, however, were something of a let down compared to the concert at Cheltenham.

In April 1980, some 10 years after its first complete performance at Cheltenham, the LSSO with the Leicestershire Chorale recorded the suite for Unicorn Records at De Montfort Hall under the direction of Eric Pinkett's successor, Peter Fletcher. The suite was coupled with a performance of *Virages - Region One* by Douglas Young, conducted by the composer with the solo cello part played by Rohan de Saram.

In September 1998, during a project to fully update some personal archives relating to the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra, the mystery tape from Cheltenham finally resurfaced in an attic 28 years after the event. It had been recorded in stereophonic sound of excellent quality. I simply couldn't believe my luck. This recording has now been shared with some colleagues and friends who played in the concert. The sound is little short of amazing and the performance is also highly accomplished - a world premier beautifully captured as it took place that night in Cheltenham Town Hall and a permanent reminder of the special relationship between the Leicestershire County School of Music and Sir Michael Tippett.

# Boost for the county's musical significance

THE SIGNS are that next year's Leicestershire schools' music festival is going to give the County School of Music its biggest prestige boost ever.

First performances of a new symphony and a festival prologue and epilogue — all specially written for the occasion — will contribute to an event of nation-wide importance, and a competition open to student composers throughout Britain will further enhance Leicestershire's growing musical significance and provide yet another new work for first performance during festival week.

The festival will occupy six hectic and exciting days from May 9 to 14 and will revolve around the name and personality of the famous British composer Michael Tippett, whose enthusiasm for the Leicestershire enterprise is boundless.

## Specially written

He has agreed to compose a prologue and epilogue and, as the festival's conductor-in-chief, he will direct the first performance of a symphony written specially for the County Youth Orchestra by his distinguished ex-pupil Alan Ridout, who is well-known for his series of BBC music talks.

Mr. Ridout heard the orchestra earlier this year at their De Montfort Hall concert when his "Three Pictures of Picasso" formed part of a programme conducted by Rudolf Schwarz. He was so impressed with their playing that he had no hesitation in agreeing to write a symphony specially for them.

Exciting, too, is the prospect of a festival production of Mr. Ridout's recently written opera. Its title is "The Rescue", and its setting



ALAN RIDOUT

"I was delighted to write a symphony for the County Youth Orchestra. I have made few concessions on grounds of technical difficulty except to allow for the fact that string players develop less quickly than wind players. But I have not evaded this—the slow movement is for strings only."

in a Paddington coffee bar bears testimony to its contemporary theme. The Leicester presentation will, in fact, be its fourth performance.

The idea of the 1965 festival is both courageous and imaginative and of particular value at a time when the need for the encouragement of active participation in music is considered to be of prime importance.



MICHAEL TIPPETT

"The Leicestershire Festival seems to be an astonishing affair. I have had the feeling for some time that your part of the country is undergoing a kind of renaissance in its musical life — particularly in schools music. I couldn't be more pleased than to be actively involved in this stimulating and exciting venture".

## Main inspiration

The festival supplants the memorable pageants which, in past years, crowned the county's schools music and drama activities from time to time.

As good as they were, the need was for something different. This was the view of Mr. Eric Pinkett, county music adviser and the main inspiration behind the venture.

By the very magnitude of the festival's programme it seems he has proved himself right in deciding it was time for new ideas — for a bigger conception and a broader horizon.

But he admits that luck has been running with him and that his first stroke of good fortune was Michael Tippett's instant enthusiasm for the festival enterprise and his ready acceptance of the principal role.

It so happens that the festival will gain still more in significance from the fact that it will take place in the year of Tippett's 60th birthday (he was born on January 2, 1905) and at a time when anniversary programmes will give particular emphasis to his name and to his music.

His double concerto for orchestra will be included among the works he will conduct during the festival. So too, his delightful oratorio "Child of our Time" which will be performed by a full complement of young Leicestershire musicians including vocal soloists, instrumentalists and a choir of 500.

R.A.P.

Leicester Mercury  
October 1964

# Youth Orchestra Impresses Michael Tippett

COMPOSER Michael Tippett travelled from his home in Corsham, near Bath, on Saturday to listen for the first time to Leicestershire County Youth Orchestra—the orchestra he is to conduct during next May's Festival of Music.

For members of the orchestra and the music staff it was a normal Saturday rehearsal

at Longslade School, with the exception that there was an extension from the usual one o'clock finishing time to three o'clock.

Mr. Tippett who arrived just after midday was thus able to make a good assessment of the playing standard, and also to judge their response to his own conducting.

His verdict: "They are very good; but you know that already."

But for Mr. Tippett there apparently was an earlier moment of doubt about the wisdom of his decision to become associated with the orchestra.

The whole school area was alive with the sounds of music-making when he arrived, and it so happened that the first sound that Mr. Tippett heard came from the smallest and rawest recruits.

He said nothing, but the expression on his face indicated his fear that this was the orchestra he had been invited to conduct.

A member of the County music staff was quick to sense the situation and to restore Mr. Tippett's mental calm.

"This way, Mr. Tippett", he said, directing the composer's footsteps away from the juniors' amiable cacophony. "The senior orchestra's rehearsal hall is further on".

And, so, Mr. Tippett's features resumed their remarkably youthful look. As he listened to the seniors polishing up a section from Britten's "Sea Interludes" orchestral suite, he was smiling.

*Leicestershire  
Schools Festival  
of Music*

Choral and orchestral concert  
conducted by Michael Tippett  
and performed at the  
De Montfort Hall, Leicester, May 1965.



A programme of music conducted by Michael Tippett, and performed by the Senior Symphony Orchestra of the County School of Music and the choirs of primary schools.

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<b>National Anthem</b>	arr. Stanford
<b>Prologue</b> (written for the occasion)	Michael Tippett
<b>Overture 'Cockaigne'</b>	Elgar
<b>Junior Choir and Instrumentalists</b>	
<b>Symphony No. 2</b>	Alan Ridout

Interval

<b>Concerto for Double String Orchestra</b>	Michael Tippett
<b>Junior Choir and Instrumentalists</b>	
<b>Four Sea Interludes</b> from 'Peter Grimes'	Britten

Choirs taking part are from the following primary schools :

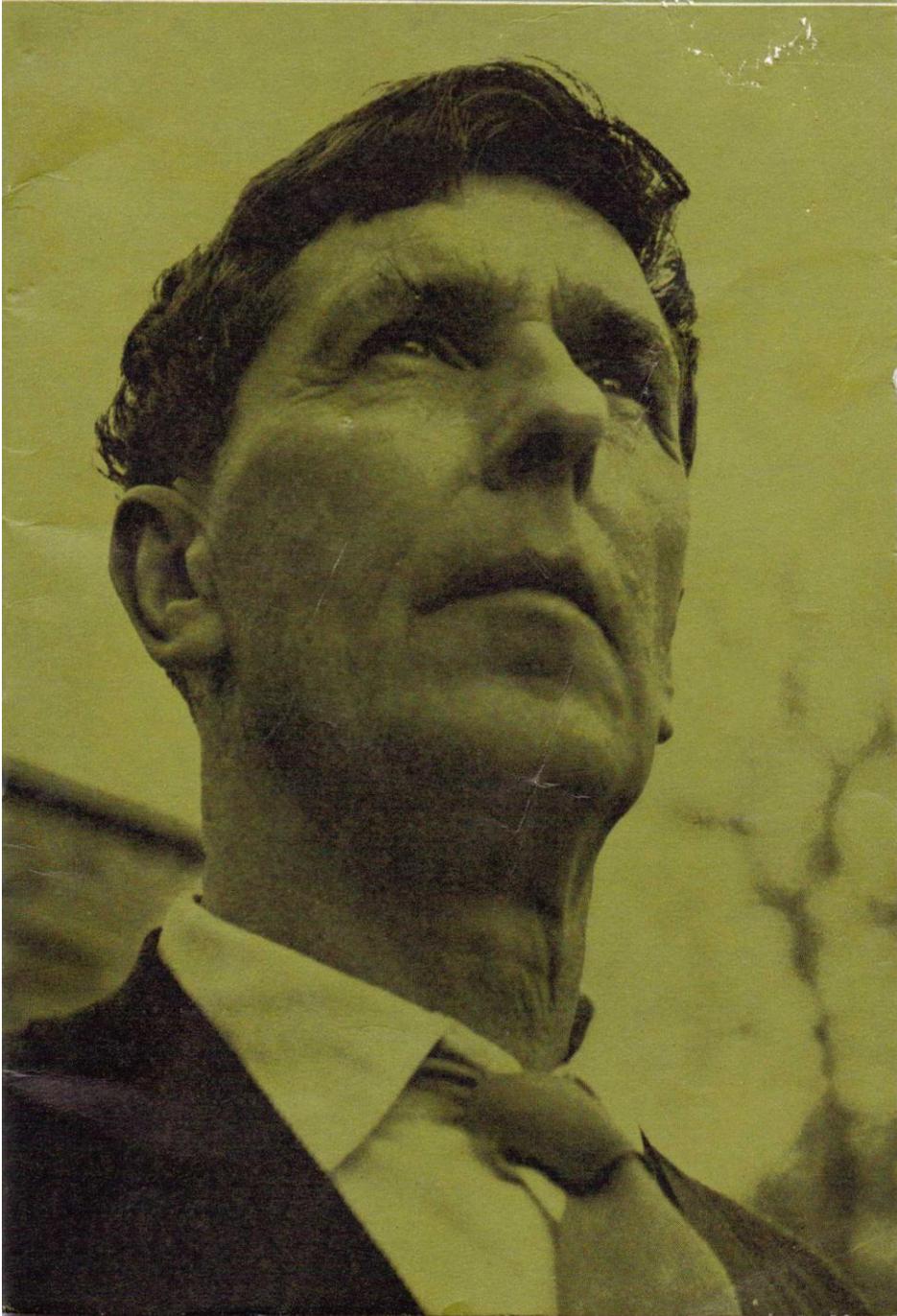
**Ashby-de-la-Zouch**  
**Coalville All Saints**  
**Coalville Broomleys**  
**Glen Parva Rolleston**  
**Hinckley Westfield**  
**Loughborough Mountfields**  
**Loughborough Shelthorpe**  
**Oadby Launde**  
**Thurmaston Church Hill**

Tenors and basses for the Prologue are from  
**Longslade Grammar School, Birstall** and  
**Beauchamp Grammar School, Oadby.**

*Leicestershire  
Schools Festival  
of Music*

*Richard Jeffers*

Choral and orchestral concert  
conducted by Michael Tippett  
and performed at the  
De Montfort Hall, Leicester, May 1965.



## **Leicestershire Schools Festival of Music 1965**

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A programme of music conducted by Michael Tippett, and performed by choirs from the Grammar Schools and the Senior Symphony Orchestra of the County School of Music.

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<b>National Anthem</b>	arr. Stanford
<b>'Mars' and 'Jupiter' from 'The Planets'</b>	Holst
<b>Divertimento for String Orchestra</b>	Shaun Dillon

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Presentation of Leicestershire County Council Education Committee's prize to the winner of the Composition Competition restricted to students at the Colleges of Music:

**Shaun Dillon, Royal Scottish Academy of Music, Glasgow.**

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Interval

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<b>The Oratorio 'A Child of our Time'</b>	Michael Tippett
Soprano Soloist	<b>Glenda Russell</b>
Contralto Soloist	<b>Kathleen Pring</b>
Tenor Soloist	<b>James Griffett</b>
Bass Soloist	<b>Lionel Fawcett</b>
Soloists appear by courtesy of the Director of the Royal College of Music	
<b>Epilogue</b> (composed specially for the Festival)	Michael Tippett

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Choirs from the following grammar schools will take part:

**Ashby-de-la-Zouch Boys' Grammar School**  
**Ashby-de-la-Zouch Girls' Grammar School**  
**Beauchamp School, Oadby**  
**Dixie School, Market Bosworth**  
**Guthlaxton School, Wigston Magna**  
**Hinckley Grammar School**  
**Longslade School, Birstall**  
**Loughborough Grammar School**  
**Rawlins School, Quorn**

COURAGEOUS and imaginative enterprises seem inevitably to get the success they deserve.

And so it happened last night, that the opening concert of Leicestershire Schools Festival of Music at the De Montfort Hall, was an exhilarating triumph for all concerned in it and, in particular, for Michael Tippett whose inspiring direction and warm personality evoked playing from his young orchestra that, at times, had a touch of miraculousness about it.

The programme was both ambitious and cleverly designed to display visually and aurally the two extremes of the gamut of musical education organised and run by the County School of Music.

Massed choirs from nine county primary schools represented the beginnings of musical experience as they sang, confident and clear-voiced, and produced a proliferation of sounds from recorders, dulcimers, guitars, bells and an assortment of percussive instruments. They numbered in their hundreds and they made an impressive stage backcloth of white shirts, coloured ties and shining bright faces.

The fine playing of the senior County Youth Symphony Orchestra demonstrated the quite amazing progress in individual

skill and corporate response that are achieved in relatively few years.

### Energy

The music they played, with the exception of Elgar's "Cockaigne" overture, was all written by composers who are still living—and the same contemporary emphasis typifies the programmes of the whole Festival week. A wise and fitting concept this, for a generation which, more than any other, perhaps is very much concerned with its own age.

Last night's concert began with Michael Tippett's specially-written prologue—a short arrangement for choir and orchestra of the traditional tune "Soomer is i-coomen in" which impressively established a mood of youthful well-being and energy.

### Fun

An eagerly awaited first performance was that of Alan Ridout's second symphony in three movements, dedicated to his former teacher Michael Tippett as a 60th birthday tribute and written especially for the County Schools' Symphony Orchestra at the request of the indomitable Friends of the County School of Music.

# Musical Miracle

## CHILD PLAYERS WERE INSPIRED

The symphony may well have been an expression of the view that serialism can be fun. It has a not inflexible 12-note system and, in its outer movements, displays a wealth of lively rhythmic and melodic ideas whose natural and uninhibited flow and bustling good humour belie their tight organisation.

The last movement, with its extended centre-piece for solo percussion, is a sort of concentrated Young Person's Guide designed to reveal the technical strength of all sections of the young county musicians.

### Incredible

The slow movement for strings only provides an excellent and finely-proportioned contrast, its brooding and tense atmosphere being ingeniously and assuredly created and quite moving.

Alan Ridout has an orchestral vocabulary that is very much his own and, apart from the exciting sounds he invents, it is typified by the unusually precise and clean-edged textures that are an important element of his attractive style.

Tippett's direction was superb and the orchestra played with professional maturity and with the obvious pride of co-ownership.

Tippett's own concerto for double string orchestra was splendidly performed with a quite amazing acceptance of its technical difficulties and with a beautiful realisation of the slow movement's elegantly discursive melodic line.

Even more exacting were Britten's Four Sea Interludes from "Peter Grimes" in which the full orchestra rose to the very heights of their achievement. There must have been many people in the audience who occasionally pinched themselves (as I did) as a reminder that this assured, virtuosic performance was by schoolchildren. Incredible!

### Charming

The primary choirs charmed the whole audience with their delightful singing and playing—sometimes with the help of their seniors in the orchestra and sometimes wholly self-supporting. Indeed, it might be said that their rumba with full orchestral support was the show stealer!

Mr. Tippett danced on his rostrum with obvious pleasure and, when it was all over, turned to the audience and said: "We'll have that again!"

This was, indeed, typical of the exuberance and the eternal youthfulness of the man. The last words of praise must go to him for the energy and devotion with which he directed the programme and for the affection and the wholehearted response which he drew from every performer.

The ovation he received was generous and enthusiastic—and



Leicester Mercury  
May 1965

## Eleven plus Festival

LEICESTERSHIRE Education Committee is holding next week a characteristically adventurous Festival of Music. There will be thirteen concerts on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday in all parts of the county, and on Monday and Friday there will be two important choral and orchestral concerts in the De Montfort Hall, Leicester.

The events in the county include three performances of short operas by Alan Ridout ("The Rescue") and Arthur Benjamin ("Prima Donna"), recitals by the Northern Sinfonia Trio and the Camden Wind Quintet, and a programme of prize-winning compositions in a specially arranged competition. More than two thirds of the cost of these concerts (£1,500) has been returned in advance subscriptions, and it is expected that ticket receipts will cover the rest, including the two concerts in the De Montfort Hall which should be well filled on Monday and Friday.

At the first of these Michael Tippett will conduct the first performance of his own Prologue and of Alan Ridout's Second Symphony (both of them written for the occasion), together with Elgar's "Cockaigne" Overture, Britten's Four Sea Interludes from "Peter Grimes," and Tippett's Double Concerto. On the Friday he will conduct another work he has written for the Festival—an Epilogue—Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante for four wind instruments, and his own "A Child of our Time."

Now, these programmes are to be performed not by any body of professionals, who would find them challenging enough, but by the boys and girls of the Symphony Orchestra of the County School of Music and its junior and senior choirs. None of this music has been composed especially for children—even those pieces written for the occasion show no sign of writing down.

Dedicated to his former teacher, Michael Tippett, Ridout's Second Symphony is noticeably Tippettian in style and so includes the consequent rhythmic complexities and contrapuntal texture. It does not call for individual virtuoso technique, but it does call for considerable corporate skill in sustaining a clear texture so that the interweaving melodic lines are audible on all levels (as in the slow movement for strings and percussion), for precision and a sense of the dramatic in the interpretation of the dynamics, and for advanced rhythmic command to deal not only with the frequent syncopations and off-beat entries but also the many asymmetrical metres. Tippett's Prologue ("Sooner is common in") and Epilogue ("Non nobis domine") are based on familiar settings of the words, but in neither case has he restrained his individuality in cross rhythms, tricky polyphony and tonality merely in order to spare his young singers.

## LEICESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS MUSIC FESTIVAL

by Gerald Larner

ASSEMBLED at the De Montfort Hall, Leicester, on Monday for the opening concert of the Leicestershire Schools Music Festival, the 400 or so singers and instrumentalists looked alarmingly young. What from a distance had seemed adventurous, looked more like foolhardiness from close to. Even the entry of the conductor, Michael Tippett, did not quell all apprehensions, but the events of the rest of the evening finally condemned all fears as unjust and groundless.

In fact, this was one of the few concerts that can be classed as an experience. It was not an entirely musical experience, for no one could fail to be touched by the spectacle of one of this country's most important composers devoting so much care and energy to a concert by schoolchildren.

But there was more to it than this. Tippett conducted the first performance of the Prologue he had written for the Festival and was rewarded by some very bright brass and percussion playing, although this did tend to divorce itself from the voices, partly because the composer had failed to integrate the texture and

partly because the performance was not properly balanced. His Concerto for Double String Orchestra was rewarding, too. The strings of the Senior Orchestra of the Leicestershire School of Music do not possess the strength or brilliance of tone that the Concerto really needs, but the rhythms are the main thing and these were skilfully dealt with and, as the composer rightly refused to relax the tempi, the performance maintained its essential impetus and vitality. The counterpoint was not often obscured, the antiphonal effects came off and intonation was never so bad as to be disturbing.

Perhaps the most surprising performance of all was that of Alan Ridout's Second Symphony, the other work commissioned for the occasion. It is not a great work, but it is a pleasing one with considerable rhythmic interest. Again, the orchestra was equal to this aspect of the music, even in the most tricky metres, and the whole performance was admirable for its discipline, its lively colouring and its purposefulness. In comparison with this, Elgar's "Cockaigne" Overture and Britten's Four Sea Interludes seemed mere child's play.

HOWEVER, to have trusted this music to instrumentalists and singers of school age is not as unwisely ambitious as it might seem. For 17 years now Leicestershire's Adviser for Music has been Eric Pinkett, and it is he who rescued school music in the county from a state of post-war inertia—and so developed it that the orchestra regularly plays abroad, gives full-scale symphony concerts in Leicester (with conductors like Schwarz and Boulton), and has taken part in six previous (and less ambitious) Leicestershire Schools Festivals.

The centre of activity is the County School of Music, a meeting for rehearsal every Saturday morning at the Longslade Grammar School on the outskirts of Leicester of the most promising musicians from the surrounding county schools. The orchestra, which naturally loses many of its members every year, is sustained by a junior orchestra, and the supply of instrumentalists is kept up in the schools by a carefully planned teaching programme, the basis of which is the county's seven peripatetic instrumental tutors.

It is a thorough, highly developed, and apparently effective arrangement that must be the envy of most other education authorities. Perhaps the most inspired example of Eric Pinkett's planning is that this year the senior orchestra took its annual Easter vacation course at Corsham, Wiltshire, where Michael Tippett lives. Here they stayed, with a "Tempo" camera team and other fascinated visitors, near the home of the composer who rehearsed them twice a day for a week. The teachers present were impressed by Tippett's way with the children, Tippett was impressed by their orchestra, and the children have benefited enormously by this close and prolonged contact with such an original musical mind.

A symptomatic story was told to me by the secretary of the Festival, Jack Richards: At the end of the week members of the orchestra spontaneously made a collection between themselves, went to Bath, sought out a respectable tailor, inquired if he were Mr Tippett's tailor (which he was) and bought him a waistcoat. No doubt he will be wearing it in Leicester next week.

Gerald Larner

WITH a skilful and spirited performance of Michael Tippett's oratorio "A Child of our Time" the several hundred school children who have this week been rehearsing and studying with Tippett brought the first Leicestershire Schools Festival of Music to a satisfying conclusion at the De Montfort Hall, Leicester, on Friday. It was a performance which in spite of the inevitable deficiencies must have given the composer, who directed it, pleasure for there was no mistaking the commitment of these young singers.

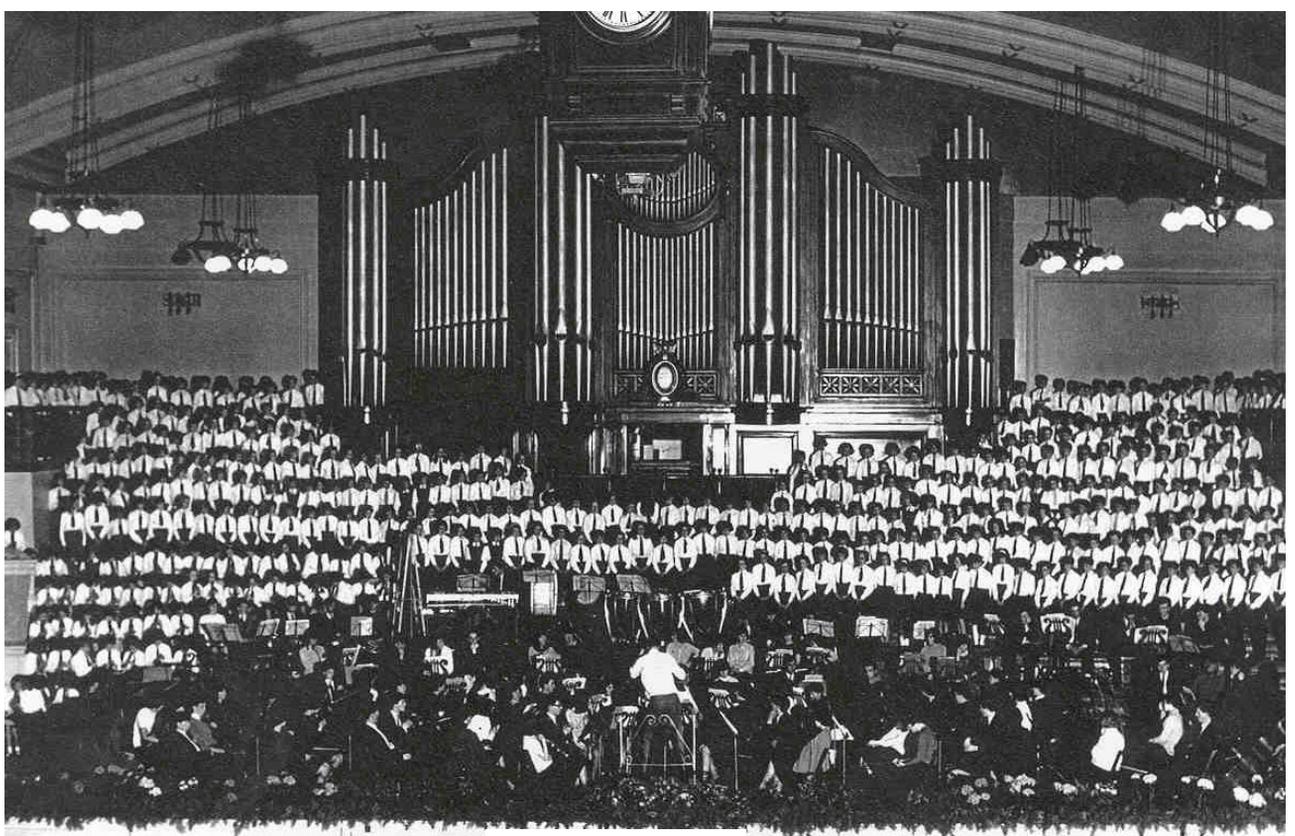
For them the conditions which permitted the enormities of the last war are history but they clearly appreciate Tippett's passionate protest against injustice and his consolatory optimism and faith in humanity's potential for goodness and decency. They sang with an intelligent liveliness which belied their youth and inexperience, dealing valiantly with the awkward accents and wicked cross-rhythms. By way of relaxation they intoned the measures of the Chorale—like spirituals with a warm religious fervour, remembering the composer's injunction to "swing" it a little. It was a performance which proclaimed Tippett's natural control of emotional tensions and a grasp of spiritual fundamentals which override questions of time and location. In short, a very creditable effort. The soloists, all of them students at the Royal College of Music, were Glenda Russell (soprano), Kathleen Pring (contralto), James Griffett (tenor), Lionel Fawcett (bass).

Shaun Dillon's "Divertimento for string orchestra," which won him the first prize in the festival's composition section, was included in the programme, conducted by Eric Pinkett, director of the County School of Music. It is a commendable piece of graceful writing.

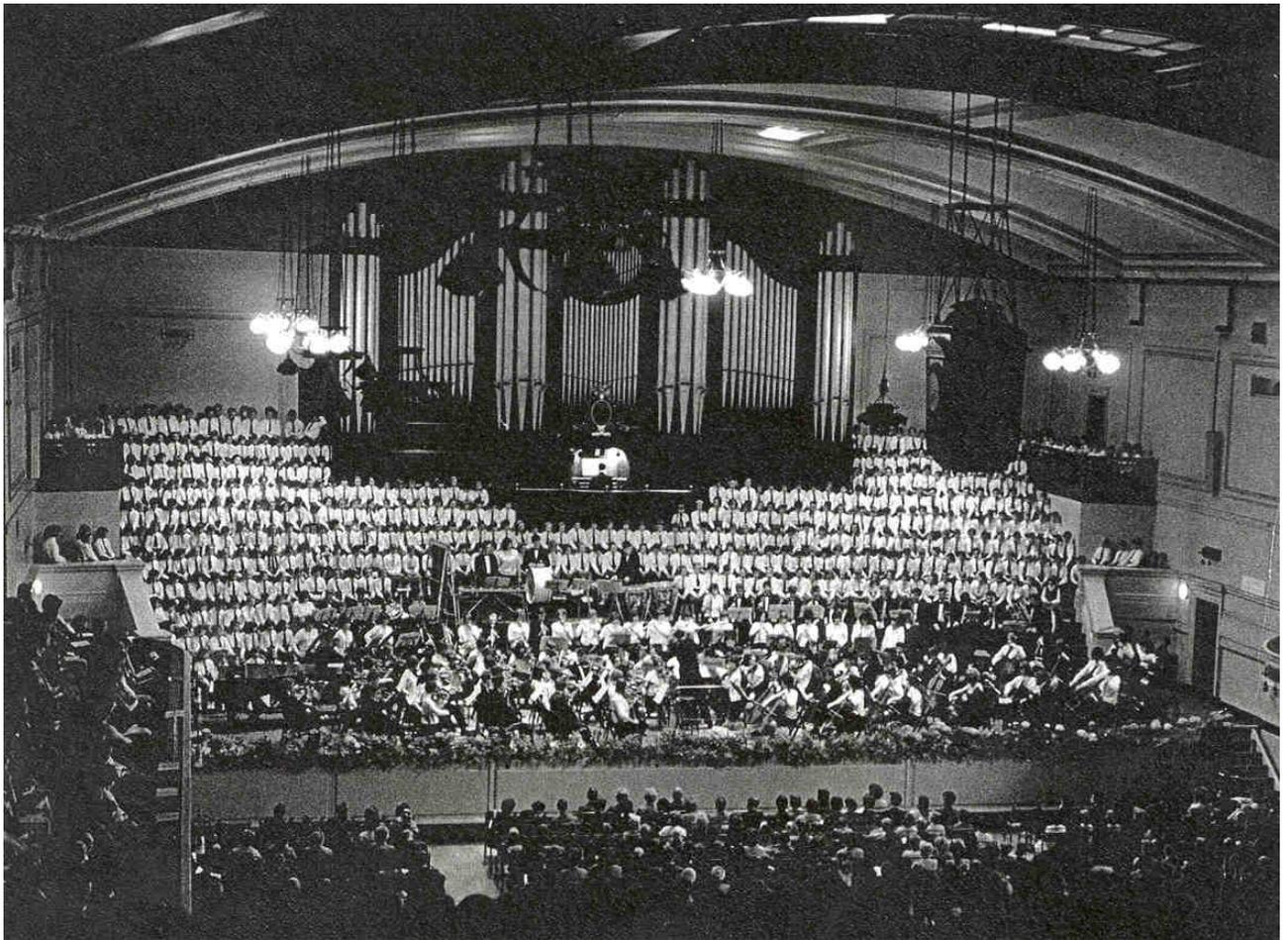
The Guardian  
May 1965



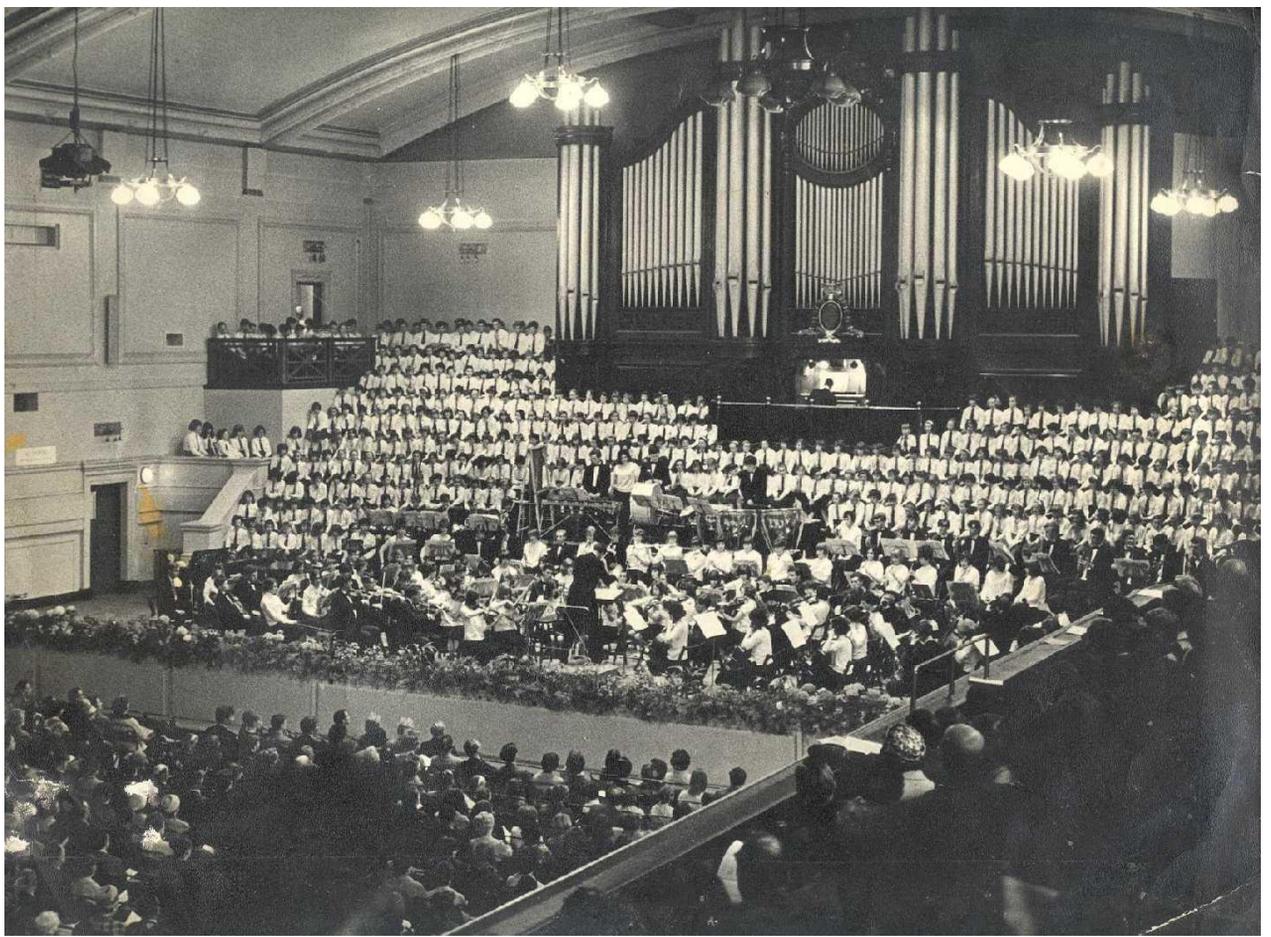
Rehearsals in Corsham with Sir Michael Tippett in 1965



Final rehearsal



The 1965 Music Festival, De Montfort Hall, Leicester



The 1965 Music Festival, De Montfort Hall, Leicester

# County Schools Orchestra For Bath Festival

LEICESTERSHIRE Schools Symphony Orchestra will tomorrow become the first orchestra of its kind to play at the Bath Festival.

Their patron, Sir Michael Tippett — one of the festival's three new directors — will conduct and the programme will include the first performance of his own "Interlude" which eventually will form part of a suite specially written for Leicestershire, of which the prelude and epilogue are already in the orchestra's repertoire.

Charles Ives's "Three Places in New England" will reflect Sir Michael's current interest in American music's father-figure and his basic fondness for jazz accounts for his choice of Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" and Constant Lambert's "Rio Grande." Sir Michael has said that his present approach to composition embraces what he calls a re-exploration of the "blues."

## Soloist

The Young Composer Richard Rodney Bennett will be the piano soloist in both these works. But when it comes to rehearsal time, he, Sir Michael, the orchestra and the Leicestershire Schools choir, who will sing in Rio Grande, will yield to another manifestation of Americana. The concert takes place in Bath's Forum Cinema which on Saturday afternoons is given over irrevocably to bingo. So the Leicestershire contingent travel today to be ready for tomorrow morning's run-through.

The Schools Orchestra will soon be represented on another LP record. A chamber group of young musicians is to repeat for one side of the disc a performance (shown on ITV recently) of "Dead in Tune" — a music fantasy for young viewers, with a text written and spoken by Robin Ray and music by Bert Chappell.

The reverse side will appeal similarly to the young. Bert Chappell is again the composer and the words are by John Kershaw of Thames TV, who was concerned with the very first television programme in which the County School of Music was featured. — R.A.P.

Leicester Mercury  
June 1969

ACCENT on youth at the Bath Festival: Sir Michael Tippett on Saturday evening conducted the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra and Chorus in modern British and American music; and yesterday afternoon, Colin Davis, the other musician member of the Festival's directorate, conducted the BBC Training Orchestra in a more sophisticated programme of Mozart, Haydn, Ravel, and Stravinsky.

Tippett's programme might have been designed expressly to contradict everything that the Menuhin era at Bath has stood for. As at the opening concert a week earlier, the music of Charles Ives was prominent, shatteringly wild yet beautiful in "Putnam's Camp." This devotion to Ives provided a clear pointer

to the new piece that Tippett himself had composed for the occasion, an *Interlude to go with a Prologue and Epilogue* written for the orchestra some four years ago, when he first became associated with it. The canon "Great Tom is Cast" keeps coming in, Ives-like, bold with heavy brass, piercing heavy clouds of notes. Though I failed to detect the promised part for electric guitar, it was a riot for everyone, not least for Sir Michael himself as conductor.

He gives himself with such intensity in his music-making that these wonderfully responsive children almost unfailingly return the compliment. His is not the quick professionalism such as electrifies Britten's work at Aldeburgh. Where Britten moves mountains overnight, Tippett is slower.

But Tippett, like Britten, can go true as an arrow to the emotional core of music quite alien from his own. So with Richard Rodney Bennett, another composer-interpreter, as a superb piano soloist Tippett directed a moving performance of Constant Lambert's wickedly neglected "Rio Grande."

The Guardian  
June 1969

## 9.30 **ENCOUR** MUSIC NOW

The monthly review  
of what is happening in

### MUSIC NOW

The last programme  
of the current series

☆

### SIR MICHAEL TIPPETT

co-director of the Bath Festival,  
discusses its aims and conducts the  
Leicestershire Schools Symphony  
Orchestra in his new work  
*Interlude II*

Radio Times  
June 1969



1969 Bath Festival June 13-29

Artistic Directors :

Sir Michael Tippett/Colin Davis/Jack Phipps

Saturday 21 June at 6 pm

The Forum

Leicestershire Schools Symphony  
Orchestra and Chorus  
conducted by Michael Tippett

Richard Rodney Bennett, piano  
Helen Attfield, contralto

*Richard Rodney Bennett*

Ives

Putnam's Camp

Copland

Quiet City

Lambert

The Rio Grande

*Interval*

Tippett

Divertimento: 'Sellinger's Round'

Gershwin

Rhapsody in Blue

Tippett

Prologue, Interlude and Epilogue \*  
*(\* first public performance of Interlude)*

*Helen Attfield*

*Michael Tippett*

The chorus is drawn from Ashby-de-la-Zouch  
Girls' Grammar School and Boys' Grammar School,  
Longslade Upper School, Birstall and Lutterworth  
Grammar School.



**CHELTENHAM  
FESTIVAL  
3-12 July  
1970**

The jolliest, most rousing, not to say rowdy, concert of the week was that of the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra, which tackled brilliantly, though of course not impeccably, the complex score of Sir Arthur Bliss's Piano Concerto under the guidance of the composer, while Frank Wibaut revelled in the unabashed bravura and romantic cantilena of the keyboard writing. The rest of the concert was conducted by Sir Michael Tippett, who, in one way and another, both here and in London, has emerged as musical hero of the week.

Having appeared on the previous evening in a "Meet the Composer" programme at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, he was returning thence in the small hours when he was involved as passenger in a serious road accident, from which he emerged shaken but mercifully unharmed. Without a word, he thereupon made his way to Cheltenham, took the three-hour afternoon rehearsal, conducted a long concert (with an encore of Ives' riotous "Circus Band") and did not even dinch from a "Composer in Person" appearance at 11 p.m. after the concert. Who else could have done it? Dame Ethel Smyth, perhaps.

The Ives piece, together with his naively solemn Ninetieth Psalm (ferently sung by the Schola Cantorum of Oxford) and Gershwin's zippy "Rhapsody in Blue" (polished off with huge gusto by Wibaut), brought America vividly to our doorstep at last; and the concert ended with the first complete performance of the hero's own "Shires Suite," written at intervals for these young performers, which makes varied and subtle play with canons composed by others (from Byrd to Goehr) and concludes with a moving version of Byrd's "Non nobis, Domine," contained within a glowing envelope of orchestral tone.

Sunday Times  
July 1970

# Famous composers conduct young musicians

Last night at Cheltenham Festival was a gala occasion for the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra, who gave a lively and vivid concert at the Town Hall, under the direction of Sir Arthur Bliss and Sir Michael Tippett. The young musicians, augmented in the choral works by the fine choir of the Schola Cantorum of Oxford, were clearly on their toes with excitement and enjoyed every minute of it. So did the audience.

Tippett's work with the Leicester Schools Orchestra is renowned, and his "Suiris Suite" has been written for them in stages over the past few years. Last night saw its first complete performance, under its composer's direction.

It is probably not generally known that Tippett came almost straight from hospital after a bad car accident the night before, and took a long and arduous rehearsal with the young players in the afternoon before conducting the evening concert.

His devotion was well rewarded. Both the orchestra and the choir gave him all they had got.

The work itself demands astonishing virtuosity from the players. It begins with a Prologue, with a fierce and lively opening for the orchestra which leads in the chorus setting of "Boomer is I-coomen in" against cheerful percussive ejaculations.

The slow Interlude I is brought in with some firm

brass chording, leading to a long slow chorale-like brass tune based on the canon "The Silver Swan."

## BONGO DRUMS

Strings take it up, still slower, and the percussion with bells and woodwind repeat it in measured, even slower note clusters. Bongo drums lead in the light-hearted hunting canon which follows—"Hey ho, to the Greenwood" which ends with shouts of "Tantivy" in a roaring climax with megaphones, and then dies suddenly away.

A drinking catch follows, with an amusing cork-out-of-bottle percussive opening, and gusts of cheerful laughter to end each verse.

The third canon is a slower and more serious one by Alexander Goehr to Blake's words: "The sword sung on the barren heath," with a small dialogue between trumpets and guitar echoing the song of death which is cancelled by the swinging sound of the sickle "which will not yield."

## VERY FAST

The second interlude is very fast and difficult, with a repeated swift string motif, equally swift percussive interjections leading to a climatic ending with the gong reverberating on into silence for the last section, the beautiful little epilogue.

This moving small movement with its slow, upward-moving string tune beginning on a low B flat is grave and quiet and leads to the final canon, "Non Nobis Domine" which has a special significance for the Leicestershire schools.

The canon grows, with the orchestral motives all bound in together, to a massive climax, and then dies quietly away. The orchestra and choir gave the work a most spirited and heart-warming performance.

## BRILLIANT PIANIST

The rest of the concert was equally exciting. Frank Wibaut, a young pianist of 25 from London gave a brilliant virtuoso performance of Bliss's Piano Concerto in B flat. This is a full-blooded work in the great romantic concerto style, and this young pianist fully understood this, and produced lyric tone and feeling, great strength when needed and equally great restraint and quietude.

The young orchestra, under Sir Arthur's crisp and sparkling direction, rose to the occasion and matched their soloist with vitality and attack.

Frank Wibaut's second appearance of the evening was in Gerishwin's famous Rhapsody in Blue. This, too, sounded vivid and pulsing with excitement, and the orchestra almost matched the pianist's astonishingly subtle jazz hit. It was a tour de force for the soloist, especially after his prodigious performance in the Bliss Concerto.

## TWO WORKS BY CHARLES IVES

The Schola Cantorum began the evening with one of Charles Ives's best works—the small, fervent setting of Psalm XC. With organ and bells for accompaniment, they sang this well-shaped work with firm, strong conviction.

Ives's other piece for the evening was the orchestral setting of "The Circus Band," which works a lot better in this cheerful, hearty arrangement than as a song. It is eminently suitable for young people to perform, and both chorus and orchestra gave it lively and amusing treatment. It was so well received, that it was given a second performance.

Altogether a happy occasion in which youth took us all by storm.

**Berlin**  
**Kaiserwilhelmkirche**  
10 September 1969

**Dirigent:** Eric Pinkett

Banks of Green Willow  
Trompetenkoncert  
Sinfonische Metamorphosen  
über Themen von Weber

*Butterworth*  
*F. X. Richter*

*Hindemith*

**Pause**

Ouverture: 'Sancho Panza'  
'Sellingier's Round'  
Brigg Fair

*Brian Kelly*  
*Michael Tippett*  
*Delius*

**Berlin**  
**Philharmonie (Schulkonzert)** 12 September 1969

**Dirigent:** Sir Michael Tippett  
**Solist:** Richard Rodney Bennett

'Russlan und Ludmilla'  
Trompetenkoncert  
Sinfonische Metamorphosen  
über Themen von Weber

*Glinka*  
*F. X. Richter*

*Hindemith*

**Pause**

Rhapsody in Blue  
'Sellingier's Round'  
Schottische Tänze

*Gershwin*  
*Michael Tippett*  
*Iain Hamilton*

**Berlin**  
**Philharmonie (öffentliches Konzert)**  
13 September 1969

**Dirigent:** Sir Michael Tippett  
**Solist:** Richard Rodney Bennett  
**Chor:** Berliner Konzert Chor

Sinfonische Metamorphosen  
über Themen von Weber  
Brigg Fair  
Putnam's Camp

*Hindemith*  
*Delius*  
*Ives*

**Pause**

Quiet City  
Rhapsody in Blue  
Prolog, Intermezzo und Epilog

*Aaron Copland*  
*Gershwin*  
*Michael Tippett*

**Hannover**  
**Theater am Aegi** 15 September 1969

**Dirigent:** Sir Michael Tippett  
**Solist:** Richard Rodney Bennett  
**Chor:** Der Niedersächsischen Singkreis

'Russlan und Ludmilla'  
Trompetenkoncert  
Sinfonische Metamorphosen  
über Themen von Weber

*Glinka*  
*F. X. Richter*

*Hindemith*

**Pause**

Rhapsody in Blue  
Putnam's Camp  
Prolog, Intermezzo und Epilog

*Gershwin*  
*Ives*  
*Michael Tippett*

**Gelsenkirchen**  
**Hans-Sachs-Hans Grosser Saal** 16 September 1969

**Dirigent:** Sir Michael Tippett  
**Solist:** Richard Rodney Bennett  
**Chor:** Der Junge Chor der Stadt  
Bochum und die VHS Chorgruppen Gelsenkirchen

'Russlan und Ludmilla'  
Trompetenkoncert  
Sinfonische Metamorphosen  
über Themen von Weber

*Glinka*  
*F. X. Richter*

*Hindemith*

**Pause**

Rhapsody in Blue  
Putnam's Camp  
Prolog, Intermezzo und Epilog

*Gershwin*  
*Ives*  
*Michael Tippett*

**Köln**  
**Gymnasium Kreuzgasse** 17 September 1969

**Dirigent:** Sir Michael Tippett  
**Solist:** Richard Rodney Bennett  
**Chor:** Chor'61

'Russlan und Ludmilla'  
Trompetenkoncert  
Sinfonische Metamorphosen  
über Themen von Weber

*Glinka*  
*F. X. Richter*

*Hindemith*

**Pause**

Rhapsody in Blue  
Putnam's Camp  
Prolog, Intermezzo und Epilog

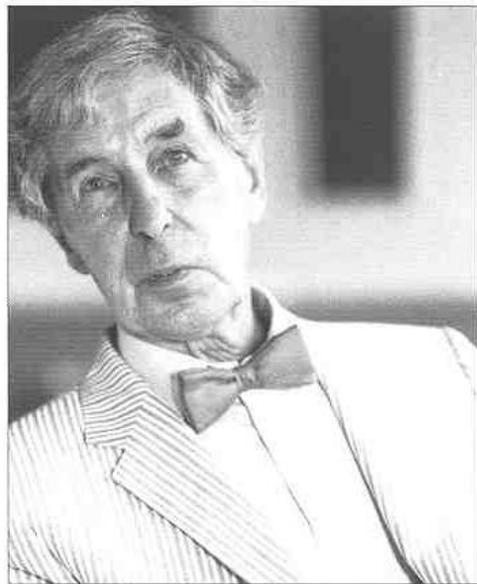
*Gershwin*  
*Ives*  
*Michael Tippett*

LSSO Tour of Germany 1969

Eric Pinkett rightly became a legend in the history of music education. His work in Leicestershire has been emulated by many Local Education Authorities since. In his book *Time to Remember* published on the 21st Anniversary of the County School of Music, he describes the beginnings of the first orchestra which Malcolm Fletcher joined on the first day. Pinkett writes "Thus in May 1948 there began the Saturday morning routine, which has continued without pause for these 21 years. There were about 60 players, mostly strings, with only one cellist and very few violas, one flute, one oboe and a host of brass wind..... week by week, I added fresh members to the orchestra, just as soon as they could blow or scrape well enough to make a tolerable sound" (*Time to Remember*). The Saturday morning tradition continues 50 years on with ten bands and orchestras, ballet and dance groups, Indian music and Dance, Steel Pans and Youth Theatre groups reflecting the wider brief of the organisation now known as Leicestershire and Leicester Arts in Education.

Pinkett found instruments in junk shops, friends' attics and by advertising in the press. We still have some of those instruments, added more over time through the good offices of the LEA and fund raising and of course the National Lottery. Pinkett's County Youth Orchestra soon made more than a 'tolerable sound'. Under his conductorship, the players achieved excellence both nationally and in Europe where the orchestra went on many successful tours. Many famous conductors and composers worked with the orchestra over the years and extended the range and quality of the musical experience for young people in Leicestershire. They included Sir Adrian Boult, Douglas Cameron, George Weldon, Norman Del Mar, Andre Previn and, above all, the late Sir Michael Tippett who worked with the Orchestra in the 1960s and continued to be its patron until his death in 1998.

Sir Michael Tippett



Stewart Mason, Pinkett's Director of Education, was an ardent supporter of the County School of Music and went on tours with the orchestra. In a postscript in *Time to Remember*, he writes: "What a great day it was when past members of the County School of Music after finishing their higher education in music started coming back to teach in our schools... We have seen over these 21 years, the musical life of the County at every level getting richer and richer - and at every level the programme becoming more ambitious and more creative." In 1998 there are ex members of past orchestras still teaching as peripatetic instrumental teachers and music teachers in Leicestershire schools. In 1976, Eric Pinkett finally retired. After such an inspiring reign, his successor had to be special. Andrew Fairbairn, Director of Education from 1971 - 1984, takes up the story.

Eric Pinkett's last great accomplishment was the easy integration of the City of Leicester's bands and orchestras into the Leicestershire School of Music because of the reorganisation of Local Government in 1974. Such was the County School of Music's reputation nationally and internationally that the process was appreciated as being in the best interest of children and students.

1977 - 1984

With the great support of Nathan Harris, Chairman of the Leicestershire Education Committee in 1977, we were fortunate to appoint Peter Fletcher. Peter was then Chairman of the Dalhousie University's Music Faculty in Nova Scotia, and before that had been Staff Inspector for Music in the Inner London Education Authority. His recruitment of a first rate band of peripatetic instrumental teachers, the introduction of much contemporary repertoire, of Douglas Young as Composer in Residence, major overseas tours, concerts in St. John's Smith Square, recordings etc., and tireless development of the School of Music to a new pitch of excellence was legendary. Peter brought into focus the choral side of music which had tended to be obscured by the powerful development of the instrumental and curriculum aspects of the work. His establishment of the Leicestershire Chorale as a teachers' choir and of the Loughborough Singing Week are examples. He may have been a thorn in the flesh of the office, but the results until his move to be Principal of the Welsh College of Music & Drama in 1984, were outstanding and second to none in Great Britain.

To follow the Pinkett era, I reckoned that it was important to select someone charismatic, but different in character and approach; someone with excellent musical credentials, wide experience of music education and who would make an immediate rapport with students and insist on the highest possible standards. I wanted someone who would maintain and enhance the Leicestershire Schools' Symphony Orchestra's and the School of Music's reputation as the best in the United Kingdom.

**Peter Fletcher**



**Andrew Fairbairn, Director of Education from 1971 - 1984**

## Stuart Johnson



Peter Fletcher left the School of Music in 1984. His successor did not have to be sought in far off regions, he was near at hand. Stuart Johnson was Peter's Vice Principal at the School of Music and Head of Strings. Keith Wood-Allum, Director of Education from 1984 -1994, decided that the continuation of the County tradition would on this occasion be best in the hands of a man who knew the system and who was a distinguished performer in his own right.



*Stuart Johnson was awarded an Associate Board scholarship to the Royal College of Music where he studied under Antonio Brosa, led all the major orchestras at the College, won the Tividar Nachez and W.H.Reed prizes and the Vaughan Williams and Countess of Munster awards and was presented by Irene Truman with a Ceruti violin. He later won a British Council/Spanish Embassy scholarship to study the violin in Spain.*

*Stuart Johnson has enjoyed a distinguished career as a soloist, conductor, teacher, and orchestral and chamber music player. In addition to appearances on TV and radio and in film work, he has played in several professional orchestras. He joined Leicestershire from the Hallé where he played under Sir John Barbirolli.*

*Stuart Johnson was Principal Music Adviser to Leicestershire and Principal of the School of Music from 1984 to 1993. As Musical Director and Principal Conductor of the LSSO he has conducted the Chamber Orchestra and the LSSO in the UK and abroad and at such prestigious events as International Singing Weeks, the Montepulciano and Cheltenham International Festivals. He continues to retain a close link with the Leicestershire Arts in Education Service.*

*Stuart Johnson and I shared a commitment to the continuing development of music in the County and a determination to broaden musical opportunities for young people. This resulted in greater emphasis on chamber music, rising numbers of students on Saturday mornings, the expansion of Indian and Afro-Caribbean music, schools concerts for more than 10,000 pupils a year, and a review of the LSSO repertoire and the format of Gala concerts.*

*Highlights of our nine years' association included the unveiling of a bust of Sir Michael Tippett commissioned by the Friends of the School of Music at a LSSO concert at Loughborough Town Hall to celebrate his 80th birthday; the LSSO inaugural concert at the Bath Festival when*

*Sir Michael conducted the orchestra in his Ritual Dances; and a triumphant concert in Strasbourg when I was able to eavesdrop on a French audience astounded at the accomplishment of such a young orchestra.*

*I should like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the valuable support of Leicestershire's Appeal for Music and the Arts, the Michael Tippett Bursary Foundation, the Friends and the Governors of the School of Music and the parents.*

*None of this would have been possible without the excellent work of the staff of the School of Music and Stuart Johnson's enthusiasm, commitment and ability. His retirement in 1993 was a great loss but it has afforded him the opportunity to develop his career as a performing musician and soloist. His reward is to see so many professional orchestral seats occupied by former LSSO players and the many more whose quality of life is enriched by the enjoyment of music making acquired during their years at the School of Music.*

**Keith Wood-Allum, Director of Education,  
1984-94.**

