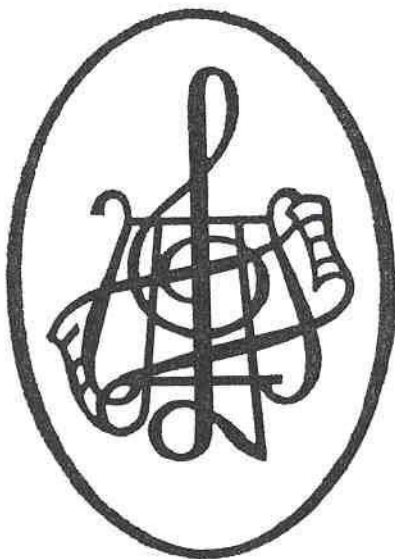


Background information about the  
Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra  
to accompany the  
Klassic Haus Restorations  
release of  
Tippett's  
A Child of Our Time  
conducted by  
Peter Fletcher



Leicestershire  
County School of Music

# **Sir Michael Tippett**

## **Some recollections of rehearsals and performances with the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra**

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.

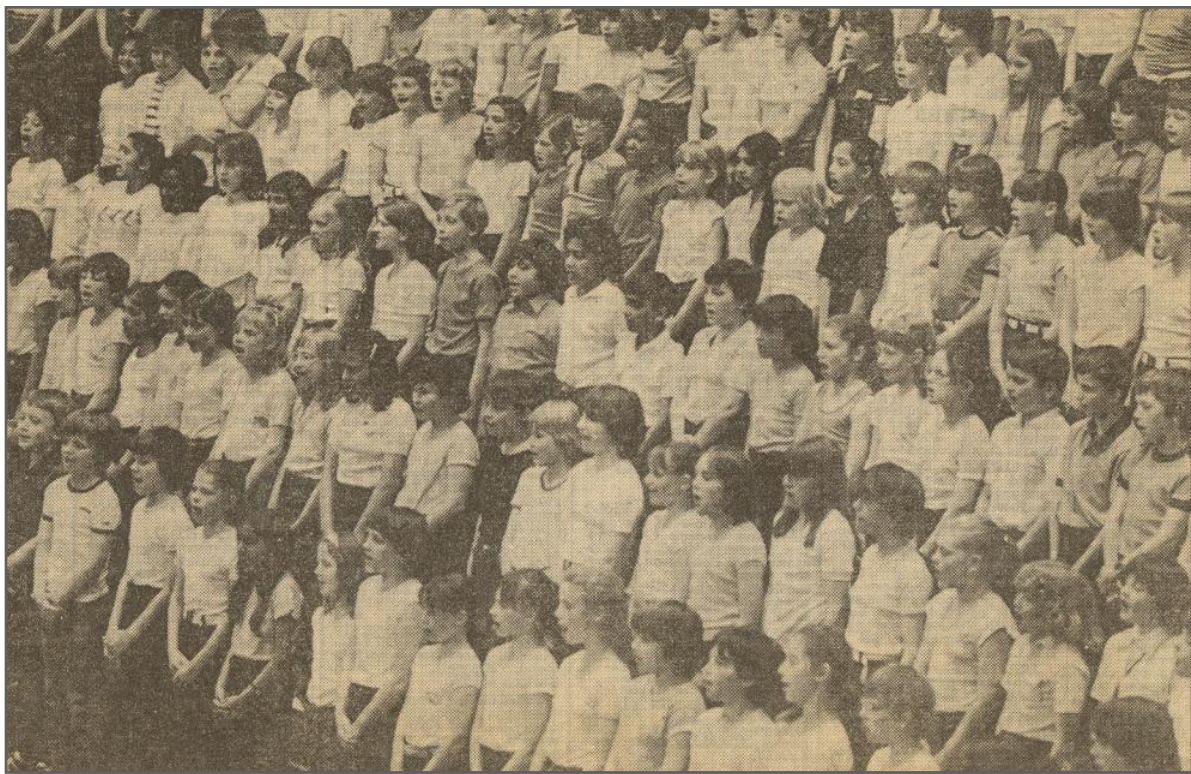
Sir Michael first became involved with the Leicestershire County School of Music in 1965 when he became patron of the Schools Music Festival and conducted two concerts at the De Montfort Hall, Leicester. The logistical problems in actually rehearsing for this festival were overcome by the orchestra travelling 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. Rehearsals in Corsham were focused on the Schools Festival programmes and included the preparation of a performance of *A Child of Our Time*. 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's *Cockaigne*, Holst's *Planets*, Michael's own *Concerto for Double String Orchestra* and *A Child of Our Time*. He also composed two new pieces for the occasion: *Prologue* and *Epilogue*. These short pieces were performed to open and close the festival and by 1970 had become the first and fifth movements of a completed work known as *The Shires Suite*.

The 1965 staging of *A Child of Our Time* was a huge undertaking, featuring as it did the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra and massed children's choirs. It's to Tippett's huge credit that he was prepared to attempt a piece such as this with a group of young musicians.

In August 1976, the *Europa Cantat* festival was hosted in Leicester. This is a major choral festival attracting choirs from all over Europe. The culmination of the 1976 event, *Europa Cantat 6*, was a performance of *A Child of Our Time* with Willi Gohl conducting the Leicestershire Schools Symphony Orchestra in the presence of the composer. The very make-up of the 200 strong chorus at Leicester De Montfort Hall that night was in a sense a fulfillment both of the compassionate nature of the oratorio and of the ideals of *Europa Cantat*. For here, side by side, were members of German choirs and of the Israel kibbutz choir to join in the singing of music whose composition was triggered off by a young Jewish refugee's killing of a German diplomat (it happened in 1938) and by the Nazi programme of revenge which followed.

The 1965 and 1976 performances were not recorded for posterity. The performance featured on this CD was given as part of the 1982 Leicestershire Schools Choral Festival in De Montfort Hall, Leicester. The chorus was made up of choirs drawn from various schools in the county of Leicestershire and the adult singers of the Leicestershire Chorale conducted by Peter Fletcher.



Section of the spectacular chorus of 350 young voices on stage at the De Montfort Hall, Leicester, last night, for the Leicestershire Schools' Choral Festival.

The 1982 performance



# Boost for the county's musical significance

**T**HE 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.

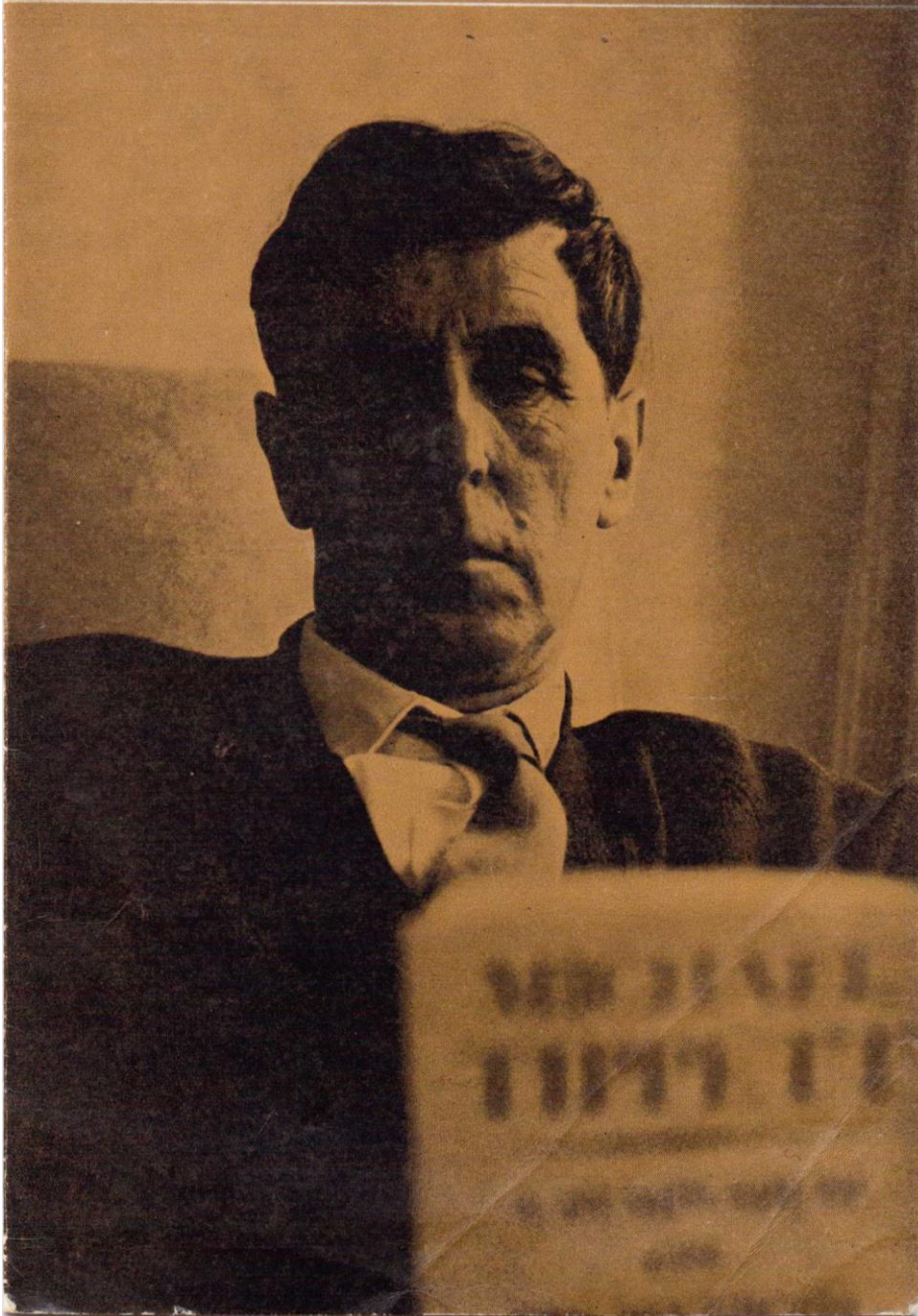
"This way, Mr. Tippett", he said, directing the composer's footsteps away from the juniors' amiable cacophony. "The senior orchestra's rehearsal hall is further on".

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	

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

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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**

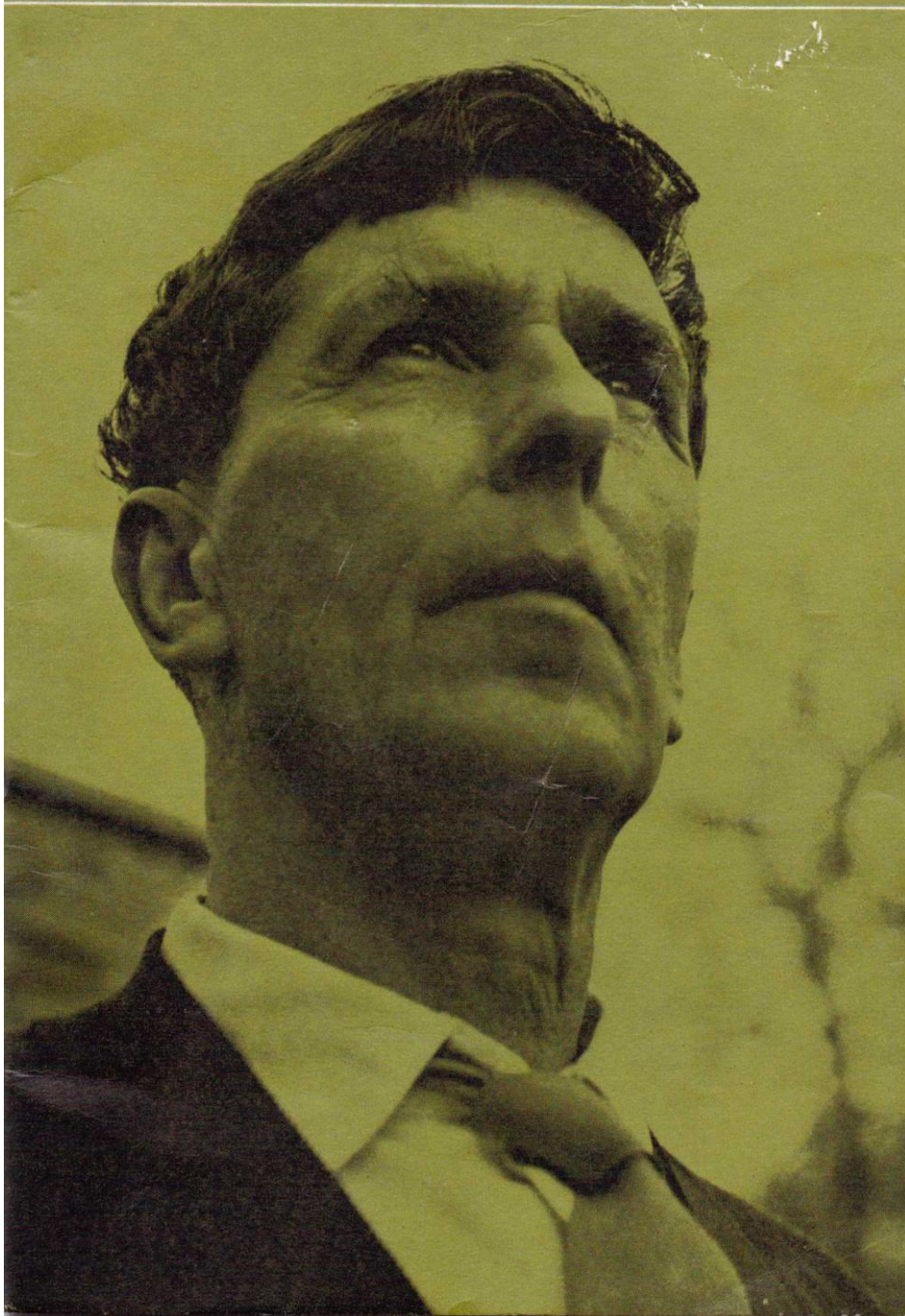
Tenors and basses for the Prologue are from  
**Longslade Grammar School, Birstall** and  
**Beauchamp Grammar School, Oadby.**



*Leicestershire  
Schools Festival  
of Music*

*Michael Tippett*

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 the 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 "Sooner 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 no one clapped more vigorously than the beaming army of primary school choristers.

—R.A.P.



Leicester Mercury  
May 1965



# Eleven plus Festival

**L**EICESTERSHIRE 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

**A**SSEMBLED 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.

**H**OWEVER, 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 Boult), 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

**W**ITH 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.

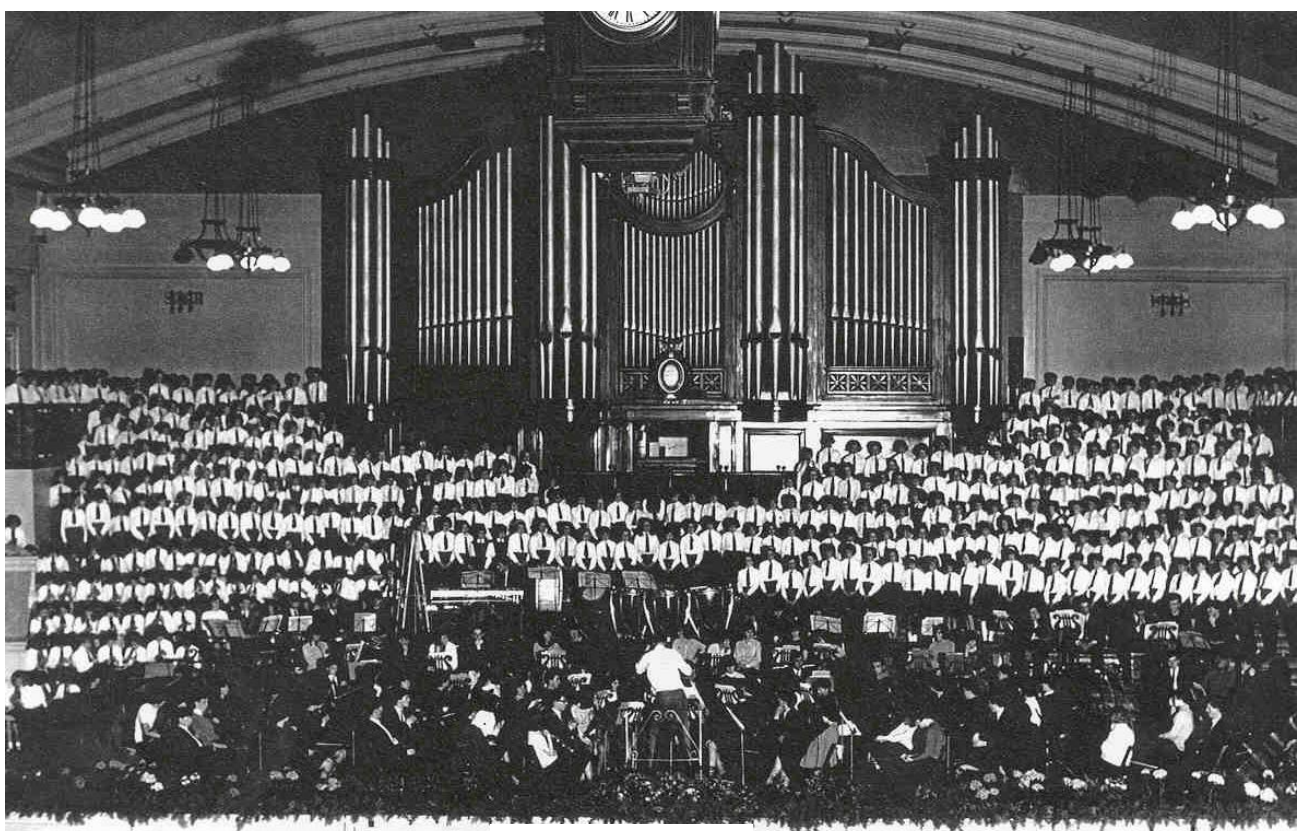
The Guardian  
May 1965



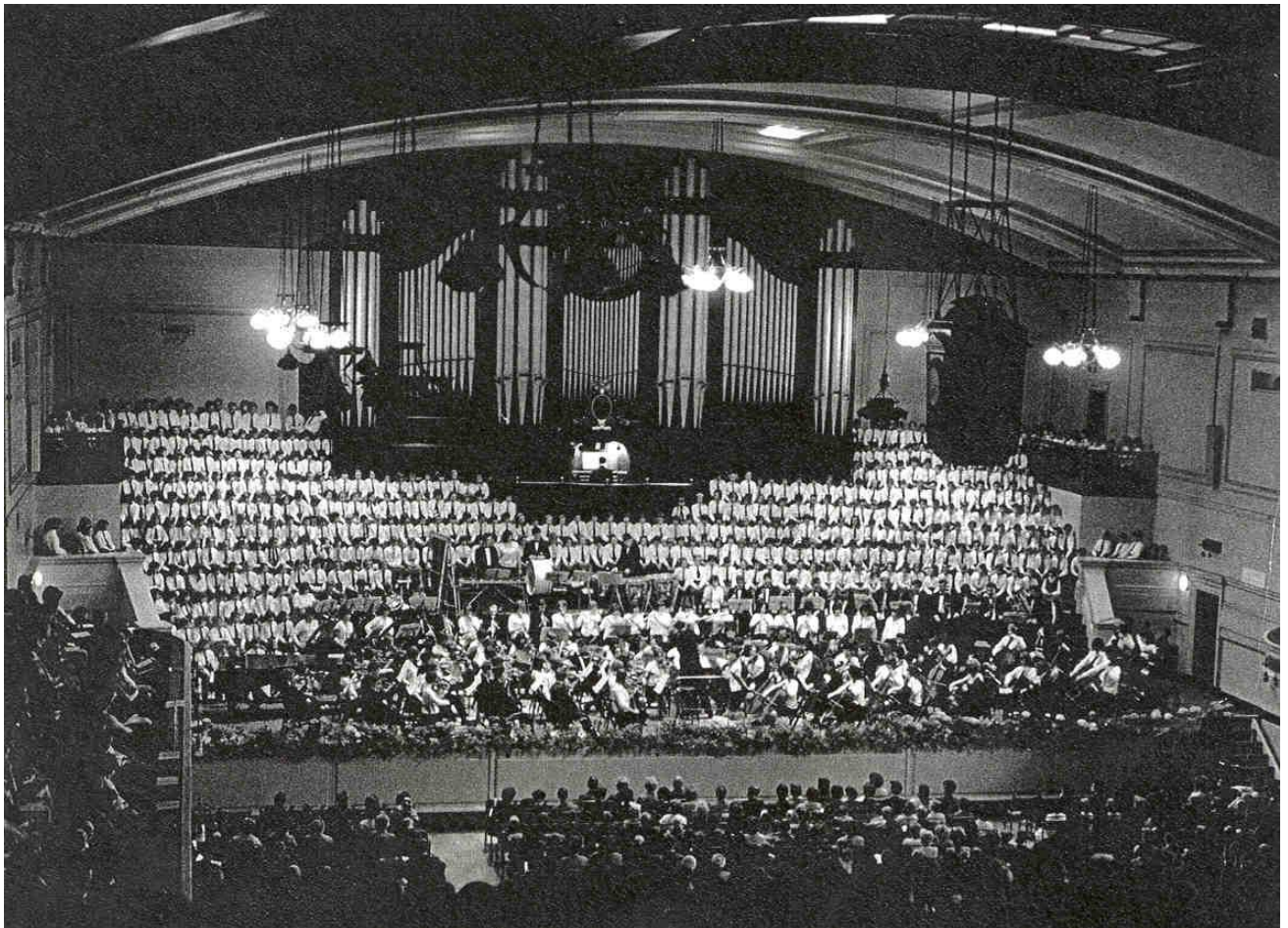


Rehearsals in Corsham with Sir Michael Tippett in 1965





Final rehearsal



The 1965 Music Festival, De Montfort Hall, Leicester





The 1965 Music Festival, De Montfort Hall, Leicester



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**



# Libretto – *A Child of Our Time* by Sir Michael Tippett

## PART I

### CHORUS

The world turns on its dark side.

It is winter.

The Argument

### ALTO

Man has measured the heavens

with a telescope,

driven the gods from their thrones.

But the soul,

watching the chaotic mirror,

knows that the gods return.

Truly, the living god consumes

within and turns the flesh to cancer.

Scene

### CHORUS

Is evil then good?

Is reason untrue?

### ALTO

Reason is true to itself;

But pity breaks open the heart.

### CHORUS

We are lost.

We are as seed before the wind.

We are carried

to a great slaughter.

### BASS (Narrator)

Now in each nation

there were some cast out

by authority and tormented,

made to suffer for the general wrong.

Pogroms in the east,

lynching in the west;

Europe brooding

on a war of starvation,

And a great cry went up from the people.

### CHORUS OF THE OPPRESSED

When shall the usurers city cease,

And famine depart from the fruitful land?

### TENOR

I have no money for my bread;

I have no gift for my love.

I am caught between

my desires and their frustration

as between the hammer and the anvil.

How can I grow

to a man stature?

## SOPRANO

How can I cherish my man  
in such days,  
or become a mother  
in a world of destruction?  
How shall I feed my children  
on so small a wage?  
How can I comfort them when I am dead?

## A Spiritual

### CHORUS & SOLOISTS

Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus;  
Steal away, steal away home  
I ain't got long to stay here.  
My Lord, He calls me,  
He calls me by the thunder,  
The trumpet sounds within-a my soul,  
I ain't got long to stay here.

Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus;  
Steal away, steal away home  
I ain't got long to stay here.

Green trees a-bending,  
poor sinner stand a-trembling,  
The trumpet sounds within-a my soul,  
I ain't got long to stay here.

Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus;  
Steal away, steal away home  
I ain't got long to stay here.

## PART II

### CHORUS

A star rises in mid-winter.  
Behold the man!  
The scapegoat!  
The child of our time.

### BASS (The Narrator)

And a time came  
when in the continual persecution  
one race stood for all.

### DOUBLE CHORUS

#### PERSECUTORS, PERSECUTED

Away with them!  
Curse them! Kill them!  
They infect the state.  
Where? How? Why?  
We have no refuge.

### BASS (The Narrator)

Where they could,  
they fled from the terror,  
And among them a boy escaped secretly, and  
was kept in hiding in a great city.



## CHORUS OF THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS

We cannot have them in our Empire.  
They shall not work,  
nor beg a dole.  
Let them starve  
in No-Mans-Land!

BASS (The Narrator)  
And the boys mother  
wrote a letter, saying:

Scene

MOTHER (Soprano)  
Oh my son! In the dread terror  
they have brought me near to death.

BOY (Tenor)  
Mother! Mother!  
Though men hunt me like an animal,  
I will defy the world to reach you.

AUNT (Alto)  
Have patience.  
Throw not your life away in futile sacrifice.

UNCLE (Bass)  
You are as one against all.  
Accept the impotence  
of your humanity.

BOY (Tenor)  
No! I must save her.

A Spiritual

CHORUS & SOLOISTS  
Nobody knows the trouble I see, Lord,  
Nobody knows like Jesus.  
Oh brothers, pray for me,  
Oh brothers, pray for me,  
And help me to drive  
Old Satan away.  
Nobody knows the trouble I see, Lord,  
Nobody knows like Jesus.  
Oh mothers, pray for me,  
Oh mothers, pray for me,  
And help me to drive  
Old Satan away.  
Nobody knows the trouble I see, Lord,  
Nobody knows like Jesus.

Scene

BASS (The Narrator)  
The boy becomes desperate in his agony.

ALTO  
A curse is born.  
The dark forces threaten him.

BASS (The Narrator)  
He goes to authority.  
He is met with hostility.

ALTO  
His other self rises in him,  
demonic and destructive.

BASS (The Narrator)  
He shoots the official—

ALTO  
But he shoots only his dark brother  
And see  
he is dead.

BASS (The Narrator)  
They took a terrible vengeance.

The Terror

CHORUS  
Burn down their homes!  
Beat in their heads!  
Break them in pieces on the wheel!

BASS (The Narrator)  
Men were ashamed  
of what was done.  
There was bitterness and horror.

A Spiritual of anger

CHORUS & BASS  
Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt land;  
Tell old Pharaoh,  
to let my people go.  
When Israel was in Egypt's land,  
Let my people go.  
Oppressed so hard they could not stand,  
Let my people go.  
"Thus spake the Lord",  
bold Moses said,  
Let my people go.  
"If not, I'll smite your first-born dead",  
Let my people go.  
Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt land;  
Tell old Pharaoh,  
to let my people go.

The boy sings in his Prison

BOY (Tenor)  
My dreams are all shattered  
in a ghastly reality.  
The wild beating of my heart  
is stilled: day by day.  
Earth and sky are not  
for those in prison.



Mother! Mother!

MOTHER (Soprano)

What have I done to you, my son?  
What will become of us now?  
The springs of hope are dried up.  
My heart aches in unending pain.

ALTO

The dark forces rise like a flood.  
Men's hearts are heavy:  
they cry for peace.

A Spiritual

CHORUS & SOPRANO

Oh, by and by, by and by,  
I'm going to lay down my heavy load.  
I know my robe's going to fit me well,  
I tried it on at the gates of hell.  
Oh, hell is deep and a dark despair,  
Oh, stop, poor sinner, and don't go there!  
Oh, by and by, by and by,  
I'm going to lay down my heavy load.

### PART III

CHORUS

The cold deepens.  
The world descends  
into the icy waters  
where lies the jewel of great price.

ALTO

The soul of man  
is impassioned like a woman.  
She is old as the earth,  
beyond good and evil,  
the sensual garments.  
Her face will be illumined like the sun.  
Then is the time of his deliverance.

Scene

BASS

The words of wisdom are these:  
Winter cold means inner warmth,  
the secret nursery of the seed.

CHORUS

How shall we have patience  
for the consummation of the mystery?  
Who will comfort us  
in the going through?

BASS

Patience is born  
in the tension of loneliness.  
The garden lies beyond the desert.

#### CHORUS

Is the man of destiny master of us all?  
Shall those cast out be unavenged?

#### BASS

The man of destiny  
is cut off from fellowship.  
Healing springs from the womb of time.  
The simple-hearted shall exult in the end.

#### CHORUS

What of the boy, then?  
What of him?  
He, too, is outcast,  
his manhood broken  
in the clash of powers.  
God overpowered him—  
the child of our time.

#### GENERAL ENSEMBLE

#### TENOR

I would know  
my shadow and my light,  
so shall I at last be whole.

#### BASS

Then courage, brother,  
dare the grave passage.

#### SOPRANO

Here is no final grieving,  
but an abiding hope.

#### ALTO

The moving waters renew the earth.  
It is spring.

(Chorus repeats the words  
of the soloists)

#### A Spiritual

#### CHORUS & SOLOISTS

Deep river,  
my home is over Jordan.  
Deep river, Lord,  
I want to cross over into camp-ground.  
Oh chill! Oh don't you want to go,  
To that gospel feast,  
That promised land,  
That land where all is peace?  
Walk into heaven,  
and take my seat,  
And cast down my crown  
at Jesus' feet.  
Deep river,  
my home is over Jordan,  
I want to cross over into camp-ground,  
Lord!