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The English Voice of the Mid-Twentieth Century: Ferrier, Deller and Pears

by

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ABSTRACT

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THE ENGLISH VOICE OF THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY: FERRIER, DELLER, PEARS

Xin Ying Ch'ng

This thesis explores how the reception of Kathleen Ferrier, Alfred Deller and Peter Pears's voices gave new insights into the constructions of national musical identity in mid-twentieth century Britain. I highlight how an exploration of the 'national voice' constitutes both an idealisation of musical sound and national belonging. Through voice, I offer not only a new methodological approach to the question of musical nationalism, but also an understanding of its embodiment through concepts of gender and sexuality. In my first chapter, I identify how the drive for a distinct English musical identity is ultimately a manifestation of the need for a 'national voice'. This figures prominently in the mid-twentieth century where the musical careers of Ferrier and Deller were built on precedents of the past: Ferrier on Clara Butt and Deller on Purcell. The second chapter addresses how both Ferrier's and Deller's voices embodied gender and sexual mismatches between their onstage roles and offstage bodies in performances of opera. In the third chapter, reviews of both Deller's and Pears's performances highlighted discrepancies between ideals of sexuality with their voices, that pointed to underlying tensions of homosexuality and effeminacy in the broader national and cultural landscape. The last chapter demonstrates that the BBC's broadcasts of these singers' voices were done in promotion of a collective sense of national aural identity. These three singers' voices navigated the stratification of tastes evident during the BBC's early years. Pears and Deller characterised the emergence of elitist ideals that were clearly advocated in the Third Programme, while Ferrier's voice challenged the classification of highbrow/lowbrow distinctions in broadcast culture. Through analysis of the national tropes and claims written about their voices, I offer a new approach to music history and a chance of national vocal redress for Britain's musical future.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Xin Ying Ch'ng

declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

The English Voice of the Mid-Twentieth Century: Ferrier, Deller and Pears

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
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3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
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Definitions and Abbreviations

Primary Sources

MDS - Mark Deller Scrapbook

Places

BBC - British Broadcasting Corporation

BPF - Britten-Pears Foundation Library, Aldeburgh

WAC - BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham

Introduction

Since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, British musical identity has been fraught with a sense of loss and insecurity.[1] Writing in 1934, Vaughan Williams described the 'cigar' theory of music when speaking of England's musical climate, claiming 'that music is not an industry which flourishes naturally in our climate; that, therefore, those who want it and can afford it must hire it from abroad'.[2] Such musical anxiety underlined the cultural backdrop in Britain during the mid-twentieth century. This thesis stands at the crux of such a discourse and addresses how implications of a national voice were closely bound up with the constructions of national music identity and nationhood in Britain.

In this thesis, the understanding of such a national voice is explored through case studies of three mid-twentieth century art music singers: Kathleen Ferrier, Alfred Deller and Peter Pears, whose careers and voices were a crucial contribution to the cultivation and recognition of a national music identity. By mapping the reception of their voices, I am able to identify clearly various intersected elements that were crucial to the formation of national music identity in mid-twentieth-century Britain. According to MP William Johnson Galloway in 1902, the condition of Britain's musical achievement left much to be desired. He lamented, 'Things have come to such a pass that one may well wonder whether there is any room at all for an Englishman, and whether the time has not arrived for a voice to be raised on behalf of native artists and native art'.[3] Galloway's idea of a voice was essentially not just a physical voice, but a conscious sense of identity, used as a marker and support for national musical identity.

The mid-twentieth century was an era fraught with drastic shifts and significant social changes. For Britain, the fragmentation of the British Empire, the breaking down of social and gender boundaries, the rise of a new middlebrow culture, a preoccupation with the past and a deep-seated uncertainty with modernity were all symptoms of a nation in the

[1] See Nicholas Temperley, "Xenophilia in British Musical History," in *Nineteenth-Century British Music Studies*, ed. Bennett Zon (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999); Andrew Blake, *The Land Without Music: Music, Culture and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain*, ed. Peter J. Martin and Tia DeNora, Music and Society (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997).
[2] Ralph Vaughan Williams, *National Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 5.
[3] William Johnson Galloway, *The Operatic Problem* (London: John Long, 1902), 12; cited in Irene Morra, *Britishness, Popular Music, and National Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 2.

course of renegotiating its past and rebuilding its present.[4] Tensions between the old and the new were then not an uncommon theme for Britain in the mid-twentieth century: a country on the verge of rediscovering its place in the world after the British Empire and recovering after the losses of the Second World War. The rise of nationalism and particularly music nationalism in Britain during the late nineteenth to twentieth century has been seen as an effort to counter German musical hegemony, undoubtedly triggered by political motivations. Negative assessments of British music were partly due to pessimism on being overshadowed by what was dubbed as the 'great German tradition'. Predominantly made up of Austro-German composers, this tradition exposed the sense of uncertainty British composers felt in matching up against Continental composers accepted into the Western musical canon. Jack Allan Westrup in 1962 portrayed this insecurity by saying that from 1839 to 1914, 'there was in England no composer whom one would be able to match with Mendelssohn, Schumann, Wagner, Brahms, Berlioz or Verdi'.[5] Westrup's fear stemmed from a lack of national composers that Britain could claim as its own. The attribution of musical fitness according to the presence or absence of a well-known composer is a fundamental problem. Despite that, this rhetoric was extensively adopted and meant that for England, Purcell's death has been seen as a watershed, leaving a gap in British music historiography until Elgar came along 200 years later. Such a view not only disregards all other musical activities as secondary to composition but also presents an incomplete view of actual musical life in Britain.

The basing of British music historiography upon composers and composer-centered texts has significant consequences. It presents Britain as a country devoid of all musical aptitude while musical life in Britain suggests otherwise. Influenced by Germanocentric models of historiography, British music historians and musicologists have continued to be

[4] This is argued in many different forms and perspectives. From a literary point, see Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010); and Jed Esty, *Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), 1-22, where Esty argued for a relationship between the imperial contraction of Britain and English modernism in what he called as an 'anthropological turn'. From a musical point, Wiebe's book articulates how strongly Britten's music figures in Britain's postwar reconstruction efforts, Heather Wiebe, *Britten's Unquiet Pasts: Sound and Memory in Postwar Reconstruction*, Music since 1900 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012). On the other hand, Jenny Doctor analyses the tensions between modernist and traditional ideals in the programming of new music in the wartime Proms, Jenny Doctor, "The Parataxis of "British Musical Modernism"," *Musical Quarterly* 91, no. 1-2 (2008): 89-115.

[5] Jack Allen Westrup, "Die Musik von 1839 bis 1914 in England" (paper presented at the Bericht über den Internationalen Musikwissenschaftlichen Kongreß Kassel, 1962), 51; cited in Jürgen Schaarwächter, "Chasing a Myth and a Legend: 'The British Musical Renaissance' in a 'Land without Music'," *The Musical Times* 149, no. 1904 (2008): 53-60, 59.

preoccupied with an identification and search for distinct national music characteristics in the works of British composers.[6] There has been a strong need for these composers and their works to identify with a national idiom, one that embodied national authorship, belonging and identity – a national voice. Recent historians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century have since then adopted similar kinds of approach and strategy by locating a compositional national voice most notably in the period known as the English Musical Renaissance. This identified a period where the development of English music engaged not only composers, but performers, music critics and writers in a prominent discourse that seek to reimagined the nation's musical past in negotiation of its then present musical identity. This movement identified the compositional national voice in works through eminent British composers such as Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Britten to more recently, Birtwistle and Maxwell Davies. My contribution asserts that British music identity could instead be found in the models of singers and their voices, which leads to the reception of performers and their performances in the twentieth century. In this thesis, I attempt a new methodology for the discussion of nationalism and nationhood through music, which helps to revisit an old question in terms of looking through composition and musical styles, and proposes a new one through singers and their voices in the construction of a national musical identity.

Nationalism in Music

Nationalism concerns more than descriptions of nation. It is an ideology, a mind-set that inevitably sets and creates boundaries that are not necessary geo-political. It transcends the geographical and is inextricably bound to social and cultural concerns. Richard Taruskin describes it best when he depicts 'nationalism as an attitude', as opposed to nationality as a

[6] See Michael Trend, *The Music Makers: Heirs and Rebels of the English Musical Renaissance, Edward Elgar to Benjamin Britten* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1985); Alain Frogley, "'Getting Its History Wrong': English Nationalism and the Reception of Ralph Vaughan Williams," in *Music and Nationalism in 20th-Century Great Britain and Finland*, ed. Tomi Mäkelä (London: von Bockel Verlag, 1992), 145-61. Lewis Foreman went to the extent of listing the main stylistic elements that constitute 'Englishness' in compositions, see Lewis Foreman, "National Musical Character: Intrinsic or Acquired?," in *Music and Nationalism in 20th-Century Great Britain and Finland*, ed. Tomi Mäkelä (London: von Bockel Verlag, 1992), 65-85. The most recent entry to this list is David Maw, "'Phantasy Mania': Quest for a National Style," in *Essays on the History of English Music in Honour of John Caldwell*, ed. Emma Hornby and David Maw (Woodbridge, United Kingdom: The Boydell Press, 2010), 97-121.

condition.[7] Taruskin's definition demonstrates that constructions of a nation are less concerned with unifying similarities and characteristics, but more with the 'negotiation of the relationship between the political status of communities and the basis of their self-description, whether linguistic, ethnic (genetic/biological), religious, cultural or historical'.[8] It is through this evident and at times rather subtle negotiation of 'self' and 'other' that we see underlying concepts of nationalism. Music figures as a powerful component in elucidating these negotiations and constructions of nation and national tradition.

The power of nationalism as a concept was most evident in the nineteenth to twentieth century when formations between national state and borders were taking place. But the employment of music as a tool for political domination occurred in many guises from as early as the eighth century, most notably in the imposition of Gregorian chant in view of the Carolingian Empire. In the eighteenth century, both the 1752-54 *Querelle des Bouffons* (a battle between advocates of the Italian *intermezzo* and the French *tragédie*) and the Handelian oratorio (as a genre that reflected the patriotic fervour of eighteenth-century Britain) were symptomatic of how music was upheld as a reflection of nationalistic identity.[9] It was not until the later nineteenth century, however, that political nationalism was fostered consciously through music. A prime example of this is the voice of the chorus in Italian operas, enacting as a collective identity and envoicing an imagined nation united as part of the Italian Risorgimento.[10] This is especially prominent in the choral unison number 'Va, pensiero' from Verdi's *Nabucco* in 1842, which scholars have claimed was understood in significance to a newly unified Italy in the 1860s.[11] Other Verdian operatic choruses that portrayed the triumph of Italian nationalism as such were found in *I Lombardi* (1843) and *Ernani* (1844).

German political nationalism in the eighteenth century had roots in Johann Gottfried Herder's *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache* ('Treatise on the Origin of

[7] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Nationalism," by Richard Taruskin, accessed November 25, 2015, 2013, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/.
[8] Taruskin, "Nationalism."
[9] Ruth Smith, *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 202-10.
[10] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised ed. (London, New York: Verso, 1991), 6; for the idea of the collective voice of the chorus as a public realm, see Anthony Arblaster, *Viva la Libertà: Politics in Opera* (London: Verso, 1992), 4; cited in Richard Dellamora and Daniel Fischlin, eds., *The Work of Opera: Genre, Nationhood and Sexual Difference* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 3.
[11] Roger Parker, *Leonora's Last Act: Essays in Verdian Discourse* (Princeton Princeton University Press, 1997), 20-41.

Language', 1772). Herder promoted language as humanity's most autochthonous and authentic form of expression. This appropriated folklore and linguistic heritage in different art forms such as music, resulting in the identification of 'folkishness' or *Volkstümlichkeit* as part of its representation. Herder's anthology of folk song *Stimmen der Völker* ('Voices of the Peoples', 1778), the supposedly heavily edited Finnish epic *Kalevala*, Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha* and the later folk song revival in Britain were all manifestations of such a folk culture.[12] Further ideals corroborated the concept of *das Volk* through representation of the *lieder* and the ballad, for example, Goethe's *Erlkönig.* The popularity of Weber's Singspiel *Der Freischütz* (1821), with peasants elevated to status of main characters, was significant, providing an opportunity for nationalists to ascribe to it various political sentiments that were especially prominent in the cultural unification of Germany. Political and national ideologies were pronounced most evidently in Wagner's mature operatic works. *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (1876) and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (1845) both explicitly promoted Wagner's expression of racialist, exclusivist nationalism and both were later used as tools to advance ideologies of anti-Semitism.

National consciousness in Russian music started with what Taruskin calls the 'creative appropriation of folksong'.[13] Defined as a national composer, Glinka utilized folk song as a tool to rouse national consciousness among Russians as an imagined community and to promote his credibility as a Russian composer. National significance was especially prominent in the triumphant 'hymn march' or dynastic anthem that concluded Russia's first opera, Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* (1866). Its appreciation and wide reception justified the composition as musically progressive and elevated opinions upon Russian art despite the absence of actual employment of folkloristic elements. Nationalistic composers such as Balakirev and his 'mighty kuchka' (Musorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov and Borodin) were all strong advocates of the allegedly authentic and widely known Russian folkloric style found in invented and existing anthologies such as *L'vov-Pratsch*.

It is hence not difficult to see that concepts of nation and nationalism figured prominently as both subject and inspiration for many composers from different national backgrounds. The idea of the 'nation' serves as a powerful tool – wielded in order to assert cultural and musical value by extending and consolidating a sense of national pride and heritage beyond the imagined borders of the nation state. Such ideals of the nation

[12] Taruskin, "Nationalism."
[13] Taruskin, "Nationalism."

provided a means to understand or even feature works by composers such as Grieg, Dvořák, and Sibelius who were mainly portrayed as 'nationalist' composers or through nationally tinted lenses. However, such a way of understanding these composers' works implicitly cast their music as peripheral in a situation where the center included mainly Austro-German works. On the other hand, Italian and French music tended to get subsumed in the discourse of national styles within the European tradition, while Eastern European, Scandinavian or music from other countries are depicted as 'national' and removed from the center.[14]

In the case of Britain, its natural boundaries as an island kingdom helped explain Taruskin's assertion that 'post-Restoration Britain was perhaps the earliest nation-state to consider itself a natural community as well as a political one, and to find ideological support for that self-image outside the person of a sovereign'.[15] England has been considered as the first country where musical culture was sustained by modern concert life in a model that offered public, collective patronage of musicians. This distinction was advantageous, but according to Vaughan Williams, unable to be sustained in the musical life of the sovereign courts. Vaughan Williams claimed that domination of foreign musicians proliferated in courts of Charles II, and nationalist awareness was founded upon economic rather than cultural or spiritual means.[16] Despite Vaughan Williams's assertions, England's first wave of consciousness and claims for superiority as a nation were expressed in eighteenth-century scholars' readings and interpretation of Handel's oratorios. Ruth Smith's work shows how notions of political and religious authority were subscribed and interpreted through the oratorio in claims of the British as modern counterparts of the Jewish 'chosen people'.[17]

For Britain then in the eighteenth century and also later in the twentieth century, there was a particular need to 'enforce British nationalism through identifiably British art

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[14] In the particular case of Scandinavia, see Katharine Leiska, "The North as Self and the Other: Scandanavian Composers' Symphonies in German Concert Halls around 1900," in *Music, Longing and Belonging: Articulations of the Self and the Other in the Musical Realm*, ed. Magdalena Waligórska (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 57-60. Also Michael Murphy, Introduction to *Musical Constructions of Nationalism: Essays on the History and Ideology of European Musical Culture, 1800-1945*, ed. Harry White and Michael Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2001), 7, where Murphy portrays nationalism in music as a 'species of exoticism'.

[15] Taruskin, "Nationalism."

[16] Vaughan Williams, *National Music*, 54.

[17] Smith, *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought*, 52-53, 213-29; cited in Suzanne Aspden, "Ballads and Britons: Imagined Community and the Continuity of 'English' Opera," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 122, no. 1 (1997): 24-51, 27.

forms', namely the ballad, masque and the oratorio.[18] Despite that, not even the predominantly British oratorio could surpass what the folk-song revival in the late-nineteenth century could do for the inculcation of national musical consciousness and the English Musical Renaissance in Britain. The clear intersections between aspects of nation and voice have been distinct in the studies of nationalism and music. In Britain, the folk revival and discourse around the provenance of a native opera show identification of English singers, voices and vocal music as prime signifier of national musical identity.

Folk Music in British Music Identity

The growth of musical nationalism in Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has manifested through many different facets of musical culture. Activities of collecting and preserving traditional music, an interest in early music and the compositional movement of British composers often described as the 'English Musical Renaissance' were all efforts towards the cultivation of a national musical identity in Britain.

The voice has figured prominently in nationalist music rhetoric and discourse, frequently as a marker of authenticity in locating humanity's innate need for music. Vaughan Williams, one of the successors of the English Musical Renaissance, described the human voice as:

> the oldest musical instrument and through the ages it remains what it was, unchanged; the most primitive and at the same time the most modern, because it is the most intimate form of human expression.[19]

The voice offers more than just a means for expression of words, sound and meaning; it also maps on to our identification of innate humanity and authenticity. Here I explore how vocal works and the voice have featured in British music historiography. These vocal works constitute an important part of later discussions in the thesis, as these singers from my case studies, besides having played a huge role in promoting the repertory, ultimately were dependent on these works in order to establish their careers.

[18] Aspden, "Ballads and Britons," 49.
[19] Vaughan Williams, *National Music*, 102.

The nexus between nation and voice emphasizes the two constituents' inherent need for local roots and authenticity. Coherent with Herder's ideology of folk culture as autochthonous, folk song presents a way of solidifying voice as the locus of national identity. Vaughan William describes folk song as:

> an art which grows straight out of the needs of a people and for which a fitting and perfect form, albeit on a small scale, has been found by those people; an art which is indigenous and owes nothing to anything outside itself, and above all an art which to us today has something to say – a true art which has beauty and vitality in the twentieth century.[20]

Quotes such as this solidified the mythologising of folk song as a predominantly indigenous form, couching its supposed timelessness and vitality in national rhetoric. Cecil Sharp's emphatic response in 1906 to folk culture as an answer to Britain's loss of national music identity is another example:

> One reason why we have in England no national school of music is because we have so unaccountably neglected our folk-music…Little or no effort to repair this deficiency is made… at the music colleges.[21]

The resurgence of folk performing culture in Britain had its roots much earlier in the nineteenth century. However, the founding of the Folk Song Society in 1898 and the later English Folk Dance Society in 1911 by Cecil Sharp further solidified efforts from the previous century that were best viewed as dilettantism. However, ideas in the resuscitation of an indigenous folk culture, as means for a national and cultural reform in Britain were pervasive. For example, Hubert Parry's 1898 inaugural address for the founding of the Folk Song Society clearly portrayed folk song as a 'heritage to generations' where in 'may lie the ultimate solution to the problem of characteristic national art'.[22] Nevertheless, consolidation of folk song as a scholarship was made possible from the folk song collecting efforts of a few middle-class music enthusiasts. Among its most staunch advocators were Cecil Sharp and Percy Grainger, whose transcriptions of folk melodies

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[20] Vaughan Williams, *National Music*, 41.
[21] M. Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp: His Life and Work* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), 61; cited in Robert Stradling and Meirion Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance 1860-1940: Construction and Deconstruction*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2001), 74.
[22] Nendeln Liechtenstein, *Krauss Reprint* (1975), 1; cited in Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology and the English Folk Revival*, Music and Society (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 25.

became important resources and models of inspiration for later composers such as Vaughan Williams, George Butterworth and Benjamin Britten. The folk song 'revival' culminated in the establishment of the English Folk Dance and Song Society in 1932. In addition to that, the composition of art music based on folk melodies very much permeated compositional life in Britain, especially in the mid-twentieth century and during the English Musical Renaissance.[23]

The appropriation of folk song in compositions such as the three *Norfolk Rhapsodies* (1905-6) by Vaughan Williams and songs from Butterworth's *A Shropshire Lad* (1911) were utilized as national idioms to counter the German hegemony of art music in the nineteenth century. Besides countering threats of Germanic domination, what is significant about the folk 'revival' is the gradual assimilation and canonizing of folk song as part of Britain's national music repertory. This is most apparent in the programming of folk songs into repertories of BBC broadcasts and concert recitals. Singers such as Kathleen Ferrier, Alfred Deller and Peter Pears's performance of folk song, coupled with composers such as Britten's arrangements of the idiom, elevated the status of this repertory into the sphere of highbrow art music.[24] Despite folk song's potentially problematic background as a lowbrow offering, it was employed as a tool in national morale building through music.[25] The arrangement of folk song by prominent composers, the performance of the repertory and the broadcasts of institutions such as the BBC further imbued folk song with claims of national identity. The consolidation of folk song as an élite musical taste was further demonstrated by the execution of a five-year BBC Folk Music and Dialect Recording Scheme from 1952 to 1957.[26]

Besides notions of perceived authenticity and provenance, the national implications of folk song lie also in the performance of songs in the vernacular rather than foreign language. Ramifications of both wars with Germany during the twentieth century made

[23] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "England (i)," by Stephen Banfield and Ian Russell, accessed 2 December, 2015, 2015, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.
[24] Georgina Boyes writes of how the Folk Revival despite inconsistencies in its idealisation as a rural, working-class culture, has earned a place in elite and high culture and was effectively used as a tool 'to represent – and sell – "Englishness" throughout the world'. See Boyes, *The Imagined Village*, 3.
[25] Boyes demonstrates evidence where in this case folk culture was used not only as a means for national unification of the working class but as a way of cultivation of higher aspirations and purposes. See Boyes, *The Imagined Village*.
[26] See note 5 of Allan F. Moore and Giovanni Vacca, eds., *Legacies of Ewan MacColl: The Last Interview*, Ashgate Popular and Folk Music Series (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), 65.

singing the enemy's language especially difficult.[27] Translations of German repertoire such as the *lieder* did temporarily reconcile differences between national agenda and art music performing culture in the early twentieth century. However, the widespread use of translations in the 1930s indicated a different situation; it represents a nation keen to promote appreciation of art music by translating largely Continental song and operatic repertory into English. During such processes of translation, much transfer of meaning that is idiomatic to the original language is lost. On the one hand, this undermines the public's ability to grasp the essential characteristics and context of the repertoire, but on the other hand, promoted means for wider appeal and appreciation due to its performance in the vernacular.

Voice and Vocality

In shifting attention from musical works to the performance of singers, I draw upon recent theories of voice and vocality to understand the communicative potential of the embodied voice. The ephemeral qualities of the voice allow for representation and identification of different meanings such as desire, identity, textual authority, autonomy and empowerment. Kaja Silverman claims that 'the voice is the site of perhaps the most radical of all subjective divisions – the division between meaning and materiality'.[28] Silverman's quote evokes the idea of the voice as a site of contested polarities and attributes, in reference to its temporal physicality and dislocation of meaning. The term 'vocality' signifies identification with the non-verbal aspects of the voice, another closer albeit limited word for the depiction of sound in the entirety of its phenomenological roots. By focusing on the singer's 'vocality', emphasis is shifted from understanding the voice as being in servitude to the textual and verbal dimensions of the compositions, to portraying the dynamic interrelationship between the voice, the performer and its accompanying cultural constructions.[29]

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[27] See Laura Tunbridge, "Singing Translations: The Politics of Listening Between the Wars," *Representations* 123, no. 1 (2013): 53-86, 53-86.

[28] Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 44; cited in Dellamora and Fischlin, *The Work of Opera: Genre, Nationhood and Sexual Difference*, 6.

[29] See Leslie C. Dunn and Nancy A. Jones, *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 2, where Leslie Dunn's description focuses on the 'performative dimension of vocal expression, that is on the dynamic, contingent quality of both vocalization and audition, and on their vital interrelationship'.

In terms of understanding concepts of the voice, Roland Barthes's work as a semiotician is helpful in interpreting music as an interplay of signs and semiological interpretation.[30] His idea of 'pheno-song' and 'geno-song' is useful in suggesting two ways of interpreting the voice. The pheno-song covers 'everything in the performance which is in the service of communication, representation, expression, everything which it is customary to talk about, which forms the tissue of cultural values'.[31] In other words, the pheno-song refers to other cultural references and extra-musical signifiers that aim to reveal a better understanding of the music. The geno-song is what Barthes repeatedly describes as the 'grain', the unidentifiable medium between the performer and the music. The 'grain' calls for an understanding of the music beyond its sonority, delving into the very substance of its sound-signifiers and the 'body' of its sound. [32] The voice's 'grain' points to the idea of singing as a non-linguistic communication that explores intricate qualities between the phenomenological and sonic qualities of the voice. By focusing on the voice's 'grain', I emphasize how the voice materialises the body in musical sound and how its embodiment leads to an understanding of the voice's reception and social constructions.

Post-structuralist concepts such as Barthes's 'The Death of the Author' suggest the diminishing authority possessed by the historical author, another means of describing the weakening and lessening of the authorial voice. An emphasis on embodied voices leads us away from the influence and dominance of a monological author, such as that of a single composer in a work.[33] By focusing on voices, the live, variable and performative aspects of the musical work are amplified, serving to remind us that 'music is written by a composer, but made and given phenomenal reality by performers'.[34] Edward T. Cone presented similar issues of performer agency and authority when he indicated that the voice of music's dramatic persona comes to listeners through the performer's impersonation, which is perceived as a 'living personification' of that musical work.[35] The delegation of authority between performer and composer is highly variable. At a performative level, as Abbate points out, the performer's voice usurps the composer's voice.[36] The compositional voice

[30] Jonathan Mark Dunsby, "Roland Barthes and the Grain of Panzéra's Voice," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 134, no. 1 (2009): 113-32, 115.
[31] Dunsby, "Roland Barthes and the Grain of Panzéra's Voice," 115.
[32] See more in Dunsby, "Roland Barthes and the Grain of Panzéra's Voice," 114, 15.
[33] Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), x.
[34] Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, x.
[35] Edward T. Cone, *The Composer's Voice* (California: University of California Press, 1974), 5.
[36] Carolyn Abbate, "Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women," in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 234.

speaks through the performative voices of singers; and yet, without the composer's work, the performer's voice would be subjected to silence. The disjuncture occurs in the form of power distributed between performer and composer where authority and subjugation between these roles are constantly shifting. By focusing on the performative aspects of singers and their voices, my thesis serves to dethrone the work/composer-centred models of music history and emphasise the mutually dependent relationship between composer and performer.

Using the voices of actual singers as case studies, I aim to explore how the voice – more clearly than instruments – conveys the presence and corporeality of a body. Given that our cultural understandings of bodies are so strongly shaped by concepts of gender and sex, a construction of a 'national voice' inevitably has to negotiate with gender as a fundamental issue. More precisely, the voice is utilized here as a tool for navigating the discrepancies found between the singer's voice and their performing bodies. My discussion expands on this theory by viewing voice types as detached from and yet associated with their performing bodies. I start from the theory that gender in voices is never fixed by the performers' biological sex but appended according to their accompanying culture. This highlights the potential mismatch between voices and their bodies and refutes essentialist claims of voices with their prescribed gender roles.

Gender and Sexuality

Musicological studies in the late 1980s to 1990s introduced gender studies in a way that challenged the autonomy and authority of the text. This crucial step portrayed voices not as mere utterances, but as bodily-constructed sound, leading to the understanding of voice as a subject in its own right. Similar to how feminist criticism took shape in other humanities, gender studies in musicology started out as an opportunity to reclaim the authority of the female 'voice' – a methodological move that incorporated compositional authorship, performative authority and female identity. Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings* (1991) was among the earliest musicological studies to apply feminist criticism in studies of music. In McClary's work, discourse on gender and sexuality, in particular understanding cultural representations and constructions behind operatic characters and operatic pleasure, are

important concepts in establishing voice as a materialistic construct.[37] The essays in Leslie Dunn and Nancy Jones's collection *Embodied Voices* (1994) identify female vocality in the context of its Western cultural representations.[38] This is done through mediums such as song, poetry, drama, film, opera, critical theory and myth, underlining the voice's significance and its ability to expose the locations/dislocations of female representation in a wide range of contexts.

The main body of scholarship from the 1990s surrounding vocality and gender has focused mainly on operatic performance. The voice as a physical and cultural construct has led into understanding of the voice and its operatic, cultural manifestations as a distribution and assignment of power. The political reading of opera runs deeper than the operatic narrative and links to real issues that occur off stage. Stereotypical conceptions of vocal gender; tensions between composer autonomy and performer agency; and contests between the authorial and performative voice are all part of the power plays and rhetoric employed within and against the discourse of patriarchal subjugation of women in opera.

The rhetoric of subjugation resonates with Catherine Clément's identification of 'women's undoing' in the narrative of nineteenth-century opera.[39] Clément claims that male operatic composers enforced their authority by subjugating female singers to the tragic ending of their characters. However, Carolyn Abbate argues that Clément neglected the redemptive agency of the singing voice, whose vocal authority is able to surpass narrative elements found in the opera and the power of the monological composer.[40] Abbate describes how this 'undefeated voice speaks out across the crushing plot', where the focus on voice as 'sonorous texture' refigures how the voice is depicted and performed.[41] Abbate terms this process not as 'women's undoing' but instead as 'women's envoicing'. Building on these concepts, in 'Opera; or the Envoicing of Women' (1995), Abbate challenged conventions based on the male/object, female/subject dichotomy in male-authored musical works, by emphasizing the subversion of power offered in operatic roles. The female voice refutes the complete authority of the composer: first, the musical work achieves phenomenal reality through her voice; and second, her singing voice usurps

[37] Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002; repr., with a new Introduction), ix, x.
[38] Dunn and Jones, *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture*.
[39] Catherine Clément, *Opera or the The Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (London: I.B. Tauris Publishing, 1997).
[40] Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, xi, x.
[41] Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, xi.

the composer's voice by assuming an active subject position typically taken by male composers. Since the female voice demands attentiveness through the subjugated position of the listener, she assumes the role of subject rather than object and is offered a chance of redemption through the agency of her voice.[42]

Subjugation is also a crucial feature in the discussion of gender, sexuality and queer studies in musicology of the 1990s. The opening up of discourses around female vocality offered a chance for female vocal redress and allowed scholars to reclaim female authority by emphasizing the singers' performative aspects. The refocus on voice and vocality also asserted a new importance for vocal reception, while including the art of listening and its experience as part of musical scholarship. Since many studies remained predominantly male-orientated, the position of the homosexual opera fan became an important topic. The subjugation found in Michel Poizat's *jouissance* insists on the effects operatic singing has on the listener and the pleasure of being willingly subjugated and overpowered by the voice.[43] Wayne Koestenbaum's *The Queen's Throat* (1994), based upon an autobiographical account of the opera queen, configures operatic listening experiences and adulatory worship of the operatic diva as part and parcel of gender and sexuality studies. Koestenbaum's words, 'to hear is metaphorically to be impregnated – with thought, tone, and sensation', underline how powerfully the body subjects itself to being physically overwhelmed by the voice. [44] In all, the voice not only commands idealistic imagery or carries specific conviction and meaning, but also invokes strong emotions of desire.

Koestenbaum and Poizat identified how such invocations of desire voiced forms of sexual transgression beyond the boundaries of normative, heterosexual attraction. The ability of opera to appeal to and give pleasure from the performances between androgynous and transvestite characters proved especially empowering for queer and gender studies. The essays in Corrine E. Blackmer and Patricia Juliana Smith's *En Travesti: Women, Gender Subversion, Opera* (1995) explored how gendered voices and bodies blurred boundaries of erotically-charged meaning between *en travesti* roles of women playing and singing as men but making love to women.[45] Cross-dressing and the overt play

[42] Abbate, "Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women," 234, 35, 54.
[43] Michel Poizat, *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*, trans. Arthur Denner (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 93.
[44] Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1994), 16.
[45] Corrine E. Blackmer and Patricia Juliana Smith, eds., *En Travesti: Women, Gender, Subversion, Opera* (Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 1995), 5.

of female/male gender subversion in opera were intended to create confusion. By understanding the pleasure audiences received from intentional homosexual references on stage, Blackmer and Smith exposed representations of sexuality and gender roles that were subverted and prohibited.[46] What Blackmer and Smith did in *En Travesti* not only helped to redefine female vocal identity on stage, but also presented a woman's voice as powerful enough to 'transcend her gender' and 'rescue her own sex'.[47]

Recent developments in voice and gender studies have become increasingly extensive. Studies from 2000 have engaged issues of gender and sexuality as not only part of operatic criticism in musicology, but have also included singers and their voices as individual performing bodies. Mary Ann Smart's collection of essays *Siren Songs* (2000) revisits the idea of sexual obsession and its contingent power relations in operatic performances.[48] There is also a move towards situating singers and their voices in their performative context. Authors such as Naomi André in her book *Voicing Gender* (2004) expounds on the castrati, travesti and the gendered manifestations that arose in their performances of both female and male roles in early nineteenth-century Italian opera.[49] Studies on figures such as the castrati and the countertenor also proliferated alongside inquiries into how the dis/embodiment of gender in voice informs the body.[50] Equally important is how such exploration of gender probes issues of masculinity that challenged ideas of male heterosexuality as normative in relation to male voices.[51] The expansion of early music has also contributed much to the discussion of gender and voices, especially in relation to voices as gendered entities and how it questions our ideals on aspects of race, politics and nation.[52]

Such important understandings of the voice have been much explored in recent scholarship, as exampled in the colloquy on 'Why Voice Now' in the Journal of the

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[46] Blackmer and Smith, *En Travesti: Women, Gender, Subversion, Opera*, 6.
[47] Blackmer and Smith, *En Travesti: Women, Gender, Subversion, Opera*, 5.
[48] Mary Ann Smart, ed. *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
[49] Naomi André, *Voicing Gender: Castrati, Travesti, and the Second Woman in Early-Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera* (Indiana: Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).
[50] Simon Sherry, "Accidental Voices: The Return of the Countertenor," in *Aural Cultures*, ed. Jim Drobnick (Canada: YYZ Books; Walter Phillips Gallery Editions, 2004); Simon Ravens, *The Supernatural Voice: A History of High Male Singing* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2014).
[51] Philip Purvis, ed. *Masculinity in Opera: Gender, History, and New Musicology*, Routledge Research in Music (New York: Routledge, 2013).
[52] Melanie L. Marshall, "Voce Bianca: Purity and Whiteness in British Early Music Vocality," *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 19 (2015): 36-44; Todd Borgerding, ed. *Gender, Sexuality, and Early Music*, Criticism and Analysis of Early Music (New York: Routledge, 2002).

American Musicological Society and an article on voice and ideals of purity by Melanie Marshall.[53] Both Marshall and Feldman's articles express precisely how voice highlights the limitations and humanness of the body. All three of my case study singers possessed voice types that provide different matches of both sex and gender to their bodies that have, in some way, transgressed normative roles of class, gender and sexuality. Despite that, their voices do not differ much in range: Ferrier and Deller were both singing in the same *tessitura* with Pears only slightly lower. While Ferrier's voice revealed discrepancies with common perceptions of the operatic soprano diva that could be potentially androgynous, Deller's voice highlights the mismatch of gendered voices and bodies: his 'natural' heterosexuality with his seemingly 'unnatural' voice. Pears's 'natural' tenor voice is the only voice type that is appropriate to its gender, but he envoices the 'unnatural' body of the homosexual. By dissociating the attachment of gender with voices, I seek to understand and ultimately deconstruct gendered stereotypes and social conventions found in their voices that were inextricably tied to expressions of national identity.

Media

Technological advancements in the mid-twentieth century made possible the proliferation of wireless broadcasts, gramophone recordings, 'talking pictures' and the national daily press, which sought to wield control and extend influence upon the British public. This was demonstrated by the founding of the BBC in 1922, the increasingly rapid coverage of national newspapers since the twentieth century and gramophone players that were already a common entity in most households by 1929.[54] The press, though not an entirely new form of media in the twentieth century, experienced a huge expansion at the turn of the century. It sold 3.1 million copies of newspapers in 1918, 4.7 million in 1926 and a staggering 10.6 million copies by 1939.[55] Such introduction and intervention of mass media into British culture fundamentally altered and changed the way music was consumed, participated in and enjoyed. Cyril Ehrlich's statement on twentieth-century

[53] See Martha Feldman et al., "Why Voice Now?," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 68, no. 3 (2015): 653-85; Marshall, "Voce Bianca: Purity and Whiteness in British Early Music Vocality."
[54] The mass popularity and consumption of the gramophone is shown by a *Times* report in 1929, where 'in every street, in every block of flats, it is now usual to hear half-a-dozen or more gramophones all making different noises at once.' See *The Times*, 28 April 1927; cited from D.L. LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy: Mass Communication and the Cultivated Mind in Britain Between the Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 81.
[55] See LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy*, 12.

music consumption not only demonstrates how 'fundamental patterns of consumption, manufacture and distribution have been realigned, sustaining an enormous growth in the use of music', but also how 'mechanized sound has replaced live performance as the normal experience'.[56] This underscores not only the general enthusiasm generated by burgeoning musical opportunities, but also displays anxieties on the way performing traditions were affected and disrupted.

Broadcasting took over Britain early in the twentieth century. The latest accumulation of wireless technology by Guglielmo Marconi, the start of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the proliferation of radio magazines and amateur radio sets all contributed to the widespread influence that broadcasting culture had in twentieth-century Britain. Marconi's company was also responsible for the first high-profile public musical broadcast on 15 June 1920, by the Australian soprano Dame Nellie Melba. Melba's voice, heard singing in French, Italian and English, helped secure the viability of broadcasting for the singing voice.[57] Over the ensuing decades, the broadcasting medium would become indispensable in shaping and establishing the artistic tastes of the public. Given how the voices and careers of Ferrier, Deller and Pears contributed to and promoted repertoires that were distinct to the British musical scene in the mid-twentieth century, a close understanding of how their voices were situated in and have shaped British broadcast culture is important. Drawing from Benedict Anderson's theory, I seek to understand the radio, especially the BBC's role, in the construction of such an imagined national community and musical identity through these singers' voices, while highlighting the continuities and ruptures of national definition during important years of cultural and musical renewal in Britain's pre-and-post war years.[58] More specifically, I analyse how the selection, promotion and reception of singers such as Ferrier, Deller and Pears in the BBC's local and overseas broadcasts were reflective of British cultural and national values that undergirded the portrayal of a national voice and aural image.

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[56] Cyril Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century: A Social History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 39; Jennifer Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922-1936: Shaping a Nation's Tastes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[57] Andrew Crisell, *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting*, 2nd ed. (London, New York: Routledge, 2002), 14.
[58] Heather Wiebe provided an extensive exploration of music and cultural renewal in Britain during the post-war years of the 1940s and 50s in Wiebe, *Britten's Unquiet Pasts*, 16-40.

The 'English' Voice and British Musical Identity

Even though aspects of gender and sexuality are crucial in the materialisation of singer's body in voice, this thesis will also identify with class as important aspects in the formation of nationhood and national identity. Most importantly I emphasise the way these issues of class, gender and sexuality delineated features of non-normativity in the constructions of nationhood and national identity. For Britain, this identification of non-normativity and 'otherness' highlights how such alternative social and cultural means were prided and then enlisted as definer of national identity and 'Englishness'. By presenting on the singers and how their voices negotiated the tensions and challenged the narratives that defined them nationally, I show an unprecedented account of British music history voiced through Ferrier, Deller and Pears.

While mass media and institutions in mid-twentieth century Britain were clearly promoting and advocating cultural standards that appealed to the upper echelons of British society, what was behind this promotion was ultimately the corollary promotion of 'Englishness'. The projection of Englishness was implicitly embedded within the national promotion of culture. I argue that a construction of nation and Englishness underlay much of the promoters' approaches to cultural reforms. Institutions and organizations such as the BBC implemented these reforms through employment of the latest technological advancements in broadcasting. They were keen to address and educate the nation through an extensive programming of musical repertoire seen as crucial to the construction and cementation of elite and English tastes among the British public. The promotion of Ferrier, Deller and Pears's voices and their reception were concomitant to the formation and understanding of such tastes. This thesis suggests ways of understanding why and how the promotion of their voices invoked tropes of nation and national belonging.

Such prominence given to the description of 'Englishness' in my case studies demonstrates how the voice can highlight dominance of an English identity in accounts of British musical culture.[59] In this case, the word 'culture' was brandished by British institutions such as the BBC as a form of national vision to achieve wholesale improvement of British musical tastes and standards. LeMahieu referred to such

[59] Stradling and Hughes identified how 'even before 1914, the Boer War, together with the deepening of the Irish crisis, had impelled the transition from a "British" notion of the national culture to a more exclusively 'English" one.' See Stradling and Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance 1860-1940: Construction and Deconstruction*, 90-91.

implementation of cultural tastes as specifically derived from the 'cultivated élites'.[60] The cultivated elites, defined within constraints of a certain socio-cultural position, projected an outlook that was predominantly English and were partially represented by geographical areas of London and the South, the Oxbridge educational hierarchy, and the middle to upper-class society.

All three singers detailed above were paradigmatic in the way their voices were frequently associated with concepts of national identity. Before providing further details about the singers who feature in my case studies, it is important to address the national identity issue of 'British' versus 'English'. An 'English' as opposed to a 'British' voice recognizes the dominance of an English identity frequently conflated with identification of a national British identity, especially in the 1940s.[61] Bearing in mind the slippage of the English/British identity and the ensuing tensions in the identification between them, this thesis will not argue for or impose on the distinction of either national identity, but will use 'English' mainly because this is the most common description found in literature and primary sources addressed towards these singers. I wish to make clear here that 'British' is used in reference to Britain in description of the entire nation; whereas 'English', is specifically meant to describe hegemony of a predominantly white, upper middle-class culture cultivated especially for the reconstruction of post-war Britain.

I wish to point out clearly here that the propositions forwarded in this thesis do not argue for a singular discourse of racial or national theory, nor is it gesturing to sweeping statements of vocal branding or stereotyping. However, I do wish to highlight that the identification of 'Englishness' in voices has, for most of the twentieth century and even now, been painted and labelled negatively. Such descriptions of nation in a voice provided an avenue to probe into the manifestations of nation or national identity unavailable elsewhere. I hope that my research will deconstruct and break down such misconceptions of 'English' voices but, most importantly, that it will help us to understand why these perceptions are there in the first place.

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[60] LeMahieu described these 'cultivated élites' as a 'deliberately ambiguous, fluid category embracing writers, artists, musicians, academics, and a variety of other educated individuals.' LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy*, 103. See also Krishan Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 233, where culture was used as a form of national unity among the differing social classes through the 1921 Newbolt Report.

[61] In aspects of culture and social study, Krishan Kumar refers to the wholesale substitution of British as English as expressions of 'English imperialism' instead of nationalism. This could be seen not only in areas of music, but equally in areas of political ideology and literature where ideas of 'Englishness' were consciously cultivated as a collective sense of national identity for the first time in the late nineteenth century. See Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity*, 186-225.

Kathleen Ferrier

My first case study, Kathleen Ferrier, was a contralto singer who was frequently identified as continuing in the tradition of concert-hall and drawing room singers such as Clara Butt in fin-de-siècle Britain. Kathleen Ferrier was born on 22 April 1912 in Higher Walton, Lancashire. She was an accomplished pianist and had competed successfully in a few local music festivals as a pianist, including the Blackpool Music Festival in 1929 and 1935. Her first big break as a singer was when she competed at the 1937 Carlisle Festival as both a pianist and a singer and won both competitions and the competition's Silver Rose Bowl. Realising that she needed to take singing seriously, Ferrier started vocal lessons with John Hutchinson in 1939.[62]

Kathleen Ferrier's career as a recitalist started with the North Western Counties Division of Council for the Encouragement of Music and Arts (CEMA) in 1941, singing under conductor Maurice Jacobson and Alfred Barker, former leader of the Hallé orchestra. Her career with the BBC spanned for a period of ten years, where she can be heard in the Home Service, Third Programme and Light Programme. She began broadcasting mainly light variety programmes for the BBC northern regional services since 1942, performing in the Newcastle and then Manchester studios. By 1944 she had established her core performance repertoire of oratorios, including Handel's *Messiah*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*. Although her repertory did expand when her recognition increased, it remained firmly entrenched in oratorios, British folk songs, Bach's Masses and Passions and German *lieder*. Nevertheless, she was also an outstanding interpreter of late-nineteenth century works of Mahler, Brahms's *Alto Rhapsody* and Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*. These works were frequently performed by Ferrier and remained the highlights of her collaboration with conductors such as Bruno Walter and John Barbirolli.

An oratorio and recital singer more than an operatic one, Ferrier's star status confirmed that her reputation and her singing career were not hampered by her limited

[62] Due to the limited studies and research on these singers, much background and biographical information on them is based on non-academic literature. See Maurice Leonard, *Kathleen: The Life of Kathleen Ferrier 1912-1953* (London: Hutchinson, 1988); Winifred Ferrier, *The Life of Kathleen Ferrier* (London: Hamilton, 1955). Fifield's book Christopher Fifield, ed. *Letters and Diaries of Kathleen Ferrier*, Revised ed. (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), provides an extensive and well researched documentation of Ferrier's letters and diaries.

operatic performances. She performed in only two operatic performances through her relatively short career. The first was her stage début at Glyndebourne in the title role of Benjamin Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* (1946). The second opera was Gluck's Orpheus, which she performed in 1947 at Glyndebourne and again in 1953 at Covent Garden, which became her last performance. With a voice that was lauded for its dark, ripe and expressive qualities, Ferrier reinvented the role of the contralto voice type and the recitalist in twentieth-century Britain.[63] Her distinctive vocal characteristics encouraged British composers to create specific roles for her. Bliss wrote his scena *The Enchantress* (1951) for Ferrier; Britten wrote both his opera and his Second Canticle: *Abraham and Isaac* (1953) with her voice in mind. Ferrier's vocal beauty was equalled by her physical attractiveness. Her popularity stemmed not only from her voice, but also from her winning personality and her ability to communicate profoundly with audiences on stage.

Ferrier performed extensively as a recitalist and had a renowned reputation in the States and Europe. She had recitals in Netherlands, North America, and Germany, broadcasted and recorded extensively and performed in Vienna alongside one of the most renowned conductors of the time, Herbert von Karajan. Her performances of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* in the Edinburgh Festival in 1947 and Salzburg in 1949 were especially memorable. By 1953, she was already battling with late symptoms of breast cancer, which claimed her later that year on 8 October, at the young age of forty-one. She was Britain's best-loved contralto of the mid-twentieth century, and had an immense following and popularity, once said to second that only of the then newly crowned Queen of England.[64] At her death in 1953, one commentator asserted that her popularity came second only to that of the nation's monarch across all classes.[65] Such rhetoric continued to portray Ferrier not only as the nation's 'greatest contralto', but also as a contralto voice embodied with national characteristics. Ferrier's legacy and contribution to the British music scene was commemorated by the foundation of the Kathleen Ferrier Society and the Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Scholarship, which annually holds the Kathleen Ferrier Awards, one of Britain's most prestigious singing awards.

[63] Cullingford credits Ferrier as distinctive due to her 'deep, English contralto voice'; whereas Dame Janet baker mentioned of its 'dark, milk chocolate quality' in Martin Cullingford, "Parting is Such Sweet Sorrow," *Gramophone*, September 2003, 26-29, 26

[64] Ian Jack, "Klever Kaff," *Granta*, Winter 2001, 88-133, 96.

[65] Ian Jack referred to her as 'the most celebrated women in Britain after the Queen' in Jack, "Klever Kaff," 96.

Alfred Deller

Previous discussions of 'vocality' have typically focused on the ascription of status and authority to the female voice. The dominance of patriarchal understandings in musical scholarship also meant that most musicologists have generally avoided studies on masculine or male voices and vocality that were considered as normative.[66] My focus here ponders the troubling silence towards male voices, which is especially evident in the paradoxical discussion of the countertenor. Ironically, the countertenor is a voice type that is constantly in need of reclaiming for itself its own patriarchal autonomy despite its obvious biological sex. My second and third case studies of Alfred Deller and Peter Pears thus allow me to address questions around voice and nation in the context of a fuller range of sexual and gender identifications.

The proliferation of solo countertenors in today's concert platform owes much to the English countertenor – Alfred Deller. Deller's voice and his musical legacy resided mostly in his moral courage and inherent musicianship in pushing the potential boundaries of the solo countertenor outside ecclesiastical contexts and elevating it onto the concert platform. A British countertenor active in 1940s and 1950s, Deller's singing career as a countertenor started late in his thirties. He received no formal musical training and derived most of his musical education from the strong choral tradition that he was part of since boyhood. Born on 31 May 1912 in Margate, Alfred Deller was trained as an alto choirboy at Margate's Church of St. John the Baptist and continued singing alto well past his puberty. He proceeded from Christ Church, Hastings into the position of lay clerk at Canterbury Cathedral in 1938.[67] Deller's career as a lay clerk was far from smooth sailing. After being turned down twice by Lincoln and Salisbury Cathedrals for a lay clerkship alto vacancy, the securing of a position at Canterbury was significant. Harry Haskell attributes Deller's earlier rejections to his unorthodox falsetto technique.[68] Financial pressures from the war meant that Deller had to balance choir duties with an additional job, first working at a shop and then taking up labour work at a neighbouring farm during the war. He maintained double duties at the farm and the cathedral every day for two services of

[66] Although this to an extent has changed in recent years where more musical scholarship are taking the lead in establishing discourse on masculinity and male vocal studies. See Purvis, *Masculinity in Opera: Gender, History, and New Musicology*; and Ravens, *The Supernatural Voice*.
[67] *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, s.v. "Alfred Deller," by J.B. Steane, accessed March 7, 2016, 2014, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.
[68] Harry Haskell, *The Early Music Revival: A History* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1996), 148.

Matins and Evensong until his relocation to London as lay clerk at the prestigious St. Paul's Cathedral in 1947.[69]

That year was to be the start of various freelancing jobs in London that eventually secured Deller's position as the most important countertenor recitalist of the early music scene in mid-twentieth century Britain. Before his position at Canterbury Cathedral, Deller had been performing as early as 1932, singing miscellaneous items and the occasional *Messiah* in local churches. It was not until 1944 that Michael Tippett's discovery of Deller launched his career in a Morley College concert, with Deller performing in a Purcell solo, 'Music for a while', and two verse anthems, *O sing unto the Lord*, and *My beloved spake*. This concert was significant for Deller as it established him as a solo countertenor and initiated his concentration on Purcell and the early music repertoire. His debut broadcast for the BBC in celebration of Purcell's 250th death anniversary in 1945 promoted Deller and his unusual voice type beyond the peripheries and boundaries of the church. For that occasion, Deller sang as a countertenor in a BBC studio performance of Purcell's *Hail, bright Cecilia* from the Ode for St Cecilia's Day, which was then broadcast nationwide on the Home Service.

Deller's countertenor voice, historically anachronistic as it was, sounded appropriately strange to modern ears, which helped with the promotion of the early music revival. Purcell's anthems and odes, Dowland's lute songs, Renaissance madrigals and English folk songs are compositions that were typical in Deller's repertory. Besides his work in early music, Deller's voice type was also inspiration for modern composers. At the 1960 Aldeburgh Festival, Benjamin Britten wrote the role of Oberon with Deller's voice in mind for his opera *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Op. 64. An advocate of modern works for the countertenor voice, Deller sang in works by Peter Racine Fricker in his *Elegy, The Tomb of St. Eulalia,* Op. 25 in 1955, and in Alan Ridout's *The Pardoner's Tale* in 1971.

A performance of Purcell's ode Come, ye Sons of Art for the inaugural concert of the Third Programme in 1946 marked the start of many broadcasts Deller and his Consort made for the network. Founded in 1950, the Deller Consort was Deller's initiative of a group of singers dedicated to historically informed performances ranging from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century. The internationally renowned Consort led performances around Europe, Australasia, Americas and East Asia, while their recordings

[69] Mollie Hardwick and Michael Hardwick, *Alfred Deller: A Singularity of Voice* (London & New York: Proteus Books, 1980), 97.

played a huge part in reviving interest of early music among listeners. Deller's performances and broadcasts with the Consort persisted until the early 1970s and continued under the direction of his son, Mark. Deller's frequent collaborations as a recitalist with lutenists Desmond Dupré, Robert Spencer and harpsichordist Walter Bergmann were important contributions to the British early music scene and were preserved in the huge output of recordings he made with them. His voice, singing style and mannerisms were distinctive: despite being contentious, it was often acclaimed for their expressiveness and richness in poetic beauty. Alfred Deller died a sudden death on 16 July 1979 in Bologna, Italy. Musicologists and writers have unanimously held Deller's career and contribution to the modern solo countertenor's revival in high regard and claimed his importance in restoring the countertenor to the recital and operatic stage.[70]

Peter Pears

Interest in my third case study, tenor Peter Pears, has proliferated alongside numerous studies of his partner and musical collaborator, Benjamin Britten. Overshadowed by the popularity of Britten, Pears's significance seems to diminish in areas of academic research in comparison to his renowned counterpart. Despite that, numerous performances, broadcasts and recordings with Britten demonstrate Pears's crucial contribution to the twentieth-century British musical scene. It would be hard to disregard Pears's importance in the shaping of Britten's music. He premiered most of Britten's major tenor roles, which were conceived for Pears and with Pears's voice in mind. His voice, capable of great expressivity but frequently disputed in vocal power and quality, was nonetheless, influential and highly regarded in performances of Britten.

Born on 22 June 1910 in Farnham, Peter Pears's singing career started in 1933, after he won an operatic scholarship to London's Royal College of Music, where he had lessons with Dawson Freer and later Elena Gerhardt. He joined the BBC Singers in 1934 and after that left the Royal College to pursue a full time job with the BBC Singers.[71] The untimely death of their mutual friend, Peter Burra, in 1936 brought Pears and Britten together. This encounter was to become highly significant for both of them, as it led to the start of a

[70] See B. Forsyte Wright, "The Alto and Countertenor Voices," *The Musical Times* 100, no. 1401 (1959): 593-94; Frederic Hodgson, "The Countertenor," *The Musical Times* 106, no. 1465 (1965): 216-17.
[71] Christopher Headington, *Peter Pears: A Biography* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1992), 42.

professional and personal partnership that lasted for forty years. Pears and Britten gave their first public recital in 1937, the first of many recitals given together. In the same year, Pears's contract with the BBC Singers expired, which led him to find work with the New English Singers. In 1939, Pears and Britten left Britain for the United States of America due to the political situation of Europe in the imminent war, but it was a stay that turned out to be longer than expected. While in the States, Pears studied singing with Therese Behr-Schnabel and Clytie Hine Mundy and performed regularly with Britten. The song cycle *Les Illuminations*, Op. 18 was a popular choice and was frequently performed after Pears sang in its American premiere on 12 May 1941. Although the *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo*, Op. 22 did not premiere in the States, it was composed in the States specifically for Pears. Most notably, it was in California of 1941 that Britten and Pears came across a BBC *Listener*'s reprint of a broadcast talk on the poet George Crabbe. Crabbe's *The Borough* – a poem about a fishing village and a lonely fisherman in Suffolk – was to become the genesis of the opera *Peter Grimes*, Op. 33 four years later.

Peter Grimes premiered in Sadler's Wells on 7 June 1945 with Pears in the title role. This operatic venture was to be a watershed for both composer and singer, launching Britten as Britain's national composer and Pears as his most prominent interpreter. Pears premiered twelve operatic roles which were the Male Chorus in *The Rape of Lucretia* (1946), Albert Herring (1947), Captain Vere in *Billy Budd* (1951), Essex in *Gloriana* (1953), Quint in *The Turn of the Screw* (1954), Flute in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1960), Mad Woman in *Curlew River* (1964), Nebuchadnezzar in *The Burning Fiery Furnace* (1966), Tempter in *The Prodigal Son*, (1968), Sir Philip Wingrave in *Owen Wingrave* (1971) and Aschenbach in the *Death in Venice* (1973). These operas stretched over a span of thirty years, especially marked the exclusive and long partnership between an operatic composer and one singer. Besides Britten's work, Pears was an important performer of modern works by British composers such as Boaz in Lennox Berkeley's *Ruth* (1956) and Pandarus in Walton's *Troilus and Cressida* (1954). He collaborated frequently with Michael Tippett and premiered the solo tenor role in his oratorio *A Child of our Time* (1944), the cantata *Boyhood's End* (1943) and with Britten in Tippett's song cycle *The Heart's Assurance* (1951).

As founders of the English Opera Group in 1946, Britten and Pears were fervent promoters of English opera and new works in post-war Britain. The English Opera Group mounted productions with Pears premiering the role of Male Chorus in *The Rape of*

Lucretia, *Albert Herring*, Macheath in Britten's realization of *The Beggar's Opera* and Satyavān in Holst's *Sāvitri*. The Aldeburgh Festival, founded by Britten and Pears in 1948, played an important role in providing a venue for the productions of the English Opera Group. Pears was a frequent performer at the festival and worked with various local and international artists who premiered works that Britten had written for them. These include Dennis Brain, Julian Bream, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Alfred Deller. Pears kept a busy performing schedule even after Britten's death in 1976 and it was not until 1980 that he properly retired. After his retirement, Pears focused on working with young artists and singers at the Britten-Pears School in Aldeburgh until his own death on 3 April 1986. Pear's legacy was well preserved in numerous recordings, including all of the major roles that Britten wrote for him.

Despite premiering roles in Britten's operas, neither Ferrier, Deller nor even Pears would easily identify themselves as operatic singers, as far as normal conventions of Continental opera were concerned. They voiced ideals of an 'English' voice that were secured predominantly in the realm of the concert and oratorio rather than in opera. In this context, their vocal limitations in range, repertory and dramatic ability were counterbalanced by other strengths such as clear diction, intelligent interpretation of words and expression that contrasted with the model of Continental operatic singers. Through this thesis, I identify clearly how these voices of Ferrier, Deller and Pears all had to undergo change in order to establish the 'English' voice in the operatic realm when their reputations were already secured on the concert platform. Yet, the implications of bringing these vocal characteristics into the operatic stage through Britten's operas were prominent and showed how promotions of a national voice were concomitant in the promotion of Britten as Britain's national operatic composer. In this thesis, I will specifically highlight the incongruities implicated in the transfer from the oratorio/concert voice to the operatic voice and demonstrate how ideals of an English voice were adapted to fit the medium of opera.

The ideals and manifestations of an English voice found through Britten's operas is a central theme in this thesis. Since opera was such a central component in work-centered understandings of national musical identity, it was inevitable that Britain, before the emergence of the composer Britten, was frequently characterised as a country without its own musical culture. For many, claims that British operatic culture was 'non-existent' proved invalid when Britten premiered *Peter Grimes* in 1945 with Peter Pears. Following engagements with Kathleen Ferrier in 1946 with *The Rape of Lucretia* and later Alfred

Deller as Oberon in *The Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1960, Britten's operas were successful in promoting not only his talent as an operatic composer, but also the vocal talents of local singers in Britain. As Britten's operas gained prominence in the international scene, the profile of these British singers was elevated as well. This meant that these concert singers' voices offered a chance to readdress and reassess Britain's problematic operatic past in order to view it in conjunction with its more prolific present. Britten's operas and singers catered to this niche created by the absence of an operatic voice in Britain and carved a distinctive English identity through their own voices. The promotion of Britten's operas concurrently promoted ideals of an English voice inhabited by these singers in their respective operatic roles. By mapping out the reception history of these singer's voices, I articulate mid-twentieth century attitudes, tastes and responses crucial to the construction and shaping of such a national vocal identity.

Methodology

In order to understand how constructions and perceptions of Englishness were elicited through these singers' voices, I employ methodologies that emphasised on the reception of their voices. My intervention here goes against the composer-centred methodologies of using composers and their works as a marker and identifier of national music identity. Reception history of these voices demonstrates a deconstruction of the musical canon. First, it goes against the idea that musical and aesthetic value of the texts is transcendental and inherent regardless of its historical circumstances. These singers' voices make it possible to locate reception in a fluid environment that opens up understanding of the inner workings that have gone into the introduction, reproduction and preservation of their voice. Second, by considering the historical contexts and institutions that formulated the reception and evaluation of these voices, this dethrones the hierarchy of composer as the singular and highest interpreter of the musical work.[72] The vocal reception of Ferrier, Deller and Pears during the mid-twentieth century will be seen as (to use Mark Everist's term) 'cultural

[72] See Mark Everist's comment on John Guilllory's usage of 'institution' as a reference to the academy as 'the location of canon formation and preservation' in literary studies, but could be broadened to 'concert-giving organizations, opera-houses, journals, critics, and record-producers' in musical studies. Mark Everist, "Reception Theories, Canonic Discourses, and Musical Value," in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 390, 91.

artefacts' of the past that help us to articulate aesthetic responses to cultural and musical tastes in Britain at that time.[73]

My methodology involves analysing the reception history of these singers' voices through the distribution of both old (press) and new (radio) mass media. To this end, I will refer to media studies especially the BBC in order to understand the promotion and distribution of national vocal ideals through the airwaves. I will also employ gender and sexuality studies as tools to understand the various constructions and perceptions of nation that materialised in the singers' voices. This allows for an approach to redress these singers' voices as essentialised gendered entities by acknowledging the way notions of gender and sexuality have shaped and informed their voice and bodies through performances and roles onstage. The exploration of gender ambiguity in female voices have challenged and transgressed the limitations that usually define onstage female identity. This is a crucial point in my research on Ferrier as I ask how the blending of gender in her voice and body both onstage and offstage revealed gender and sexual ideals that participated in her widespread popularity. By identifying attributes of gender in Ferrier's voice, I navigate how her voice both responded to and resisted prescribed gender and sexual roles assigned to her body. Given how notions of English national identity were ascribed to her voice, I address how such gendered envoicings have informed national ideals through the conflation of her voice and body.

The voice's associations with femininity or female identity have also allowed for sexual allusions that permeated much discourse of Deller's and Pears's career. For example, I recognise Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic identification of voice as 'maternal, with a state of being that precedes the symbolic realm of the father and is thus irrational, inarticulable – and marked female.'[74] In a way, Deller's countertenor voice and Pears's homosexuality were both seen as deviants from normality. Deller's countertenor voice generated perceptions that insinuated at his sexuality, whereas Pears's homosexuality remained closeted mainly because of his and Britten's connection with the twentieth-century British music scene.

Given how moral and social stability were contingent upon British male citizens, associations of a national vocality for male singers in this case Deller and Pears, were

[73] Everist, "Reception Theories, Canonic Discourses, and Musical Value," 383.
[74] "Introduction: On "Difference" ", in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 14.

framed in the projection of national ideals. Strong aversions to effeminacy indicated underlining sexual tensions that were especially prominent in Britain during and after the Second World War. Notions of sexual anxiety that characterised much of Deller's and Pears's career were symptomatic of the underlying insecurity and threats that twentieth-century Britain faced as a nation. By understanding the sexual anxieties that were directed at Deller's and Pears's voices, I uncover how the nation's musical identity is contingent upon affirmation of their heterosexuality and masculinity. Through this, I demonstrate how apprehension against these singers' sexuality was voiced in nationalistic terms, suggesting that the need for confirmation of the singers' sexual stability is ultimately a manifestation of Britain's need for affirmation of its musical ability.

Antagonisms directed at effeminacy in early twentieth-century Britain evidenced underlying sexual tensions especially problematic for men in the impending First World War. Negative associations present since the last century with men engaging in musical activities, 'widely deemed to compromise a man's masculinity' continued to be increasingly difficult in the twentieth century.[75] Philip Brett's chapter in *Queering the Pitch* ascertains underlying connotations that associated 'musicality' with 'gay identity'.[76] Brett perceives music as a convenient way to address 'deviances' that were not necessarily of a sexual nature, but were in a way differing from the normative. Using obvious tensions occurring with the homosexual identity of composer Britten – his musical accomplishments and national status – Brett uncovers suppressed homosexual anxieties through coded messages in his music.[77] These references highlight the essentialist thinking of how music is intricately bound up with feminine identifications and how dangerously close homophobia is identified with misogyny.

Bearing this in mind, I identify deeper undercurrents that problematised men's engagement not only with music, but also with the act of singing. Suzanne Cusick shows how by understanding our voices as culturally constructed sites of gender, sex and sexuality, our voice can perform and negotiate relationships between our inner and external

[75] See predominantly, Christina Bashford, "Historiography and Invisible Musics: Domestic Chamber Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 63, no. 2 (2010): 291-360, 332-33.
[76] Brett demonstrates how 'musical creativity [is seen] as a force deriving from the "eternal feminine" in men', in Philip Brett, "Musicality, Essentialism and the Closet," in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas (New York, London: Routledge, 1994), 22.
[77] Brett, "Musicality, Essentialism and the Closet," 11.

world well.[78] This is important more for men than for women, who after puberty had to abandon their previous vocal register for fear of being associated with the opposite gender.[79] Nonetheless, the act of singing or song demonstrates the internalized control required to perform this cultural practice intelligibly to those around us and the way 'we have allowed cultural norms to penetrate and discipline our bodies' interiority and interior actions'.[80] The voices of Ferrier, Deller and Pears embodied socio-cultural, gender and sexual discrepancies that navigated constructions crucial to the fabrication of an English national voice and identity. On the other hand, promotion of a national voice and identity through mass media, especially the BBC, prompted realisations of vocal disembodiment, found not only in the detachment of bodies and voices but also in the detachment of emotion and expression.

Paradoxes of fascination with and apprehension towards mass media provide a cultural background for understanding Ferrier, Deller and Pears's artistic careers. Situated in the various intersections of change and continuity in Britain's musical culture, their musical lives were heavily influenced by the accessibility of mass media. They benefitted from and engaged with the numerous publicity opportunities that mass media offered, such as broadcasts and press publication. It is crucial to understand the roles and presence that the media played in these singers' lives given that the media had such a strong and pervasive presence in forming and shaping the musical tastes and perception of mid-twentieth century British audiences and listeners. Benedict Anderson centred formation of the modern sense of nation and nationality through the widespread influence of print culture in how it shaped new ways of imagined relational and communal ties in a modern society.[81]

The radio reflects and projects such a sense of national identity at a wider and larger scale in creating a communal and simultaneous aural experience shared by millions in the nation. Michele Hilmes expresses the transcending qualities that radio possesses in creation of such an imagined relationship:

> based on nothing so tangible as concrete geographical boundaries, common ethnic heritage, or linguistic homogenisation, but instead on assumptions, images, feelings,

[78] Suzanne G. Cusick, "On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex," in *Audible Traces: Gender, Identity and Music*, ed. Lydia Hamessley and Elaine Barkin (Zürich: Carciofoli, 1999), 29-32.
[79] Cusick, "On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex," 33.
[80] Cusick, "On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex," 31.
[81] Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 35-36.

> consciousness, it is not the technical means of communication, but the central narratives, representations, and "memories" – and strategic forgetfulness – that they circulate that tie the nation together.[82]

I locate how in this thesis, the reception of these singers' voices through both press and radio were not only symptomatic of national values and agendas that discernibly shaped the imagined community of Britain, but also uncovers the promotion, sustenance and staging of a national narrative and aural identity – a national voice – founded through mass media. By understanding such idealizations and manifestations of Englishness embodied in these singers' voices, I uncover underlying concepts of nation and nationhood that were important to the establishment of twentieth-century Britain.

Sources

By employing both old and new media as part of the performance and vocal reception of my singers, I outline two main areas of resources that were used for the purposes of this thesis. The first concerns press cuttings, which are found mostly from archival collections and digitised archives such as the British Newspaper Archive and the Gale Newspaper Database.[83] Most of my sources for Alfred Deller are from a personal scrapbook of articles, photos, programme notes, newspaper clippings and reviews that were collected by his wife Peggy, but kept by his son Mark Deller.[84] Due to the nature of these press cuttings, some of them have sources and dates that are impossible to identify and I will be referring to them throughout my thesis as from the Mark Deller Scrapbook (MDS). For Peter Pears, a vast amount of material was sourced at the Britten-Pears Foundation (BPF) in Aldeburgh, where the archive housed correspondence, personal papers and a large collection of press cuttings, reviews and articles of both the composer and the singer.

The second set of sources consists of both archival and online BBC material such as papers, reports, broadcasts and programmes, which are important tools in understanding

[82] Michele Hilmes, *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting , 1922-1952* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 12.
[83] "British Newspaper Archive." Findmypast Newspaper Archive Limited in partnership with the British Library, accessed 2 March 2016, www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk; and "Gale Newspaper Database." Gale Cengage Learning accessed 2 March 2016, http://gale.cengage.co.uk/product-highlights/general-reference/gale-historical-newspapers.aspx.
[84] I would like to express my sincerest thanks to Mark Deller who have so graciously allowed me access to this scrapbook and a few other personal collections of Alfred Deller that were privately owned by the family.

and formulating the contextual background that the singers were working in. Archival material, including personal files of the singers, written memos and letters that are held at the BBC Written Archives Centre (WAC) in Caversham, proved immensely important to the realisation of this thesis. I have also consulted the BBC Genome, which is an online database of BBC listings found in the printed copies of Radio Times between 1923 and 2009, in order to identify broadcasts and programmes that were aired and performed by the singers.[85] In addition to that, the BBC Online Archives feature digitised versions of the annual BBC Handbook from 1928 to 1987, which were then publicly available literature that provided an idea of how the Corporation negotiated its role as the nation's most influential broadcast station.[86]

Due to the limited scholarly research done on these singers, I have chosen to base background information of them on literature such as personal memoirs and biographies that could be hagiographical, but provided an understanding of the reception and responses that engendered their nationalising and mythologizing. In this case, Ferrier's biographies are more extensive and included those by her sister Winifred and Maurice Leonard.[87] Deller's biography was written by a couple, Mollie and Michael Hardwick who were close friends of Deller, while Pears's was written by Christopher Headington.[88]

Chapter Outline

In this thesis, I will address the concept of national identity as a complex construct with many intersecting elements. Each chapter of this thesis demonstrates that national identity in Britain is intimately bound up with various aspects, including those of gender, sexuality and tradition. In Chapter One, I review the existing literature on music and nationalism and investigate how the search for national musical identity through various accounts of British musical life in the late nineteenth to twentieth century such as the English Musical Renaissance manifested into the need for a national voice. This is especially true in the case of opera, where its discourse had been used as a strong marker of national musical

[85] "BBC Genome Project: Radio Times 1923-2009." British Broadcasting Corporation, accessed 15 July 2015, http://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/.
[86] "BBC Handbooks." Microform Academic Publishers, BBC Written Archives Centre, 2 July 2008, accessed 13 July 2015 www.britishonlinearchives.co.uk/browse.php?pid=bbc-hand.
[87] Ferrier, *The Life of Kathleen Ferrier*; and Leonard, *Kathleen: The Life of Kathleen Ferrier 1912-1953*.
[88] See Hardwick and Hardwick, *Alfred Deller*; and Headington, *Peter Pears: A Biography*.

identity. Through this, I understand how Ferrier's career was built on the precedent of Clara Butt and how she was envisaged as the future 'voice of Britain'. I also investigate how claims of Deller's countertenor voice as English reveals a strong need for the fabrication of a distinct musical identity in Britain. Investigation of the connection between Deller and English composer Henry Purcell reveals how the countertenor voice was framed in order to signify and promote a certain national musical greatness in conjunction with the postwar reconstruction efforts of Britain. This chapter recognizes how the need for national voice shifted from a compositional to an actual voice and vocality and how the non-normative voices of Ferrier and Deller were later incorporated into the creation of a national vocality for Britain.

Chapter Two emphasizes how Ferrier's and Deller's voices embodied gendered vocal ideals and roles that underlined constructions of national music identity in Britain. Through the reception of their voices, I navigate how their voices rejected gendered vocal norms of male and female singers and negotiated the discrepancy of voice and body pairings. In this case, through Deller's mismatch of voice and body and conflation of Ferrier as mezzo-soprano instead of contralto, they both transgressed gender and socio-cultural barriers were later appropriated and adopted as normative. This chapter addresses how Deller's and Ferrier's voices highlight issues of gender incompatibility between roles onstage with their performing bodies and elicited gendered national ideals.

Chapter Three expands on the issues brought up in the previous chapter by addressing the problematic incongruities found between Deller's and Pears's vocal identity and sexuality. The reception of Deller's and Pears's voices underlines how sexual anxieties of effeminacy and homosexuality in their careers were very much framed in nationalistic terms. Most importantly, in this chapter I also show how the non-normative voices of both Deller and Pears were crucial to the creation of a national voice and sound for a new English opera. Specifically, Deller's role as Oberon and Pears's portrayal of the many operatic roles written for his voice exemplified how Britten appropriated their vocal qualities for a distinct operatic identity identified as English.

The mid-twentieth century English voice is emblematic of how changes in technology affected the public's listening ideals. Broadcasting navigated and highlighted such changes clearly through the appropriation of the singing voice in a medium very different from the concert stage. The national and international broadcasts of Pears, Ferrier and Deller are symptomatic of the shifting tastes and demands of musical consumption in

mid-twentieth century British broadcast culture. While Pears and Deller's voices appealed to the specialized niche of art music appreciation through the Third Programme, Ferrier's voice navigated the tensions of high/low cultural barriers by appealing to a wide range of audiences in both the Third Programme and the Home Service. This chapter highlights how the BBC sought to promote a national and international version of English identity through the voices of Pears, Ferrier and Deller and how they were part of the construction of Britain's aural image and national broadcast culture.

These chapters point to the overarching aim of my thesis in demonstrating how the reception of Ferrier, Deller and Pears's voice forms an integral part of national music discourse and identity. This thesis not only suggests ways to understand how the voices of these singers delineate constructs of English identity, but also shows that these identifications were symptomatic of a much bigger discourse on nationhood: the problematic homogenization and adoption of Englishness as a cultural and aural image of Britain. Britain's grappling with issues of self-identification and nationality illustrates the anxieties that marked a nation at the intersections of cultural reconstruction and renewal since the turn of the century. Much more than that, this thesis demonstrates that the discourse of a national voice is intrinsically attached to our insistence on the materialization of bodies in sound. Since cultural understandings of bodies are so strongly shaped by concepts of gender and sexuality, any construction of a 'national voice' inevitably will negotiate the fundamental issues of gender. This thesis proves that national music identity can be found in new models of the voice. By framing nationhood and national identity through the concept of a 'national voice', I aim to redress Britain's problematic music history and envoice the nation with a voice of her own.

Chapter 1: Voicing Nation

The notion of nation involves imagination of a collective identity and sense of belonging represented through the invention of mythical ties in a varied cultural, linguistic and historical background.[1] A voice actualizes and embodies such belonging in more concrete terms. Hence, the act of envoicing – giving voice – essentially affirms the prescribing of identity. Through Dellamora and Fischlin's description of the 'notion of nation as an enactment of voice', namely that the concept of nation became a means for the existence and performing of voice, we understand how inexorably voice is bound up with national identity and how the voicing of identity can be used to define concepts of nation.[2] My chapter asserts that not only can national identity be found in voices, but also that issues of voice and vocality have always been a crucial part of national music discourse.

The 'national voice' is what I define here as a shared understanding that ostensibly transcends language, time and geographical boundaries. More so than 'voice', 'vocality' addresses utterances and sound embedded with social signifiers and meanings located beyond the vocal system of speech.[3] Both elements of 'nation' and 'vocality' ascribe status and power to their attachment. Therefore, the implications of a 'national vocality' signify and endow the voice with concepts of empowerment, prestige and status in identification of a national identity. Through this, I seek to understand how the construction of certain vocal qualities, criteria and performativity are indispensable to the creation and representation of a national music identity in Britain. Not dissimilar to the concept of voice, in its promotion of intimacy and self-identification,[4] vocality here also identify with shared interests, commonality and the institutional strategies of inclusion and exclusion taken to ensure the presentation of a homogenous version of national music identity and Englishness. In this chapter, I will show how aspects of voice, vocality and most importantly, perceptions of the need for a 'national voice' participate in concepts of nationalism and national identity.

In regard to that, this chapter shows how the reception history of Alfred Deller's and Kathleen Ferrier's voices uncovers alternative versions of Englishnesses and how such

[1] To understand Benedict Anderson's seminal theory on nation as 'an imagined political community', see Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 1-7.
[2] Dellamora and Fischlin, *The Work of Opera: Genre, Nationhood and Sexual Difference*, 3.
[3] See a clear exposition of 'vocality' in Dunn and Jones, *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture*, 1.
[4] Philip V. Bohlman, *Focus: Music, Nationalism, and the Making of the New Europe*, ed. Michael B. Bakan, 2nd ed., Focus on World Music (UK, New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2011), 58.

themes of non-normativity were later promoted as a normative part of national musical identity in Britain. I examine how the perceived uniqueness of Ferrier's and Deller's voices founded the vocal criteria and style that shaped a distinctive compositional soundscape identified as English. Given how identifications of Englishness has been deeply associated with notions of eccentricity,[5] I understand how both Ferrier's and Deller's voices were ultimately vocal representations of such deviances and how they clearly voiced transgression of cultural and social norms. This chapter elucidates how the legitimisation and nationalisation of Deller's and Ferrier's voices were not only symptomatic of the need for a 'national voice' but also realised the shift of that need from a compositional to a singing one.

1.1 The Need for a National Voice

As concept of a national voice can come to signify an amalgam of meanings listed above, in this thesis I understand how it can also come to be used as marker of a national need and identity. The 'national voice' is not an actual and physical voice, but in a more abstract sense of 'voice' as expression of a collective self and identity. The need for such a national voice has manifested through various methods and solutions. Literature that focuses on the intersections between nation and music in Britain encompasses a range of studies from for example, popular music such as Irene Morra's *Britishness, Popular Music and National Identity* (2014),[6] to imperial studies such as the research on the role of music in the British Empire[7] to alternative and Northern versions of national identity through music personas such as Gracie Fields.[8]

In the case of situating art music as national signifier in Britain, previous work and discourse on music have focused not only on composers and their compositional work, but also on a search for national recognition at a much wider scale. Firstly, in the abundant

[5] Besides Paul Langford's *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character 1650-1850* (2000) which identified eccentricity as a key label of Englishness, Sophie Aymes-Stokes and Laurent Mellet's collection of articles is a wide-ranging assessment of how notions of eccentricity featured in British discourse. See Sophie Aymes-Stokes and Laurent Mellet, eds., *In and Out: Eccentricity in Britain* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012).

[6] Morra, *Britishness, Popular Music, and National Identity*. Simon Featherstone's monograph here deserves a side mention. Although not entirely about music, this book provides an important discussion to the formation of popular culture and English identity, see Simon Featherstone, *Englishness: Twentieth-Century Popular Culture and the Forming of English Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

[7] Jeffrey Richards, *Imperialism and Music: Britain 1876-1953* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

[8] Simon Featherstone, "The Mill Girl and the Cheeky Chappie: British Popular Comedy and Mass Culture in the Thirties," *Critical Survey* 15, no. 2 (2003): 3-22.

literature devoted to the canonizing of lesser-known composers from Hubert Parry, George Butterworth, Gerald Finzi to Granville Bantock.[9] Most studies tend to encase their subjects within a national framework, situating the composer as yet another overlooked national icon in the early twentieth century that will readdress Britain's 'unmusical problem'. The abundance of literature in reference to the English Musical Renaissance phenomenon is another testament to the strong identification of composers and their compositions as locations of national identity, which I will later discuss in the chapter. Secondly, research interests in the nexus between music and culture, especially during the twentieth century, have continued to underline how cultural policies of Britain were set up with the main aim of promoting a distinct national and cultural identity. This is prominent in the studies of British institutions such as the BBC and its cultural manifestations such as the Henry Wood Promenade Concerts and the BBC Symphony Orchestra.[10] Thirdly, the musical positioning of Britain and its composers at the turn of the century is also a subject that invites endless debate. This is especially apparent in the problematic juxtaposition of institutions such as the BBC who were, on one hand keen to identify with Continental music models of modernism, and on the other, appealing to the traditionalist, ruralist idiom of English composers such as Vaughan Williams.[11]

Another important area that has invited much scrutiny from the discourse of music and national identity in Britain is opera, which I will discuss in further detail in this chapter. This is done usually in relation to the formation and the establishing of a national operatic canon, identity and sound identifiable as English. The huge amount of publication on especially Britten, his operas and the publicizing of his homosexuality have added considerably to the amount of research on British operatic studies.[12] However, what most scholars of Britten have yet to recognize is that this obsession with a single composer as

[9] Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song-Composers* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002); Guido Heldt, "Das Nationale als Problem in der Englischen Musik des frühen 20. Jahrhunderts. Tondichtungen von Granville Bantock, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Edward Elgar, George Butterworth, Gerald Finzi und Gustav Holst" (Doctoral Dissertation, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Münster, 1996).
[10] Humphrey Carpenter, *The Envy of the World: Fifty Years of the BBC Third Programme and Radio Three* (London: Phoenix Giant, 1997); Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922-1936: Shaping a Nation's Tastes*; A.M. Garnham, *Hans Keller and the BBC: The Musical Conscience of British Broadcasting, 1959-70* (England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003); Christina L. Baade, *Victory Through Harmony: The BBC and Popular Music in World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
[11] For a general exposition of British music and its approach of modernism in the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, see Matthew Riley, *British Music and Modernism, 1895-1960*, Reprint ed. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 1-12; Byron Adams, "Foreword," *Musical Quarterly* 91, no. 1-2 (2008): 1-7, 1-7; and Doctor, "The Parataxis of "British Musical Modernism"," 89-115.
[12] Paul Kildea, *Selling Britten: Music and the Marketplace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Philip Brett, *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, ed. George E. Haggerty (California: University of California Press, 2006); Claire Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten: Expression and Evasion*, Reprint in Paperback ed. (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007); Philip Rupprecht, ed. *Rethinking Britten* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

representative of national musical pride, or what Philip Brett called 'serial monogamy' between the leading composer and the British public, are attempts to envoice Britain with a national voice.[13] Such attempts of nationalizing and institutionalizing Britten ultimately serve to promote Britain's musical climate, as one that is capable and has the potential of producing composers that are equivalent to national standing and international status. It is hence, a trend that has been obvious since the start of the English Musical Renaissance, that musicologists' and scholars' search for the next 'great' composer, and for a continuous compositional national voice, is ultimately a never ending one.

Work on émigré composers and musicians such as Mátyás Seiber and István Anhalt demonstrate how issues of nationality and xenophobia have foregrounded and shaped the twentieth-century British music scene. Florian Scheding's work on émigré composers in London from 1933 to 1945 highlights their contribution and their place in twentieth-century British music.[14] The emphasis of giving back émigré composers and musicians their voice suggests that they were silenced during their stay in Britain. Most of these emigrant composers were incidentally members of the avant-garde music modernism; hence their inability to integrate into the fabric of Britain's music life indicates the monolithic approach of these British institutions towards foreign composers. Their unwillingness to integrate and incorporate foreign composers and musicians indicates the xenophobic risk felt in the securing and protecting of national as opposed to foreign interests of British musicians and composers.

Such varying tropes of identification with 'voice' in the discourse of nation and music have demonstrated how Britain's need and search for a national voice has been answered in many different methods. However, no assignment of nation and music in Britain has been as successful and widespread since the late nineteenth-century as the English Musical Renaissance. Concomitant with what Jeremy Paxman described as 'marching backwards into the future',[15] constructions of national identity in mid-twentieth century Britain was a self-anthropological move where nostalgic interests formulated around the historicity of Britain's national pasts and tradition. Various music projects such as the English Musical Renaissance, the choral tradition, the early music revival, in particular the revival of Purcell's music as well as the countertenor revival were all associated with the past. Not only that, they were all founded on aspects of the voice and

[13] Brett, *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, 204-05.
[14] Florian Scheding, "Problematic Tendencies: Émigré Composers in London, 1933–1945," in *The Influence of Nazism on Twentieth-Century Music*, ed. Erik Levi (Wien, AT: Böhlau, 2013), 245-69.
[15] Floriane Reviron-Piégay, ed. *Englishness Revisited* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), 4; cited in Aymes-Stokes and Mellet, *In and Out: Eccentricity in Britain*, 18.

the performing, composing and analysing of vocal music. Despite that, what was implicitly underlined in these discussions on music and national discourse is that such preoccupation for a national voice has always been that of a compositional voice, one that was clearly fulfilled in the English Musical Renaissance.

1.2 The English Musical Renaissance

The English Musical Renaissance was a direct manifestation of the pursuit and identification for a national idiom through music, which aimed to resurrect an imagined musical 'Golden Age' in Britain. This was fuelled in part by the early signs of rupture in the British Empire where the empire was slowly losing dominance and influence upon its colonies.[16] Imagination of a musical Golden Age was especially associated with the Elizabethan era during the period of the English Renaissance where there was a strong flowering in fields of literature, arts and music in combination, supposedly due to internal peace and economic expansion in the country. However, this painted a picture that was far from an actual portrayal of the Elizabethan era, a time marked with war and internal strife not unlike any other period in history. The Golden Age was ultimately a rose-tinted version of the Elizabethan era, an invention that supported the need and search for national validation. It is important to understand how validation and belief in such a presupposed era is foundational in sustaining notions of a national identity.

The cultivation of British nationalism was in a way long overdue in comparison to other nations in Europe. The Franco-Prussian crisis of 1870-71 and the later two World Wars increased much of the impetus for the eradication of various foreign musical influences, most notably Austro-German, which ignited the rallying call for a distinctive British musical identity. Ernest Newman wrote in 1916 that: 'All the war will do, I think – so far as England is concerned – is to accelerate a process that has been going on for at least ten years – a process of disillusionment with the most recent German music.'[17] Music 'made in England' had become not just a cultural necessity, but could also be seen as a 'political priority, an extension of competing nationalisms'.[18] At the turn of the century, the Renaissance reached its peak with the initiation of the folk music revival; the resurgence of

[16] Frogley, "'Getting Its History Wrong': English Nationalism and the Reception of Ralph Vaughan Williams," 150.
[17] Ernest Newman, *Music and Musicians: The Present State of Music, IV* (1916); cited in Laura Grey, "Sibelius and England," in *The Sibelius Companion*, ed. Glenda Dawn Goss (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), 287.
[18] Stradling and Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance 1860-1940: Construction and Deconstruction*, 25.

interest in early music, especially Purcell; a string of upcoming British composers who were unsurprisingly also early proponents of the movement (Mackenzie, Parry, Sullivan, Stanford); and the establishment of the Royal College of Music.

The expression 'English Musical Renaissance' was first coined by Joseph Bennett, chief critic of *The Daily Telegraph*, in a review of the premiere of Hubert Parry's First Symphony in 1882. Bennett wrote that 'Mr Parry's Symphony in G … is capital proof that English music has arrived at a renaissance period'.[19] Bennett's usage of the word 'renaissance' helped to reconnect and renegotiate ties of sixteenth-century past glories with the then present nineteenth century. Stradling and Hughes claim that by using the word 'renaissance', Bennett was appropriating this phrase for the effective conjuring of the apogee of English political and literary achievements, with the dominant example of Shakespeare and Raleigh.[20] Looking to reconstruct continuity with the past, the movement of the English Musical Renaissance legitimated historical ties from the sixteenth-century Renaissance. The establishment of the English Musical Renaissance was based upon the need of a mythical cord of recognition and reference that connects the spatial and temporal dislocation of the two periods. The expression 'renaissance' and the conjuring of wealth and glory that comes with it, is an attempt to validate a linear relationship of tradition and heritage. To borrow Hobsbawm and Ranger, such linearity is invented for 'establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority'.[21] John Butt's comment here is apt in extrapolating the difficulty of 'distinguish[ing] qualitatively between a tradition that is newly invented and one that appears to be continuous, without making claims for some mystical thread that validates the latter.'[22] In this case, the renaissance was distinguished by conjuring assertions of the former to validate the latter. Through these, we sense that in attempting to make sense of both renaissances, fictitious claims were made between the pastness of the sixteenth century and the presentness of the English Musical Renaissance.

One case of this can be seen in Morton Latham's wild assertions of England pioneering the first musical renaissance in his book *The Renaissance of Music*. In it, Latham claimed that England initiated the first musical renaissance so 'composers like Mackenzie, Parry and Stanford, give promise that musical England will hold her place

[19] Joseph Bennett, *The Daily Telegraph*, 4 September 1882; cited in Stradling and Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance 1860-1940: Construction and Deconstruction*, 42.
[20] Stradling and Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance 1860-1940: Construction and Deconstruction*, 43.
[21] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, Canto ed. (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 9.
[22] John Butt, *Playing with History: The Historical Approach to Musical Performance* Musical Performance and Reception (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 12.

among the nations in the century which we are rapidly approaching'.[23] Latham's claim sidestepped the evidence of music history by ignoring European musical centres such as the Italian Renaissance courts, and declaring that England was the forger of the Renaissance. Instead, Latham fabricated claims about the past to justify the English Musical Renaissance's occurrence 400 years later. His subscription to these claims mirrored the insecurity and lack of confidence in his country's own musical strength, hence the attempt to counter it through manipulation of history. Such historical manipulations show how history was appropriated for the advantage of current times. Latham's claims were made to assert historical influence, extending from a bygone era into the present, which were intended to pave the way forward for composers in the twentieth century.

Latham's claim is an indication of the deep-seated fear and uncertainty that had plagued British music historians and scholars of their own music historiography. As early as 1881, music critic and writer F.J. Crowest wrote that, 'we have the continental reputation of being the Great Unmusical Power of Europe – strong enough in commerce and steam, but devoid of musical talent, invention and discrimination'.[24] Similarly, Frank Howes wrote in 1966 of England's big import trade in music as the main reason the country failed to establish a musical reputation.[25] Nevertheless, the complete quote in Crowest's book *Phases of Musical England*, continues: 'notwithstanding… that as a people, we probably spend upon the Art and its Artists more money than any two or three of the nationalities combined'.[26] Crowest's deliberate reference on wealth spent on musical activities in the country was used as compensation against Britain's supposed lack of musical talent or composers. This shows that commentators and music historians nearing the turn of the century had already pointed to a mismatch between high levels of musical activity in England and the low status of its composers in the domestic and international arenas.

What is most striking here is not the predicament that had beset Britain as an 'unmusical nation' but rather the widely assumed and unchallenged acceptance of this by musicologists and writers alike as fact in the later nineteenth and twentieth century. The most notorious expression of this view was Hugh Reginald Haweis's book *Music and Morals* (1888), in which he proclaimed that 'however improving and improvable, the

[23] Morton Latham, *The Renaissance Music* (Harvard University: D. Stott, 1890), 175; cited in Stradling and Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance 1860-1940: Construction and Deconstruction*, 45.
[24] Frederick James Crowest, Preface to *Phases of Musical England* (London: London English Pub. Co., 1881), Preface; cited in Temperley, "Xenophilia in British Musical History," 5.
[25] Frank Howes, *The English Musical Renaissance* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1966), 19.
[26] Preface to Crowest, *Phases of Musical England*.

English are not, as a nation, an artistic people, *and the English are not a Musical People*'.[27] More than forty years later, W. J. Turner's description of the attitude and the situation of music in England in his *Music: A Short History* (1932) were hardly less different. Turner depicted music in England 'no longer as part of man's intellectual life, but as an amusement; and musicians henceforth are foreigners, hired, like Handel, to amuse the nobility and the court.'[28] Turner claimed that it was this attitude that 'has been so far-reaching that, in the history of European music since the seventeenth century to the present day, England can be ignored.'[29] This sense of rivalry against foreign influences and even musicians that has beset Britain since the eighteenth century continued to play out strongly in the reclaiming of Britain's national music and identity in the twentieth century.[30]

When German journalist Oskar Schmitz published a book titled *Das Land ohne Musik: Englische Gesellschaftsprobleme* in 1914, it was to be a basis for fervent discourse and contestation upon Britain's musical identity.[31] Schmitz wrote that:

> And I finally found a little that distinguishes the English from all other cultured nations in almost amazing measure, a shortcoming that everyone admits – therefore no new discovery at all – the range of which is still not stressed sufficiently: The English are the only cultured nation without their own music (popular songs excepted).[32]

Schmitz's writing denounces the credibility of Britain's musical prowess solely upon the absence in its cultivation of a national music idiom, while presupposing the fact that popular songs in Britain should not be considered. This reflected upon the way music was perceived in Britain: that however fertile music is in their own lands, it is always seen as a foreign import. Jürgen Schaarwächter asserts that Schmitz's denouncement of British music in the book was generally unfounded as music featured least in Schmitz's book, where discussion is generated towards features of English society.[33] Schaarwächter argues

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[27] H.R. Haweis, *Music and Morals*, 15th ed. (Strahan, 1871), 124-5; cited in Stradling and Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance 1860-1940: Construction and Deconstruction*, 6.
[28] W.J. Turner, *Music: A Short History*, ed. Gerald Bullett, The How-and-Why Series (London: A&C Black Ltd, 1932), 73.
[29] Turner, *Music: A Short History*.
[30] Ruth Smith demonstrates how Handel's oratorios were seen as national products to counter foreign art forms especially Italian opera, see Smith, *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought*, 70-80; and Scheding, "Problematic Tendencies," where foreign compoers and musicians where prejudiced and treated as 'enemy aliens', 245-69.
[31] There was a published translation of the book in English under Hans Herzl, *The Land without Music* (London: Jarrods, 1926).
[32] Oskar Adolf Hermann Schmitz, *Das Land ohne Musik: Englische Gesellschaftsprobleme* (München1914), 28; cited in Schaarwächter, "Chasing a Myth and a Legend," 57.
[33] Schaarwächter, "Chasing a Myth and a Legend," 57.

that because Schmitz's opinions and writings resulted from firsthand experiences as a journalist and were taken from popular, domestic venues and not professional concerts, hence it is ultimately biased and should not be used as a point of reference.

Attention directed to the 'unmusical Britain problem' nevertheless united music critics and initiated literary reaction for scholarship on the English Musical Renaissance. Frank Howes's 1966 book on the movement is perhaps the earliest on this subject.[34] In the book, he charts the progress of the English Musical Renaissance, from its nascent gestation, to its genesis and then later growth in three distinct stages. As Howes acknowledges, it has been clear that the main aim of the renaissance has been the 'emergence of British composers writing English music', which lay the foundation for the institutionalising of composers such as Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Holst.[35] Peter Pirie's book of the same title (1979), and later Michael Trend's *The Music Makers: Heirs and Rebels of the English Musical Renaissance, Edward Elgar to Benjamin Britten* (1985) are both examples of literature emerging from the recognition of such a movement in British music history.[36]

More recent scholarship, such as Stradling and Hughes' controversial book, *The English Musical Renaissance 1840-1940: Constructing A National Music* (first published in 1993) is less inclined to search for a single national composer or style, but rather focuses on cultural political issues of the English Musical Renaissance.[37] Stradling and Hughes formulated a vicious circle of outsiders and insiders who consciously appropriated the movement as a cause for the building of national identity. Stradling and Hughes's theory, although contentious, did probe deeper into manifestations of the socio-cultural background that underline discourses of English national identity. For one, that existence of a German aversion in cultural and musical practices, stimulated by the backlash of the wars, was very much valid in the earlier and mid-twentieth century. On the other hand, discourse on the English Musical Renaissance underlined that the need for a national identity and solidarity through music is a valid one.

This is realized most strongly through the lionizing of composer Henry Purcell (1659-1695). As Britain's national music icon, Purcell's strong musical influence to the nation has not been compensated by his early death, a misfortune that was much lamented

[34] Howes, *The English Musical Renaissance*.
[35] Howes, *The English Musical Renaissance*, 23.
[36] Peter John Pirie, *The English Musical Renaissance* (London: Gollancz, 1979); Trend, *The Music Makers: Heirs and Rebels of the English Musical Renaissance, Edward Elgar to Benjamin Britten*.
[37] See Alain Frogley's critique on Stradling and Hughes' book in Alain Frogley, "Rewriting the Renaissance: History, Imperialism and British Music since 1840," *Music and Letters* 84, no 2(2003): 241-57.

by British musicologists and scholars since the turn of the century.[38] Purcell's compositions of masques, songs, odes and verse anthems offer a basis for establishing a supposedly fertile association of national music making in the seventeenth century, especially since his odes and anthems were largely monarch-inspired works during his position at the Royal Chapel. The resuscitation of Purcell's works later in the English Musical Renaissance and especially in the early music revival in Britain is symptomatic of the composer's seminal influence on the nation's twentieth-century music performing scene. Purcell's compositions were largely vocal works and he composed in every sacred and secular genre available for the voice during his time. He was also a noted singer; a fact that led to immensely contested debates surrounding his voice type, which I will discuss later in this chapter. Besides Purcell, predecessors during the Renaissance period such as John Dowland, Thomas Tallis, Thomas Weelkes and Orlando Gibbons were all composers of vocal music. Dowland is a significant composer of lute music and lute songs, whereas Tallis, Weelkes and Gibbons composed madrigals, anthems and services for the voice. Nonetheless, it was not Purcell's odes and verses anthems, but his operas that became in the twentieth-century, a powerful marker and trope for national music identity in Britain.

1.3 Opera in Britain

No discussion of national music identity would be complete without opera. Discussions of national musical identity in Britain are inextricably bound up with identifications or absence of an operatic tradition. Opera or the operatic tradition, as we have seen in the cases of Italy, France and Germany, has been an especially potent signifier of national music identity. The absence or discontinuity of similar genres in Britain before or since Purcell's seventeenth-century compositions such as *Dido and Aeneas* have been debated by musicologists since the early twentieth century.[39] Nevertheless, such understandings of absence were twofold. Firstly, that the absence of a British compositional voice in opera underlined motivations for the English Musical Renaissance, which culminated in the identification of a 'national opera' through composers such as Britten. Secondly, the absence or loss of a national operatic idiom was equally felt in identification of a British operatic singing voice, where the vocal style and the operatic genre (despite its popularity among British listeners) were understood more as 'foreign' products than as an indigenous

[38] Cecil Forsyth, *Music and Nationalism: A Study of English Opera* (London: Macmillan and Company, Limited, 1911), 277.
[39] Forsyth, *Music and Nationalism: A Study of English Opera*, 277; Turner, *Music: A Short History*, 72.

and national art form. For Britain, the national identity issue persists not only through the claims of an absent national compositional voice, but also through an absent national singing voice.[40]

This is, however, largely contingent upon how the term 'opera' is defined and used. Comparisons of how Britain fared against traditions of mainstream continental opera culture have continued to reflect insecurities felt by British music historians and scholars. In general, most music historians believe that a British operatic compositional tradition has not firmly taken root in the country, nor was it an internationally exportable product until Britten's *Peter Grimes* in 1945. There are numerous attempts of justification for the situation, such as in the case of Nicholas Temperley, who validated British opera's absence in relation to the nation's 'powerful school of drama, where music enjoyed an established but subordinate place'.[41]

Such tendencies framed the failure of a national operatic culture in Britain as a largely unfortunate cause. However, the popularity and wide consumption of foreign opera in Britain, especially after 1710, demonstrates that even though there was no clear local operatic culture in the country, the genre itself is significantly dominated by foreign influences, a fact that later in the twentieth century led to the insistence of a national opera being built not only with British composers, but with British singers. Temperley described John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), 'as a synthesis of music and drama radically different from that of opera and wonderfully suited to English taste and experience', which developed effectively alongside successes of Italian opera in London.[42] The only later local theatrical works that have been significantly successful are the Gilbert and Sullivan collaborations during the late nineteenth century.

The Savoy operettas by dramatist W.S. Gilbert and composer Arthur Sullivan were light-hearted and comical. Despite widespread popularity of the operettas both locally and internationally, Sullivan was not properly established as a 'serious' composer, which relegated his compositions to an inferior rank. His compositions were not necessarily seen

[40] Ideas of opera being essentially a foreign art form had its roots since the eighteenth century in the contestation between the dominantly British oratorio and the Italian opera. Daniel Defoe's proposal to set up a national music academy emphatically asked 'Wouldn't it be a glorious thing to have an *Opera* in our own, in our own most noble Tongue, in which the Composer, Singers, and Orchestra, should be of our own Growth?' See Daniel Defoe, 'Proposal to prevent the Expensive Importation of *Foreign Musicians*, & c. by forming an Academy of our own', *Augusta Triumphans* (1728), repr. in M.F. Shugrue, ed. *Selected Poetry and Prose of Daniel Defoe* (New York: 1968); cited in Smith, *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought*, 73.

[41] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Great Britain," by Nicholas Temperley, accessed December 4, 2016, 2015, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/.

[42] Temperley, "Great Britain."

as a national idiom of British music, or as one to effectively represent Britain's operatic achievement. Even Sullivan's only attempt at serious opera in *Ivanhoe* (1891) proved to be a failure in entering the repertory of British opera. Stephan Banfield and Ian Russell assert that failure of the establishment of an English operatic tradition during the nineteenth and twentieth century was due to 'upper-class male reserve' rather than 'British moral temperament' as most composers who were close to establishing a British operatic canon, were regarded as 'outsiders to the dominant English culture'.[43] Composers such as Charles Villiers Stanford, Ethel Smyth and Rutland Boughton to even Britten were excluded due to their nationality (Stanford was Irish), gender, sexuality (Britten and Smyth were homosexuals), class or political ideologies (Boughton was a Communist).[44] Regardless, there is still much anxiety in addressing Britain's operatic scene, one that was countered by strong advocates of an English opera. Through his book *Music and Nationalism: A Study on English Opera* in 1911, Cecil Forsyth voiced keen and real aspirations of setting up a national English Opera, advocating it as a significantly patriotic stance against hegemony and domination of German culture.[45]

The early to mid-twentieth century stimulated stronger opposition against Germany and there was a real need to identify with a specifically British/English operatic idiom. Walton's *Façade* (1923) and Holst's *At The Boar Head* (1925) were both indications of such a need, with the former focusing on 'new word-music combinations' and the latter on 'folk operas'.[46] The Sadler's Wells Theatre, set up in 1931 and opened as a 'People's Opera' was dedicated expressly to the funding, staging and performing of opera in English. Post war reconstruction of Britain's artistic and cultural scene in the inter-war years were a crucial prelude to the premiere of Britten's opera *Peter Grimes* in 1945, marked as a watershed in British operatic history. Britten's further operatic ventures were successful, which established both the composer and his operas as a national symbol of the country. The nationalising of Britten's operas demonstrates how the drive for a distinct musical identity in Britain ultimately manifested in discourses around the singing voice.

Evidence in such a need for a national singing voice was realised in Kathleen Ferrier who despite being a non-normative choice for opera, was firmly established by Benjamin Britten as one in his quest for a new opera in Britain. However, it was not only Ferrier's operatic roles that established her as a national icon of Britain. Ferrier's career

[43] Banfield and Russell, "England (i)."
[44] Banfield and Russell, "England (i)."
[45] Forsyth, *Music and Nationalism: A Study of English Opera*, 280-301.
[46] Temperley, "Great Britain."

was built largely on the precedent of famous contralto singer Dame Clara Butt (1872-1936). As the 'voice of the British Empire',[47] Butt was the previous voice of Britain. With the near demise of the British Empire and the death of Clara Butt both in the mid-twentieth century, Ferrier's rising singer status in the 1940s was envisaged to replace Butt as the new voice of Britain.

1.4 Ferrier as 'Clara Butt'

As a then present evocation of Clara Butt,[48] Ferrier was often prejudiced against perceptions of the contralto voice. She often found herself typecast, especially during her early years as a singer. Butt's performing career was, unlike most famous divas during her time, mainly on the concert rather than the operatic stage. Her contralto voice, noted by the media for its deep, powerful characteristics encompassed a wide range that seemed to correspond to her imposing and tall figure.[49] It was, however, largely in Butt's legacy that Ferrier's career continued. There was, in this case, a strong desire to see Ferrier as the new Clara Butt and to interpret the contralto voice as representational of the nation; and on the other hand, a tendency to dismiss the voice type or to conflate it with the mezzo soprano.

During Ferrier's formative years as a singer, comparisons with Butt were rife, much to Ferrier's exasperation.[50] Despite the tendency of institutions such as the BBC to conflate the contralto with the mezzo-soprano, the strong association of Butt and Ferrier was enough to counter negative connotations of the contralto voice and place Ferrier as valid successor to the popular singer. In a reply to BBC North Region Music Director Maurice Johnstone's enquiry about Ferrier (who was then Kathleen Wilson), Cecil McGivern of the Newcastle's Programme Department wrote:

> As Kathleen Wilson says, she has broadcast from Newcastle studios several times, but chiefly in variety and light entertainment programmes. She is a trained contralto,

[47] Ivor Newton, *At the Piano* (London: Hamish and Hamilton, 1966), 99; cited in Richards, *Imperialism and Music: Britain 1876-1953*, 476.
[48] According to Grove authors, Butt was then referred to as 'mother of the free'. See *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Contralto," by Owen Jander et al., accessed December 11, 2015, 2014, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/.
[49] Conductor Thomas Beecham claimed that Clara Butt's voice could be heard across the English Channel on a clear day, Sophie Fuller, ""The Finest Voice of the Century": Clara Butt and Other Concert-Hall and Drawing-Room Singers of Fin-de-siécle Britain," in *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Rachel Cowgill and Hilary Poriss (Oxford Oxford University Press, 2012), 321., cited from Charles Haynes, liner notes to Dame Clara Butt "Abide with Me" Pearl GEM 0081 (2000)
[50] In Maurice Leonard's biography of Ferrier, Kathleen Ferrier complained to her sister that 'I don't sound a bit like Clara Butt!' Leonard, *Kathleen: The Life of Kathleen Ferrier 1912-1953*, 46.

> with a warm 'Clara Butt' voice. I personally like her singing very much but I am not enough of a musician to 'place' her correctly. When war started, we had determined to use her in straight shows but had no opportunity to do so. I personally should recommend that she be given an audition. Her voice is of a rather unusual type and, as I said, I find it attractive. I understood from her that she once broadcast from Manchester many years ago but on that occasion as a pianist.[51]

Similarly, the *Nuneaton Observer* wrote that 'the extraordinary beauty of her "O rest in the Lord" indicates her as a coming Clara Butt'.[52] *The Liverpool Evening Express* described Ferrier's performance with the Leslie Bridgewater Salon Orchestra as 'worthy to be mentioned as a possible successor to Clara Butt.'[53] These comparisons were geared towards promotion of Ferrier as a contralto who might succeed Butt as 'the most celebrated British singer of her generation'.[54] Even with the relative obscurity during Ferrier's early days, her contralto voice operated as replacement for the loss of the most famous contralto in the previous century. By the time Butt died in 1936, she had already achieved the status of national icon, and that opened up a position for the next singer who would walk in Butt's footsteps. There was, hence, a strong desire for Ferrier to succeed the legacy of the contralto in Britain, effectively as the next 'Clara Butt'.

Music critics understood the influence wielded by previous artists such as Butt and frequently employed rhetorical comparisons in music reviews of Ferrier as a nod towards her predecessor. Despite that, there were also reviews that were not so kind to Butt and downplayed her in order to paint Ferrier as superior. The *Hinkley Times* called Ferrier far better as 'she has what Clara Butt never did have, a grand voice trained over its whole range'.[55] Maurice Leonard wrote that the review was 'monstrously unfair' to Butt where she was denigrated on promotion of Ferrier as the next big thing.[56] However, what figures more importantly here is not whether Ferrier was equal with Butt, but that Ferrier was clearly irritated by these comparisons as she claimed that she 'in no way resembled Dame Clara either in voice or in style of singing'.[57] Ferrier's irritation might be due to the negative connotations associated with Butt and her repertoire. Butt was a concert-hall singer and her repertoire largely concentrated on ballads, a genre that was then dismissed

[51] Cecil McGivern to Maurice Johnstone, 3 October 1941, 'Kathleen Wilson', N18/428 North Region: Artist Ferrier Kathleen 1939-1955, BBC WAC.
[52] Leonard, *Kathleen: The Life of Kathleen Ferrier 1912-1953*, 63.
[53] Leonard, *Kathleen: The Life of Kathleen Ferrier 1912-1953*, 46.
[54] Fuller, ""The Finest Voice of the Century": Clara Butt and Other Concert-Hall and Drawing-Room Singers of Fin-de-siécle Britain," 317.
[55] Leonard, *Kathleen: The Life of Kathleen Ferrier 1912-1953*, 64.
[56] Leonard, *Kathleen: The Life of Kathleen Ferrier 1912-1953*, 64.
[57] Leonard, *Kathleen: The Life of Kathleen Ferrier 1912-1953*, 64.

as overtly sentimental, simplistic and unrefined. Butt's shadow loomed largely over Ferrier's musical career and comparisons between them were frequently made. Both were lauded for their fine contralto voices, Ferrier as the 'possessor of a voice of exceptional range and beauty'[58] and Butt as one whose voice 'appears to be in the prime of its beauty, rich, full, and with a quality of its own.'[59]

Although she was irritated by the comparison to Butt, Ferrier was – like her famous predecessor – a non-operatic singer. Ferrier sang in only two fully staged operas: in the title role of Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* (1946) and as Orfeo in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*. She first performed Gluck's opera in Glyndebourne (1947), and took it on tour to New York and Amsterdam later in 1949. The Covent Garden performances of *Orfeo* in 1953 were to be her last, due to the increasing severity of her illness. Similarly, the only opera that Butt ever attempted was the same English-translated opera of Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice*. This started as a Royal College of Music production when Butt was still a student. She then performed in a command production for the Prince of Wales and finally in four sold-out Covent Garden performances under Thomas Beecham. The *Pall Mall Gazette* praised Butt's Orpheus as 'more than merely satisfactory' and called her 'fine contralto voice, full and sweet, and of considerable power; it is remarkably even in tone, and her transition to the lower notes almost unnoticeable.'[60] The resemblance between Butt and Ferrier did not end there. Butt had a scena for contralto and orchestra, *Cleopatra* (1904) composed for her by British composer Frances Allitsen and Arthur Bliss wrote his scena, *The Enchantress*, for Ferrier in 1951. Both works figure strong women in the title role and were written for contralto voices.

It is interesting to note the pressures against both women taking up full operatic careers. Butt may have reined in her operatic ambitions because of the negative perceptions that tainted the operatic profession and her desire to preserve her image as a married woman.[61] For Ferrier there were more than a few objections to her operatic ventures. For example, Ferrier was under consideration for the title role of *Carmen* at the 1946 Glyndebourne Festival under conductor Thomas Beecham. In a letter to Audrey Christie,

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[58] "Miss Kathleen Ferrier: Popular Contralto at Hull Concert," *Hull Daily Mail*, 6 May 1946.
[59] "The Clara Butt Concert," *Belfast News-Letter* 3 May 1899; cited in Fuller, ""The Finest Voice of the Century": Clara Butt and Other Concert-Hall and Drawing-Room Singers of Fin-de-siécle Britain," 322.
[60] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 December 1892; cited in Fuller, ""The Finest Voice of the Century": Clara Butt and Other Concert-Hall and Drawing-Room Singers of Fin-de-siécle Britain," 317-18.
[61] There might be a variety of reasons that Butt did not pursue her operatic ambitions, however one main reason might be opposition from her husband, baritone Kennerley Rumford. See Aspinal, liner notes to *Clara Butt. A Critical Survey*, vol. 1: The Acoustic Years, Marston 52029-2 (2000), cited from Fuller, ""The Finest Voice of the Century": Clara Butt and Other Concert-Hall and Drawing-Room Singers of Fin-de-siécle Britain," 319.

Betty Humby (Beecham's wife) claimed that Ferrier was 'embryonic material' and listed three reasons why she was rejected:

> 1) that all the great Carmens of the world from 1875 to the present year have been sopranos, 2) that only two mezzo-sopranos have ever sung the role with a fair measure of success, 3) that no contralto has ever succeeded in doing anything with the role but make a complete ass of herself.[62]

According to Fifield, Thomas Beecham fell out with John Christie because of this incident.[63] Nonetheless, the obvious tension between the contralto and the soprano voice types were strongly played out here; and almost always it was the contralto that faced denigration. Dislike expressed towards contralto singers in operatic roles exposes the reservations that stopped them from venturing beyond their genres of concert-hall ballads, oratorios and song recitals. Beecham's lashing out against the contralto was a way of keeping them in check if contraltos were ever to trespass into operatic territory 'reserved' for sopranos and mezzo-sopranos.

Other objections were voiced against Ferrier's performance in *Carmen*. After a concert performance of *Carmen* at Stourbridge Town Hall in 1944, a *Worcester County Express* critic expressed his reservations: 'Miss Ferrier's grave and beautiful contralto is more suited to oratorio than light opera.'[64] Perhaps the loudest objections came from Ferrier herself and her own insecurities about opera, which included doubts about her physical and technical abilities. This was in part largely influenced by her vocal teacher Roy Henderson, who strongly advised against her singing Verdi's *Requiem* for fear of the *tessitura* being too high for her.[65] Although the *Requiem* was not an opera, its operatic style meant that it was frequently performed by operatic rather than concert singers. This is especially true for the *Requiem*'s solo contralto part, written for operatic singer Maria Waldmann who premiered the role in 1874.[66] Waldmann, whose other Verdian roles included Amneris (*Aida*) and Preziosilla (*La forza del destino*) had a wide tessitura. As testament to the range of her voice, the alto solo that Verdi wrote in 'Liber Scriptus' went from a low G to high A♭. This is a range, as David Rosen pointed out, that was similar to

[62] In a letter dated 3 November 1945, Fifield, *Letters and Diaries of Kathleen Ferrier*, 9.
[63] Fifield, *Letters and Diaries of Kathleen Ferrier*, 10.
[64] Leonard, *Kathleen: The Life of Kathleen Ferrier 1912-1953*, 67.
[65] Roy Henderson was against Ferrier doing Verdi's *Requiem* and exclaimed to her that 'there is lack of heat in the blood for such things', see letter no. 96 Fifield, *Letters and Diaries of Kathleen Ferrier*, 74.
[66] Waldmann, being Verdi's only trusted contralto had a wide tessitura. Despite that, Verdi addressed her as a contralto when he said that 'Waldman [*sic*], for example, can do all the high 'A's' and 'B♭'s' she wants, but will always be a contralto.' See David Rosen, "Verdi's "Liber Scriptus" Rewritten," *The Musical Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (1969): 151-69, 166, 69.

Ulrica from Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera*, a feat not impossible for Ferrier given that her performance in *Lucretia* reaches up to a high A.[67] It is hence possible that Ferrier could have sung the role of Verdi's *Requiem* if not for the objections of her teacher.

Henderson's objections to Ferrier singing opera were likely to be strong influences during her early vocal training, which suggested the reason of her turning down every operatic offer, even Verdi's Ulrica at Glyndebourne.[68] Other operatic roles that she rejected included Niklaus in Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffman* and a request by Herbert von Karajan to sing Brangäne in *Tristan und Isolde*. Ferrier readily admitted that opera was not her strongest suit. Even in her first operatic debut as Lucretia, she confided in a letter to her sister Winifred that she felt awkwardly placed, like a 'broken down windmill' with her big hands and feet.[69] Despite that, Ferrier achieved what Dyneley Hussey called, her 'greatest artistic success' in Gluck's *Orfeo* within a relatively short span of less than ten years.[70] Her portrayal of Orfeo came at the peak of her career, which for many represented not just her final operatic act, but also her farewell.

Ferrier's career was built on the precedent of Butt as the previous voice of Britain. Deller's career however, was built on proponents of the early music revival and the legitimisation of a past musical 'Golden Age' as present. In order to understand how the invention of tradition is an important aspect in British music historiography, some background on the establishment and impact of various music projects such as the early musical revival, the English choral tradition, the Purcell Revival and the countertenor revival is needed. By elucidating on how promotion of the countertenor voice, in particular Deller's voice was wrapped in the promotion of national musical identity, I claimed that Deller was understood to embody – in a literal, physical sense – crucial links between the past and the present within mid-twentieth century constructions of English national identity.

[67] Rosen, "Verdi's "Liber Scriptus" Rewritten," 169. See also Ch'ng Xin Ying, "Kathleen Ferrier's Voice and Benjamin Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*" (Master of Music (Musicology), University of Southampton, 2012).
[68] In a letter dated 22 October 1948 to Glyndebourne's General Manager, Rudolph Bing, Ferrier expressed interest in the role of Ulrica but had to reject it because it was too high, saying that Roy Henderson would not let her do Verdi's Requiem for the same reason. Ferrier purportedly exclaimed that Henderson said that 'there is a lack of heat in the blood for such things!!' and that she was determined to prove him wrong one day. See Fifield, *Letters and Diaries of Kathleen Ferrier*, 74.
[69] Ferrier, *The Life of Kathleen Ferrier*, 74.
[70] Dyneley Hussey, "Critic on the Hearth," *The Listener*, 22 October 1953.

1.5 Early Music Revival

The history of the early music movement in the twentieth century is complex and had generated a vast body of literature as well as strong opinions among its proponents and detractors. It is not my intention here to provide a detailed account of the movement, although other scholars had done it successfully.[71] However, a brief discussion of some key points helps us to understand how implications of the movement shaped and influenced Deller's career. Projects of music from the past that characterised the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were concerned first, but were not limited to repertory from the Medieval and Renaissance periods. These had roots at least as early as the eighteenth century, well before Mendelssohn's ambitious undertaking of performing Bach's *St Matthew Passion* in 1829, which initiated momentum for a Bach revival and is often seen as a watershed moment. In England, the first music restoration practices were morally rather than culturally directed. In 1711, the clergyman Arthur Bedford proposed in his *Great Abuse of Musick*, a revival of Tudor music as a means to counter secularism, notably the popularity of Italian opera.[72]

Performances of early music – usually characterised as music before 1750 – were not unprecedented before the twentieth century. However, the late nineteenth century ushered in new ways and attitudes of performing early music: one that sought to be 'historically-accurate'. Performers of early music incorporated historically-informed performing conventions through their choice of period instruments, repertory and performing styles, despite much contention on the basis of its plausibility.[73] The overall trajectory of early music performances is that of reconstruction and restoration with an emphasis on 'authenticity'. The fixation on authenticity is partially due to a reactionary crisis countering unrest in the postmodern twentieth century where events of the revival were especially active. The revival represents interest in the performance of early music

[71] See Haskell, *The Early Music Revival: A History*.
[72] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Early Music," by Harry Haskell, accessed December 18, 2015, 2015, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.
[73] The polemics surrounding 'historically-informed performances' varied widely and were mostly centred in the 1980s. Some musicologists challenged the advocate of 'authenticity', charging such ideals as contradictory and even counter-cultural. A full history of the early music revival discourse is beyond the scope of this study; here I list some of the major studies done in this discourse. Lawrence Dreyfus is one of the earliest to address the implications of 'historically-informed' practices in the present state, see Laurence Dreyfus, "Early Music Defended against Its Devotees: A Theory of Historical Performance in the Twentieth Century," *The Musical Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (1983): 297-322, 297-332. See also, Robert P. Morgan, "Tradition, Anxiety and the Current Musical Scene," in *Authenticity and Early Music: A Symposium*, ed. Nicholas Kenyon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 57-82; Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Peter Kivy, *Authenticities : Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); and also Butt, *Playing with History: The Historical Approach to Musical Performance*

during the mid-to late-twentieth century especially with advantages provided by recording and broadcasts.

In the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century, early music revival involved wide-ranging efforts in performance, edition, instrument building and scholarship, with contributions from leading British figures in each of these areas. A significant figure in the British early music from the 1890s onward was Arnold Dolmetsch. A man of many hats, Dolmetsch was an instrument maker, a performer, music scholar and educator. His crafted instruments were revolutionary and were created with an awareness for authenticity and historicity. By using these instruments, Dolmetsch championed the motto that 'we can no longer allow anyone to stand between us and the composer'.[74] Such precedence for the authority of the composer commanded renewed cultural appreciation for English composers such as Dunstable, and most notably Purcell, at the turn of the century. While Dolmetsch revolutionised instrumental performances of early music, Edmund Fellowes and Richard Runciman Terry were both important early vocal music promoters in England. Although there had been earlier performances by ensembles such as the Oriana Madrigal Society, Fellowes's extensive editions of English music from 1545 to 1640, for example in his *Tudor Church Music* series (1923-37), were crucial in establishing the performing culture of English madrigals and sacred music in a broader performance culture. The organist and music director of Westminster Cathedral, Richard Terry's (1901-1924) incorporations of medieval and Renaissance liturgical music in his choir were also particularly significant in the revival of English composers such as Byrd, Tallis and Taverner among others.[75]

In the 1920s, the English Singers and later the Fleet Street Choir performed and promoted madrigals at least partly because of Fellowes's editions. Ramifications of the First World War and the spirit of nationalism during the interwar period spurred further enthusiasm for early music, resulting in a spread of 'Elizabethan fever' in Britain. The revival in Britain reached new heights with the tercentenaries of William Byrd in 1923 and then Orlando Gibbons in 1925. The wide range of commemorative events and performances mounted in those years can also be read as efforts to promote Renaissance music as a collective and national music repertory. Later early music projects in the mid-

[74] Arnold Dolmetsch, *The Interpretation of the Music of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries*, Reprint ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969); Haskell, *The Early Music Revival: A History*, 43.
[75] Haskell, "Early Music; Haskell, *The Early Music Revival: A History*, 36-37.

twentieth century were similarly motivated and often seem marked by a sense of anxiety.[76] This attitude underlined how behind events of music highlighting English composers and their works, there was the corollary promotion of an idealised national music identity.

The introduction of performers such as Alfred Deller could not have been possible without the groundwork laid out by prominent scholars and performers before him. The 1930s to 1960s depicted a full-fledged extension of the early music revival. The arrival of recording and broadcasting, especially the BBC, and subsequently the introduction of the BBC's Third Programme, precipitated a widespread propagation of early music that lasted until the end of the century. The Third Programme broadcasted lesser-known works from the medieval to the later Baroque periods and engaged music specialists to educate and promote appreciation of early music. Even though the Third Programme appeared to cater to a relatively minor audience, which led to charges of elitism, it did eventually increase performing and listening opportunities of early music that were unprecedented in the previous century.

The early music revival's orientation around authenticity implied reference to a state of originality. The many motivations and methods of the early music revival has led to a huge amount of debate involving opposing attitudes to the idea of 'authenticity'. How does one define 'authenticity' and to what extent can it be resurrected from the past so that it is not mere reconstruction and invention? These are questions that both opponents and practitioners of the early music movement have tried to answer for many years. The assertion that there would inherently be a greater claim of authenticity for those immemorially linked to the past is a tacit assumption for some; but, make-believe for others such as John Butt.[77]

A significant component of the debate arose from two contrasting views of 'tradition'. The first view assumes that the idea of 'authenticity' in resurrecting works of the past establishes a break in the linear discourse of tradition.[78] In fact, the very idea of 'revival' found in 'authentic' and historically-informed performance is already responsible for the charge of 'separation and revolution'.[79] This concept of revival sees history and tradition as detached from the past and it is through 'revival' that continuity with the past is

[76] Robert Morgan links the need for historical accuracy in contemporary musical culture as one characterised by 'an extraordinary degree of insecurity, uncertainty, and self-doubt - in a word, by anxiety'. See Morgan, "Tradition, Anxiety and the Current Musical Scene," 57.
[77] Butt, *Playing with History: The Historical Approach to Musical Performance* 33.
[78] Morgan, "Tradition, Anxiety and the Current Musical Scene," 67.
[79] Butt, *Playing with History: The Historical Approach to Musical Performance* 33.

forged. This view disregards the past's collective history as if accumulated trappings of an art restoration project: unnecessary build-up or dirt that needs to be stripped away for music to be in its pristine condition. It assumes the historical work of music to be composed of ahistorical and fixed entities of a past, immutable to the transient nature of its associated surroundings. This establishes the musical canon as transcendental and the *werktreue* as an 'authentic' representation of the immortalized composer.[80]

The second view presents 'authenticity' as being relevant and responsive to current and existing situations. Robert Morgan affirms this view when he said that:

> the only 'authentic' music from the past will be music that has survived as a vital part of a living tradition – literally as part of the *present* – and the only authentic way of performing it will be according to the requirements of current custom.[81]

Morgan considers the idea of 'authenticity' as part and parcel of our current living condition and one which reflects the understanding of present times. Butt adopts a related stance when he claims that 'the various forms of historical restoration', are what he believes to be an ''authentic' expression of our contemporary cultural condition bringing new experiences and insights into our world.'[82] His statement exemplifies that tradition and the idea of authenticity would be better experienced not from a detachment of the past, but from a renewed outlook of the present with its accompanying cultural manifestations. This assumes that true 'authenticity' is a fallacy because we could never achieve similar cultural understandings that were part of the musical work's creation. Despite attempts of reliving past performance practices, we are still appropriating this music for our own specific purposes and intentions, according to the tastes and function of our times. Taruskin addresses historical performance as the 'sound of now, not then' where authenticity is derived 'not from its historical verisimilitude, but from its being for better or worse a true mirror of late-twentieth century taste'; in other words, authenticity is being 'true to the voice of one's time'.[83]

These debates around the concept of authenticity and the meaning of the early music revival have occupied musicological scholarship since the 1980s. The musical and commercial success of the early music revival especially from the 1950s to 1980s have led to the questioning of assumptions surrounding the revival in later scholarship.

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[80] Nick Wilson, *The Art of Re-enchantment: Making Early Music in the Modern Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 11.
[81] Morgan, "Tradition, Anxiety and the Current Musical Scene," 67.
[82] Butt, *Playing with History: The Historical Approach to Musical Performance* 5, 6.
[83] Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* 166.

Musicologists such as Richard Taruskin have asserted that early music practitioners are reflecting the present instead of reviving the past. Taruskin claimed that 'historical' performances demonstrate not an anachronism of the past, but a 'performance style that is completely of our own time, and is in fact the most modern style around'. He clarifies that 'historical hardware has won its wide acceptance and above all its commercial viability precisely by virtue of its novelty, not its antiquity'.[84] Morgan echoes a similar belief when he claims that the early music revival is 'a faithful reflection of our current thinking about art: it is itself in other words, an entirely "authentic" manifestation of our age.'[85] Daniel Leech-Wilkinson establishes similar understandings when he proposes that performance styles of early music are largely based on personal inventions and constructions, 'current taste more than accurate reproduction'. Hence, he addresses that historically informed performances should, instead of operating within reproductions that were distant and anachronistic to present times, be appropriated to premises of its present sound-world.[86]

Another cultural manifestation of the early music revival is what Robert Morgan defines as 'an extraordinary degree of insecurity, uncertainty and self-doubt – in a word, … anxiety.'[87] There is a sense of anxiety that stems from the pull of opposing sites: an attempt to secure a fixed identity through connections with the past and the attempt to embrace the novel in the context of modernism, industrialization and commercialisation. According to some scholars, this anxiety also emerged in reaction to depersonalising forces of mass reproduction of art, where art is seen to be losing its value to fake replicas and substitutes. Taruskin considers historically-informed performance as 'a symptom of late twentieth century modernism.'[88] I extend this argument for the case of Britain, in that anxieties felt were symptomatic of a lost cultural and national identity, manifested most prominently in the fervent promotion of early music during the mid-twentieth century.

[84] Richard Taruskin, Richard Taruskin, "The Pastness of the Present and the Presence of the Past," in *Authenticity and Early Music: A Symposium*, ed. Nicholas Kenyon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 152.
[85] Morgan, "Tradition, Anxiety and the Current Musical Scene," 72.
[86] Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, "'What We Are Doing with Early Music Is Genuinely Authentic to Such a Small Degree That the Word Loses Most of Its Intended Meaning'," *Early Music* 12, no. 1 (1984): 13-16, 14.
[87] Morgan, "Tradition, Anxiety and the Current Musical Scene," 57.
[88] Butt, *Playing with History: The Historical Approach to Musical Performance* 8.

1.6 English Choral Tradition

For most of the late nineteenth century, British music historians and scholars emphasised vocal music as basis for the instigation of the English Musical Renaissance and early music revival. This was evidenced by a desire to claim or reclaim a now lost 'English Golden Age' in music, leading to wild assertions of 'English musical greatness'. The most notorious assertion was in 1881, when the Duke of Albany, in a fund-raising speech at a Royal College of Music event, declared that 'the English were a musical people, since in earlier times they were the first and greatest musical nation in Europe.'[89] The duke validated this by referring to 'Sumer is icumen in', a thirteenth-century vocal canon (*rota*) widely claimed as the first known example of six-part polyphony in Western Europe. Misrepresentations such as this were extensive in mid-twentieth century music history books, where fact was distorted and appropriated for the sake of national music significance. Francis Toye, in his book *The Musical Companion: A Compendium for All Lovers of Music* noted the English's 'mistaken pride' in attributing any nationalistic significance towards 'Sumer is icumen in'.[90] But these claims were evidence of a nation constantly searching for legitimacy and validity of their own musical identity, in other words, for its own 'voice'.

Notions of authenticity and tradition in vocal music figure heavily in the construction of an especially English 'national voice', in other words a national music identity. The search for 'authenticity', as evidenced above, is symptomatic of a need to reclaim historical value and affirm precedence of the past. In Britain, idealization of the past features significantly in the choral tradition represented by Renaissance composers such as William Byrd, Orlando Gibbons and Thomas Tallis. Tensions are created by a need for consistency in reference to the past, and an equally powerful need to embrace modernity. Traditions were thus invented in an attempt to sustain a linear continuity from the past to the present. According to Hobsbawm, these traditions conform to a set of 'invented, constructed and formally instituted' rituals, which seek to reflect values and norms that indicate continuity of the past.[91] This sense of tradition and its association with antiquity connotes a sense of continuity that Hobsbawm deemed 'factitious'.[92] Music scholars and historians are equally responsible in constructing ways to make sense of

[89] Robert Stradling and Meirion Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance 1860-1940: Constructing a National Music*, Second Edition ed. (London: Routledge, 2001), 28.
[90] Francis Toye, *The Musical Companion: A Compendium for all Lovers of Music*, ed. A.L. Bacharach, 6th impression ed. (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1940), 378.
[91] Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, 1.
[92] Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, 2.

traditions by appropriating them for current times. In other words, the choral tradition is ultimately not an actual tradition, but one that music historians and scholars used to claim continuity and relevance of the past for effective portrayals of national music identity. Claims of the English choral tradition's supposedly longevity and historicity are employed to portray an idealized version of English musical culture.

The rhetoric and imagined historicity of the English choral tradition has been used to counter the insecurities of a potentially awkward British music historiography. The English choral tradition's supposed continuous legacy led to accounts of it as an English icon and representation of a national tradition. Belief in the centrality of the English choral tradition was widespread through the mid-to late twentieth century and remains strong today in many quarters. George Dyson in his *The Progress of Music* (1932) proudly remarked on the church's effectiveness in retaining the internal organization of its 'monastic predecessors' with lay clerks and choir boys.[93] Dyson's account of the Anglican choir was delivered with a sense of achievement:

> The Anglican choir is not a choral society. It is a special and delicate instrument for the production of special and delicate effects, and it has fifteen hundred years of proved experience behind it. We have seen what happened to those churches which imported the prima-donna and the operatic chorus instead. We have no reason to envy them. Our cathedral organist, with his men and boys, may have made no great mark in the world, but he and they have preserved an atmosphere, bequeathed from the long past, which carries with it an ideal of religious and musical intimacy not easily to be matched in our less restful age.[94]

Dyson substantiates the choral tradition in Britain by referring to its extensive history and by comparing it with opera, marking operatic presence in the choir as an infiltration. Comparisons and distinctions with opera became a recurring theme in the twentieth-century British music-performing scene. It features significantly in the later chapters of my thesis, where singers in Britain have consistently been compared with and distinguished from Continental operatic singers. Most importantly, these comparisons were negotiated in order to make sense of an especially problematic musical past.

Claims of an especially strong English choral tradition were sustained until the late twentieth century. As late as 1980, the director of Tallis Scholars, Peter Philips addressed

[93] George Dyson, *The Progress of Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 40.
[94] Dyson, *The Progress of Music*, 40.

the choral tradition as 'one of the most tenacious and characteristic aspects of English musical life'.[95] He praised the strict musical discipline these professionals and semi-professional choirs go through to preserve and sustain the daily services of Anglican institutions all around the United Kingdom. Philips portrayed the choral tradition as one that has 'proved so strong and the English enthusiasm for singing so great over the centuries that very few choral foundations have had to close'.[96] Belief in the choral tradition in England was not only entrenched among British music scholars, but assumed to be equally well reputed in the Continent. Christopher Page wrote later in 1993, that a distinctive *tradition anglaise* and *tradición británica* was coined in reference to the influence and exclusivity of the English choral tradition. Spanish choral devotees were believed to exclaim that:

> Perhaps the English do not know what an immense treasure they possess in having maintained the choral tradition in colleges and churches, since it provides an unsurpassable musical training, an important number of truly fine choirs, and, finally, the possibility to experience (and for the listener, to enjoy) repertories that the long-suffering Spanish enthusiast scarcely knows since they are not performed [in Spain].[97]

Whatever the actual historical reality of the choral tradition may or may not be, it is clear that rhetoric such as this was powerful enough to sustain a romanticised English choral tradition that was supposedly unbroken. The choral tradition's continuity was envisaged as a basis for a convincing portrayal of national musical achievement. The fervent belief in the English choral tradition by musicologists and music scholars then and now demonstrates how tradition was enshrined in order to fuel the imagination of an English 'Golden Age'. The English choral tradition's presupposed continuity generates perception of a powerful musical past invented for claims of musical and national greatness in Britain.

1.7 Purcell Revival

The English choral tradition was seen as an important foothold for the establishment and revival of early music performances in Britain. Performance of choral works of so-called 'English Golden Age' composers spearheaded the Purcell Revival. Projects of early music

[95] Peter Phillips, "The Golden Age Regained," *Early Music* 8, no. 1 (1980): 3-16, 3.
[96] Phillips, "The Golden Age Regained."
[97] Christopher Page, "The English 'A Cappella' Renaissance," *Early Music* 21, no. 3 (1993): 453-71, 453.

in Britain were closely connected with the Purcell Revival, most notably with the founding of the Purcell Club and its descendent, the Purcell Society in 1876. According to Frank Howes, the Purcell Society was founded 'for the purpose of doing justice to the memory of Henry Purcell, firstly by the publication of his works, mostly of which exist only in MS [Manuscript], and secondly by meeting for the study and performance of his various compositions'.[98] A brief review of previous committee members and editors of the Purcell Society shows that it featured musicians and composers such as Sir George MacFarren, Sir Hubert Parry, Sir Charles Stanford, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Sir Michael Tippett.[99] Both Britten and Tippett further propelled the revival by initiating performing editions and recordings of Purcell's music.[100] It is not surprising to find key figures of the English Musical Renaissance listed among instigators of the Purcell Society. Purcell's music was envisioned as a stronghold of the nation and English music. Progenitors of both the English Musical Renaissance and the early music revival in Britain were united in the reviving and reinstituting of his music.

Despite his short life and career (1659-1695), Purcell was a prolific composer of vocal works. He composed in every vocal genre (both sacred and secular) available during the seventeenth century. Tippett claimed that the 'carry and freedom' of Purcell's vocal line were huge influences for him and Britten.[101] Purcell's output contains a large number of anthems, which were seen as a highly characteristic English genre. These are predominantly verse anthems, scored for solo voices in contrast with a full choir. By 1662, the anthem was already incorporated into the Book of Common Prayer as a primary musical form in English choral services. The verse anthems were significant in being one of the most frequently employed genres for English composers during the Elizabethan and pre-Restoration era. English composers then fashioned the anthems into devices of great dramatic impact by incorporating contrasts of texture, greater variety of harmonic and melodic rhythms and means of motivic development.[102] Composers reputed as icons of English music such as William Byrd, Thomas Morley, Orlando Gibbons, Thomas Tomkins and Weelkes wrote verse anthems as well. However, Purcell was revered as the highest

[98] Howes, *The English Musical Renaissance*, 91.
[99] Andrew Pinnock, "Purcell Phenomenon," in *The Purcell Companion*, ed. Michael Burden (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), 11.
[100] Meirion Bowen, ed. *Music of the Angels: Essays and Sketchbooks of Michael Tippett* (London: Eulenburg Books, 1980), 68.
[101] Bowen, *Music of the Angels*, 77.
[102] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Anthem," by John Harper et al., accessed October 30, 2015, 2014, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/.

achiever of them all, the composer who according to John Harper, 'synthesized and developed all that was most successful in the work of his predecessors'.[103]

The attachment to and nationalizing of Purcell and his music by musicologists and music historians, especially in the late nineteenth and twentieth century, were not only attempts to promote greatness in British music history, but were made to redress Britain as a musical nation. Late nineteenth and even early twentieth century scholars pointed to the eulogizing of Purcell as the 'pride and darling of the stage' when he died in 1695 as evidence of the composer's popularity and significance.[104] Named as 'the English equivalent of Bach' by Stradling and Hughes, the envisaging of Purcell as a national composer fulfilled the nation's desire for one.[105] The first Grove *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* written around 1879-89, showed that Purcell had a longer entry than Bach.[106] Stradling and Hughes assert that these efforts of publicizing English music by advocators such as Grove were done with the aim of rewriting Britain's music history.

The nationalizing of Purcell was also done in relation to the composer's skilful music setting of the English language. British musical writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries especially highlighted the essential connection between the composer and his native tongue. Later writers would follow the influential historian Charles Burney's praise of Purcell's *Orpheus Britannicus* in 1789:

> His superior felicity and passion for expressing the poet's sentiments which he had translate into melody… there is a latent power and force in his expression of the English words, that will make an unprejudiced native of this island feel more than all the elegance, grace, and refinement of modern Music less happily applied can do.[107]

This process of praising Purcell's word setting not only promoted the composer's musical ability, but more importantly it also asserted that qualities of the English language were essential to the superiority of the composition. Writing in a similar vein, Michael Tippett proclaimed in 1951 that:

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[103] Harper et al., "Anthem."
[104] Anon, "A Poem Occasioned on the Death of Mr. Henry Purcell... By a Lover of Music " (London1695); cited in Pinnock, "Purcell Phenomenon," 15.
[105] Stradling and Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance 1860-1940: Construction and Deconstruction*, 36.
[106] Stradling and Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance 1860-1940: Construction and Deconstruction*, 26.
[107] Charles Burney, *A General History of Music from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period* 2nd ed. (1789), 392, 404-5; cited in Pinnock, "Purcell Phenomenon," 6.

> In setting the English language, Henry Purcell is undoubtedly the greatest master except Dowland. Both had a fine ear for English poetry.[108]

The attachment of Purcell's compositional aptitude to the English language is done to relate literary greatness to musical eminence. The gesturing toward Shakespeare in Purcell criticism resonates with Pinnock's description of Purcell: 'canonized by the arbiters of musical taste, fixed as if a set of bells to Shakespeare's harness'.[109] This demonstrates how comparable with Shakespeare, Purcell's nationalizing is an effective portrayal of the nation's cultural and eventually, musical status. The rhetoric of Purcell as an especially important national composer reveals strategies aimed at justifying England's musical place in Europe. The attribution of significant national composer status for Purcell even went as far as using his death as a watershed for the end of the English 'Golden Age'.[110] Turner wrote in 1932 that English music 'as an art equal to the art of music on the Continent, was extinguished with the death of Purcell.'[111]

Even though Purcell was lionized in the nineteenth century, his music was not widely performed. The Purcell Society, which was founded in February 1876, was set up to promote appreciation of his music through the publications and performances of his works.[112] The under appreciation of English composers, especially Purcell and his works in the 1920s, was according to Michael Tippett (composer and advocate of Purcell), due to 'the English worship of Handel and later of Mendelssohn, [which] effectively nullified any possible influence of Purcell. His scores were unavailable, lost from the public gaze, and his music almost unperformed.'[113] Vincent Novello's edition of five volumes (1828-1832) covered only Purcell's sacred music whereas the Musical Antiquarian Society had only four volumes; three of them stage works (*Dido and Aeneas*, *Bonduca* and *King Arthur*) and the Ode for St Cecilia's Day, *Hail, bright Cecilia*.[114] The Purcell Society's slow publication of Purcell's complete editions started with two volumes in 1887; by 1965, they had completed thirty-two volumes over a span of 78 years.[115] Nevertheless, widespread

[108] Michael Tippett, "Purcell and the English Language," in *Eight Concerts of Henry Purcell's Music: Commemorative Book of Programmes, Notes and Texts*, ed. Shaw Watkins (London: The Arts Council of Britain, 1951), 46.
[109] Pinnock, "Purcell Phenomenon," 8.
[110] Stradling and Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance 1860-1940: Construction and Deconstruction*, 45.
[111] Turner, *Music: A Short History*, 72.
[112] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Purcell Society," by Shaw Watkins and Laurie Margaret, accessed January 13, 2016, 2016, www.oxfordmusiconline.com.
[113] Bowen, *Music of the Angels*, 67-8.
[114] Pinnock, "Purcell Phenomenon," 10-11.
[115] Watkins and Margaret, "Purcell Society."

performances of Purcell's music especially from the 1950s, was sufficient to garner wide enough recognition for the establishment of Purcell's national status.

By 1951, Purcell's reputation was well established enough that the organizers of the 1951 Festival of Britain could singularly promote his music in depiction of him as a national music emblem. It was clear in the Festival that promotion of Purcell was an incidental promotion of Britain, as when a *Times* music critic wrote: 'a national festival without some celebration of Purcell would be a monument of national ineptitude'.[116] The 1951 Festival of Britain was a five-month long festival held in places all around Britain to celebrate the nation's progress in science, technology, architecture and the arts. Set up as a 'tonic to the nation' by Gerald Barry, Director-General of the Festival, it was aimed at the reconstruction and rebuilding of national confidence after the austerity of the Second World War.[117] Yet, Barry demonstrated how the Festival could also be seen as a reestablishment and a reassessment of Britain's position in the world.[118] The main exhibition centre in London featured exhibitions extending from the South Kensington Exhibition of Science, the Exhibition of Architecture in Poplar, to the Dome of Discovery highlighting British scientific and technological achievements on the South Bank.[119] Given how projection of national pride underpinned most planning of the Festival, the London Season of the Arts was no less different in the performance and showcase of the best British music. The dedication of eight concerts wholly to the performance of Purcell's music demonstrates how national significance was attributed to the composer. In his programme notes to the Purcell concerts, Vaughan Williams envisaged that performance of a wider range of Purcell's music 'will demonstrate the power, vitality and originality of one of Britain's greatest composers.'[120] The nationalising and canonising of Purcell in the 1951 Festival of Britain indicates the composer as an important musical stronghold of the nation; hence, an effective portrayal of Purcell is concomitantly a successful portrayal of Britain's national music image.

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[116] *Musical Britain 1951 Compiled by the Music Critic of 'The Times'*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 141; cited in Pinnock, "Purcell Phenomenon," 13.
[117] See F. M. Leventhal, ""A Tonic to the Nation": The Festival of Britain, 1951," *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 27, no. 3 (1995): 445-53, 453.
[118] Gerald Barry, "The Festival of Britain," *United Empire* 41, no. 2 (1950): 82; cited in Alayna Heinonen, "A Tonic to the Empire?: The 1951 Festival of Britain and the Empire-Commonwealth," *Britain & the World* 8, no. 1 (2015): 76-99, 77.
[119] See the Festival of Britain leaflet in "Festival of Britain 1951- Leaflet," Museum of London, accessed 20 December 2015, http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/mol-82-158-347; Ben Johnson, "The Festival of Britain 1951," accessed 20 December 2015, http://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/The-Festival-of-Britain-1951/.
[120] Ralph Vaughan Williams, Foreword to *Eight Concerts of Henry Purcell's Music: Commemorative Book of Programmes, Notes and Texts*, ed. Shaw Watkins (London: The Arts Council of Britain, 1951), 7.

1.8 The Countertenor as an English Voice

Alfred Deller featured in three of the eight Purcell concerts from the 1951 London Season of the Arts. He sang two songs for the first concert: 'Crown the altar, deck the shrine' from the *Ode for Queen Mary's Birthday* and 'Music for a while', from *Oedipus*. In the second concert, Deller sang the Ode for the Duke of Gloucester's birthday and extracts of *The Indian Queen*; while in the fifth concert, Deller performed the Ode for St Cecilia's Day. The 1951 Purcell concerts demonstrated the countertenor's integral involvement in the promotion of the composer.

Neither the establishment of the ideal of the choral tradition nor the immortalization of Henry Purcell would have been as successful without the countertenor. The voice type's survival and current maintenance in English choral institutions provide ways for music historians even now to claim countertenors as part of the English choral tradition. As late as 1980, Peter Phillips asserted: 'whereas in Continental all-male choirs, boys sing the alto part, in England there is a long-established tradition of countertenors, adult male falsettists, the foremost exponents of which have recently, and for the first time attracted a great deal of attention abroad.'[121] In a way, music historians' belief in the countertenor's historicity helps to substantiate the vitality of an English choral tradition.

George Dyson's great pride in the countertenor – using the older name male alto – is evident from statements in his *Progress of Music* (1930). Dyson asserted that the voice type's assumed historicity adhered to the most authentic and highest form of music tradition and worship:

> It often surprises our Protestant kinsmen abroad that we have clung so tenaciously to this narrow view of the type of voice appropriate to the Church. Our men altos in particular seem to some of our visitors strange and unnatural. But the Anglican choir is a monastic survival, and with it have survived these traditions of monastic music. The passionless tone of boys' voices suits the passionless serenity of contemplative worship. Our altos are trained to produce the nearest equivalent to that smooth and restful tone. Mellowed by the echoes of a great building, it is in spirit the oldest music we know.[122]

[121] Phillips, "The Golden Age Regained."
[122] Dyson, *The Progress of Music*, 40.

Terms such as 'tenaciously', 'monastic' and 'oldest' portrayed the countertenor as a careful preserve of the past and proof of an existing cultural heritage that was invented by British music historians and scholars. The countertenor was essentially seen as an artefact of the choral tradition in order to project an English national past as historically and stylistically superior.

British music historians and critics insisted on another point as justification for the countertenor's superiority to Continental singers: that countertenors were a reaction to the Continent's unnatural usage of the castrato. In 1937, J.A. Westrup claimed in his book *Purcell*, that 'English singers contented themselves with cultivating the countertenor, and winning approbation without insulting nature.'[123] This belief still held sway among music scholars even in the late twentieth century. In 1994, Peter Giles proposed 'innate English conservatism' as a rationale for the rejection of the castrato and survival of the countertenor.[124] This corroborated with the already present theme in British music historiography in which efforts were made to distinguish British models from operatic influences.[125] Attempts such as these were coping mechanisms used to relieve Britain from the stigma of Schmitz's '*Das Land ohne Musik*' and to reclaim her position as a musical nation.

However, twentieth-century British musicologists' greatest claim was that the countertenor was a specifically English voice. In *Henry Purcell, the English Musical Tradition* (1933), A.K. Holland addressed the then current lack of the countertenor as an issue especially in the performance of Purcell's music. 'Yet', Holland continued, the male alto (or counter-tenor) is a real voice and a traditionally English one'.[126] Thurston Dart, in *The Interpretation of Music* (1954), provided a similar description of the countertenor, linking it to his praise of Deller:

> Another obsolete voice, the solo male alto or counter-tenor, has become familiar again during the last decade through the artistry of Alfred Deller. The tradition of counter-tenor singing in English cathedrals choirs has never been broken since the

[123] J.A. Westrup, *Henry Purcell* (Dent, 1937), 97; cited in Peter Giles, *The History and Technique of the Counter-Tenor* (England: Scolar Press, 1994), 57.
[124] Giles, *The History and Technique of the Counter-Tenor*, 7. In Chapter Three, I provide clear examples where the countertenor was deliberately set apart from the castrato in order to sustain notions of masculinity and virility that conform to national ideals, see pg 115-116.
[125] I will discuss this in detail in Chapter Two and Three where ideals of British national identity acted as a deterrence for Continental operatic styles, see pg. 106-110 for examples on Ferrier's singing style and connections with the oratorio.
[126] A.K. Holland, *Henry Purcell, the English Musical Tradition* (Penguin, 1933), 124-25; cited in Giles, *The History and Technique of the Counter-Tenor*, 125.

> earliest times, but solo counter-tenors of Deller's calibre must always have been rare. The voice itself seems to have been an especially English one – Purcell and Henry Lawes were both counter-tenors – and its distinctive tone colour is an essential part of English choral music.[127]

To Dart, the existence of Alfred Deller as a countertenor affirms not only the English choral tradition's continuity, but the validity of an English national music heritage exemplified by composers such as Purcell and Lawes. Deller's 'English' voice along with the shared nationality of Purcell and Lawes helped substantiate a thriving national music image. On the other hand, Holland's advocacy of Deller's voice as not only English but 'real', proves the English choral tradition's sustenance. Such claims were made in order to counter allegations against the countertenor's legitimacy, assuming the countertenor as proof of a national music identity that is essentially English. The nationalising and anglicising of Deller's singing voice are efforts that aim to redress Britain not only as a musical nation but a nation that has its own musical 'voice'.

Rhetoric that couched Deller as national was evident among press critics even until very recently.[128] An appreciation published shortly after Deller's death in 1979, with the title 'England's Very Own Voice' made it clear that Deller's voice was used to evoke national greatness.[129] *Guardian* critic Paul Jennings addressed Deller as the first modern countertenor since the seventeenth-century Restoration, who 'remained far and away the best'. The review set Deller apart and promoted him on parallel with composers such as Mozart and Elgar. Described as 'the supreme paradox of singing', Jennings wrote of Deller's voice as:

> Elegiac and tender yet with a marvellous cutting edge, not wearing words like a garment but seeming to come from inside them, possessing the quasi-mechanical agility of, say, an oboe, an instrumental objectivity – yet capable of more passion than the most sensuous soprano, or tenor.[130]

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[127] Thurston Dart, *The Interpretation of Music* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1954), 49.
[128] See Gramophone article in 2013, where Richard Wigmore is still referring to Deller as 'England's Very Own Voice' and giving him credit for 'almost single-handedly… restoring the male alto … voice to the status it had enjoyed three and four centuries earlier' in Richard Wigmore, "Alfred Deller: Richard Wigmore Pays Tribute to the Pioneering Singer Who Revived the Countertenor Voice," *Gramophone*, January 2013.
[129] My gratitude to British Library News Reference Specialist, Dr John Boneham for his help in locating this unidentified press cutting originally sourced from Mark Deller's scrapbook filled with paper clippings of his father Alfred. Paul Jennings, "England's Very Own Voice: Paul Jennings Remembers Alfred Deller, the First Modern Countertenor, who Died this Week," *Guardian*, 21 July 1979, 11. See also Wigmore, "Alfred Deller."
[130] Jennings, "England's Very Own Voice."

Jennnings's review attributed Deller not only as a rare artist, but one that was able to contend with acclaimed composers internationally such as Mozart and Elgar. By framing the singer as irreproachable, Jennings identification of Deller and his voice marked Britain's national music identity as ideal.

Jennings did this by firstly, describing Deller's capabilities as distinct and superior to that of an operatic soprano or tenor. Such rhetoric in a way exposed Britain of its problematic operatic past, an issue that it has as a nation, consistently grappled with since the turn of the century. The description of Deller's singing as passionate was a means of justifying the countertenor as no lesser in comparison with operatic singers. Secondly, Jennings expressed Deller's musicianship as an innate skill, claiming his voice and singing as completely personal and distinct. Terms such as 'miracle', 'developed entirely on his own', 'just knew without being told' were employed in order to portray Deller as a true and rare artist. Thirdly, the review likened Deller's performances and concerts to a spiritual experience. Conveyed through terms such as 'prayer', 'total concentration', 'soul-piercing', 'epiphanies', Jennings insisted that Deller's singing was unlike any other musical performance, upholding it as mystical to the point of sacrosanct.

Another review by Tippett on the countertenor in 1945 were couched in similar terms:

> To my ear the contra-tenor voice has a peculiarly musical sound because almost no emotional irrelevance distracts us from the absolutely pure quality of the production. It is like no other sound in music, and few other musical sounds are so intrinsically musical.[131]

Tippett suggested that the countertenor embodied an otherworldly, ethereal quality. In reference to terms such as 'absolutely pure' and 'like no other', he claimed that there was no reference to emotion. Expression of any emotion, according to Tippett, claimed to distract listeners from the music and was deemed irrelevant. This is clearly contested against Jennings's review on Deller where the emphasis was on Deller's voice as an instrument equally capable of passion and expression. While Tippett was trying to differentiate Deller's voice among others by referring to ideals of 'purity', Jennings justified Deller as equal with operatic singers by claiming that his voice is also capable of

[131] I am indebted to Mark Deller who very kindly offered me access to a personal scrapbook filled with press cuttings and reviews of his father, Alfred Deller. The source of some cuttings in this scrapbook is not noted and impossible to identify, although some did have handwritten dates and newspaper titles on them. For the purposes of this thesis, I will address these unidentified press cuttings as from the 'Mark Deller Scrapbook'. W.S.E.D, "Alfred Deller Broadcasting," *MDS*, November 1945, from the Mark Deller Scrapbook.

invoking passion. Such contesting rhetoric on Deller's voice showed how critics eagerly framed and appropriated his voice according to their own means. By showing how his voice was both distinct and yet equally expressive in comparison with operatic standards, they are able to claim both vocal and emotional precedence for the countertenor.

The nationalising of Deller seemed to be widely believed and accepted as fact. Nonetheless, Deller's biographers, the Hardwicks, wrote in 1980 that Deller himself did not subscribe to this presupposition: 'there's a widely held opinion that the countertenor is an essentially English voice. This isn't true. It was, in fact, a European voice'.[132] Peter Giles declared emphatically in 1993, that though 'the traditional counter-tenor seems so very English, yet this tradition was and is again much wider.'[133] In a *Grove Music Online* entry, accessed in 2014, Giles again wrote that the:

> male high voice employing "falsetto" was never an exclusively English phenomenon. It has been cultivated variously, worldwide, and played an important part in the earliest and middle development of Western music, especially in the Low Countries, Germany, Spain, Italy, France and England.[134]

However, the fact that Giles would still feel the need to debunk the nationalising of countertenors, shows that even now this belief remains entrenched among at least some British musical publics.

It would be easy for musicologists or music critics to credit Deller for single-handedly reviving the countertenor tradition. Jennings wrote: 'No self-respecting madrigal group or university choir is without countertenors now. The scholars have taken over and good luck to them. But Alfred started it all.'[135] Such rhetoric portrayed Deller not only as important to the countertenor revival, but the first countertenor since Henry Purcell in the eighteenth century. Frances Killingley contested this in a *Musical Times* review when she pointed to a precursor listed in George Bernard Shaw's 1894 review of one of Arnold Dolmetsch's concerts.[136] Whatever the actual historicity of the countertenor, these reviews affirmed the obsession that music critics and historians had with Deller and his voice. Claims such as crediting Deller as wholly responsible for the countertenor revival,

[132] Hardwick and Hardwick, *Alfred Deller*, 180.
[133] Giles, *The History and Technique of the Counter-Tenor*, 6.
[134] *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, s.v. "Countertenor," by Peter Giles and J.B. Steane, accessed March 7, 2015, 2001, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.
[135] Jennings, "England's Very Own Voice."
[136] Frances Killingley, "The Countertenor Revival," *The Musical Times* 120, no. 1642 (1979): 986, 986.

attributing his voice as the first countertenor after Purcell and promoting him as part of the English choral tradition were all endeavours aimed at the envoicing of Britain.

1.9 Deller as Purcell and the Embodiment of the Past

Given how Purcell's music was employed as a tool to instil national pride in Britain, Deller's introduction to the twentieth-century recital stage is important not only in the promotion and performance of Purcell's music, but because it extends notions of precedence in the English 'Golden Age'. He was most active in the performance of madrigals and anthems from English composers, represented especially by Henry Purcell, John Dowland and William Byrd. Unsurprisingly, it was Purcell's 'Music for a while' that presented Deller his big break with Michael Tippett in 1944. Tippett's discovery of Deller and his unique voice led to a Morley College concert on 21 October that same year, performing the same solo and two of Purcell's verse anthems.

The Morley College concert was an important breakthrough for Deller besides being his debut; it was intended by Tippett to launch Deller's career as a 'countertenor', instead of a 'male alto'. For Deller to subscribe to this terminology, not only was he being made aware of his part in connection to an assumed English choral tradition, he was also deliberately steering clear of any potential confusion to female voices or singers.[137] According to the Hardwicks, Tippett suggested that Deller made this change in reference to the 'old English classical name' for the high male voice.[138] For Tippett, specific usage of the term 'countertenor' suggests more than claims of authenticity; it promotes connotations towards the re-invoking of past glories when English music was especially influential during the Elizabethan and Purcellian periods.

The connection of Deller with notions of authenticity and tradition was an attempt to associate the countertenor with Purcell: national icon and personification of English music. In Deller's biography, Tippett defined the countertenor as 'the voice for which Bach wrote many of the alto solos in the Church cantatas; and Purcell, who himself sang countertenor, gave to it some of his best arias and ensembles.'[139] Tippett's claims were significant expressly for the fact that they have come to shape how later reviews and critics

[137] See Chapter Two, where I elaborate on the countertenor's potential for gender confusion and ambiguity on pg. 85-90.
[138] Hardwick and Hardwick, *Alfred Deller*, 76.
[139] Hardwick and Hardwick, *Alfred Deller*, 75.

perceived the countertenor. Firstly, music writers assumed that the countertenor is accurate and authentic in performances of Purcell's music. Secondly, that the countertenor voice is being reinvented not only as the embodiment of past English glories but as the vocal reincarnation of Henry Purcell.

Music critics and writers about Deller, especially in the mid-twentieth century, were keen to emphasize his connection with Purcell not only because the countertenor was purportedly accurate for this repertory, but because Deller and Purcell shared the same voice type. Deller's voice was deemed immemorially associated with Purcell due to their shared nationality and voice. Two accounts of promotional literature taken from newspapers in 1945 testify particularly well to this Purcell-Deller connection. Both were associated with Deller's BBC debut for the 250th anniversary of Henry Purcell's death. For this occasion, Deller was scheduled for a studio performance of Purcell's *Hail, bright Cecilia* from his Ode for St Cecilia's Day on 22 November 1945. The broadcast was aired on the same day and given prime evening airtime from 7.25 pm to 8.10 pm.

The first account, entitled 'Alfred Deller Broadcasting' advertised the BBC broadcast in an unknown newspaper on November 1945.[140] In this advert, the writer billed Deller as a 'contra-tenor' and wrote that 'Mr Deller will be singing the airs which Purcell himself sang'. The advert commended Deller for his fine vocal quality, where its use achieved 'a high degree of artistic craftsmanship'. Reviewer W.S.E.D claimed that use of the countertenor is:

> a special development in English music and the magnificent choral works of Purcell, the lovely songs of Dowland and Handel's oratorios only reach their greatest heights when sung by this voice – for which, of course, they were written – as do also the late songs of the Elizabethans, revived by Peter Warlock and others of his own composition. [141]

The advert's rhetoric was geared towards promotion of a voice type that was linked with English composers, the English choral tradition and Purcell. Purcell's connection was especially important here because of the voice type's assumed legitimacy in performance of his vocal works. Such assumptions about Purcell in connection with countertenors like Deller are mostly unfounded. Assertions concerning Purcell's singing voice have always

[140] W.S.E.D, "Alfred Deller Broadcasting," from the Mark Deller Scrapbook.
[141] W.S.E.D, "Alfred Deller Broadcasting."

been highly controversial and some musicologists have since concluded that there is no hard evidence that clearly identifies Purcell's singing voice.[142]

The second account is a *News Chronicle* review of the same broadcast in 1945. Music critic Scott Goddard's review, entitled 'Superb singing of a Purcell ode', credited the performance's effect as 'astonishing'.[143] He applauded the countertenors' performance and declared that 'the performance was worth hearing if only for the florid male alto solos, the duets for alto and tenor and for two bass voices.' Goddard's review expressed that even though the production was not outstanding; 'the vitality of Purcell's imagination, expressed in music of such grace and strength overcame all'.[144] Goddard framed the review in order to credit Purcell's ingeniousness and the countertenor voice as both saving graces of the performance. In this review, Goddard assumed superiority and value of the countertenors only to endorse Purcell and his music.

In understanding the performing practicalities of the countertenor in Purcell's solo and choral works, Stephen Rose has concluded that the current term 'countertenor' is very different from what Purcell would have understood.[145] For Purcell, the designation 'countertenor' did not refer to the intended voice type, but merely indicated the voice part countering the tenor. Rose refers to detailed research done by Andrew Parrott, which evidenced that 'falsetto voices are appropriate for only a small proportion of Purcell's countertenor lines.'[146] In summary, Rose demonstrated that Purcell's choral countertenor parts in his odes and anthems were suitably placed for both the falsettist and the high tenor, since Purcell's writing avoided extreme top and bottom ranges of the vocal register.[147] Whereas in Purcell's solo countertenor lines, Rose affirmed that they were sung by high tenors instead of countertenors due to a lower vocal range: from f or g to no higher than a' or b'.[148] The most obvious case for this was Deller's performance of Purcell's 'Music for a while' from *Oedipus*, Z.583. Although Deller was popularized and claimed by Tippett to

[142] See Nicholas Kenyon, "Henry Purcell: Towards a Tercentenary," in *Performing the Music of Henry Purcell*, ed. Michael Burden (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3; Timothy Morris, "Voice Ranges, Voice Types, and Pitch in Purcell's Concerted Works," in *Performing the Music of Henry Purcell.*, ed. Michael Burden (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 141. Giles, *The History and Technique of the Counter-Tenor*, hypothesized Purcell as bass based on the roster of basses found in Francis Sandford's History of the Coronation of James II and Queen Mary, 65.
[143] Scott Goddard, "Superb Singing of a Purcell Ode," *News Chronicle*, 22 November 1945.
[144] Goddard, "Superb Singing of a Purcell Ode."
[145] Stephen Rose, "Performance Practices," in *Ashgate Research Companion to Henry Purcell*, ed. Rebecca Herissone (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2012), 136.
[146] Rose, "Performance Practices," 136.
[147] Rose, "Performance Practices," 137.
[148] Rose, "Performance Practices," 136. Stephen Rose used the Hemholtz pitch notation to specify the vocal range from f/g to a'/b' which is F3/G3 to A4/B4 in the scientific pitch notation.

be 'the voice for which Purcell had written',[149] Rose contested the authenticity of Deller's performance and recordings. He claims that since Deller did not use the low Consort pitch common during the Purcellian period, his version was between a tone and a major third higher than what Purcell notated.[150] This shows that the pitch, vocal range and voice type employed by Purcell are all very debatable; hence the countertenor as legitimate voice for Purcell's works cannot be ascertained. Due to this, Nicholas Kenyon has asserted that the image of the 'male falsettist' that Deller and Tippett built on for the Purcell revival is ultimately a myth.[151]

However, Deller's break into the British music scene offered a chance for various parties, especially music historians and the media, to mythicize and claim national music greatness from his voice type. Despite the glowing (if inaccurate) claims made about the countertenor in 1945, things were very different for Deller ten years before. The unfamiliarity and rarity of the countertenor proved that it was still a highly prejudiced voice type during the mid-twentieth century. Papers at the BBC Caversham Written Archives show that Deller's request for an audition in a letter dated 10 November 1935 was turned down.[152] The Programme Contracts Department responded: 'we regret there is no opening for this kind of work in the Variety Department' and passed on his letter to the Music Department.[153] The Music Department rejected Deller in a letter dated 28 November, claiming that 'male voice altos are not normally employed by us'.[154] After his first broadcasting job with the BBC for the 250th anniversary of Purcell's death in 1945, securing work with the BBC was hardly easier, but it slowly trickled in. The recommendation of Canterbury Cathedral organist Gerald Hocken Knight, to the BBC's Director of Music, Dr. Hely-Hutchinson proved successful.[155] Deller was given the opportunity to broadcast in a Purcell programme for the European service at 10 pm on 14 July 1946.[156] A few months later, the creation of the BBC's Third Programme paved a new way for the promotion of Deller's work through radio broadcast.

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[149] Michael Tippett, Walter Bergmann, and Robert Spencer, "Alfred Deller," *Early Music* 8, no. 1 (1980, Jan): 43-45, 43.
[150] Rose, "Performance Practices," 136.
[151] See Kenyon, "Henry Purcell: Towards a Tercentenary," 3.
[152] Alfred Deller to British Broadcasting Corporation, 10 November 1935, Alfred Deller File 1: 1935-1950, BBC WAC.
[153] Programme Contracts Department AL to Alfred Deller, 20 November 1935, Alfred Deller 1: 1935-1950, BBC WAC.
[154] Music Executive BJW to Alfred Deller, 28 November 1935, Alfred Deller File 1: 1935-1950, BBC WAC.
[155] Gerald H. Knight to Victor Dr Hely-Hutchinson, 11 June 1946, Alfred Deller File 1:1935-1950, BBC WAC.
[156] Arthur Wynn, BBC Programme Contracts Department (Music) to Gerald H. Knight, 19 June 1946, Alfred Deller File 1:1935-1950, BBC WAC.

The inaugural concert of BBC's Third Programme on the 29 September 1946 was an important occasion, marking a new chapter for the broadcasting company's role in the post-war reconstructive efforts of the nation's music scene. The concert, intended as a celebration of the best English music, selected both old and new repertoire for a successful promotion and portrayal of the nation's music profile. The concert marked the beginning of the Third's important contribution to the British musical scene and especially to the early musical revival in the mid-twentieth century.

The concert broadcast at 8 pm from the BBC's Maida Vale orchestral studio and was conducted by Sir Adrian Boult with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. It included a commissioned work by Benjamin Britten (*Festival Overture*), Handel's *Music for the Royal Fireworks*, Vaughan Williams's *Serenade to Music*, Parry's *Blest Pair of Sirens*, Bliss's *Music for Strings* and Purcell's Ode 'Come ye Sons of Art'. Featuring an all-English programme, it was carefully selected to promote specifically English composers with the sole exception of Handel, who was considered well adopted into England despite his German origins. Despite its obscurity, the Purcell ode was chosen to reinstate Purcell's national significance as composer. Hence, the solo countertenor roles, which featured both Deller and Charles Whitehead, were deemed necessary. The selected programme was specifically chosen to establish an immanent link from past (Handel and Purcell) to current composers.

It was Sir Steuart Wilson, tenor and Music Director of the Arts Council of Great Britain who secured Deller's performance of Purcell's 'Come ye Sons of Art' from the Ode for Queen Mary's birthday Z.323. Wilson introduced Deller to BBC Music Department's Anthony Lewis, who was entrusted with the arrangement of the Third Programme's inaugural concert. Lewis asserted that Deller's engagement made the performance of this unknown Purcell ode possible, which would otherwise remain unheard.[157] *The Times* reviewer wrote that:

> Purcell's ode Come, Ye Sons of Art was too alike in scoring for it immediately to assert its individuality, though the little impediment was soon swept away on the entry of the voices, which included two counter-tenors. It was a revelation to hear the familiar duet "Sound the Trumpet" sung by voices of this unfamiliar timbre, for Purcell obviously intended the resemblance to trumpet tone to have the effect of happy allusion.[158]

[157] Hardwick and Hardwick, *Alfred Deller*, 100.
[158] "The New B.B.C. Programme," *The Times*, 1 October 1946.

Given how the main aim of this concert was to promote English music from Purcell to modern day composers, the countertenors' performance embodied the presentness of the English music connection. It became clear that the countertenor was effectively seen as a mouthpiece of Britain's musical past and present, voicing not only the musical greatness of Purcell in modern-day Britain, but establishing an essential connection from past voices through present bodies. Such juxtaposition of old and new, past and present implied validation and extension of Britain's national music heritage. Deller's countertenor voice demonstrated ways for various parties in Britain to claim national identity and authority. The various claims that I have presented: Purcell's supposedly countertenor voice, the anglicising and nationalising of Deller, were ultimately manifestations for a national voice in Deller as physical and vocal reincarnation of Purcell.

Besides such claims of Deller's countertenor voice as both vocal embodiment of Britain and Purcell, Deller enthusiasts also tapped into the counter-cultural rhetoric of the early music revival as a means to claim cultural and vocal precedence. In order to understand how Deller's voice invoked such attributions, I mapped his vocal qualities found in concert reviews on to ideals that were upheld in the early music revival. Deller's countertenor voice and his particular commitment to the early music repertoire exposed the public to a vast amount of music from this period that would have been otherwise inaccessible. Deller's regular partnership with early music practitioners such as lutenist Desmond Dupré and harpsichordist Walter Bergmann advocated a different kind of performance style that reconditioned the way people listened and appreciated music. The countertenor's restoration in performances engendered a sound quality that was fundamentally distinct from Continental operatic styles. Music practices were leaning towards smaller and more intimate ensembles in accordance with the smaller scale of sound produced by its instrumental predecessors. Voices were moving away from heavy, operatic vocal productions and aspired towards descriptions of a thin, pure, and vibrato-less quality.

Such attitudes framed early music performances as historical reconstructions of a distant past that were similar to archaeological excavation sites, and later nineteenth-century performance practices as accumulated excesses needing to be stripped off. Even after Deller's death, his biographers termed such practices as 'sticky romanticism' and identified vocal ideals as uncontaminated, pure.[159] 'Purity' was a key feature in reviews of

[159] Hardwick and Hardwick, *Alfred Deller*, Introduction.

Deller during the mid-twentieth century. Music critics and writers frequently expressed Deller's countertenor voice as possessing qualities of cleanness, clarity and radiance.

In a 1933 performance at Hasting's White Rock Pavilion, a *Hastings and St Leonard Observer* critic wrote:

> In direct contrast came Alfred Deller who, relying mainly on the sheer beauty of his tone and true purity of style, made some old English songs peculiarly acceptable. Not only has he a phenomenal alto voice, but also the judgment of a real musician who knows the value of treating these old airs quite simply, qualities which, coupled with a perfectly lovely pianissimo and command of tone graduations, so captivated his hearers that he was encored on each appearance.[160]

Deller's Morley College debut in 1944 earned him similar praises from *The Times*:

> The verse anthem "My beloved spake" was given with a true contratenor singing the part for that voice, of which Purcell made frequent use. Mr. Alfred Deller, of Canterbury, in the anthem and in an air, made familiar by Dr Whittaker as "Music shall proclaim" but sung in its original pitch, showed by the purity of the voice and of the style how it was that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries came to attach so much value to the high male voice.[161]

Another *Times* review in a 1955 Wigmore Hall concert credited Deller's singing as phenomenal:

> Mr Deller's solos included some sixteenth and seventeenth-century lute songs which he sang, by way of a change today, with their original ornamentation; his tone sounded uncommonly pure and radiant, and he sang with great expressiveness yet with an almost instrumental-like agility and cleanness of attack when it came to the *fioritura*.[162]

In the three reviews above, critics couched Deller's voice as pure, alongside descriptions such as beautiful, expressive and radiant. Most critics accredited purity in order to differentiate how Deller's voice and style were distinct from those of operatic singers: vibratoless, with sudden dynamic gradations, unique phrasing and expressive shadings of tone. Melanie Marshall has identified the touting of purity among early music

[160] "White Rock Pavilion," *Hastings and St Leonard Observer*, 29 July 1933.
[161] "Concert at Morley College: The Contratenor Voice," *The Times*, 24 October 1944.
[162] "New Work by Fricker: Wigmore Hall Concert," *The Times*, 22 September 1955.

practitioners as a way to identify the countertenor as an established Anglican, English sound, distinctive from classically trained women sopranos.[163] The employment of purity, according to Marshall, was used to 'distinguish the countertenor timbre from the wide vibrato then typical of classically trained women singers, who are silently marked as impure.'[164] Daniel Leech-Wilkinson disputed the claims of authenticity that English singers and scholars such as Christopher Page made for English collegiate and cathedral traditions.[165] More significantly, Deller's listeners attributed value to his voice due to the way it exemplified collectorship qualities. Advocators of early music idealised Deller's voice in recordings as something to be collected, where its pure qualities reflected the pristine condition of highly valued artefacts. His voice implied references to a perfect and romanticised past, made available in the present through recordings. The concept of purity, founded on ideals of authenticity and tradition was especially important for a strong portrayal of national identity. Deller embodied and realised these qualities through his voice, where national identity could be sustained in the linking from past and present ties.

Secured by the advocacy of the BBC, press and British music historians and critics, Deller's career in the 1950s was well established in comparison with the previous decade. The Purcell concerts of the 1951 Festival of Britain Concert were especially helpful in the exposure and promotion of Deller, firmly declaring his national connection with English music. In the first Purcell Concert, a *Times* critic attempted to assert validation on English music:

> For here, in suites and chaconnes for strings, in the "Golden" sonata for violins and continuo, in songs ravishingly sung by Miss Margaret Ritchie and Mr. Alfred Deller, is the limpid but astringent water of English music, unemphatic but potent in expressiveness, formal within the restraints of the period's instruments and conventions, but pulsing with vitality.[166]

Reviews of Deller then were keen to portray the countertenor as part of a strong national music identity. These reviews were intended to increase the British public's appreciation of its own national musical heritage.

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[163] Marshall, "Voce Bianca: Purity and Whiteness in British Early Music Vocality," 38-39.
[164] Marshall, "Voce Bianca: Purity and Whiteness in British Early Music Vocality," 39.
[165] See Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *The Modern Invention of Medieval Music: Scholarship, Ideology, Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 128-29; where Leech-Wilkinson contested Christopher Page's theory of English choirs possessing a training and sound similar to that of medieval and Renaissance choirs in Page, "The English 'A Cappella' Renaissance," 453-71.
[166] "Purcell Series: First Concert," *The Times* 9 May 1951; in *Musical Britain 1951 Compiled by the Music Critic of 'The Times'*, 141.

Music critics in the 1950s were much more willing to recognise Deller's artistic capabilities and international musical status. A *Hastings and St Leonard Observer* writer acknowledged that: 'Musicians, both in England and other countries agree that Alfred Deller has no equal as a counter-tenor, and that no other voice of this rare order can produce such ravishing tones',[167] while N.W. addressed Deller as the 'finest countertenor in England'.[168] Even though Deller's musical recognition was already established in England, his musical position was only gaining precedence outside England in places such as Belfast and Edinburgh. The acceptance of Deller as national figure and icon in the British Isles possibly demonstrated a politically motivated hegemony of English social, cultural and musical tastes. Despite that, the success of Deller's concerts in these places reflected the amalgamation and synecdochical promotion of national music identity in Britain as predominantly English.

A newspaper review of the Golden Age Singers' Belfast performance in 1952 is a testament to this. The music critic wrote that, the singers 'gave us a reminder of past glory in their singing of Madrigals'. The ensemble was depicted 'as near perfection as one could ask' and Deller's performance, being 'a countertenor, so usual in Elizabethan days, and so very rare now', was described as 'an experience in itself'.[169] For an English ensemble named the 'Golden Age Singers' to sing predominantly English madrigals in Belfast was a politically contentious attempt to promote national musical identity as English in the capital of Northern Ireland. On the other hand, Cecil Smith's 1952 Edinburgh Festival review in the *Daily Express* entitled 'A Masterpiece: And only Britain could do it', exclaimed that:

> Only in Britain could such a performance of this inspired masterpiece be given. British choristers have a spontaneous feeling for the cadence of the words and the way the musical line sits upon them; at least the well-trained members of the Kirkcaldy Choral Union had it. And the special art of Alfred Deller, the counter tenor, is not duplicated elsewhere.[170]

The performance featured Purcell's Ode for St Cecilia's Day at the Edinburgh Freemason Hall. Smith's review credited national significance to Deller and the Kirkcaldy Choral Union, in a way validating Purcell, the British choral tradition, the countertenor and the

[167] "Christ Church Event," *Hastings and St Leonard Observer*, 13 September 1952.
[168] N.W., "Memorable Recital at Christ Church: Allan Biggs and Alfred Deller," *Hastings and St Leonard Observer*, 27 September 1952.
[169] "The Golden Age Singers: Programme of Madrigals," 1952, from the Mark Deller Scrapbook.
[170] Cecil Smith, "A Masterpiece: And Only Britain Could Do It," *Daily Express* 1952, from the Mark Deller Scrapbook.

performers' inherent expression of the English language as emblematic of Britain's musical strengths. The concomitant promotion of English musical culture as predominantly British underlines the existing political tensions in the British Isles during the mid-twentieth century. National promotion of Deller's countertenor voice reveals a need to symbolically unify Britain and to envoice her with a national voice that promotes connotations of English musical greatness.

1.10 Conclusion

The employment of both Ferrier's and Deller's voices as emblematic of a national music identity demonstrates how the perceived need for a national compositional voice was supplanted by an actual singing voice. Such constructions of a national vocality based on the choices of Ferrier's and Deller's voices exemplify how non-normativity was appropriated as the norm. In the case of Ferrier, despite denigration against her as a non-operatic contralto singer, she was identified not only as a national icon, but her career largely followed in the vocal precedent and presence of Clara Butt. The emergence of Deller's voice in mid-twentieth Britain allowed different parties and establishments to identify and claim national musical identity through the countertenor voice. Deller's countertenor voice exemplifies strong ideals of tradition, expressed in the various projects of the early music revival, the English choral tradition and the Purcell revival. Performances of English works through his voice were envisaged to embody a past musical Golden Age through the reincarnation of Purcell's voice and body. The nationalising and mythicizing of both Deller's and Ferrier's voices established new vocal criteria and ideals that marked the creation of a distinctively English vocal identity.

Chapter 2: Voicing Gender: Ferrier and Deller

In his obituary for Kathleen Ferrier, headlined 'A Shining Voice is Stilled for Ever', Percy Cater described Kathleen Ferrier as 'one of the greatest contraltos of our time'.[1] Cater's exclamation, despite its hagiographical tone, demonstrated Ferrier's reputation as one of the nation's foremost female singers of her time. Frequently depicted as a distinctively 'English' voice (even in the twenty-first century), Ferrier's contralto voice was very much a part of her popularity.[2] Yet, her contralto voice was equally important as a site that performs and participates in the cultural and gendered norms of her time. On the other hand, Alfred Deller's countertenor voice highlights the social negotiation of gender ideals and boundaries in mid-twentieth Britain. In this chapter, I ask to what extent their voices projected the markings and unmarkings of gender that were seen as part of their national identity. Using Ferrier's and Deller's voices as case studies, I seek to understand how their voices foregrounded themes and attributes of gender that participated in the sociocultural and historical background of mid-twentieth century Britain.

2.1 Vocal Gendering

Before I analyse how Ferrier and Deller embodied concepts of gender in their voices, it is important to first understand how voice and the act of singing are intrinsic to constructions of gender and culture norms. Judith Butler states gender as performative and can be understood as repeated acts of the body that formulated over time and then adopted as normative.[3] Suzanne Cusick further expounds on Butler's theory in suggesting that voices and the act of singing could potentially demonstrate aspects of gender in the cultural participation and practice of song.[4] Understanding voice and gender as performative acts, our voices hence, represented and negotiated the relationship between the interiority of our bodies and the outer cultural understandings of a specific time and place.

[1] Percy Cater, "A Shining Voice is Stilled for Ever," *Daily Mail*, 9 October 1953, 3.
[2] Cullingford, "Parting is Such Sweet Sorrow," 26. On the other hand, David Hurwitz insisted that Cullingford's article is an example of how much literature on Ferrier tended to be hagiographical, which blurred the lines between historical fact and myth, see David Hurwitz, "Kathleen Ferrier: England's Greatest Contralto or Fruit Basket," accessed 26 November 2012, http://www.classicstoday.com/kathleen-ferrier-englands-greatest-contralto-or-fruit-basket/.
[3] According to Judith Butler, 'gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being', see Judith P. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, London: Routledge, 1999; repr., Tenth Anniversary Edition), 44.
[4] Cusick, "On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex," 38-39.

Song hence became a way to construct and perform our gender and identity through our voices. As opposed to the participation of Speech where modern practices and culture adopt 'popular stereotypes [that] portray men as loud voiced and women as softly spoken; men as deeper pitched, and women as lighter and higher pitched', song became a field where the crossing or observing of boundaries underlines prevailing cultural norms.[5] Cusick addresses song as a 'cultural system' and a 'hospitable field for "alternative" performances of one's bodily relationship to culture, including various levels of resistance to the enterprise of enculturation'.[6] Hence, the act of singing and the participation in the culture of song is a way to manage and understand the discrepancies that occur in the distribution of gender through voices with their actual performing bodies.

In the field of opera, voices of operatic singers hence become like gender, variable constructs and definable according to how present socio-cultural norms respond to the cultural system of 'opera' through their performing bodies.[7] There is no fixed assignment of gender in operatic roles. In a way, 'the voice of the hero' is unstable due to the *primo uomo*'s inability to assume precedence over a single voice type or gender.[8] In the Baroque era, the castrato was the epitome of divine power and heroic grandeur. Such ideals of the heroic male lead found in the castrato were later transferred to leading tenors in the Romantic nineteenth century. The loss of the castrato was crucial in relation to the creation and shaping of these leading tenor roles. However, its impact was equally felt in the performance of female singers and in the appointment of female operatic roles. The substitution of heroic travesty roles by low female voices, although less often discussed in the literature,[9] was also important to the appropriation and transfer of roles from castrati to female voices and then to leading tenors.

In the example of high male voices, the principal heroic male operatic roles in the seventeenth century were generally assigned to the castrato. Although seventeenth-century composers did write principal leading roles for tenors (such as Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, Cavalli's *Egisto* and *Ormindo*),[10] the castrati outshone their tenor counterparts in brilliance, virtuosity and popularity. It was no surprise that from 1680

[5] David Graddol and Joan Swann, *Gender Voices* (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, USA: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 13.
[6] Cusick, "On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex," 38.
[7] See further information about gender as performative in Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 43-44.
[8] André, *Voicing Gender: Castrati, Travesti, and the Second Woman in Early-Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera*, 3.
[9] André, *Voicing Gender: Castrati, Travesti, and the Second Woman in Early-Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera*, 4.
[10] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Tenor," by Elizabeth Forbes et al., accessed December 10, 2015, 2014, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/.

onwards, the *primo uomo* (leading male part in a serious opera) and *secondo uomo* were both sung by castrati.[11] Castrati are being replaced by tenors by the end of the eighteenth century, first in German *Singspiels* and then in the nineteenth-century Italian tradition. By then, the profuse terminology given to specific tenor voice types – such as the lyric, lyric coloratura, *Heldentenor*, *spinto* and *robusto* – were indications of the increasingly precise demands expected from tenor operatic singers. More recently, the involvement of countertenors in new compositions and in reviving operatic roles that once belonged to the castrato is another example of the shifting roles that were assigned to leading opera male singers from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. Through such variable claims of gender and voices, I understand how the participation of Deller's countertenor and Ferrier's contralto voices highlights the cultural constructions and performative acts of gender and their bodies in mid-twentieth-century Britain.

2.2 Embodiment of High Male Voices

High male voices have fascinated listeners for generations. It would be easy to write off these voices as catering specifically to audiences of a different time and space. However, looking at how high male voices still drive fanatic fervour: from the Beatles's high-pitched singing in 1960s, to Michael Jackson's whoops in the 1980s-90s, to the latest obsession with Sam Smith's 'passionate falsetto' after he was crowned BBC's Sound of 2014, we are not as far as we think from the castrati-loving Baroque patrons of the seventeenth century.[12] The general trend for male voices is 'the higher the better'. Despite that, the tension and discomfort for audiences listening to high male voices in the countertenor still persists in the twenty-first century. I navigate this problematic incongruity of the countertenor voice and its body by understanding the discrepancies found in the embodiment of high male voices with its socio-cultural understandings. By providing a brief overview of the cultural constructs that make up the historical reception of high male voices in Western music until the countertenor's revival in the 1940's, I show how gendered ideals of high male voices are constantly variable, in other words, held according to its cultural and periodic contexts. Yet, in the next chapter, I demonstrate how Britten

[11] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Castrato," by John Rosselli, accessed December 10, 2015, 2014, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/.
[12] Mark Savage, "BBC Sound of 2014: Sam Smith," BBC News, accessed 19 January 2015, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-25635440.

appropriated the countertenor – a voice that was and maybe still is treated with suspicion – expressly for the creation of a new type of English opera.

The countertenor voice type is a high male voice above the tenor situated mostly in the alto range. Here, a clear distinction has to be made before proceeding with the overall discussion of the countertenor. As mentioned in chapter one, one has to bear in mind that even in similar terminology, the countertenor voice type that we understand now would most certainly sound different to periodic ears. For one, the flexibility of temperaments and tuning systems in different periods connoted different pitches from the pitch reference of a'=440 Hz that we are now used to. This means that countertenors during Purcell's time would not necessarily sound like today's countertenor, especially with the estimation of lower Restoration pitch standards. In fact, according to recent study, Purcell's countertenors would more likely be modern tenors rather than falsettists.[13] The term 'countertenor' was an anglicised version of 'contratenor', which literally meant to 'counter the tenor' and was first used to denote a vocal line rather than a voice type in late medieval, early Renaissance polyphonic music. In the twentieth century, it was used synonymously with 'male alto' albeit with very different connotations. This manifested in the never-ending discussion of nomenclature between the countertenor and the male alto.[14] Despite it being a misleading term, the typical countertenor frequently employed falsetto (better termed as second-mode phonation or head-voice) either wholly or in part in order to achieve the required high notes.[15]

The countertenor has been in use much earlier, however Post-Restoration England marked a time of flourishing for the voice type in the male-voice trio of tenor, countertenor and bass, mainly found in the solo parts of anthems.[16] Solo countertenor singing was equally popular during this period in secular and ecclesiastical platforms. As the eighteenth century progressed, taste for Italian opera and singing increased with the importation and appointment of castrati in England. There was much heightened competition between the countertenor and castrato as both were equally well employed on ecclesiastical stages. In operatic performances, however, the countertenor voice type was usually cast aside in

[13] Since Baldwin and Wilson's 1969 article, music scholars have argued against the direct correlation of voice type and range between period and modern countertenors. See Thelma Wilson Olive Baldwin, "Alfred Deller, John Freeman and Mr. Pate," *Music and Letters* 50, no. 1 (1969, Jan): 103-10, 102-10; Simon Ravens, "'A Sweet Shrill Voice': The Countertenor and Vocal Scoring in Tudor England," *Early Music* 26, no. 1 (1998): 123-34, 123-34; Ravens, *The Supernatural Voice*, 211-13.
[14] Discussion of nomenclature regarding the countertenor and male alto ranged from clarification between the two voice types to asserting that the term alto itself is enough to mean male singers. See Giles, *The History and Technique of the Counter-Tenor*, xxi.
[15] Giles and Steane, "Countertenor."
[16] Giles, *The History and Technique of the Counter-Tenor*, 57.

favour of the castrato. The countertenor voice type was never properly established[17] on the operatic stage until Britten wrote the role of Oberon for Deller in 1960.[18] Nonetheless, Handel was said to have thought the countertenors as 'equal to the parts written for the Italians (castrati)' and exploited this to his advantage in his compositions.[19] For example, Irish countertenor William Lamb of Dublin's Christ Church Cathedral was one of the alto soloists in the 1742 premiere of Handel's *Messiah*. According to Giles, Handel was also to be blamed for the countertenor's decline. The employment of castrati in most of Handel's operas promoted them as celebrities and left much less challenging work of chorus and solo singing to the countertenor.[20]

The countertenor's gradual decline paralleled the rise of the female contralto. The female contralto came to assume most of the alto lines and replaced the castrato after its decrease in the middle of the eighteenth century. Female contraltos not only usurped the newfound power left by castrati, but also dominated roles that were originally composed for the countertenor especially in oratorios. Since the castrato's slip from fashion in the late eighteenth century, the once glorified voice type has regularly been denigrated as a subject of ridicule and contempt. Associations of effeminacy and foreignness with the castrato were pejoratively linked with the countertenor, causing apprehension in its practice. Such reluctance of men to be related as countertenor was due to fear of being associated with castrati despite the voice type's prior employments as Baroque operatic heroes. Even with the mixed feelings attributed to high male voices, countertenors were still performing in secular stages until the nineteenth century. However, anxiety gradually pushed the countertenor into the safer confines of church stalls, oratorio performances and glee clubs where the countertenor voice continued until the 'rediscovery' of Deller by Tippett in 1943.

Despite Deller's breakthrough as a solo artist, the countertenor voice type was still treated with much suspicion after it was removed from its main choral setting. The apparent mismatch between the countertenor's voice and body alluded to the countertenor's sexuality and underlined much tension in regard to the voice type, an important point that will be discussed further in this chapter. Nevertheless, that did not stop composers of the twentieth century from composing new music for the countertenor voice and incorporating it into the operatic stage. Britten's choice of Deller as the King Fairy

[17] The English countertenor Francis Hughes sang in Thomas Clayton's Arsinoe, Rosamond and Thomyris. Even with his 'strong, countertenor voice' he was no match for the castrati and lost his roles to the castrato, Valentini. See *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Hughes, Francis," by Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson, accessed January 23, 2015, 2014, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.
[18] Ravens, *The Supernatural Voice*, 99.
[19] Frederic Hodgson, "The Contemporary Alto," *The Musical Times* 106, no. 1466 (1965): 293-94, 294.
[20] Giles, *The History and Technique of the Counter-Tenor*, 75.

Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is one of the few that employed the countertenor. Susan McClary claimed that Britten relied on the 'negative implications that plagued the male soprano since the end of the eighteenth century' for a rendering of the countertenor's connection with otherworldliness, in the same way that Handel revivals encouraged listeners to regard the countertenor voice 'as the pinnacle of the gender hierarchy'.[21] Besides Britten and Michael Tippett, it was first predominantly British composers such as Alan Ridout and John Tavener who composed for the countertenor. Later, twentieth and twenty-first century composers have also come to write roles for the countertenor. For example in Philip Glass's 1983 opera *Akhnaten*, where Paul Esswood's countertenor voice was employed to signify 'otherness'.[22] This evolution in understanding the countertenor's vocal embodiment signified changes in our perception of high male voices. The abnormality and intrigue triggered by the transgression of gender and sexual boundaries of the countertenor generated reactions ranging from anxiety to fascination and suspended our identification of any bodily categorization of voices.

2.3 Strange Voices in Unusual Bodies: Alfred Deller

Judith Butler's claims of gender as acquired and performative constitutes a distinct break between sexual anatomies and gender, which provides a framework for the inclusion of sexual deviance that transgresses physical bodies. Here, Butler asks a question important to my current discussion: 'Is there a "physical" body prior to the perceptually perceived body?'[23] This question is crucial in terms of understanding or decentralizing claims that persist in rejecting discourse outside strict dichotomies of male/female and masculine/feminine. Reading this into perceived body of the countertenor, the perception of gender identity through voices goes beyond understanding how their voices match their physiological bodies, but how bodies and voices negotiated and contributed to the marking and unmarking of gender.

The countertenor's vocal abnormality exists in two ways: first, through the transgression of social codes framed from the policing of gender and sexual boundaries and secondly, by voicing the rejection of male vocal norms and archetypical displays of manhood and masculinity. The countertenor's high male voice poses a threat to the

[21] Susan McClary, "Soprano Masculinities," in *Masculinity in Opera: Gender, History and New Musicology*, ed. Philip Purvis (New York: Routledge, 2013), 44.
[22] Ravens, *The Supernatural Voice*, 218.
[23] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 146.

patriarchal reservations of maleness and male identity in the body for fear of being identified as female. While post adolescent males readily engage in a vocal register that performs their biological sex differently from females, the countertenor's ungendering thus occurs in a way that disassociates his voice from his physical male body. In a way, the countertenor is unable to perform his sex through his vocal register because the usual characteristics in lower male voices of tenors, baritones and basses are unavailable to his listeners. Such refusal to adopt the socio-cultural traits of twentieth-century Western maleness and masculinity is ultimately a rejection of the adopted cultural practices in relation to the performativity of gender. In elaboration of Cusick's theory of voice as an audible performance of gender difference, the countertenor can thus be seen as 'performing his body as male without engaging the traditional trope of sex as register'.[24]

The countertenor's disengagement with the cultural tropes of twentieth-century masculinity recalls the same negativity attached to a voice that exhibited the very lack of maleness and male identity – the castrato. Although the castrato has very much been an obsolete voice since the death of the last known castrato Alessandro Moreschi (1852-1922), rhetorical opposition formulated against the countertenor was very much framed in ways that were similar to the castrato. A figure that has generated rich discourse in areas of vocality, gender and most recently, sexuality, the endless fascination with the once idolised castrato exists concomitantly with the disgust and horror attached to his emasculation. The same fascination exists for the countertenor with reasons that were somewhat similar but ultimately different, due to differences in periodic and cultural settings. Although the countertenor generated less discussion in areas of gender and sexuality than the castrato, the overlapping areas of both the countertenor and the castrato are helpful in the extrapolation of similar cultural issues. For one, they are both high male voices although situated in very different backgrounds and origins. However, it would be dangerous to import wholesale the discussion related to the castrato to that of the countertenor. It is important hence, to acknowledge these caveats in negotiating the problematic disjuncture of both the countertenor and the castrato.

Firstly, the most obvious disparity is that the countertenor and the castrato possessed stark albeit veiled physical differences. It would be problematic to associate the castrato's physiological similarities with the countertenor because of their similar high voices, as the castrato's enforced emasculation threatens the seemingly intact, unaltered physical masculinity of the countertenor. The countertenor's physiological difference

[24] Cusick, "On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex," 35.

assumes a methodological separation from the castrato because he did not undergo the surgical procedures that preserved the higher range of the castrato's voice. Secondly, our current understanding of the countertenor and castrato were formulated in very different historical and cultural contexts. The extinction of the castrato removes us from recovering and understanding the actual vocality of the voice type; whereas, the countertenor is still very much to us an existing voice type.

The castrato voice's historical loss reflected important limitations in relation to a materialistic understanding of the voice type, which created many opportunities for exposure for the countertenor. The introduction of technology during the late nineteenth century changed the way the voice materialized through recorded sound, an extended topic that begs further discussion in the next chapter. The actuality and presence of the countertenor voice type was further encouraged by the immediacy that technology provided, something that the obsolete castrato could not benefit from.[25] Recorded sound provided a sense of disembodiment and dislocation of voice from the body. This exacerbates the disjuncture that is already present between the visual and aural image of both the countertenor and the castrato.

The bodily mismatch between the countertenor's voice and his body is disturbing because of our innate need to assign a voice to a prefixed body and gender. Even though it is acceptable for men in certain cultural contexts, for example popular music, to sing in high voices, it is uncommon for twentieth-century classical audiences. For most, the countertenor is susceptible to much gender confusion. Simon Sherry describes how this mismatch forced listeners to detach the countertenor's voice from his body.[26] The countertenor's high-pitched voice and outwardly male body image are seemingly contrasting male attributes, which provoked incompatibilities between a listener's visual and aural identification of the singer.

In navigating the countertenor's problematic intersection between gender and sexual ambiguity with his voice, what would be a better place to start than Alfred Deller, the man who initiated a comeback of the sound and terminology of 'countertenor'. Later successors of Deller have much to thank him for although not necessarily clearing up the discrimination and misunderstanding, but for reducing the prejudices directed at the countertenor during the early days of its revival. Several incidents that occurred during

[25] This is with exception of the last known castrato, Alessandro Moreschi's recording, which was made in 1902-3, which provided a stark contrast in comparison with Deller's numerous recordings made during the burgeoning early music consumption and recording scene in mid-twentieth century.
[26] Sherry, "Accidental Voices: The Return of the Countertenor," 110.

Deller's performing days demonstrated the hostility then directed at the countertenor. There was the account of an orchestral leader, whom Deller had been too kind to name, that ridiculed him as 'the bearded lady' within earshot before a performance at the Royal Festival Hall.[27] Another humorous story retold in various accounts, is of Deller's response towards an audience member in Germany who asked him in limited English if he is a eunuch, to which Deller replied 'I think you mean unique!'[28]

Most audiences' initial response to hearing a countertenor included a mixture of shock and uncertainty. Deller's biographers the Hardwicks' account of audiences' reaction in hearing Deller for the first time indicated their attempt at reconciling the irreconcilable: 'when, from that great frame and manly presence, there issued those flute-like sounds, ranging the register of the female alto, yet unmistakably masculine in character.'[29] The Hardwicks insisted on Deller's masculinity not only by referencing his body –'great frame and manly presence' – but also by couching his voice as 'unmistakably masculine'. These contradicted the description of his voice, where 'flute-like sounds, ranging the register of the female alto', seemingly portrayed incompatibilities between Deller's bodily and aural image.

The response of Deller's audiences in the Hardwicks' account was very much affected by the inability to match high-sounding pitches assumed as belonging to women with the visual presentation of a man. Deller even learnt to anticipate and embrace the audience's response when he said: 'I have trained myself not to be upset by it, and I only hope that the audience will quickly get over this natural surprise and settle down to listen to the voice as a musical instrument.'[30] Deller's way of seeing his voice as a musical instrument is a way of detaching his voice from the premises of his body. His separation of voice from body provided compensation for the attack to be directed not at his body or his voice, but outside his body. In a way, Deller viewed this dislocation of voice from body as a kind of vocal disembodiment. The separation of voice from body insists on voice as a detached apparatus, a 'musical instrument' identified as strange and foreign, rather than a voice heard as strange because of the body that voiced it.[31]

[27] Giles, *The History and Technique of the Counter-Tenor*, 138.
[28] Ravens, *The Supernatural Voice*, 182.
[29] Hardwick and Hardwick, *Alfred Deller*, Introduction.
[30] Hardwick and Hardwick, *Alfred Deller*, Introduction.
[31] Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: (Homo)sexuality and the Art of Singing*, ed. Diana Fuss, Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories (Great Britain: Routledge, 1991), 217.

The idea of the countertenor singing in 'falsetto' has been a much-debated subject.[32] Description of the term itself is an apparent misnomer. For Peter Giles it is a 'perfectly natural vocal state, available in undeveloped form in almost every male'.[33] The contention lies in how countertenors were defined: either employing falsetto as a form of second-mode phonation or head voice built from a first-mode fundamental tenor or baritone voice, or in order to be called true countertenors, singing only in 'natural' first tenor mode without falsetto.[34] Tension arises in the describing of falsetto as an unreal or deceptive vocal production. For example, Wayne Koestenbaum coined falsetto as a 'sylph-sheer embodiment of mystery, unnaturalness, absence'.[35]

For singers, the interiority of voice and the act of singing contradicts the outwardly tangible physicality of a body.[36] Falsetto singing resists identification of a corporeal body and generates anxiety in the absence of a physical and sexual identity. James Davies questions the mythologizing claims found in nineteenth-century vocal manuals and treatises that wrote off bodies by insisting on its release to obtain musical truth.[37] Self-contained and detached from actual music making, bodies are viewed as obstructions or getting in the way of attaining musical perfection. The relation between performers and their performing bodies is an aspect that is rarely discussed in musical studies.[38] Bodies were contorted, twisted and made to conform to certain technical demands. There is tension in performers, especially singers, who are at loss in seeing their voices as part of their performing body and yet as separate apparatus of instruments. The interiority of a singer's voice as his instrument further increases the confusion. But at the same time, the actual process of singing – breathing, the vibration of vocal cords to the projection of sound – confirms the corporeal existence of the singer's body.

With the countertenor's voice, in particular Deller's voice, I seek to understand and bridge the irrecoverable gaps between a singer's voice and body without viewing them as separate entities, but with the awareness that both mutually influence and affect each other.

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[32] For an overview of the argument, see Giles and Steane, "Countertenor." General debate since the mid-twentieth century focuses on the distinction of vocal production between the falsetto and the countertenor, see Wright, "The Alto and Countertenor Voices," 593-94; Albert Pengelly and Brian Brockless, "Countertenor or Alto?," *The Musical Times* 101, no. 1403 (1960): 28-29, 28-29. Ardran and Wulstan used radiographic evidence to suggests that both countertenors and altos sing in falsetto, see G. M. Ardran and David Wulstan, "The Alto or Countertenor Voice," *Music & Letters* 48, no. 1 (1967): 17-22.
[33] Giles and Steane, "Countertenor."
[34] Giles and Steane, "Countertenor."
[35] Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: (Homo)sexuality and the Art of Singing*, 217.
[36] Cusick, "On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex," 29-30.
[37] James Q. Davies, ed. *Romantic Anatomies of Performance* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2014), 5-6.
[38] I would like to cite James Davies for contributing to a fresh discourse on 19th-century virtuoso performers and singers with their performing bodies in his book Davies, *Romantic Anatomies of Performance*.

However, Deller's separation of voice and body contributes to the fact that transgression of gender and cultural codes were evident in his performance. Sherry attests to this vocal and bodily mismatch of the countertenor and addresses it as 'visual dissociation…and break with naturalism [that] frees the listener to hear the voice as separate from the body'.[39] The countertenor brings to light questions about the voice and its occupation in the body. In the same way the castrato's voice displays and exhibits the body's physiological lack. This lack emphasizes the castrato as 'hollow, blank' and devoid of any form of gender and sexuality.[40] In the same way, the countertenor voice places us in a similar state of blankness and loss in the categorization of its gender. Sherry suggests that 'the countertenor voice resembles a ghost of the past, a lost tradition, part of our world and yet at home with the doubleness of gender, gender-blurring and voice-morphing present'.[41]

Such ambiguity of gender can also be found in the contralto, who shares the same vocal register with the countertenor. In a way, the contralto is identified as performing her body as female without engaging the traditional trope of sex as register. While the countertenor is seen as abandoning the lower vocal register that affirms his masculinity, the contralto rejects the higher pitched vocal register that identifies her with the female characteristics of her body. Through this, such disassociation of voices from body in the countertenor and contralto can both be viewed as rejection of gendered vocal norms in opposition to sopranos and tenors whose singing voices concurred with their performing bodies.

2.4 The Contralto Voice and its Embodiment

The term 'contralto' was first entirely designated for male singers such as the castrato or falsettist. Most general sources today specify that a contralto's *tessitura* encompasses roughly just under two octaves, from g to e''.[42] According to Owen Jander and others in *Grove Music Online*, 'contralto' usually refers to solo singing, whereas the term 'alto' is reserved for choral voices and encompasses the whole gamut of boys, falsettists and

[39] Sherry, "Accidental Voices: The Return of the Countertenor," 110.
[40] Roger Freitas draws upon the Lacanian conception of 'phallus' as discussed in Roger Freitas, "The Eroticism of Emasculation: Confronting the Baroque Body of the Castrato," *The Journal of Musicology* 20, no. 2 (2003): 196-249, 199. He cited works that employ upon the castrato's lack as not only due to castration but also as devoid of any 'phallic significance' in works of Beth Kowaleski-Wallace, Joseph Roach and most commonly in Roland Barthes's *S/Z*.
[41] Sherry, "Accidental Voices: The Return of the Countertenor," 110.
[42] This can only be taken as a reference point and not as a definable register of the contralto due to their increasingly shifting and variable vocal ranges.

women.[43] Vocal range, which is often cited as a marker of voice type, serves to inform only a partial understanding of the singer and its vocal roles. In this thesis, all three singers possess voices that were similar in range. Deller and Ferrier were both singing in the same vocal ranges while Pears's voice is only slightly lower than both of them. Hence, it is crucial to note how ideals of gender have contributed to the policing and later transgressing of singers' vocal roles and ranges.

Before the seventeenth century, there was no clear distinction that this voice type meant any specific gender. This caused further confusion when occasionally operatic roles were interchangeable between male and female voice types. A good example is Cavalli's *Erismena* (1655) where the roles of old women such as Arnalta and Alcesta were sometimes played to comic effect by tenors *en travesti*. After the castrato's slow decline, the operatic contralto voice type came to be associated solely with female singers, although it was sometimes employed for high male voices that existed outside the operatic stage (the male alto of cathedral choirs, for example). Despite that, confusion of nomenclature between 'falsettists' and 'altos' was and still is a topic that stirs up endless debate well after the castrato's decline. It proceeds today in the confusing terminology between identification of the countertenor and the male alto, as explained earlier in this chapter.

Confusion is not the only word normally associated with the contralto voice. The deep and sonorous qualities of this voice type were especially valued in eighteenth-century operas by composers such as Handel, who regularly wrote for female contraltos in breeches. Famous contraltos such as Francesca Bertolli specialised in Handel's operatic male roles. Among the nine roles that he wrote for her, five were male characters, for example, Gandartes in *Poro* (1713), Armindo in *Partenope* (1730) and Melo in *Sosarme* (1732). Contraltos in this case emulated prestige, divinity and heroic masculinity, a far cry from the secondary roles to which they were often relegated. It is such notions of masculinity embodied in these roles that made Clément compare the contralto with the bass and address them as 'voices of spirit and power'.[44]

[43] Jander et al., "Contralto."
[44] Clément casts the contraltos as voices that were individual and distinct, which 'do not really impersonate, but rather act in a sacred field, shamanistic or religious', see Catherine Clément, "Through Voices, History," in *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera*, ed. Mary Ann Smart (Princeton, New Jersey; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 24; André, *Voicing Gender: Castrati, Travesti, and the Second Woman in Early-Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera*, 6.

The gap of fifty years between the demise of the castrato and the rise of the tenor voice from 1800[45] equally propelled the use of low female voices in Italian opera. In the early nineteenth century, contraltos were frequently allocated male roles of stature and power such as leaders and princes. These contraltos redressed themselves as heroes and substituted castratos as leading singers on the operatic stage.[46] These roles figured women playing trouser parts mostly in operas of Rossini, for example in the title role of *Tancredi* (1813), Malcolm Graeme in *La donna del lago* (1819) and Arsace in *Semiramide* (1823). The popularity of Rossini's operas equally meant that these contralto roles were widely performed and disseminated in the nineteenth century. Such substitution roles for castrati were clearly related to the powerful, masculine characters portrayed by earlier eighteenth-century Handelian contraltos.

Alongside the breeches parts that were created in the nineteenth century, composers began to portray contraltos principally as voices of their own gender. Such was the case for Marietta Marcolini's unprecedented role as the 'prima donna contralto', where as many as five operatic roles were created for her.[47] The rise of celebrated singers such as Marcolini was one of the main reasons for the marked prominence given to female-leading contraltos in operas. In particular, Rossini employed the low female voice's rich vocal characteristics in his comic and serious operas and created roles predominantly for coloratura contraltos. Geltrude Righetti, for example, portrayed both the character of Cinderella and Rosina in Rossini's *La Cenerentola* (1817) and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (1816) respectively.[48] Contralto Pauline Viardot, who created the role of Fidès in Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète* in 1849 was another example. Blanche Deschamps – a contralto with a rich and wide vocal range – was the first Delilah in Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila* at the 1892 Paris Opéra performance. She inspired and created many roles in the French operatic tradition during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Jules Massenet, who wrote roles for Deschamps in *Hérodiade* (1881), *Cendrillon* (1899) and *Chérubin* (1905), was a huge admirer of her voice.

By the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century, the female contralto was already associated with potentially restrictive and even undesirable operatic roles. Connotations

[45] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Primo Musico," by John Rosselli, accessed December 15, 2015, 2014, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/.
[46] André, *Voicing Gender: Castrati, Travesti, and the Second Woman in Early-Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera*, 4.
[47] The five operatic roles that Rossini wrote for Marcolini were Ernestina in *L'equivoco stravagante* (1811), Ciro in *Babilonia* (1812), Clarice in *La pietra del paragone* (1812), Isabella in *L'italiana in Algeri* (1813) and the title role of *Sigismondo* (1814). See Jander et al., "Contralto."
[48] Jander et al., "Contralto."

such as 'matronly' and 'maternal' were frequently attributed to the voice type, portraying a lack of glamour and feminine desirability for the contralto. They featured regularly in unattractive secondary roles such as a witch in Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* (Ulrica, 1859) and old ladies in Puccini's *Suor Angelica* (Princess, 1918) and *Gianni Schicchi* (Zita, 1918). By the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the popularity of celebrity contralto Dame Clara Butt, whose imposing figure and repertoire of mostly oratorios and ballads further established the contralto's vocal persona.[49] Apart from the stereotypes of old ladies and comic travesty roles such as those of Gilbert and Sullivan, in the late nineteenth century, later prejudice against the contralto in serious opera was equally contributed by the fact that popular contraltos, in the case of Ferrier and Butt, were mostly oratorio and concert singers.

On the other hand, prima donnas are, since the early eighteenth century, mainly (although not entirely) sopranos: stars of the most prestigious opera houses and employed to attract huge crowds. Contraltos are, on the other hand, (in Warren Boroson's expression) relegated to roles of 'witches, bitches and britches'.[50] These roles were not the only ones allocated to contraltos in the nineteenth century and allowed only a partial understanding of the voice type. Despite such contradicting images of the contralto, further composers of the Russian and French operatic tradition did provide contraltos with a wider range of opportunities at the end of the nineteenth century. Anna Petrova, a Russian contralto, created two of Glinka's operatic roles: Vanya in *A Life of the Tsar* (1836) and Ratmir in *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (1842). Wagner's Erda in *Das Rheingold* (1869) and *Siegfried* (1876) was revolutionary in the way he reinvented and redefined the contralto's operatic position in the twentieth century. Off the operatic stage, the contralto's wide vocal range was frequently used to convey powerful and profound expressions and emotions, seen in late Romantic and early twentieth century repertoires such as Brahms *Alto Rhapsody* (1869), Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* (1900) and Mahler's *Das Lied von de Erde* (1907-09).

If the contralto enjoyed a fairly wide range of possible roles in the nineteenth century, by the twentieth century, most female operatic roles tended to eschew the low female range for the higher and lighter *tessituras* of mezzo-sopranos. Strauss's Klytemnestra in *Elektra* (1909) and Clarion in *Capriccio* (1942) are examples of operatic

[49] Butt was reported to be 6 feet two-and-a-quarter inches tall, a height which posed difficulties when paired with other tenor operatic singers. Saint-Saëns had originally proposed to pair Butt with equally tall tenor Albert Alvarez in his later aborted *Samson et Dalila*. See Fuller, ""The Finest Voice of the Century": Clara Butt and Other Concert-Hall and Drawing-Room Singers of Fin-de-siécle Britain," 319.
[50] Warren Boroson, "The Case of the Disappearing Opera Singers," New Jersey Newsroom, accessed 30 January 2014, http://www.newjerseynewsroom.com/movies/the-case-of-the-disappearing-opera-singers.

roles frequently sung by mezzo-sopranos instead of contraltos. Janáček's Kabanicha (*Kát'a Kabanová,* 1921) and Weil's Leokadja Begbick in *Der Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (1930) were also examples of strong roles sung mostly by mezzo-sopranos. Although there were major operatic roles written for the solid contralto voice type, most of them were restricted to character roles in for example, Berg's Margret (*Wozzeck*) in 1925, Auntie, the Boar's landlady in *Peter Grimes* (1945) and Sosostris, a clairvoyant in Tippett's *The Midsummer Marriage* (1955). Limited, unappealing roles and performance opportunities meant that contraltos were constantly overlooked as a valid voice type and made to extend and push their vocal ranges higher into the range of mezzo-sopranos.

This demonstrated the practice even now of billing low female singers in agent's listings and programme notes as mezzo-sopranos instead of contraltos. There was trepidation and anxiety in being referred to as a contralto and according to Eric Myers, many singers feared 'treading down there'.[51] Practical reasons such as better offers and more lucrative job opportunities could be another motive for resisting the contralto label. Generally, there were more roles written for sopranos than contraltos, hence the billing of mezzo-sopranos meant that these singers are versatile enough to expand their vocal range to encompass roles in the higher register, whereas a contralto would be limited to her low vocal range. As evidenced, the Metropolitan Opera does not acknowledge contraltos and lists female singers under the categories of soprano and mezzo-sopranos on its artist roster.[52] The preference for lighter and more brilliant voice types was one of the reasons contraltos were cast aside, apart from limited performance opportunities. Myers laments the situation of the vanishing contralto by addressing them as 'endangered species'.[53] In the second half of the twentieth century, the already shrinking repertoire of the contralto was faced with another threat: the introduction of countertenors in castrato substitution roles. Since the late twentieth century, countertenors have been gradually replacing contraltos by successfully taking on roles previously written for castratos. By mapping out the contralto voice in its various contexts, I point out that the contralto's vocal identity is highly unstable both in the contexts of its gender and its portrayal of operatic roles.

[51] Eric Myers, "Sweet and Low: the Case of the Vanishing Contralto," *Opera News*, 28 December 1996, 20.
[52] Myers, "Sweet and Low: the Case of the Vanishing Contralto."
[53] Myers, "Sweet and Low: the Case of the Vanishing Contralto," 18.

2.5 Ferrier's Contralto Voice

This is most notably shown in the case study of Ferrier, whose career in mid-twentieth century Britain reveals different expectations that were placed on her contralto voice. She was, on the one hand, highly valued especially in succeeding Clara Butt as the nation's most popular contralto, but on the other hand, risked being written off or conflated into a mezzo-soprano. Ferrier's voice negotiated problematic associations in twentieth-century gender representations of the contralto that the voice type did not provoke in earlier times. Her highly unstable voice – both greatly prized and dismissed – revealed how perceptions of this voice type has shaped and continue to inform national musical ideals in Britain.

The privileging of the mezzo-soprano over the contralto can also be seen by personnel of authority in prominent musical establishments such as the BBC in the mid-twentieth century. One such was Julian Herbage, an English musicologist who became BBC's Assistant Director of Music in 1940. As evidenced in his reviews, his solidly conservative musical tastes shied away from unusual and non-normative voice types. One of his reviews of Ferrier included a broadcast performance of the BBC's Handel's *Messiah* with the Huddersfield Choral Society and the BBC Northern Orchestra under conductor Malcolm Sargent on 27 December 1944. As a soloist, Ferrier sang alongside Joan Cross, Heddle Nash and George Pizzey. Despite praising Ferrier for being an excellent singer, at the same time, Herbage criticised her for 'developing too much the contralto quality in her voice' and claimed that 'she is really a mezzo-soprano'.[54] Herbage's review showed that, even though Ferrier's singing was appreciated, her contralto voice was not always whole-heartedly embraced.

Despite that, by 1945 Ferrier was well accepted enough to debut at the last night of the Henry Wood's Promenade concerts. She gave a performance of Tchaikovsky's recitative and aria in English ('So wills the Lord… Farewell you native hills and fields') from Act 1, No. 7 of the opera *Orleanskaya deva* (*The Maid of Orléans*). Except for Mozart's recitative and aria 'Ombra felice! ... lo ti lascio', K255 in the 1947 Proms, her remaining Prom concerts were all performances of Brahms. The first performance, which Julian Herbage's review suggests, may have affected the chosen repertoire for Ferrier's remaining Proms performances. For Ferrier, the rehearsal before the performance of her

[54] The review was written as a note to someone under the acronym D.M. (probably Director of Music) and was copied to BBC Music Booking Manager, M.P.O. Julian Herbage. "Messiah": Wednesday, December 27th, Artists' Personal File Kathleen Ferrier File 1, 1942-1946, 910, BBC WAC, 28 December 1944.

Proms debut was anything but smooth.[55] The Tchaikovsky aria that she was supposed to sing was not in the key that she expected.[56] The change in key figured heavily in Herbage's artist report of the performance, where he remarked that Ferrier had 'a really lovely voice' but he 'could not bear to hear Air des Adieux in this low key.'[57] There were no other BBC records of Ferrier in her 1947 Proms performance, but we might speculate that Herbage's review of the 1945 performance might categorise Ferrier in the 'Brahms-only' category. There seemed to be irreconcilable opinions on the lowness of Ferrier's voice regardless of how well she sang just because her voice type was supposedly inappropriate for the aria.

One could suggest many reasons for the anxiety associated with low female voices and preference towards sopranos. Christopher Fifield attributes the BBC's pigeonholing of singers for ease of categorization to indifference.[58] However, the conflation of contraltos into the mezzo-soprano category seemed to reflect more than just personal tastes or bureaucratic judgment. More than that, the preference for mezzo-sopranos over contraltos resists the chance for women's voices to be confused with men's. The preference for women to be mezzo-sopranos and not contraltos resonates with essentialist views and claims of gender in voice types. This is exacerbated by vocal performances and broadcasts from the radio, which I will discuss in Chapter Four, where the performers' invisible bodies created a sense of vocal disembodiment.[59] Following these claims on gender, men should possess low voices and be basses, baritones and tenors and not countertenors nor castratos. High voices should belong exclusively to women: sopranos and mezzo-sopranos were allowed full rein of the uppermost register, where contraltos and countertenors seemed to destabilise their prescribed gender roles. Categorizing and gendering male and female voice types for ease of reference assures them of being referred unmistakably to men and affirms patriarchal inheritance that were socially accustomed to men.

The employment of contraltos runs the risk of usurping powers that belonged to soprano and mezzo-soprano prima donnas. Nonetheless, one conveniently forgets that these powers, transferred from the throne of the fallen castrati, were also attributed to contralto voices and once belonged to the reign of prima donna contraltos and *primo musicos* in the eighteenth century. The dethroning of the contralto's voice demonstrates

[55] In letter no. 28 to Mr. Giddy, Ferrier describes the performance as 'rather wearing'. Fifield, *Letters and Diaries of Kathleen Ferrier*, 37.
[56] Ferrier arrived at the rehearsal to find out that the aria was a third too high for her, and she needed her sister's help in retrieving the right score. The BBC readily admitted that the fault was theirs and provided contribution towards the taxi fare needed for the journey to collect the score.
[57] Julian Herbage. Promenade Concerts 1945: Report on Artists, Artists' Personal File Kathleen Ferrier File 1, 1942-1946, 910, BBC WAC, 12 October 1945.
[58] Fifield, *Letters and Diaries of Kathleen Ferrier*, 242.
[59] See page 147 in Chapter Four.

that what is at stake is not merely the exclusivity of shutting men's doors to women, but the destabilisation of masculinity. However, the revival of Baroque and Classical operas from the 1960s has since employed contraltos in roles once belonged to the alto castrati. These roles figured prominently onstage and were usually heroic male roles such as Gluck's Orfeo, Handel's Giulio Cesare, Xerxes and Ariodante. The portrayal of kings, princes and gods were strong leading operatic roles that relied heavily on the low female voice type. Singers from the late twentieth century such as Janet Baker, Marilyn Horne and more recently, Sarah Connolly are all famous singers noted for their performances of this repertoire.

The late twentieth century brought another threat for these female singers, notably the rise of countertenors singing similar roles. The assignment of authority was, hence, transferred from contraltos to mezzo-sopranos and to countertenors. Contraltos were twice removed from their positions as these roles once employed by female singers were now popularly overtaken by countertenors. Even when roles for the lower female voice were called for, mezzo-sopranos were generally preferred rather than contraltos, whose voices were overlooked because of prejudices that were associated with the voice type.

Ferrier's vocal quality as a contralto was distinctive and noted in almost every review of her early performances. Ferrier made her big break by landing on the books of music agency Ibbs and Tillett in 1942. Earlier critiques of her singing noted that despite possessing a strong contralto voice, she was limited in both range and vocal interpretation. Composer Lennox Berkeley, when asked to report to BBC's Arthur Wynn on Ferrier's performance at the National Gallery on 28 December 1942, had similar things to say. Organized by distinguished pianist Myra Hess, the National Gallery concert was Ferrier's only performance in the series. Accompanied by Maurice Jacobson, she sang folk songs ('Fairy Lough', 'Love is a bable', 'Bier side') and *lieder* by Brahms (*Die Mainacht*) and Wolf (*Verborgenheit*, *Der Gärtner*). Although not a huge fan of Ferrier's singing style, Berkeley expressed admiration for her good vocal quality:

> She has a fine and powerful voice of real contralto quality and seemed to me an accomplished singer. Her intonation was on the whole very accurate and her diction was good. On the other hand I found her rather dull; her tone was monotonous. I cannot imagine that she could ever move on, though there is no doubt about her competence or the good quality of her voice.

Despite criticising her performance as dull and monotonous, Berkeley was assured of Ferrier's vocal quality. Five years later, he featured Ferrier in the premiere of his contralto and orchestral piece, *Four Poems of St Teresa of Avila*, Op. 27.

Another audition for the 1943 Promenade concerts rated Ferrier as having a

> rich, clarinet-like quality voice, limited in range and technique at the moment. Good diction. A promising singer but only suitable at present for small works such as Bach's Songs from Schemelli's *Gesangbuch*. Sang the St-Saëns completely without passion.[60]

Unsurprisingly, this audition was unsuccessful and it would not be until four years later when she would make her Promenade concert debut, singing Handel's 'Where'er you walk' (*Semele*) and Saint-Saëns's 'Softly awakes my heart' (*Samson et Dalila*). Despite her undeveloped vocal technique and limited range, concert reviews listed her taking on major roles such as 'Prepare thyself, Zion' from Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* and the alto solos from Handel's *Messiah* in 1943 in the same year. The *Western Daily Press* critic credited Ferrier as 'possessor of a good voice used with discretion', and having 'good enunciation' in her singing of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*.[61] These reviews of Ferrier revealed the singer's early performing years, where despite her then limited vocal technique, critics were already pointing to her diction and enunciation as ideal vocal qualities, which is a point I will discuss further in this chapter.

Reviews of Ferrier's recital and stage works highlight how her voice addressed the tensions found in the negativity assigned to low female voices with the distinction and uniqueness of the contralto voice. Critics had problems assessing her vocal quality and had to rely on technical matters of her diction and intonation as references for competent singing, given how she rejected vocal norms and ideals of female soprano singers. By eschewing the normative range and qualities of the female voice, Ferrier was unable to perform the female roles and identity offered to her through her vocal register. On the operatic stage, tensions between the agendered qualities embodied in Ferrier's contralto voice with her female body are heightened especially in the trouser role of Orfeo, which Ferrier performed as a farewell act at the height of her career.

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[60] Prom Audition. Artists' Personal File Kathleen Ferrier File , 1942-1946, 910, BBC WAC, 20 January 1943.

[61] "Leon Goosens at Theatre Royal," *Western Daily Press*, 6 December 1943.

2.6 Ferrier as Orfeo

The only two operatic roles that Ferrier sang in were unconventional in relation to normative roles written for the contralto voice. Britten's title role in *The Rape of Lucretia*, written expressly for her voice, depicts the lead character as a victim instead of fallen woman, an unusual choice given the contralto's less prominent role in opera. Ferrier's second operatic role, Orfeo, recast the contralto in the tradition of *primo musico* inherited by the decline of the castrato in operatic performances. Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* at Glyndebourne, an opera apparently selected for her return due to her high achievement with Lucretia, was better received than Britten's opera and Ferrier would take this role on tour to New York, Amsterdam and later Covent Garden in her final year.[62] The role of Orfeo was significant for Ferrier as it was an operatic role that she could identify with and one that she claimed was well suited for her. It was played *en travesti* and featured a Greek mythological figure who could revive life through his special musical abilities.

Written in 1762, Gluck's *Orfeo* was originally intended for the alto castrato Gaetano Guadagni. Since the decline of the castrato meant that the role was no longer performable, Berlioz adapted it in 1859 for Pauline Viardot. Viardot's success pushed the opera into new heights of popularity. The newly written role of Orfeo constructed the contralto as a voice type of stature, power and prestige. Orpheus the Greek god, by his musical ability, was able to travel between both worlds of the living and the dead; similarly the contralto's adaptability helped transcend the gender boundaries of male and female in using gender-specific bodies for specific roles. Hence, such transitions and appropriation of the male by a female voice posed interesting questions on how the low female voice personified characteristics of a male deity. The gendered manifestations and conception of the role Orfeo projects it as a site of sexual and gender variability. It renews perceptions of the contralto and reclaims the status once offered to this voice type by the castrato.

Orfeo's role provides useful insights into the appropriation of male roles for the female contralto. Butt and Ferrier were not the only contraltos that portrayed the Greek artistic figure. The roles of Orfeo had been performed *en travesti* by female contraltos since the nineteenth century.[63] Although stage attire and make-up would undoubtedly help in the suspension of gender for female contraltos that embodied this role, it is ultimately her voice that is needed for a convincing portrayal of the Greek figure. A *Times* critic

[62] Fifield, *Letters and Diaries of Kathleen Ferrier*, 20.
[63] Female British singers who sang as Orfeo that preceded Ferrier included Louise Kirkby Lunn and Mary Jarred; those that succeeded her were Janet Baker and Marilyn Horne.

noted Ferrier's 'firm vocal line and richness of tone, combined with the dignity of bearing that made her impersonation of the male character convincing' in her first performance of *Orfeo* at Glyndebourne in 1947.[64] The contralto voice's ability to convey and portray Orfeo's masculinity and virility was further justified in the operatic plot when his singing and lyre playing touched the Furies that stood guard at the entrance to the Underworld.

To play a role *en travesti*, the contralto's voice had to personify a kind of sexual ambiguity and blankness in order to appropriate and adopt masculine characteristics. The contralto's voice would need to be flexible enough to transcend fixed sexual characteristics so that it can accommodate whichever sex is required by the role. For the contralto Orfeo, the voice's low *tessitura* represented the role's masculinity and embodied a male character that is counter to the singer's biological sex. It is at the intersection of voices from such opposite polarities – the highness of the castrato and the lowness of the contralto – where the role of Orfeo was envisioned: in the restoration of life by musical prowess. This musical ability and power, once embodied by the castrato, was transferred to the contralto. Fitting into roles previously sung by the castrato, the contralto risks being written off as a mere replacement. Davies stated that the 'ideal voice' that was once belonged to the castrato has 'shifted'. In his words, 'once this voice was prized for its pure, mythological, static, disembodied and universal character', but in the early nineteenth century, the ideal voice – in reference to the prima donna – 'became grainy, powerful, bodily and individual'.[65] Whereas, I ascertain that the contralto voice's posits itself in between the shift and transfer of the castrato to the prima donna. The contralto's own desexualisation is crucial so that the voice is seen as the ideal vehicle for replacing the castrato as *primo musico*, allowing for a smooth transfer of roles from one voice type to another.

The gender confusion assigned to the contralto's low voice is further complicated when Orfeo is portrayed by a woman in a trouser role. As listed earlier in the chapter, the contralto relied on (besides castrato substitution roles) a wide range of travesty roles that made up the current standard repertoire for the voice type. Nonetheless, the tradition of women in breeches for opera has been ongoing since the seventeenth century and played on theatrical displays of gender suspension and sexual titillation.[66] Women cross-dressing as men destabilised gender roles and presented opportunities of gender and sexual

[64] "Glyndebourne Opera," *The Times*, 20 June 1947.
[65] J. Q. Davies, "'Veluti in Speculum': The Twilight of the Castrato," *Cambridge Opera Journal*, no. 3 (2005): 271-301, 274.
[66] Margaret Reynolds offers a good list of female travesty roles ranging from seventeenth-century castrati, page boys to *fin-de-siecle* sexually-transgressive characters in Margaret Reynolds, "Ruggiero's Deceptions, Cherubino's Distractions," in *En Travesti: Women, Gender Subversion, Opera*, ed. Corrine E. Blackmer and Patricia Juliana Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 134.

transgressions through the marking and unmarking of bodies and voices. These subtle or less subtle gendered references to sex were part and parcel of operatic theatre and offered relish of illicit pleasures onstage. Travestied roles such as Cherubino in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786) and Strauss's Octavian from *Der Rosenklavier* (1911) were not only enjoyed among operatic audiences, but were equally popular in European music halls and theatrical performances.

Female cross-dressers enjoyed success in many forms of entertainment onstage such as in musical comedies, farce and pantomime. Male impersonators especially in vaudeville stages, around the period of 1860s to 1930 were widely popular and one of the highest-paid musical performers of their time.[67] They were female performers who sang songs and dressed as male characters during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. The most popular female performers such as Vesta Tilley and Hetty King were mostly British. In fact, the attachment of male impersonators with British women and music hall tradition was so strong that Kathleen Clifford, despite being an American claimed that she was born in Britain.[68] There might be a strong correlation with the low female contralto voice and its national precedence in Britain especially from the turn of the twentieth century, given that these female cross-dressers earned a widespread reputation most notably in the States, as iconic British performers. These male impersonators relied mostly on their dressing of fashionable men's clothes, masculine features and good acting skills for a convincing portrayal of men. They sang songs with male subjects and portrayed themselves as male characters while their mezzo-soprano or contralto voices suggested otherwise. Despite how female trouser roles complicate the mismatching of gender and bodies, the general appeal of these female cross-dressers both in lowbrow and highbrow entertainment is apparent. The female contralto singing in travesty is problematic because of the discrepancy it creates between the visual and audio references of male body with female voice.

Like the countertenor as discussed at the earlier part of this chapter, the mismatch between voice and body for the contralto rejected normal gendered perceptions of voice and its embodiment, leading to at best a confused understanding of the singer's identity. While the countertenor has to insist on his actual male body despite his high male voice,

[67] Rodger notes that the highest-paid male impersonator's salary ranged from $140 per week (Annie Hindle) in 1868 to that of Vesta Tilley's $2000-3000 per week in 1906. See Gillian Rodger, ""He Isn't a Marrying Man": Gender and Sexuality in the Repertoire of Male Impersonators, 1870-1930," in *Queer Episodes in Music and Modern Identity*, ed. Sophie Fuller and Lloyd Whitesell (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 131.
[68] Rodger, ""He Isn't a Marrying Man": Gender and Sexuality in the Repertoire of Male Impersonators, 1870-1930," 127.

the trouser contralto's feigned male body contradicts her low female voice. Such visual and audio distortion between the male/female pairings of voice and body reflected the cultural appropriateness of its time. In the mid-twentieth century, gendered suspension offered through cross-dressing performances of male impersonators by Tilley were acceptable while the reverse of Deller singing as male in a high voice was much more problematic. This was mainly because for Deller, there was no costume to offer any gendered theatrical relief, he was singing as himself. However, we could also ascertain that the contralto more so than the countertenor, embodied a sense of gender fluidity that shifts easily into different personas.

There is also at the core of the contralto's voice, a sense of gender ambiguity in that it ceases to be fixed or ascribed to one specific physical body. The contralto's body hence challenges the fixed perceptions and matching of gender and bodies with voices. More so nineteenth-century ideologies categorized voices not by their biology or gender but by idealities.[69] Francesco Bennati, a pioneer of physiological studies on singing, identified only three ranges in the human voice: soprano, tenor and bass.[70] What makes things difficult for the contralto is that the voice type lies at the peripheries of 'valid' and 'substantial' voice types: the soprano and tenor, both voice types that are identified by their gender and justified through their natural state of being. Thus, the contralto voice floats without any bodily attachment and invites identification of it as a 'degenerate or passive homology of the male'.[71] However, current understandings of gender theory, most prominently by Judith Butler, argue against the demand or need for bodies to possess any gender attributes in order to acquire a state of being.[72] The body's degendering thus imagines the contralto voice as an agendered voice, without any distinct gender and unable to inhabit a body.

The contralto's sexual indefiniteness further substantiated Orpheus's sexual ambiguity. Wendy Bashant claims that Orpheus appears to be both 'asexual and super sexual'.[73] His sexuality exudes in his great love for his wife, one that sees him conquering and defeating death in order to retrieve her. The claims made for Orpheus's body and gender were framed in a tension that subjects Orpheus as both lover and victim: a lover

[69] Davies, "'Veluti in Speculum': The Twilight of the Castrato," 281.
[70] Francesco Bennati, *Recherches sur le Mécanisme de la Voix Humaine* (Paris: Ballière, 1832), xii; cited in Davies, "'Veluti in Speculum': The Twilight of the Castrato," 281.
[71] Davies, "'Veluti in Speculum': The Twilight of the Castrato," 280.
[72] See Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 146-47, where Butler argues for gender and sex as separate entities from the body.
[73] Wendy Bashant, "Singing in Greek Drag; Gluck, Berlioz, George Eliot," in *En Travesti: Women, Gender, Subversion, Opera*, ed. Corrine E. Blackmer and Patricia Juliana Smith (Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 1995), 218.

that ultimately triumphs to revive his bride; and a victim, who according to Bashant, 'falls in the trap of men [by] fatally gazing at a woman's body.' The role of Orfeo proceeds in a fashion that is rife with dualisms: sexual/asexual, natural/unnatural, non-male/non-female. Gluck's production added to the gendered confusion where he starts the opera in what Bashant termed as a 'sexually nebulous world'.[74] The opera opens with Orfeo mourning at Eurydice's tomb where there is no setting up of characters, no introduction of distinct maleness and femaleness that pervades their previous history. The only clear dichotomy that differentiates and separates the two main characters would not be if they are male or female but rather if they are living or dead.[75] The role of Orfeo – both its voice and character – thus inhabits a liminal position in relation to sexual and gender norms.

Within this sexually nebulous world, the contralto voice type further confuses matters. The contralto propels Orfeo deeper into the world of gender ambiguity and her biological sex is unidentifiable, both not entirely male and not entirely female. Rewriting Orfeo for contralto further inscribes the idea of unnaturalness and queerness in a voice. The contralto Orfeo assumes maleness and redeems love through song and operatic role-play by disregarding her actual biological sex and proceeds unfeigned without the castrato's manipulation of natural biology through castration. However, her own 'unnaturalness' is unveiled when the realisation of her singing in drag sinks in. A contralto Orfeo in drag can only imitate the heroic stature of her Greek persona, as she too falls into the slippery trap of queerness. It would not be difficult for listeners to make out that Orfeo, despite her voice and heroic quest to conquer death for love, is ultimately a woman fighting for a woman and winning approbation through her song; a song somewhat confusingly sung in a register that used to be for a 'male' but was now executed by a woman.

The dichotomy does not end there. Beyond its gendered body and voice, the female Orfeo further emphasizes the duality of the divine/human qualities of Orfeo. In its original role, the castrato Guadagni's voice embodies what Eve Barsham describes as an 'extra-human, mythic quality', whereas the contralto voice adds 'something near to the original [mythic] vocal register… and also the "human" quality'.[76] In other words, Barsham sees the contralto voice type as a way of reaching the closest likeness to the quality and timbre of the castrato, but also as a means of bringing the mythicized voice type closer to

[74] Bashant, "Singing in Greek Drag; Gluck, Berlioz, George Eliot," 219.
[75] Bashant, "Singing in Greek Drag; Gluck, Berlioz, George Eliot," 218.
[76] Eve Barsham, "The Opera in the Nineteenth Century: Berlioz and Gluck," in *C.W. von Gluck: Orfeo*, ed. Patricia Howard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 84; cited in Bashant, "Singing in Greek Drag; Gluck, Berlioz, George Eliot," 220.

humanity with its natural state of vocal production. Bashant proclaims that the castrato to contralto revision 'creates an erotic tension between women who both are and are not women; the score makes them sound both mythic and human'.[77]

Yet, this role of Orfeo personified not just any woman, but what Charles Mackerras identified as 'an older woman'.[78] In Mackerras's words, a woman portraying Orfeo is as if she is 'rejected by society', her 'Che farò senza' shows her mourning the loss of her youth at where she is left: dejected and alone.[79] Yet this bears some truth in how the role of Orfeo was frequently deployed as the perfect farewell act. In 1982, famed contralto Janet Baker chose none other than *Orfeo* under conductor Raymond Leppard for her operatic farewell in Glyndebourne. In Baker's words:

> It seems fitting that the last role I shall ever play on a stage is Orfeo. My own struggles to come to terms with my art and public versus private life, are focused at this moment in a special way… Orfeo is on every level myself, a meeting point for the art of singing, a symbol of my profession, a representative of impersonal forces in the widest possible sense and also of myself as a human being.[80]

Baker's personal attachment to the role of Orfeo possibly inspired the deep pathos that she brought to the character. Ferrier's response to *Orfeo* after her 1947 Glyndebourne performance 35 years before Baker's performance was no different. The same theme of love found and lost struck a chord with Ferrier when she replied 'Yes, the part suits me. Searching through hell for love is something I do all the time'.[81] That same determination of spirit can also be seen when she went to great lengths for the rehearsals and performances of *Orfeo* at Covent Garden in 1953 despite being at the last stages of cancer. In the second act of the second performance, Ferrier fractured a femur but braved her way through the rest of the performance and relied on pain-killing injections for the curtain call. The performance became her last and she passed away eight months after that. It might be mere coincidence, but for these two contraltos, *Orfeo* represents not just another operatic role, but a role that speaks to women who were at the twilight stages of their careers. Orfeo is a role that centres on themes of life, love and loss.

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[77] Bashant, "Singing in Greek Drag; Gluck, Berlioz, George Eliot," 221.
[78] Charles Mackerras, "Which Orfeo," (1972); cited in Bashant, "Singing in Greek Drag; Gluck, Berlioz, George Eliot," 221.
[79] Mackerras, "Which Orfeo," 394; cited in Bashant, "Singing in Greek Drag; Gluck, Berlioz, George Eliot," 221.
[80] Janet Baker, *Full Circle: An Autobiographical Journal* (Great Britain: Book Club Associates, 1982), 223.
[81] Bashant, "Singing in Greek Drag; Gluck, Berlioz, George Eliot," 216.

2.7 The Contralto as National Voice

In Britain, Berlioz's version of Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* took on an entirely different significance. Ever since its inception in 1859, the adapted opera was, according to Tom Hammond, cast as a 'sanctimonious opera-oratorio' instead of in 'the spirit of passionate and noble opera-tragedy' to which it was entitled.[82] This was mainly due to the employment of contralto singers for the title role, especially in Britain. The deep contralto voice invoked spiritual and religious connotations that were especially strongly associated with female roles in sacred choral works such as oratorios and cantatas. Britain's strong oratorio tradition, which had its roots in Handel's time during the eighteenth century, formed the female contralto's main concert repertory. Thus Hammond could claim that Gluck's *Orfeo* in Britain 'has for far too long been the province of the deep, maternal contralto of a particularly English and quite untheatrical quality', and that this was enough to discredit the opera, causing it to 'lose practically all dramatic verisimilitude in the theatre.'[83]

Despite Hammond's view, Ferrier's typically un-operatic voice was frequently hailed by others as ideal for *Orfeo*. Her 1947 performance of Orpheus in Glyndebourne, was acclaimed less for her vocal technique, and more by her ability to elicit otherworldly attributes:

> Miss Ferrier's noble tone with its strange dark qualities makes her an ideal Orpheus, spiritual and, as it were, semi-divine. Her vocal technique is not always tidy; but in these days it is as good as one can hope to hear from any but a handful of exceptional singers.[84]

Even five years after her death, *The Listener*'s Dyneley Hussey upheld Ferrier's performance as ideal:

> The sexless character of Orpheus, which, in default of the original type of singer, can still be realized by the right type of contralto voice – of which Kathleen Ferrier's was a notable example – is destroyed when sung by a tenor who is no longer what a German critic has called a 'stylized man'.[85]

[82] Tom Hammond, "Orphée et Euridice: Gluck's Final Solution," in *C.W. von Gluck: Orfeo*, ed. Patricia Howard, *Cambridge Opera Handbooks* (Cambridge University Press, 1981), 109.
[83] Hammond, "Orphée et Euridice: Gluck's Final Solution," 108.
[84] Dyneley Hussey, "Critic on the Hearth," *The Listener*, 3 July 1947.
[85] Dyneley Hussey, "Critic on the Hearth," *The Listener*, 2 October 1958.

Hussey cast Orpheus as a 'sexless' character in regard to the original castrato, which was to him, best embodied by Ferrier's contralto voice. The notion of 'stylization' might even be read as undramatic and unrealistic, to the extent where drama is being seen to reflect modernist and abstract portrayals of art. Due to the advantage of her womanhood, Ferrier's Orfeo – her make-up and onstage attire – suspends reality by assuming a different gender. To Hussey, the identical gender of a tenor with the role on stage removed this opera from such a realm of abstraction, a trend that was in accordance to operatic conventions then of realistic *verismo* operas.

It seems that in Britain, there was a tendency to relate to the contralto as an oratorio rather than an operatic voice. All these reports of Ferrier, which included her reputation for being a non-operatic singer, apprehension about her singing Carmen, comparisons of her contralto voice with Butt and suitability of her portraying Orfeo were ultimately pointing to the contralto voice as one that was strongly attached to the oratorio tradition. In a way, Ferrier's voice is seen as a continuation of the seemingly British oratorio tradition, paved by other English predecessors who were besides Butt, Louise Kirkby-Lunn, Mary Jarred, Astra Desmond and Gladys Ripley.

The contralto in Britain came to represent the antithesis of operatic singers and their vocal styles, which were usually charged with decadent indulgence and excess of emotion and expression. The *Liverpool Evening Express*'s review on Ferrier: 'just plain, honest singing without any frills', expressed a need for Ferrier as Britain's then most celebrated contralto to fit into the mould of the oratorio rather than operatic voice.[86] In fact, British music writers in the eighteenth century were already emphasising notions of simplicity, naturalness, purity and accurate pronunciation as performance and vocal ideals of British female singers. Such was the case of Elizabeth Linley; Suzanne Aspden has shown how music writers who attributed purity, sweetness, clear pronunciation and simplicity to her voice as aspects of an idealised English vocal style.[87] This is similar to how mid-twentieth century British critics of Ferrier often upheld her clear enunciation, good interpretation and communication as vocal ideals in her performances. It seemed that Ferrier's voice solidified not only ideals of an English musical taste, but represented the actual sound of an English voice.

[86] Leonard, *Kathleen: The Life of Kathleen Ferrier 1912-1953*, 46.
[87] Suzanne Aspden, "'Sancta Cæcilia Rediviva'. Elizabeth Linley: Repertoire, Reputation and the English Voice," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 27, no. 3 (2015): 263-87, 277-80.

The idealisation of Ferrier's vocal qualities especially her diction highlighted the deep-rooted issues of class and region that were associated with British nationhood and national identity. As a working-class member of Lancashire roots and background, she represented an alternative version of English identity, one that was different from the normative upper-higher class and Southern versions of Englishness that British institutions such as the BBC capitalised on. Ferrier took elocution lessons and adapted Received Pronunciation (RP)[88] in her professional speaking and singing voice in order to fit into the social status that was afforded to her through her career. Ferrier was fully aware of the social issues of class and region that contradicted with her national fame and by adopting RP, sought to eradicate her local roots in presentation of a national version of English identity that was coherent with the status concurred with highbrow culture and art music. In a way, Ferrier had to build her public and music persona around a cultivated style of speech and vocal delivery that was deemed concurrent with her art music career.

Contemporary with and similar to Ferrier's Lancashire and working-class roots was singer Gracie Fields, whose successful music hall career during the 1930s highly capitalised on her Northern-accented soprano voice. Fields's comedic performances were well aimed at an audience wearied by the afflictions of war and she became effectively a national symbol during the pre- to post-war years.[89] Her comic patter songs, which centred on Northern references of a Rochdale ingénue, complemented the emotional sincerity and sentiment of burlesque ballads belted out in an untrained but wide-ranged voice usually with her audiences.[90] Despite possessing a shrill operatic voice, Fields rejected the conventional singing style and presentation of one, choosing instead to heighten the sense of camaraderie among her audiences through conversational jokey asides, mimicry and instant changes of tone. She was what Simon Frith called the 'voice of the respectable working-class hanging on to their tatters of lace-curtained pride despite everything'.[91] While Fields's star persona was established on her down-to-earth local qualities, Ferrier's transfer into the upper echelons of 1940s to 50s British society demonstrate her as a model

[88] Jack, "Klever Kaff," 94.
[89] Despite Fields as a well-loved and widely embraced performer in Britain, she was also problematic as a national icon as she was ostracized after her second marriage to Italian film director Monty Banks. They got married in 1940 in Santa Monica after leaving Britain for Canada and the States at the onset of war. This created much public hostility against Fields especially against the jingoistic background of the inter-war years, not only because of her marriage to the 'enemy', but also she was viewed as leaving Britain for the safety of her husband rather than in following Churchill's request of putting on performances in the States for fund-raising and propaganda purposes. See *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Dame Gracie Fields," by John Snelson, accessed October 20, 2015, 2016, www.oxfordmusiconline.com.
[90] For a brief description of Gracie Fields's music hall career and the way she defied conventions of stardom in 1930s Britain, see Featherstone, "The Mill Girl and the Cheeky Chappie: British Popular Comedy and Mass Culture in the Thirties," 7-10.
[91] Simon Frith, *Music for Pleasure: Essays in the Sociology of Pop* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), 69.

of postwar social mobility. The careers of these two singers, despite their similar Northern background represented different versions of Englishness and national identity. There remained an entrenched social divide in the twentieth-century British music scene. Fields's music, despite its popularity remained as light entertainment that would allow for the promotion of alternative versions of national identity. Ferrier's voice – in this case, both her speaking and singing voice – represented the strategies of exclusions and inclusions that British institutions such as the BBC and the press took in construction of a national culture that is emblematic of the reconstructive efforts of postwar Britain.

Music critics and writers in mid-twentieth century Britain were also keen to separate Ferrier from the mechanisms and technical theatricalities usually employed in opera. It seemed that even in a concert, the British audience clung on to drama and poetry: established entities of national pride and glory in Britain. In this case, national identity was portrayed through valorisation of the English language where proper elocution of the text and distinct pronunciation were prized qualities.[92] This was to the extent that Ferrier was criticized during early years of her career for her obscure diction. *Manchester Guardian* critic Granville Hill commented unsatisfyingly that:

> Miss Ferrier must always be careful to get her words clear. We have written that her singing can reveal fine tone shading but this does not mean that such a result is invariably achieved. During two or three songs yesterday, the words lost savour and character and then a sense of monotony was noticed in the actual tonal effect. The haziness in diction was not frequent yesterday, but Miss Ferrier was too good an artist to let it go uncorrected.[93]

The review's severe tone reflected on a singer's pronunciation of words as crucial aspects in a music performance.

It is uncertain if the music review above was an anomaly or if Ferrier's elocution classes did improve her diction. However, it is clear that Ferrier's effective interpretation, diction and stylized dramatic presentation were to later music critics, important aspects that earned her an eminent position in the mid-twentieth century British musical scene. Critics were keen to praise her technical execution and dramatic interpretation in her performances. The *Hull Daily Mail* critic crowned Ferrier as:

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[92] This was already present in the eighteenth century where Ruth Smith highlights how the setting of English words to English music in the oratorio was seen as the perfect solution to the cultural and artistic rivalry between Italy and England. See Smith, *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought*, 70-80.
[93] Granville Hill, *Manchester Guardian*, 21 October 1942; cited in Leonard, *Kathleen: The Life of Kathleen Ferrier 1912-1953*, 48.

> among the first five singers in the world and her magnificent voice, which is of even quality throughout its wide range, her splendid diction, histrionic powers and ability to create atmosphere are exceeded only by her interpretative artistry.[94]

At a choral society's concert of *Messiah*, the *Western Daily Press*'s review declared that Ferrier 'gave great pleasure with her beautiful voice and interpretative powers'.[95] Another critic remarked her performance of *lieder* that:

> Miss Ferrier's ease of production, the obvious pleasure she herself enjoys in dramatic interpretation, and her purity of tone with such perfect phrasing and control, matched the studied and sympathetic background provided by the master musician.[96]

These reviews framed Ferrier's voice in relation to vocal ideals that were less associated with opera but more closely related to the oratorio. The oratorio has, since the eighteenth century, been upheld as a genre that rivalled the proliferation and consumption of Italian opera in the British music scene. Seen as a distinctively English product and as a venue for suitable expressions of national identity, the oratorio in this case represents not just an English art form, but became basis for the cultivation of a national singing voice.[97] Ferrier's performances and contralto voice were seen as ideal in oratorio, because to critics she identified with expressions of national musical identity that were non-operatic: not only through vocal qualities of purity, simplicity and articulation of the English language, but also through the lineage of British oratorio contraltos that preceded her.

2.8 Conclusion

Reviews of both Deller and Ferrier demonstrated how their voice destabilised the gender and sexual ideals that were regularly used to police voice types onstage. In participation with the cultural system of song, this chapter shows how both the countertenor and the contralto voices were culturally appropriated according to their times and how the allocation of gender shifted fluidly through varying roles onstage. The dislocation of voices and bodies exists in both the contralto and the countertenor voices and created a sense of mismatch with Deller's high voice contradicting his male body while Ferrier's

[94] "Kathleen Ferrier: Hull Song Recital," *Hull Daily Press*, 17 November 1949.
[95] "Choral Society's Concert: Handel's "Messiah" at Central Hall," *Western Daily Press*, 13 November 1945.
[96] "Two Talented Artists," *Western Morning News*, 30 September 1949.
[97] Smith, *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought*, 208.

low voice and trouser role as Orfeo complicated the assignment of gender with her female body. It seemed that both voices were unable to perform their sex through the traditional trope of their vocal register. This was compensated differently: while Deller viewed his voice as detached from his body, Ferrier's contralto voice portrayed a kind of sexual blankness through her performances of oratorio and trousered roles. On the other hand, the employment of Received Pronunciation in Ferrier's speaking and singing voice represented a kind of postwar social aspiration cultivated expressly for the national adoption of a distinctive culture promoted as English. Despite the gendered discrepancies of Ferrier's and Deller's voices, they both redresses the nation with a new vocal identity, one that was anglicised to fit the national outlook of mid-twentieth century Britain.

Chapter 3: Voicing Sexuality: Deller and Pears

Issues pertinent to sexuality that threatened the moral and cultural fabric of twentieth-century Britain were often framed in discourses of national and musical identity. The entrenchment of hegemonic domestic ideals in twentieth-century Britain promoted parallels between moral culture and national identity. Given how moral codes and laws established sexuality as innate and stable within the spatial confines of heterosexual marriages, stabilization of society is hence seen as dependent on strict observance of male and female sexual boundaries within domesticated settings. The choice of Alfred Deller and Peter Pears as important voices in Britten's opera implicated the idealisation of heterosexual relationships and marriages, which were seen as underpinning domestic, societal and national stability. My discussion in this chapter demonstrates how in creation of a new 'English' opera, Britten engaged non-normative voices for the establishment of a new national vocality. This new vocality readdresses the ideologies that framed civic capacity and sexual normality found in rehearsals of cultural and national identity in mid-twentieth century Britain. In this chapter, I show how Deller's and Pears's voices helped in the innovation of a new vocal identity which instigated Britten's revival of English opera.

3.1 Male Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Britain

In the early twentieth century, rhetoric of the German-British polarity due to the ongoing War was pervasive. Nationalist and military rhetoric offered a chance to pose direct hostility at the gradual surfacing of homosexual culture especially in cities such as London, which was identified by some as a threat to moral and social stability. At the intersections of morality, nationality and sexuality, homosexual culture was perceived to break down the sexual and moral boundaries of men and women on which the nation's stability supposedly depended on. In 1925, social critic Harold Begbie launched a series of attacks against queer culture in the journal *John Bull*. In one article, Begbie employed military rhetoric that substantiated claims of queer culture as a form of perversion and foreign invasion where its threats needed to be resisted for the preservation of Britain's moral standards: 'We conquered the Germans and now in London there is an outbreak of this deadly perversion … which will surely rot us into ruin unless we recover our sanity and fight it to

the death.'[1] Begbie's bellicose treatment of homosexual culture as a moral epidemic represented attitudes of disillusionment and disbelief that promoted exclusion of homosexuals residing in their own country.

Such treatment towards homosexuals portrayed as antipathy against the *effeminatus* resonated well among my chosen male singers. The *effeminatus* here signified not association with femininity or femaleness but 'civic incapacity', and refers to a population that were unable to perform martial duties to the polis, in other words: boys, girls, slaves, eunuchs, and hermaphrodites.[2] In other words, the *effeminatus* is negatively associated with effeminacy, degeneracy, impotency and emasculation. There is a strong tendency to identify the *effeminatus* in the form of the now defunct castrati, which will be discussed later in the chapter. The biologically altered castrati's high voice is now seemingly at odds with mid twentieth-century British national ideals and perceptions of masculinity and sexuality. Deller's and Pears's national voices hence were a way to map out disjuncture between high voices and male bodies, leading to negotiation of issues in masculinity, sexuality and nationhood.

T.S. Gilman's article about satirists' and polemicists' attack on castrati in eighteenth-century London demonstrated that as much as they were highly prized operatic stars, they were also frequently parodied.[3] Ambiguity towards castrati in eighteenth-century London highlights the sexual and political tension that underlined the British's insecurity towards these singers. Similarly, charges of effeminacy that characterised eighteenth-century satirists' attacks against the castrati were also directed at Alfred Deller in the twentieth century. Gilman claims that the castrati, seen as perfect representation of the *effeminatus,* posed a threat to the 'stability of the equation among manliness, heteronormative sexuality and civic virtue that the British citizen aspired to for identity/orientation in his socio-political milieu'.[4] Later in the nineteenth century, James Davies talks about the antipathy that the 'last great operatic castrato' Giovanni Battista Velluti faced in London, where his reception was 'dogged by this awareness of the fundamental lack at his core'.[5]

[1] " A Modern Gomorrah," *John Bull*, 13 June 1925, 18, cited in Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 224.
[2] Todd S. Gilman, "The Italian (Castrato) in London," in *The Work of Opera: Genre, Nationhood and Sexual Difference*, ed. Richard Dellamora and Daniel Fischlin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 59.
[3] Gilman, "The Italian (Castrato) in London," 49-70.
[4] Gilman, "The Italian (Castrato) in London," 60.
[5] Davies, "'Veluti in Speculum': The Twilight of the Castrato," 271.

General anxiety towards the castrati as a foreign imported 'product' framed underlying political, national and sexual tensions that will be helpful in our discussion of the countertenor. Critiques of the gender and sexual abnormality of the castrati were frequently couched in nationalist terms. For example, an 1825 *New Times* writer criticised Velluti for threatening 'the manliness of our [British] national character'.[6] It became obvious as taste and cultivation for castrati diminished, that antipathy against it was twofold. Firstly, it was seen as emasculating normative manhood due to the elicitation of sexual obsession in both men and women. However the main reason underpinning the castrato's castigation is due to the threat of 'effeminacy' that it posed and its association with incompetency, degeneracy, unnaturalness and impotency. Denigration for castrati provoked strong reactions that implied the castrato singer as unnatural, deviant and foreign. These connotations prompted idealisation and nationalisation of the countertenor as one that is natural, normal and English in order to counter the castrato.

The deep-seated negativity associated with castrati in the eighteenth century affected twentieth-century reception of countertenors as well. Perceptions of the countertenor in the twentieth century were tainted by the same anxiety noted from the castrato's reception during early years of the nineteenth century. Roger Fiske's assessment of the countertenor in 1973 demonstrated the prejudices and attitudes that Deller was up against in the mid-twentieth century.

> But the establishment of the castrati deprived perfectly normal men of their pleasure in singing counter-tenor, for they found themselves viewed with the same amusement and patronizing contempt as the castrati, but without the compensation of an equally heroic and profitable voice. In our own time, the renaissance of the counter-tenor soloist is still bedevilled by the unease such singing occasions in some circles, an unease born of the triumphs of Nicolini. It would scarcely have been understood before 1700.[7]

Fiske associated the unease directed at the countertenor with entrenchment of negative attitudes against castrati. In a way the castrato's difficult historical reception was problematic to 'normal' men singing in high voices. This exemplified how British music historiography even until the twentieth century portrayed castrati as derogatory in opposition to the countertenor. Such rhetoric castigated the castrato's abnormality as a

[6] *The New Times*, 1 July 1825; cited in Davies, "'Veluti in Speculum': The Twilight of the Castrato," 286.
[7] Roger Fiske, *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 55; cited in Giles, *The History and Technique of the Counter-Tenor*, 80.

means of affirming the countertenor's normality. In a way, by vilifying the castrato, the countertenor redeemed their position as 'perfectly normal' men.

Tippett understood how such anxieties could potentially damaged Deller's reputation among his audiences. In order to offset such attitudes, Tippett introduced Deller as the father of two sons whom he was already training to sing.[8] Tippett claimed that by doing so before Deller's performance 'seemed to do the trick. There were no murmurs when he started to sing, and he proved a great success'.[9] It was evident that Tippett was not just countering the shock expected to befall first-timers' reaction to the countertenor voice. He was setting up Deller's sexual normality and assuring his audience of Deller's masculinity and virility. Deller's voice foregrounded irreconcilable issues of sexuality: in that his high singing voice was seen as compromising his masculinity. But it also underlined the tension that critics and music writers had that by touting Deller's sexual normality, they were also highlighting the social and cultural stability of the nation.

Reviews of Deller as a countertenor hence incorporated strong contrasts of derision and praise. Music critics were keen to praise Deller for his contribution to the early music scene but he was at the same time marked as an oddity. This duality can be seen in a 1950 review of Deller when he was still widely performing as a countertenor. The review entitled 'Man who Sings Like a Boy: How Counter-tenor Overcame the Break' was written probably to bemuse or attract wider readership.[10] Nonetheless, mid-twentieth-century prejudices that coloured perception of the countertenor still stand despite the glowing remarks that the critic gave. A *Times* article a few days after Deller's death reported him as:

> A burly bearded figure whose womanish voice astounded unaccustomed audiences, the singer and his Deller Consort sextet won the enthusiastic bravos of listeners around the world for their live and recorded performances of medieval, Renaissance and baroque music.[11]

Deller's critics were constantly at a loss in addressing or categorising him. Most ended up either historically appropriating his voice type as 'valid' to a distant past or insinuated his sexuality while suggesting the contributions that he made. According to Sherry, Deller's voice type triggered a type of sexual *frisson* and possessed a jarring quality: an 'androgynous, layered, metallic tone' that was evidenced by 'the friction

[8] Hardwick and Hardwick, *Alfred Deller*, 97.
[9] Hardwick and Hardwick, *Alfred Deller*, 97.
[10] A.R.W., "Man who Sings like a Boy: How Counter-tenor Overcame the Break," *MDS* 1950.
[11] "Died. Alfred Deller, 67," *Time*, 30 July 1979.

between its different registers'.[12] The dissonance of Deller's vocal quality was further enhanced by the strong sense of disembodiment insisted by his physique. The dissimilarities between the visual and aural aspects of the countertenor contributed perceptions of Deller as a kind of sexual hybrid. Due to experience of such negative reactions, Deller sought feasible ways to counter responses and questions of an 'intimate nature' that were frequently addressed to him.[13] According to the Hardwicks, he grew a beard because it appropriately 'enhanced his "period" appearance', but more importantly it was used as a deterrent for questions posed regarding his masculinity.[14] Ironically, his beard was also an ideal set up for his later role as Oberon, which I will discuss below.

Issues of masculinity were pertinent to Deller not only because of his high countertenor voice, but also because of his pacifist views. Given how Deller's voice is touted as national (as discussed in the second chapter), his strong pacifist views proved problematic to the construction of an ideal national English identity. The impending Second World War contributed to a general mood of bellicose jingoism that depended on male citizens as defenders of the nation. Deller's position as conscientious objector did not reduce perceptions of effeminacy directed to him when the nation's morale was built on winning the Second World War. The Hardwicks wrote of an incident where an anonymous letter addressed him as 'Conchie Deller' and called him a coward.[15] However, Deller's biographers were careful to paint him as normal, setting true virility and manhood apart from allegedly debased notions of masculinity such as physicality and toughness.[16] Much as Britten's identity as national composer sits precariously with his homosexuality and pacifism, negative connotations of Deller's countertenor voice and his pacifism posed a potential threat to the nation's artistic and musical identity, a crucial point which I will detail later in the chapter.

Perceptions of Deller's countertenor voice conflicted with his outwardly male features because his high vocal *tessitura* generated derogatory perceptions of his sex. His voice portrayed him as effeminate and was disturbing to listeners because it destabilised the perception of masculinity that heteronormative relationships were based on. Deller's sexuality was constantly at risk of being written off by his voice. Hence, the bodily affirmation of growing a beard and the assertion of fatherhood were aimed at offsetting these threats. By doing so, Deller can be seen as reclaiming compatibility between the sex

[12] Sherry, "Accidental Voices: The Return of the Countertenor," 118.
[13] Hardwick and Hardwick, *Alfred Deller*, 75.
[14] Hardwick and Hardwick, *Alfred Deller*, 120.
[15] Hardwick and Hardwick, *Alfred Deller*, 98.
[16] Hardwick and Hardwick, *Alfred Deller*, 150.

of his voice and body but which were frequently denied to him by his listeners. Despite Deller's bodily exclusion, his vocal inclusion into the mid-twentieth century British music scene can be seen most vividly in his participation as soloist in Britten's new opera.

3.2 Deller as Oberon

On 18 August 1959, Britten wrote to Deller asking him to play Oberon in a new opera that he was writing on the Shakespearean subject of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It was to commemorate the reopening of a newly rebuilt Jubilee Hall in Aldeburgh for the following year. In his letter, Britten explained to Deller that, 'it [the opera] is for a big cast, and each group of people has to be carefully calculated vocally' and claimed that he saw and heard Deller's voice very clearly in the part.[17] Britten ended his letter by raising the possibility of future production plans in London and abroad, which was unquestionably the most lucrative part of the offer. Deller was pleasantly surprised by the news; nevertheless he wrote back to Britten expressing doubts more of his acting than his singing capabilities:

> It has taken me two days to recover from the shock! After all, my only stage experience was with the Church Dramatic Society, six performances of 'Laburnam [sic] Grove', and I was young then, and my mind (pardon the word) much more alert. Do you and Peter think I could do it? If so, I would consider it a privilege to make the attempt.[18]

Pears in turn assured Deller of their choice in an undated reply:

> We do <u>indeed</u> think you can do it, and more, that you will be triumphantly successful in it! You can trust Ben, I think, to write you a lovely vocal part. Your height and presence will be absolutely right (– so will your beard!) and the part will probably be a static one – I mean you won't be required to turn cartwheels or climb trees – and it would be wonderful to have you with us.[19]

At the end of the letter, Pears was, like Britten, hopeful about upcoming productions of performances in London and abroad. Pears convinced Deller of his

[17] Benjamin Britten to Alfred Deller, 18 August 1959, Correspondence BB-Alfred Deller, Shelfmark 046.K, BPF, Aldeburgh, Suffolk. See also Philip Reed and Mervyn Cooke, eds., *Letters from a Life: The Selected Letters of Benjamin Britten 1913-1976*, Six vols., vol. Five: 1958-1965 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), 173-74.
[18] Hardwick and Hardwick, *Alfred Deller*, 144.
[19] Hardwick and Hardwick, *Alfred Deller*, 144. See also Reed and Cooke, *Letters from a Life*, 173, 74.

suitability in playing Oberon not only by acknowledging his voice, but also his appearance. The unmistakable allure behind Pears's reply was clearly that Oberon was conceived for Deller, his voice, his body, even his beard was deemed fitting to Britten and Pears, when it was otherwise ridiculed. For this role, Deller's physical and vocal embodiment of Oberon concurred with Britten's conception of the character. This distinction was unlike previous performances of Deller where there were obvious discrepancies between his countertenor voice and his corporal presence. The strong accord between the vocal and physical compatibility of Deller as Oberon was due to the otherworldliness of Oberon's role as King of Fairies. According to Philip Brett, Britten's employment of the countertenor voice is attributed to the 'tendency of the work to parody convention in a more subtle way.'[20] In Deller's Oberon, Brett associated the role as 'far from the ardent tenor of the romantic ear and as close as one can get nowadays to the *primo uomo* of eighteenth-century *opera seria*, the castrato'.[21]

Brett associated Oberon's countertenor voice with notions of gender liminalities evoked from the eighteenth-century castrati. According to Brett, by participating in the asexual, genderless association of fairies and suggesting both unmanliness and homosexuality, Oberon was constructed as an 'emasculated, misogynistic, boy-desiring' figure of the closet.[22] However, one asks to what extent did Pears match Deller's beard with Oberon's characterization? How would a beard be appropriate to a character that exhibited no clear identification of masculinity? The placement of the beard transgresses conventional displays of the *primo uomo* and parodies Deller's body because of his high singing voice. The unfocused stage direction of John Cranko and Deller's costume of 'a black magician's gown, half mandarin and half Prospero' did little to resolve Deller's self-doubts and insecurities in playing Oberon which resurfaced a day before the opera's premiere.[23]

Deller sang in all four performances of *A Midsummer's Night Dream* at the Jubilee Hall, which premiered on 11 June 1960. He also performed in a pre-Festival production before an invited audience for the BBC's pre-recording a day before the premiere. The pre-Festival production was not as well received and the critics' dissatisfaction with Deller's performance damaged his already shaky confidence. On the day of the premiere, Deller

[20] Brett, *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, 117.
[21] Brett, *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, 117-18.
[22] Philip Brett, "Britten's Dream," in *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, ed. George E. Haggerty (California: University of California Press, 2006), 118.
[23] Desmond Shawe-Taylor, "Britten's 'Dream' Opera," *The Sunday Times*, 12 June 1960; cited in Reed and Cooke, *Letters from a Life*, 232.

wrote a letter to Britten expressing his fears of jeopardizing the opera's reputation because of his participation:

> It now seems pretty clear that my inclusion in the opera does much to prejudice its success with the Critics, and this must not be, it is such a wonderful work that it must go forward, so, delete me when you think fit, and believe me when I say I shall always be grateful for being given such a wonderful opportunity.[24]

Britten's immediate reply was encouraging nonetheless:

> I don't read the critics (except those put in front of me) because I know they always miss the point of everything until time proves them wrong. Please don't be discouraged by them, because I am sure the idea of your doing Oberon was a good one & the realisation by you of my idea is really wonderful. Please do go ahead knowing this, & that everyone I've so far spoken to is enormously impressed by your personality & singing. Serious art has always had a difficult time – for one reason or another.[25]

Despite Britten's reply, Deller's performance as Oberon did invite much scrutiny from most reviewers of the opera. The general observation was that Deller's casting as Oberon was an ingenious idea, yet the impracticalities of it – mainly Deller's undramatic presence and quiet voice, did less to secure the opera's success. Colin Mason expressed his reservations for casting of the countertenor voice type in *The Guardian*:

> Oberon is set for counter-tenor, a good idea that works well in this small hall with Alfred Deller, but might not be effective in a larger house, where the carrying power of this kind of voice would hardly be adequate. The score permits the use of a contralto as an alternative, but Britten is said to be thinking of re-writing the part for tenor.[26]

Britten never rewrote Oberon's part nor was there realisation of the role by a contralto. The rumours were merely indicators of the audience's inability to accept Deller's countertenor voice type as opposed to the operatic tenor voices of Romantic leading men that twentieth-century audiences were used to. Peter Heyworth wrote in *The Observer* that:

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[24] Alfred Deller to Benjamin Britten, 11 June 1960, Correspondence BB-Alfred Deller, Shelfmark 046.K, BPF, Aldeburgh, Suffolk. See also Reed and Cooke, *Letters from a Life*, 228.
[25] See letter no. 981 'To Alfred Deller' in Reed and Cooke, *Letters from a Life*, 228.
[26] Colin Mason, "Benjamin Britten's 'Dream'," *The Guardian*, 11 June 1960.

> The casting of a countertenor as Oberon seems to me more dubious. Alfred Deller sings set pieces, like his magical incantation, with delicate accomplishment. But where he is a participant in the drama the narrow dynamic range of his voice is painfully restricting, while in moments of anger or regal authority it is simply ineffective.[27]

Harold Rosenthal, editor of the music magazine *Opera*, suggested Britten's usage of a countertenor as one of the opera's weaknesses. Nevertheless Rosenthal praised it as 'a good idea in theory to suggest the unearthliness of this character, which did not succeed in practice, owing to the fact that Alfred Deller showed little dramatic ability on the stage, and often produced sounds that came close to being inaudible.'[28]

The critics' claims about Deller's inability to act and his weak stage presence were huge influences in future productions of the opera. It should come as no surprise that when the opera production arrived at the Royal Opera House in 1961, Deller was substituted by countertenor Russell Oberlin, whose timbre resembled a high tenor more than a countertenor. Deller's biographers claimed that Deller was severely depressed by the negative reviews from Aldeburgh and the rejection from Covent Garden. He felt betrayed by the 'Aldeburgh set' especially with the promise given by Britten and Pears of his inclusion in future productions of the opera. Tippett's account in Deller's biography recorded that it was the Royal Opera House and not Britten that chose Oberlin over Deller, but no letter was written to Deller to explain the situation.[29] Britten missed the premiere of *A Midsummer's Night Dream* at Covent Garden due to influenza. Nevertheless, his letter to Deller with the exclamation, 'I missed you most tremendously!' showed that Britten was thinking about Deller during on-going performances of the opera at the Royal Opera House.[30] It is hard to know what to make of Britten's letter: whether he was genuinely upset about Deller's rejection or if he was sorry that he was unable to exert his influence in the decision to match his musical aims. However, Britten managed to ensure that Deller sang as Oberon in the only recording that Britten made of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1966.[31]

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[27] Peter Heyworth, "Music and Musicians: Recapturing the Dream," *The Observer*, 12 June 1960.
[28] Harold Rosenthal, *Opera*, Autumn 1960, 21-24; cited in Reed and Cooke, *Letters from a Life*, 234.
[29] Hardwick and Hardwick, *Alfred Deller*, 147.
[30] Benjamin Britten to Alfred Deller, 13 February 1961, Correspondence BB - Alfred Deller, Shelfmark 046. K, BPF, Aldeburgh, Suffolk.
[31] Britten, Benjamin. Benjamin Britten. *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Op. 64*, Decca 425663 ADD, 1966, Compact Disc.

Deller's venture into opera was unfortunate largely due to the negative responses from his acting abilities and his voice. Despite that, this reaction also displayed wariness associated with discussions of Deller's body, sexuality and his masculinity. His height, well-built physique and beard were clear signs of manhood. Yet, Deller's employment of falsetto was more susceptible to derogatory claims of degeneracy and effeminacy when compared with a natural tenor voice. Deller's countertenor voice in 1960-Britain is in itself an awkward displacement juxtaposed between the supernatural and the realistic, the past and the present. However, Britten's employment of Deller as Oberon was crucial in the construction of a new kind of English opera. While the innovation of this new English opera called for the creation of a sound world that is distinct from Continental operatic styles, it also necessitated the pioneering of a new vocality and vocal identity for the operatic singers. By propelling the countertenor voice onto the operatic stage, Britten shied away from using normative voices that were familiar to operatic audiences and appropriated non-normative voices as the norm. Much as the participation of Deller in Britten's opera helped in creation of new English operatic voices and singing styles, the same could be iterated for Pears, whose collaboration with Britten marked the dawning of a new operatic phase in British music history.

3.3 Voicing Homosexuality: Peter Pears

If apprehension towards Deller's voice revealed covert tensions around male effeminacy in mid-twentieth century Britain, then the case of Peter Pears provides a background for probing deeper into manifestations of sexual anxieties in a society where gender roles were increasingly shifting and blurred. Wayne Koestenbaum asserts that antagonistic language towards falsetto in the late nineteenth century 'reflects – or foreshadows – the discourse of homosexuality', that emerged later in the twentieth century.[32] Peter Pears was the only tenor in the whole of Britten's vocal oeuvre with whom he consistently collaborated with for at least thirty years. Pears premiered all but one of Britten's operatic tenor roles, and more than fifty solo tenor works. Most of them were written with Pears's voice in mind.[33] Their collaboration proceeded closely beyond artistic ventures, as Pears remained Britten's consistent partner until Britten's death in 1976.

[32] Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: (Homo)sexuality and the Art of Singing*, 218.
[33] Apart from *Peter Grimes*, Pears's vocal presence can be seen in almost all of Britten's operatic works and his solo vocal works. A full list of Pears's operatic roles can be found in the *Grove Music Online* entry of Peter Pears, see *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Pears, Sir Peter," by Alan Blyth, accessed September 9, 2015, 2014, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/.

As the tenor whose partnership with Britten helped shaped the identity of English music, Pears's voice embodied ideals of the English Musical Renaissance in his performance of new English works. The vocal tenor works were thoroughly bound up in the compositional identity of Britten's oeuvre. Britten had an acute sensitivity in writing for the voice. We have already seen how in the cases of Kathleen Ferrier and Alfred Deller, the composer wrote with their specific vocal qualities in mind to bring out distinctive vocal characteristics. The vocal parts conceived for Pears were similarly written with his particular voice in mind and shaped around his vocal range. Tenor Jon Vickers explained that Britten utilized the smooth *passaggio* of Pears's voice and centered dramatic characterization around the pitch E4 in order to exhibit Pears's vocal strength.[34] Pears's voice demands vocal authorship and ownership of Britten's operatic works as most tenor roles were conceived for him and built around his vocal strengths.

The revival of recordings in the post-Second World War music scene was a key factor in the consolidation of Pears's vocal presence in Britten's music. Pears's interpretation of Britten's tenor roles was far-reaching to the extent that succeeding tenors were and are still strongly influenced by his performances. In 2010, British tenor Robert Tear,[35] a regular performer of Britten's works, was still painting a negative picture of Pears's overpowering dominance in Britten's music. Tear insisted how Pears's vocal quality, seen as so essential to performances of Britten's works, not only affected the way tenors approached Britten's music, but also negatively impacted the vocal development of the whole voice type in England. He claimed that:

> You can't sing it any other way. Even today, English tenors are very Pears, very English, very public school, and they take their Britten with them to Schubert and Schumann. They limit themselves mentally and vocally.[36]

Tear's description of being vocally English here is negatively associated with stereotypes of the English public school – insular, conservative and closed up – an image that was embodied in Pears and his voice. Tear insisted that Pears's vocal mannerisms and styles inhabited the roles that Britten composed for him to the extent that it was impossible to hear the works performed outside of Pears's interpretation. Despite that, it cannot be

[34] Jon Vickers, 'Jon Vickers on *Peter Grimes*', *Opera*, August 1984, 835-43, cited in Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 7.
[35] Tear was a huge promoter of Britten's vocal works and Britten even wrote roles for him in the operas *The Burning Fiery Furnace* and *The Prodigal Son*. Tear addressed Pears as the 'green-eyed monster' and claimed that Pears felt threatened by him, which strained his relationship with Pears. See Andrew Clark, "Peter Pears at Aldeburgh," accessed 12 May 2014, http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/c335a62c-69e4-11df-a978-00144feab49a.html.
[36] Clark, "Peter Pears at Aldeburgh".

denied that Pears's voice and his vocality shaped and contributed largely to the interpretation and performances of Britten especially in the mid- to late-twentieth century.

In recognizing Pears's significant contribution to Britten/Britain, we cannot ignore the open secret of Pears and Britten's homosexual relationship. The establishment of queer musicology in Britten studies has been marked by the amount of research poured into understanding how his compositions can be indicative of homosexual tensions indiscernible elsewhere. Wayne Koestenbaum's work identified 'the singer and the homosexual' as embodying 'closed-off cabinet of urges' that internalizes the prohibitions that they both faced.[37] The idea of voice as a legitimate tool for expressing repressed sexual desires by vocalizing them through singing, associates voice with homosexuality. Koestenbaum emphasizes this by using voice as an apparatus for his discussion of 'coming out' as homosexuals coming out of the closet about their sexual orientation. He likened 'coming out' as a 'process of vocalization' in the voice's association of 'openness, self-knowledge, [and] clarity.'[38] Given how the voice represents an important nexus in the intersections of vocality, identity, [homo]sexuality, authority, and nationhood, Pears's voice foregrounds these themes especially well.

Much scholarship on Britten still centres on using his homosexuality as a means of determining hidden tension woven into the music. Analyses of his compositional output, especially his operas, are scrutinized for marks of deviance signalling the coded references of homosexuality as Britten's 'closeted' voice. This view not only affirms the essentialist approach offered in definition and distinction of a gay identity, but it also reinscribes Britten's homosexual identity as different from the norm. In contrast, I approach the topic of homosexuality not through composer-centric models focusing on the codification of the 'closeted voice' in Britten's composition, but through understanding of an actual voice – Pears's – and how it contributed to the 'idealized' voice of Britten's works. I argue that analysing the reception history of Pears's voice is important not only in the understanding of Britten's vocal works, but also in the shaping and establishment of twentieth-century English opera through the collaborative efforts of Pears and Britten.

Due to his own marginalization as a homosexual, some scholars have portrayed Britten as sympathetic towards political and social oppression, which was voiced most evidently through his operatic subjects Lucretia, Peter Grimes and Albert Herring. However, Britten's position as a composer of status in Britain, also offers us a chance to

[37] Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire*, 156.
[38] Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire*, 158.

navigate the problematic disjuncture between his social oppression and political inclusion: the unjustly oppressed homosexual and the privileged national composer. Heather Wiebe's call to acknowledge Britten not as a marginalized figure, but as the 'primary musical voice' in mid-twentieth century Britain reassesses the need for Britten to be included rather than sidelined in discussions of the cultural Establishment.[39] Yet, one is left with a gaping silence in scholarship when it comes to identification of Pears's vocal identity and contribution to Britten's vocal works. My research seeks to not only extend the peripheries of this discourse, but also to incorporate Pears's and his voice as an important subject in studies of Britten. Recognition of Pears's voice and vocality as part of the creation of Britten's vocal works is in a way validating Pears as Britten's partner and their homosexual relationship.

The usurping of powers by Britten proposes an interesting trajectory unusual in displays of power attribution. In the case of gender studies, the usurping of powers by women was perceived significant where role and power was conventionally assigned to men. My previous research on Ferrier analyses how themes of subjugation figured in both her compositional and singing voice in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*.[40] The complications of Ferrier's compositional voice redeemed by her singing voice portray how Ferrier's envoicing occurs in a single piece within the context of female subjugation. In this case, compositional authority, which was usually vested in the male composer, was understood in terms of the pairing of male/female mapped onto composer/performer. For Britten and Pears, the pairing of male/male with composer/performer figures differently on issues of authority and subjugation, where the pairing of male/male viewed as potentially equal in social terms posed sexual ramifications in a homosexual relationship.

Current scholarly writing on Pears is predominantly biographical, with a handful of doctoral dissertations concentrating only on Pears's collaboration with Britten.[41] It would not be an exaggeration to claim that the overshadowing of Pears by Britten occurs to the extent that Britten usurps Pears's authority and presence, and that Pears's identity ceases to exist under Britten. Understanding that we cannot view Pears independently from Britten, my intervention in this thesis aims to affirm the identity of Pears not only as Britten's

[39] Wiebe, *Britten's Unquiet Pasts*, 8.
[40] See Xin Ying, "Kathleen Ferrier's Voice and Benjamin Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*."
[41] See Blaine Gregory Hendsbee, "The Britten-Purcell Realisations: Connecting the Past to the Present through the Voice of Peter Pears" (Doctor of Musical Arts, University of British Columbia, 2007); Robert Strauss, "The Five Cycles for Voice and Piano by Benjamin Britten Written Specifically for Peter Pears: The Effect of their Relationship" (Doctor of Musical Arts, West Virginia University 2006); and Christopher Swanson, "The Voice of the New Renaissance: The Premiere Performances of Peter Pears" (Doctor of Musical Arts, Florida State University, Tallahassee, 2004), where he talks about Pears independently as a singer.

partner and 'mouthpiece', but also to recognize Pears's far-reaching involvement in Britten's work. By exploring Pears's voice, I underline the importance and the mutually existing terms of how Pears's voice shaped Britten's tenor roles and how in reverse, Britten shaped Pears's career. This underlines the importance of Pears's voice as an instrument for the negotiation of authority. The inclusion of Pears suggests that the discourse of compositional authority over performative authority is much more problematic and political than it might at first appear.

3.4 The Authority of Pears

The musical partnership of Britten and Pears is helpful in understanding the manifestations of authority and subjugation in their relationship. Pears's voice fitted into this niche as an apparatus through which the implication and explication of authority can be properly explored. This evokes Carolyn Abbate's assertion that the phenomenological attributes of musical performance ultimately 'disperse' the composer's authority and 'voice', thus encouraging the musical performance as a polyphony of performers' voices instead of a single authorial voice of the composer.[42] Pears's voice negotiates aspects of both subjugation and authority in Britten's tenor roles. It would be easy to view Pears's voice as subjected to Britten, where the voice is seen as instrument for the composer's vocal works. Nevertheless, as much as Britten wielded compositional control over what Pears sang, Pears's voice and vocality dictated how Britten's works would sound. Britten's works were shaped by Pears's vocal characteristics and strengths.

The conception of Pears as an ideal interpreter of Britten's vocal tenor works comes as no surprise. Britten exercised his authority in upholding what best represented his own ideals as composer and Pears's voice was seen as synonymous with his wishes. It would be difficult to separate Britten's personal from professional judgment here, given how strongly their lives were intertwined. Pears acknowledged this co-dependent relationship when he told Alan Blyth that, 'He [Britten] made my career, by all the wonderful works he wrote for me. On the other hand, he said he would not have achieved anything without me.'[43] This interdependency was further solidified in Britten's reluctance and refusal to hear any interpretation of Pears's roles besides that of Pears. The recording

[42] Abbate, "Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women," 234-36.
[43] Alan Blyth, *Remembering Britten* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1981), 23; cited in Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 9.

of Britten's *Les Illuminations*, Op. 18 represents a good example. Britten preferred Pears's singing to that of dedicatee Sophie Wyss despite her premiere of the work, and called her performance 'coy and whimsey' in contrast to Pears's, where he described his voice as 'so much stronger and richer. He does …the Illuminations to make you cry now'. [44] Premier English Opera Group manager Keith Grant recalled how Britten 'reconciled to different interpretations, except perhaps in the case of Pears's roles, where he was bound always to hear his friend's voice, technique and interpretative powers, simply because the parts had been written with Pears's attitudes in mind'.[45] In a way, Pears's authority was an extension of Britten's promotion of his own authority.

In the case of many works written for Pears, Britten's compositions were not solely his own; it was a labour of both artistic personas, of two minds working towards a shared vision. This is most clearly displayed in the opera *Peter Grimes*, where Britten wrote for Pears's voice and Pears promoted Britten's work through his voice, further solidifying the mutual consolidation of their artistic vision. The artistic presence of Pears in *Peter Grimes* was there from the start, even before the opera's conception. During their California stay in 1941, Pears and Britten chanced upon E.M. Forster's *Listener* article and were both homesick for England.[46] Philip Brett attributed Forster's article as a main contribution in Britten's decision to return to England, associating 'the turning point in Britten's decision not only about nationality but also locality'.[47] George Crabbe's *The Borough* inspired and propelled the genesis of *Peter Grimes*; likewise, remaining handwritten drafts by Pears at the Britten-Pears Archive reveal his involvement in scripting the opera's libretto and the setting of scenes while they were in the States (1941) and on board the *Axel Johnson* in March 1942.[48] Philip Brett wrote extensively on Pears's involvement in *Peter Grimes* and how the first drafts of the opera's libretto were an insight into the opera's conceptual processes.[49] Brett pointed to excised versions of Pears's libretto that featured 'hints of loose-living and sadism' and even those of homoeroticism between Grimes and his boy

[44] Headington, *Peter Pears: A Biography*, 122.
[45] Blyth, *Remembering Britten*, 141; cited in Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 9.
[46] The *Listener* article featured a reprint of a BBC radio talk on Suffolk poet George Crabbe by English novelist E.M. Forster and introduced both Britten and Pears to Crabbe's poems. Crabbe's *The Borough* is set on the Suffolk coastal town of Aldeburgh where Britten was from, which later became basis for an unusual title role and opera. See Brett, *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, 11-12, 36.
[47] Brett, *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, 12.
[48] Peter Pears, "Peter Grimes scenario in PP's hand, including fragments of draft libretto," in *BBM/Peter-grimes/1/4* (Aldeburgh: GB-ALb).
[49] See earlier versions of Brett's article in Philip Brett, "'Fiery Visions'(and Revisions): '*Peter Grimes*' in Progress," in *Benjamin Britten: Peter Grimes*, ed. Philip Brett, *Cambridge Opera Handbooks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 47-87; Philip Brett, "*Peter Grimes*: the Growth of the Libretto," in *The Making of Peter Grimes: Essays and Studies*, ed. Paul Banks, *Aldeburgh Studies in Music* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1996), 53-78; and the latest version in Brett, *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, 34-51.

apprentice.[50] As revision of the libretto took place, the identification of Grimes in Pears's writing shifted gradually from that of the oppressor to the oppressed, framing Grimes as victim of the crowd and justifying him in accordance to liberal humanistic views.[51] Even though none of Pears's writing remained in the final libretto, Pears's earlier conception of Grimes established the psychological construction and profile of the opera's lead character. This was further solidified when the writer of the libretto was also the singer who premiered the title role of *Peter Grimes* on 7 June 1945 at Sadler's Wells. For at least twenty years, Pears's vocal presence and personality largely dominated the performance of Grimes.[52]

Pears's operatic performances before *Peter Grimes* from 1943 to 1944 were important in understanding how music critics and reviews perceived Pears's voice before the validation of Britten. At the time, Pears was establishing his operatic career at the Sadler's Wells Opera Company after his successful audition on December 1942. It was at the height of the Second World War and performance circumstances were difficult, especially without a permanent theatre in London. Pears sang mostly in Romantic leading tenor roles such as Rodolfo in *La Bohème*, the Duke in *Rigoletto*, Alfredo in *La traviata* and Almaviva in *The Barber of Seville*.[53] Music critics noticed Pears's operatic performances although they were not united in their assessment of him.

The Times credited his performance in *Rigoletto* and noted that he 'has shown some change in the production of his voice and an unfailing mastery of very diverse styles of singing' which was compensated for by the voice's 'los[s of] some of its golden quality in the process of case-hardening it for carrying power and brightness.' Despite that, the reviewer was quick to make amends by complimenting Pears for how 'the change has been accompanied by an interest in his sheer professional competence', where Pears 'was able to show that the singer of oratorio and songs can take Italian opera in his stride and present so personable a royal rake as to make the character at long last convincing.'[54] Similarly to Ferrier and Deller, such reviews casted Pears before *Peter Grimes* as predominantly a concert singer, where his 'concert singer voice' was linked to characterisations of English identity. With the lack of vocal strength and beauty, Pears's voice did not match up to Continental ideals of operatic singers that were prevalent during his time. Despite that,

[50] Brett, *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, 42.
[51] Brett, "*Peter Grimes*: the Growth of the Libretto," 56-57.
[52] *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, s.v. "Peter Grimes," by Arnold Whittall, accessed May 13, 2016, 2015, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/.
[53] Headington, *Peter Pears: A Biography*, 124.
[54] "Opera at the New Theatre: Rigoletto," *The Times*, 20 June 1943.

Pears embodiment of Britten's operatic roles indicated not merely how his voice went through change when he transferred from the concert into the operatic realm, but how Britten adapted operatic ideals and rebranded them as 'English' in order to match the characteristics of Pears's voice. In other words, Britten appropriated the distinctiveness of Pears's voice as emblematic of qualities found in English opera.

From the start of Pears's career in 1937 to his retirement in 1980, newspaper reviews demonstrated a wide assessment of his performances – both negatively and positively. Many found fault with his limited voice range, thin vocal quality and the underdevelopment of his upper vocal register. A *Times* reviewer of *The Barber of Seville* complained that Pears's tone was 'consistently "tight" and in consequence lacked variety'.[55] In a performance of Britten and Purcell songs, Dyneley Hussey criticised Pears's voice and singing in an extensive review.

> The songs were sung with a fine understanding by Mr. Pears, whose harsh tone is apt to these harsh sentiments. But I wish he could get his voice out of the back of his throat and cultivate a more beautiful tone. It was an odd comment on the taste of the audience that of the Purcell songs he sang they chose to encore the one that showed up most clearly the defects of his singing; for quick songs – and this applied, too, to the second of Britten's Sonnets – need the voice on the lips and the tip of the tongue. To sing patter in the back of the throat produces a grotesque appearance of vain effort.[56]

However, as the Britten-Pears collaboration consolidated over time, music critics were much less likely to criticize Pears as an indirect result of Britten's accomplishments due to the solidification of the Britten-Pears Cultural Establishment especially in the 1950s. This was evidenced in my amassing of Pears's reviews, where negative reviews did not extend beyond the time frame of the 1950s. Despite that, the 1940s marked one of the most fruitful decades of the Britten-Pears collaboration, where Pears premiered all of Britten's solo tenor works including *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo*, Op. 22 (1942), *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings*, Op. 31 (1943) and the *Holy Sonnets of John Donne*, Op. 35 (1945).

Pears's premieres of Britten's works in the 1940s were particularly praised. Music critics' gradual recognition of Pears's singing was most likely due to the way Britten

[55] "New Theatre: Barber of Seville," *The Times*, 22 July 1943.
[56] Dyneley Hussey, "Music: Purcell and Britten," *The Spectator*, 30 November 1945.

cleverly promoted Pears's vocal capabilities in the way he wrote for him. Another reason for the positive shift in Pears's reviews suggested that Britten's insistence on Pears in his vocal works kept him in the limelight long enough until critics began to accept the voice as it was. In a way, Britten's authority on the British music scene was strong enough to establish and 'normalise' Pears's voice despite the negative critiques. After a performance of Britten's *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo*, a *Times* reviewer commended Pears, whose 'pleasing voice [had] grown more robust and his skills consolidated by experience [had] easily persuaded us. For though they are big songs they make a singularly direct appeal.'[57] In a performance of the same song cycle, Edward Sackville West applauded Pears as 'something of a portent' as according to him, 'it has been long since we have an English tenor with a voice at once so strong so pure so sweet.'[58] Another performance of *Les Illuminations* earned critic Ralph Hill's praise 'for the beautiful and expressive singing of Peter Pears … which deservedly received prolonged applause.'[59] Such descriptions of Pears's voice couched him as the perfect interpreter of Britten's solo tenor works: beyond reproach and even to an extent 'safeguarded', because of his professional and private relationship with Britten.

Despite that, critics were like those of Deller, uneven in their critique of Pears especially in his performances of music not by Britten. Most praiseworthy comments regularly focused on his musical intelligence, although it was awarded mainly in compensation of some other musical fault, for example his lack of vocal power. This resulted in a *Times* critic's comment after a performance of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*, that Pears brought 'more musical intelligence than vocal power to his task, and there were passages, particularly in the first number, where he could scarcely cope with Mahler's orchestral vociferations'.[60] Mark Blitzstein's critique in *Modern Music* on the same performance were along the same lines, remarking that Pears 'was very good in the lighter passages, but in the stirring parts appeared to be doing a silent movie with tremendous orchestral background.'[61] Pears was also a frequent performer in the role of Evangelist for Bach's Passions. A *Times* critic commented that Pears's performance of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* 'equally commanded Bach's linear style. Yet the performance on the whole was a little lifeless'.[62] The only other remaining review of Pears as Bach's Evangelist in 1954 reported only of his pitch 'which was remarkably well maintained for

[57] "Boosey and Hawkes Concerts," *The Times*, 25 September 1942.
[58] Edward Sackville West, *The New Statesman and Nation*, 3 December 1942.
[59] Ralph Hill, "Fine Singing at Wigmore Hall," 31 January 1943.
[60] William Glock, "Music," *The Observer*, 20 December 1942.
[61] Mark Blitzstein, "London: Fourth Winter of the Blackout," *Modern Music* 20(January-February 1943).
[62] "The Bach Choir: Passion Music," *The Times*, 12 April 1943.

well over half an hour', and Pears 'sang the long stretches of the Evangelist's narrative without once wavering in his intonation'.[63] Similarly, another review on Britten and Pears's performance of Britten's *Holy Sonnets of John Donne* commended that 'Mr. Pears's handling of its verbal and intellectual demands is superb, but his voice has not quite sufficient variety of vocal colour with which to meet so arduous a challenge'.[64] These critics assessed that Pears, despite showing clear musical understanding as a singer, was often unconvincing in his interpretations and performances. Such descriptions of Pears's voice are key here in our understanding of how Britten wrote for such a unique voice: one that was evidently disputable in relation to operatic standards of vocal quality, yet undeniably significant in its contribution to the mid-twentieth century British musical scene.

3.5 Pears as the Closeted Voice

The discussion of Pears's voice mapped a cultural background for understanding mid-twentieth century operations of the closeted voice – the voice of a 'love that dared not speak its name'.[65] Eve Sedgwick's *The Epistemology of the Closet* signals the closet as a 'defining structure for gay oppression in this century'.[66] Sedgwick navigated the binary structures embedded within the definition and contestation of homo/heterosexual meanings, 'condensed in definitions of "the closet" and "coming out"' that became the crux of all other epistemologically charged pairings.[67] Gary C. Thomas underlines the intensity and the transgressions that occur in the space of the closet when he addresses it as a 'space where silences speak, obfuscations reveal, absences signify and negations posit'.[68] For Pears, the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1967 and gay rights rallies in the 1970s did little to counter and change institutionalized homophobia in the United Kingdom. Even after Britten's death in 1976, Pears still found it difficult to express his personal

[63] Eric Blom, "Aldeburgh," *The Observer*, 20 June 1954.
[64] "Concert at Wigmore Hall," *The Times*, 7 January 1946.
[65] To borrow Lord Alfred Douglas's phrase from 1894, taken from Lord Alfred Douglas, "Two Loves," *The Chameleon* 1 (1894): 28, cited from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2008), 74.
[66] Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 71.
[67] Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 72.
[68] Gary C. Thomas, "'Was George Frideric Handel Gay?': On Closet Questions and Cultural Politics," in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas (New York: Routledge, 1994), 167.

relationship with Britten.[69] Pears's physical voice represented the closeted voice of himself and Britten: a voice that negotiated its social space within the safe confines of music in a world where doors were otherwise closed to homosexual expression. Koestenbaum addressed how repressed homosexual tensions were voiced in the singing rather than the speaking voice: 'If you speak a secret, you lose it; it becomes public. But if you sing the secret, you magically manage to keep it private, for singing is a barricade of codes'.[70] Highlighting Pears's voice is a means of envoicing the silenced and elucidating the obscure. Pears's voice is a site for and embodiment of all these internal tensions, contestations and paradoxes of the homosexual.

Discussions of such internal homosexual tensions between Pears and Britten in the mid-twentieth century were potentially difficult. Their relationship was nevertheless an 'open secret', despite the fact that male homosexuality was still a criminal offence until the Wolfenden Report in 1957. Pears's constant appearance alongside Britten in public performances provided a sphere socially justified by the artistic collaboration of composer and singer, one that was shut off to the prying public. Nevertheless publicizing acts of performances regularly called attention to such close partnership, and threatened to disclose what to Britten and Pears were firmly privatized domestic affairs. These were exacerbated by the British public's tendency to establish relationships (akin to what Elizabeth Wood asserted as 'serial monogamy') with a single representative composer for the purposes of promoting national musical pride in Britten.[71] The British public's 'ownership' of Britten – his music and his persona – undoubtedly triggered similar attention directed to Pears. Such associations precariously traversed the fine line between the private and public spheres of both Britten and Pears's lives. With notions of moral, national and musical pride wrapped contingently upon the nature of their relationship, the risks and stakes of coming out for Britten and Pears were increasingly heightened.

The British musical establishment recognized the artistic fruits from the collaboration between Britten and Pears as significant contributions to the British music scene. Yet, hostility towards them as partners was, although communicated indirectly, always present beneath the surface. Objections towards the composer and singer founded

[69] This is based on tenor Neil Mackie's (student and close friend of Pears) anecdote a few days after Britten's death when he was standing next to Pears at Britten's grave. To Mackie's surprise, Pears said that he would rest next to instead of together with Britten when he died. Pears's reply when questioned about it: 'My dear, what would people think?' suggested that despite the open secret of his relationship with Britten, Pears was still very much affected by what people thought about his homosexual relationship with Britten. This anecdote was recorded in Mackie's writing dated 8 August 2013 'In Celebrating Ben We Honour Peter', written for a Britten Symposium in 2013.
[70] Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire*, 157.
[71] Brett, *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, 205.

upon the more forthright cause of pacifism were equally manifestations of such an opposition. Philip Brett noted these objections against pacifism as coded references for a 'still unspeakable homosexuality', further bolstered by Pears's then dubious relationship with the composer.[72]

The intertwining of Pears's private and artistic life provided room for unwanted speculation and gossip from the public. Homosexual tensions against Britten and Pears in the mid-twentieth century were nevertheless covert and inexplicit. Christopher Headington referred to a certain incident during the 1940s where the word 'pansy' was scribbled next to Britten and Pears in a concert poster.[73] The feature of BBC Third Programme series Hilda Tablet (1953-1959) of a fictional female composer and her female live-in companion Elsa was a direct satirizing of Britten and Pears.[74] Dudley Moore's parody in the 1961 sketch "Little Miss Britten" focused on Pears's unmistakable singing style and Britten's compositional arrangements. Though it was masked as humour and laughter, the British public and audience fully understood that what was being parodied was more than just compositional and vocal styles; it was an attack directed at Britten and Pears's homosexual identity.

The opera *Peter Grimes* in 1945 was important for both Britten and Pears because it not only made headlines for Britten, but also thrust Pears (who sang the title role) into the limelight. Both national and international newspapers took the opportunity to feature Britten and *Grimes* as a prominent watershed for British operatic history. Desmond Shawe-Taylor exclaimed that 'one can scarcely avoid seeing in Benjamin Britten a fresh hope, not only for English, but for European opera.'[75] This is significant for both Britten and Pears, in that it marked a successful move from the concert hall into the operatic realm not only for the English composer, but as well for the English voice. With a typically English subject in *Peter Grimes*, Britten instigated the start of a new type of opera that was distinct from Continental forms of opera by relying on the vocal qualities of Pears.

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[72] Brett, *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, 36. See also what Brett pointed to between the complicity of pacifism and homosexuality in Robin Holloway, "The Church Parables II: Limits and Renewals," in *The Britten Companion*, ed. Christopher Palmer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 215-26.

[73] Headington, *Peter Pears: A Biography*, 128.

[74] The 1954 instalment *The Private Life of Hilda Tablet* was a telling indication of attitudes, such as that of parody towards various happenings and composers, that were relevant to the British musical scene during the mid-twentieth century: Britten and Pears, Elizabeth Lutyens, Modernism and the Purcell revival.

[75] Originally a newspaper review in 1945, this was later compiled into Desmond Shawe-Taylor, "'Peter Grimes': A Review of the First Performance," in *Benjamin Britten: Peter Grimes*, ed. Philip Brett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 155.

With the hype generated by *Grimes*, it was no wonder that both international and national reviews were wary in describing the relationship between Britten and Pears. Most newspaper reviews indicated Pears as Britten's 'friend', apparent in the case of an American newspaper with the subheadings: 'Young British Composer has his friend, Peter Pears, Tenor cast in the title role'.[76] A *Time* magazine article in 1946 reported about the title role of *Peter Grimes*, which 'Britten had created for his good friend Tenor Peter Pears whose coloratura-like soarings are a legend in England.'[77] Even though this might be the reviewer's inexperience in writing, it might also signify difficulties of assimilating a non-operatic voice and a modernist, non-operatic style into the established genre of opera, which is largely dominated by Italian repertory and Continental singers. In a way, by capitalizing on the success of *Peter Grimes*, Britten established Pears as the voice of English opera and transformed the non-normativity of his singing and vocal qualities into the norm.

The reviews of Britten and Pears indicated how the media perceived and informed the public about the duo's relationship when they were both important artists of their time. Slight insinuating remarks of their relationship implied a subtle testing of boundaries for the conservative British public. The risks involved upon coming out for both Britten and Pears were considerably high, and indicated the homophobic environment that they both lived in which posed threats of assault, ridicule, social ruin and even imprisonment. It was not until 1967 when the Sexual Offences Act was passed that homosexual sex between two consenting adults was decriminalized. In 1945, however, Britten and Pears would still be subjected to such an offence; despite it being an open secret, it was a clear crossing of moral and judicial boundaries to the public. Euphemisms of 'friendship' with the accompanying epithet 'close' and 'good' between Britten and Pears were rife in reviews of *Peter Grimes* and deliberately done to evade any overt connotation towards homosexuality. However, such reviews, even if done without any discernible allusion to homosexuality, fuelled rather than extinguish any doubts the reader already had. One case demonstrated this clearly, where a *News Review* reporter applauded Britten's new opera and described that the title role was 'sung brilliantly by tall, high-voiced tenor Peter Pears, close friend of Britten's who shares his St. John's Wood flat.'[78] Such disclosing of private domestic details not only referred to but also consolidated Britten and Pears's homosexual

[76] "Britten Wins Acclaim for his Opera 'Peter Grimes'," *Riverhead News-Review*, June 1945.
[77] "Music: Montain Music," *Time*, 19 August 1946.
[78] "New Opera," *News Review*, 14 June 1945.

relationship. Substitutions in prose of partnership for friendship revealed covertly between the lines of the reviews an implicit sexuality between the composer and his singer.

Reviews of Britten's song cycles, especially the *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings*, Op. 31 and the *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo,* Op. 22 were indicative of the irreconcilable attitudes that critics had towards the composer and his singer. The song cycles were an established genre in Western musical canon. The Romantic *lieder* with its bare instrumental resources, heightened expression of emotions, close ensemble between singer and pianist and small performance settings connoted it as a genre that represented closeness and intimacy.[79] Comparisons of Britten's song cycles with models of Austro-German composers demonstrated the validation that was given to his compositional style. Yet, such associations with Romantic models of the song cycle also demonstrated rhetorical gestures of intimacy directed potentially at Britten's effeminacy and homosexuality. For example, a *Liverpool Echo* critic equated Britten's *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo* with Hugo Wolf's *lieder*.

> I know of nothing like them in English song literature and it is not too much to describe them as being in the great tradition of lieder writing: indeed the third and seventh songs seem worthy to rank with some of Hugo Wolf's finest inspirations. The spaciousness and flexibility of the musical idiom, the sheer beauty of vocal line, the strong and sensitive piano writing which, while lending vital support to the voice, retains an intense and glowing life of its own, combine to make this moving song-cycle something of a landmark in English music.[80]

The comparison of Britten's song cycle with Wolf's affirmed that Britten's pieces were being assimilated into a Continental music tradition – a milestone that validated English composers' equality in power with other Continental composers. Similarly to what Britten had achieved in *Peter Grimes*, English composers could finally claim precedence not only in the genre of opera but in smaller scale vocal works as well. At the same time, the description of Pears as the ideal voice for this entry of Britain/Britten in the Continental tradition suggests the cementing and nationalising of the singer's voice in promotion of Britten-Pears as a national icon. In these *Sonnets*, Britten has, according to B.A. found in Pears 'an ideal interpreter; an engaging and artistic singer with a voice of lovely quality,

[79] Benjamin Binder explores the concept of inwardness or *Innigkeit* by mapping concepts of intimacy and introversion on to the later compositions of Schumann's *lieder*. See Benjamin Alan Binder, "Intimacy, Introversion and Schumann's Lieder" (PhD in Musicology, Princeton University, 2006).
[80] B.A., "Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears," *Liverpool Echo*, 4 May 1943.

who has penetrated to the very core of the work.'[81] The review showed that even though the performance was a collaboration between Pears and Britten, it was Pears that voiced and realized the idealization of English music songs.

Similar expressions were used in the premiere of Britten's *Serenade* on 15 October 1943, where *The Observer*'s William Glock expressed his good fortune in being able to hear Britten's new work in the same way his predecessor was able to hear the premiere of Brahms's mature works. Glock exclaimed:

> Now I feel differently, for in Benjamin Britten we have at last a composer who offers us visions as great as those. His new Serenade, Op. 31, a set of six songs for tenor, horn and strings, surpasses everything else of his in strength and feeling.[82]

Again, we have Glock measuring Britten in comparison to Brahms, a sign of insecurity stemming from the dominance and the gauging of musical greatness in comparison with Germanocentric models. Glock's critique is indicative of music critics' response to early ideals of the English Musical Renaissance, where Britten's compositions and Pears's voice were envisaged as both a culmination of the Renaissance and symbolic redemption of English music.

Despite the glowing reviews that Britten and Pears garnered, critics were keen to point out the difficulties that Britten's song cycles posed to the singer's sexuality. In the *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo* review, B.A. described that Pears 'sings with an easy disarming intimacy well suited to lieder', where employment of words such as 'disarming' and 'intimacy' provoked a subtle association with homosexuality.[83] In Pears's biography, Christopher Headington wrote that Britten overcame his shyness and indicated the Sonnet's homosexual context to their friend Margot Baker. In a letter to Pears, Britten exclaimed: 'I don't know what she thought of it! But I don't care neither – I don't care who knows.'[84] Usage of homoerotic text in the *Sonnets* evidenced not only Britten's but also Pears's homosexuality.

On the other hand, Glock's enthusiasm in the performance of the *Serenade* was dampened less by horn player Dennis Brain's playing and more by Pears's singing:

[81] B.A., "Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears."
[82] William Glock, "Music," *The Observer*, 24 October 1943.
[83] B.A., "Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears."
[84] Headington, *Peter Pears: A Biography*, 120.

> Peter Pears struggled manfully with the high tessitura of the voice part. Few indeed, will be able to sing or play this Serenade, and though one may bless the friendship of Pears and Britten for the Michelangelo Sonnets and this later work, I'm anxious to hear some solo songs whose style and technique are less demanding.[85]

Glock's reference towards Pears's sexuality is obvious. Rhetorical stylizations such as 'struggled manfully' and 'friendship of Pears and Britten' were a play of words implying that Glock's actual struggle with Pears was due to more than his vocal inability, but also his civic incapacity as a homosexual. In regard to that, the homosexual's identity was one that provided no significant contribution to a country's protection, progression and wellbeing. This can be seen not only in the lack of military contribution, but also in the inability of contributing to the idealised domestic life of child bearing and rearing. The term 'manfully' explicitly referred to the homosexual's fundamental lack, which marked domestic life and national contribution as important attributes to twentieth-century manhood and masculinity. Wariness against homosexual males in the twentieth century implied that manhood and the nation was under siege, where the breakdown of gender roles threatened and destabilized the ideals of social and national stability.

3.6 Pears as Voice of Britten/Britain

The blurring of male/female social boundaries and role distinctions in mid-twentieth century Britain were symptomatic of the ramifications caused partially by post-War domestic and social fissures. Homosexuality indicated one of the many discrepancies found in comparison with the hegemony of heteronormative domestic life. Tensions were further amplified by the distinct portrayal of homosexuals from different classes: respectable 'inverts' of middle-class standing whose desires apparently stemmed from physiological and psychological origins; and lower-class 'perverts' who were portrayed as willing participants of sexual immorality and vice.[86] The class separation between homosexuals affected both categories. It stigmatized 'perverts' and drove 'inverts' towards a deeper compartmentalization of their public and private lives. The pressures of acting appropriately and in accordance with moral and behavioural codes dictated ways men and women navigated social circles. This attitude, combined with the elevated position of both Britten and Pears as national representatives and icons of British music, served to repress

[85] Glock, "Music."
[86] Houlbrook, *Queer London*, outlines case studies that clearly shows this distinction, 196, 97.

homosexual associations deeper into the privatized areas of their lives. Britten's social privilege and political manoeuvres in elite circles would be impossible with the disclosure of his sexuality. However, with the increase of Britten and Pear's reputations, the stakes of coming out were ever higher. By exposing their homosexual relationship, Britten and Pears risked not only their social standing and musical careers; but because of their strong association with British cultural establishment, they also risked jeopardizing Britain's reputation as the 'upholder of moral standards'.[87]

The disclosure of Britten and Pears's homosexual relationship would disrupt ideals that sustained interpretations of Britain as both morally upright and nationally stable. Seen as representative of British music, Britten and Pears's association with homosexuality threatened to destabilize the nation's establishment of culture and arts. In Harold Begbie's rhetoric, as stated earlier in this chapter, instead of fending off intruders that threatened Britain's moral culture, it would require that Britain disregard its own musical culture, generating exiles in its own national climate.[88] This disjuncture threatened to disrupt constructions of nation that relied upon Britten, whose national composer status connotes a certain responsibility towards promotion of high moral standards. Britten's involvement in elite circles was testament to his ability to straddle between distinct worlds of public persona and private queer. This is further complicated by the fact that Pears's performances and collaboration with the composer appeared to legitimatize Pears's constant public appearance with Britten.

Britten and Pears's musical collaborations on and off scene represented tensions that Brett identified in the uneasy relationship between musicality and homosexuality, as evidenced in the beginning of this chapter.[89] At the same time, the areas of music, arts and literature were used as tools in forming an affirmative social space among homosexuals who were desperate to distance themselves from the vice and immorality of London's queer underground scene. These were men who sustained the notion of the 'worthy, creative and principled "homosexual" – the "homosexual" who had made a contribution to the society he inhabited'.[90] Britten and Pears might have seen themselves as precisely such homosexuals, significantly different from the queers that were negatively portrayed in the

[87] Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 225.
[88] See page 114 of this chapter for the full citation of " A Modern Gomorrah," *John Bull*, 13 June 1925, 18, cited in Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 224.
[89] Brett showed the internal tensions evidenced in musicality as coded references for effeminacy and homosexuality in Brett, "Musicality, Essentialism and the Closet," 11. See also Bashford, "Historiography and Invisible Musics," where elite nineteenth-century men's engagement in music posed complications in issues of class, effeminacy and professionalism/amateurism, 291-360.
[90] Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 208.

press. Pears revealed that there was 'a streak of puritan in Ben. He thought that decent behaviour, decent manners were part of a fine life… but the "gay life", he resented that.'[91] Despite their strong contribution in music, Britten's resentment at being categorized as 'gay', most probably stemmed from the irreconcilability of his and Pears's political, pacifist and homosexual attitudes with models of conservative, upper-class citizenry.[92] For Britten and Pears, music was a safe common ground for the construction of a homosocial environment that permitted the expression of overt, same-sex desires. Britten and Pears embodied the appropriation of such a homosocial niche by carving out a separate identity for themselves in a social environment where such identification would otherwise be unavailable.

The public and music critics were quick to acknowledge Pears's contribution to the British music scene; yet, they were close-mouthed about Pears's relationship with Britten. Twentieth-century reviews demonstrated attitudes that included Pears the artist but excluded Pears the homosexual – cherry-picking his attributes that were beneficial and discarding those that were not. British critics' unwillingness to see Pears as Britten's partner insisted that his voice and homosexual body were detached and viewed separately in the British music scene. It was not until a 1979 prime time Easter Sunday TV broadcast of documentary 'A Time There Was', that Pears candidly mentioned his homosexual relationship with Britten in public for the first time.[93] It was a mere three years after Britten's death in 1976. Yet even after Britten and Pears's death, John Gill noted that 'their life and work together was handled with gloves and tongs, and never given a name that was anything more than a coy euphemism.'[94]

What was given was more than coy euphemism. Representations of Britten and Pears's life in mid-twentieth century Britain exemplified a sanitized version of their relationship because the uncovered truth would damage the moral and artistic reputation of the nation. Their relationship was analogous to Matt Houlbrook's description of how homosex between men of the Brigade of the Guards and middle-class men disrupted and

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[91] Headington, *Peter Pears: A Biography*, 128.
[92] Brett demonstrated that apart from Britten and Pears's pacifist, political and homosexual views, they were contributing their part as model citizens, 'doing their bit for the balance of payments, see Brett, *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, 212. However, I argue that these reasons are precisely why both Britten and Pears evidently felt that they were both in Pears's words, 'queer, left and conshies which is enough to put us, or make us put ourselves, outside the pale, apart from being artists as well,' in Humphrey Carpenter, *Benjamin Britten: A Biography* (London: Faber, 1992), 419-20.
[93] Headington, *Peter Pears: A Biography*, 288. For the documentary, see Tony Palmer, "A Time There Was," (London: London Weekend Television, 1980).
[94] John Gill, *Queer Noises: Male and Female Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 18.

destabilized the 'potent image of nation and its manhood'.[95] These numerous discrepancies between nation, morality and manhood posed potentially difficult questions that were similar to the homosexual relationship of Britten and Pears. Houlbrook asks in relation to the Brigade of the Guards: 'how could the embodiment of British manhood participate in homosex? How could this threat to the nation's social body be accommodated?'[96] Similarly, how could a voice that envoiced Britten and twentieth-century British music be found in Peter Pears, a homosexual? In Houlbrook's words 'the queer was constructed as beyond the boundaries of national citizenship, a fitting subject for social exclusion, legal repression, and immigration practices that marked the "sexual pervert" as an intolerable social presence – as un-British.'[97] In such an environment, how could a homosexual voice be accommodated as a central part of Britain's musical establishment when the nation insisted on writing off homosexuals as queers? Likewise, Chris Waters identified the policing of sexual boundaries in mid-twentieth Britain as crucial in securing the nation's imaginary boundaries, where cohesiveness of the national community was threatened not only by racial others but by the deviance of homosexual whites.[98]

In a social environment where homosexuality represented the marginalized, Pears's voice embodied a site full of elisions and evasions. Pears's voice precariously balanced and traversed between both inner and outer circles in twentieth-century British society. His voice afforded him a place in the music establishment set up by Britten and himself at Aldeburgh. His identity situated him in the cultural establishment that attributed Britten his place, yet his homosexual body was frequently silenced and denied by the same environment. His homosexual body was written out and replaced in order to represent an accepted, sanitized version of Britain's music scene; substitutions of partnership for friendship and *lieder* as references for intimacy and effeminacy in written reviews were evidence of such omissions.

Despite that, Pears gave Britain its own compositional voice and envoiced new works of British composers in the twentieth century, most notably Britten's. His voice embodied and expressed the ideals of the English Musical Renaissance, dedicated to counter tensions of British music insecurity in relation to composer-centric and Germanocentric models. Pears's voice was the response towards the English Musical Renaissance's germination in the late nineteenth century – a rallying cry for a 'voice' that

[95] Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 227.
[96] Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 229.
[97] Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 240.
[98] Chris Waters, ""Dark Strangers" in Our Midst: Discourses of Race and Nation in Britain,1947-1963," *Journal of British Studies* 36, no. 2 (1997): 207-38, 229-30.

represented the nation through a composer. What Pears's voice did for twentieth-century British music was threefold: first, it helped to voice the creation and establishment of a new English vocal identity through the employment of non-normative voices as the norm. Second, recognizing Pears – his voice and contribution – helps to break down composer and work-centred structures that offer only a limited view of music in twentieth-century Britain. Thirdly, in the way Pears's voice suggested embodiment of a 'Great British Opera' – frequently regarded as a holy grail of British music historiography – and how it signified British composers and singers' move from the concert to the operatic scene. This is a rhetoric frequently voiced by British music historians: from the lament of Purcell's early death to the lack of British operatic composers in the succeeding centuries. By identifying Pears's voice as representative of an English opera sound and quality, Britten insisted on the distinctiveness of English music identity and provided a chance of vocal reassessment for English music history. This readdresses issues of nationhood and nationality that were frequently intertwined with Britain's musical past. Pears helped envoice Britain/Britten: through the composer Britten for the country Britain with a voice of its own.

3.7 Conclusion

The nationalisation of Pears's and Deller's voices identified discrepancies that conflicted with ideologies of male sexuality that Britain relied on for a unitary sense of national identity. Reviews and reception of Deller and Pears in mid-twentieth century Britain demonstrated irreconcilable difficulties found in their voices: while promotion of their national voices included them in the post-war British music scene, rhetorical insinuations at their sexuality excluded them. For Deller and Pears, critiques of gender and sexual abnormality directed at the singers were couched in nationalist terms. Given how Deller's and Pears's voices were included as part of a strong national musical idiom in the representation of British composers and operatic models, they were equally envisaged as national ideals of sexuality. There was in this case, a need for their voices to be seen as masculine and virile. Music critics and writers presented sanitized versions of their voices as an attempt to reconcile such problematic notions of national identity and sexuality. Nonetheless, Deller's and Pears's voices proved important to Britten and influential in the creation of a new English opera. Both the non-normative voices of Deller and Pears were exemplified as distinctively English and were given vocal presence and authority in Britten's opera. By appropriating their voices to fit into the national and aural soundscape

of English opera, Britten justified non-normativity as the norm and initiated the start of a new era for British vocal music.

Chapter 4: Voicing New Media: Pears, Ferrier and Deller on the BBC

When the British Broadcasting Company (later Corporation) was formed in 1922, its monopoly of broadcasting rights in Britain eliminated any chances of competition from other broadcasting stations. At a time when broadcasting was the most technologically advanced form of communication, the BBC wielded official authority and power over the British airwaves. Before 1927, when the BBC started experimenting with alternative programmes, its single transmission often reflected the varied yet consolidated approach that BBC authorities frequently took in directing the consumption habits and musical tastes of the public. In 1930 when the Regional Programme was launched with centres in the Midlands, North, South, West and Scotland, transmissions were centralised on the London-based National Programme and not on localised productions.[1] This meant that the BBC not only played an important role as influential shapers of British broadcast reception, but that its central programming policies helped to project an idealised and uniform version of national identity through sound.

Such aural homogeneity helped to create a version of national identity central to the realisation of John Reith's (director of BBC from 1922-1938) aspirations on broadcasting as a tool for public service. He envisaged the BBC as a medium to educate and enlighten rather than simply to entertain[2] and projected suspicions over the public's democratic tastes.[3] Despite the BBC's monopoly of radio in Britain, narratives that emerged especially in the institution's high aspirations for cultural and national reform were hardly univocal. In fact, the BBC became a social site where contesting ideologies, values and agendas were increasingly negotiated. More than that, it highlights the medium of radio as a powerful national tool to reflect various cultural policies of its time, notably in the heightened pre-to-post war tensions of class and racial issues and in the increasingly blurred boundaries of highbrow/lowbrow culture. This chapter examines how the voices of Ferrier, Deller and

[1] It is helpful to point out here that before the 1970s, the term 'programme' confusingly meant both network and also independent broadcasts aired from the network. For the purposes of this thesis, 'programme' will only mean independent broadcasts unless stated nominally in for example, the Third Programme, which will be referred to as a network. For explanation on the terminology and information on Regional and National Programmes, see Crisell, *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting*, 21, 22.
[2] Crisell wrote that Reith's policies were not conceived in a vacuum, and due to the inefficiency and over-bureaucracy of organizational precedents earlier in the century, the BBC tried to 'combine the best of both civic and commercial values, rejecting political inference on one side and market forces on the other'. Crisell, *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting*, 19.
[3] J.C.W. Reith, *Broadcast Over Britain* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924), 15-16.

Pears played an important part in the establishment of British broadcast culture. The BBC's negotiation of socio-cultural issues underlined how constructions of national identity were voiced through the singers and how they constituted an important part in the aural image and imagined community of mid-twentieth century Britain.[4]

4.1 Broadcasting and the BBC

In the 1930s, the BBC's status – asserted as on par with other established British institutions such as the Royal Academy and *The Times* – demonstrates the Corporation's self-assumed responsibility as identifier of the nation's cultural image.[5] The corporation's public service mission, immunity to competition and protection from market forces all helped to secure the BBC as a powerful instrument for creating and promoting nationalistic ideals. The BBC's status as an emblem of Britishness presided over the content and policies of most of its national and international broadcasts. The BBC was depicted as a medium that was not only employed to secure the cohesion of national identity among British listeners, but to a fragmenting Empire in the 1930s to 1950s, its international broadcasts helped sustain a collective national identity of Britishness in various distant colonies.[6] Such means of uniting a culturally disparate and geographically expansive Empire was rehearsed not only through carefully selected programmes and broadcasts that served to sustain communities invented through mythical connections and ties, but also through the sung and spoken voices heard and the cultural connotations that they evoked.[7]

For an understanding of how the three artists concerned here made use of broadcasting opportunities provided by the BBC and similarly, how the BBC engaged their services, it is worth providing a brief introduction to the three main networks. By the 1930s, the BBC was operating in two nationwide networks, the National Programme and the Regional Programme. The National Programme emanated from its London headquarters, while the Regional Programme included programming from different regions in the country with London as the sustaining service provider. The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 combined the National Programme and centralised Regional programmes

[4] Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 35-36.
[5] "Farewell to Savoy Hill," *Listener*, 4 May 1932, 632; cited in LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy*, 189.
[6] See John M. Mackenzie, "'In Touch with the Infinite' The BBC and the Empire, 1923-53," in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. John M. Mackenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 166-87, for an understanding of how images of the British Empire were sustained through the BBC's Empire Day broadcasts.
[7] Hilmes, *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting , 1922-1952*, 13.

throughout the country into a single Home Service. When the BBC Symphony Orchestra was set up in 1930, the Regional and National Programmes' regular broadcasts of orchestral repertoire, led by Sir Adrian Boult as Chief Conductor, meant the birth of new broadcasting and performing opportunities in the British musical scene. In 1940, a new network called the Forces Programme was created to boost the morale of the British Expeditionary Force in France. The Forces Programme, featured predominantly light music and contrary to what its name suggests, attracted more listeners outside than inside the troops.[8] The General Forces Programme in 1942 was a combination of both the Forces Programme and the General Overseas Service, and became the Light Programme in 1945.[9] The Third Programme was created in recognition of a 'highly intelligent minority audience' and the need for a network devoted to 'critical discussions of art, drama, music and literature; poetry and prose readings of the less popular type; experiments in radio drama; programmes in foreign languages etc'.[10] It was inaugurated on 29 September 1946 and featured programmes that, according to William Haley, Reith's successor as Director General, were of 'artistic and cultural importance'.[11]

The BBC's advent generated huge impact on the British musical scene and provided wider opportunities for musicians. The recognition of the widespread impact of broadcasting for artists, especially singers, was prominent. The *BBC Handbook*, first published in 1928 as an accessible guide to the BBC's inner workings for the public, provides important insights into the BBC's idea of audience reception. The *Handbook* recognised the audiences' need to adjust listening habits from the medium of the concert hall to the radio broadcast and included a section titled 'Broadcasting and the Artist'. The habits of music consumption shifted from the concert hall to increasingly domestic surroundings and the *Handbook* accordingly depicted broadcasting as an increasingly privatized affair. In effect, appreciation of the singing voice became personal, blurring the sense of spatial boundaries between listener and singer. Despite how performances of *lieder* in vocal recitals even before the introduction of radio broadcast were already negotiating the ambiguity of the genre itself in social and aesthetic terms, the introduction

[8] Crisell evidenced that by 1942, the Forces Programme was 'being listened to by even more civilians than service people and commanding a total audience 50 per cent than that of the Home [Service].' See Crisell, *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting*, 60.
[9] Crisell, *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting*, 69.
[10] See Controller of Home Programmes, Robert Maconachie's proposal for the Third Programme in Kate Whitehead, *The Third Programme: a literary history*, Clarendon Press, 1989, cited in Carpenter, *The Envy of the World: Fifty Years of the BBC Third Programme and Radio Three*, 6.
[11] 'The Programme is', R34/602, 'Programme C Terms of Reference', 16.1.46, cited in Carpenter, *The Envy of the World: Fifty Years of the BBC Third Programme and Radio Three*, 11, 12.

of radio and recordings increased notions of solitude through habitual close listening.[12] The BBC administrators realised this and portrayed broadcasting as 'an *intimate* thing' in the first *BBC Handbook* by emphasizing closeness through performances playing from the hearth of one's home instead of being separated by the chasm between audience and performer on stage:

> It needs performance for the people in their homes, at their firesides; and the artist must remember that he is singing or playing, not to a multitude of people, a host of white faces in a vast hall, but to each listener individually. The attractions of beauty of face and figure, the dress, the gesture, the smile, the suggestion of lips, are lost. The voice must do it all. [13]

Indeed, the voice must do it all, for broadcasting and recording created drastic shifts in appreciation for the singing voice.[14] In the *BBC Handbook*, special emphasis was given to the voice. It listed voice control and experience as two of the main criteria for broadcasting singers. Through this article, it is interesting to note the differing demands then required of the broadcast singer in comparison to the concert hall or operatic singer – the former required a voice that was 'not necessary large, but of pure, well-produced quality; easy throughout its register, but not too hard and "white" in quality'. Expectations of voices being lesser in projection but more controlled in breath and support resulted in a voice that needed to be persuasive and clear in its interpretation and pronunciation. Hence, the author's lament of 'the annoying "vibrato" that characterises the production of fully ninety per cent of our native singers' was made in idealization of a specifically different kind of singer. A successful broadcast singer would possess good breath control, exceptionally good diction, intelligence, musicianship and personality. These delineated vocal qualities were clear ideals of how a singer would be specifically suited to the broadcasting medium. Ferrier, Deller and Pears's careers were, as we shall see later in the chapter, largely affected by such ideals that were crucial to the understanding of how the BBC was instrumental in creating a new technologically mediated voice ideal for the aural image of Britain.

The advent of radio and its creation of the broadcast singer heightened a new experience of vocal disembodiment for the listeners. While previous singers of a live

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[12] See Tunbridge, "Singing Translations: The Politics of Listening Between the Wars," especially 55-56, 76.
[13] "1928 Handbook." Microform Academic Publishers, BBC WAC, 2 July 2008, accessed 13 July 2015 https://www.britishonlinearchives.co.uk/browse.php?did=bbc-1928hand.
[14] Scannell showed how the technology of recording and broadcasting using the microphone helped to create a new kind of singing style: crooning that elevated the level of musical sincerity. See Paddy Scannell, *Radio, Television and Modern Life* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996), 60-69.

concert can rely on visual elements of stage settings, effects and costumes to engage audiences in the performance, now broadcast singers have only their voices to convey the same musical expression and effect. Given that the BBC authorities understood that the disembodied voice has the power to elicit strong emotions and to potentially unify a culturally diverse nation, it would not be surprising that requirements of the broadcast artist would be dictated in the *BBC Handbook*. The immediacy and intimacy of a voice that was disembodied yet able to appeal to millions of listeners on the air demonstrates that it surpassed boundaries, regionals, class divisions and social strata in cultivating a national sense of unity. In creation of a broadcast voice that 'spoke' or for that matter, 'sung' to a nation, the BBC played an important role in the projection a sense of nationhood and national identity cultivated through the airwaves.

These new vocal ideals delineated the increased stratification of musical tastes in British broadcast culture that the BBC was navigating in the mid-twentieth century. Despite Reith's staunchly moralistic values on programming and educating the public, what the BBC did not foresee was that the emergence and rise of a distinctive middle class and middlebrow culture, most prominently in the 1930s, came to break down what was previously understood as high/low musical tastes and classes.[15] According to *Punch*, the term 'middlebrow', allegedly first discovered by the BBC, was derogatory and defined people who aspired but have not adapted to listening tastes assumed as upper-class and elite.[16] This served to highlight the existing disparity between the actual musical consumption habits of BBC listeners and the aspirations of BBC authorities in the adoption of highbrow culture. LeMahieu asserted that the BBC 'self-consciously invented an idealized version of a fragile, never fully realized, middle-class cultural tradition which it then proclaimed to be the natural and authentic culture of the nation'.[17] This shows that the extent to which the BBC fully succeeded in exerting its influence and control over the nation's shifting musical tastes and habits is questionable.

Such idealization of national identity in Britain was consciously perpetuated and identified through the BBC's choice of broadcast accent. The BBC's adoption of Received Pronunciation (RP) evidently demonstrates the Corporation's negotiation of class and

[15] The reaction against the middlebrow culture when it was first used in the early twentieth century was ambivalent and invited both scorn and praise from critics. Some charged it for blurring the boundaries between mass culture and high modernism, while others applauded it for its wide appeal and ability to challenge and delight. See Christopher Chowrimootoo's 'Reviving the Middlebrow, or: Deconstructing Modernism from the Inside' in Laura Tunbridge et al., "Round Table: Modernism and its Others," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 139, no. 1 (2014): 187-93.
[16] *Punch*, 23 December 1925; cited in Laura Tunbridge, "Frieda Hempel and the Historical Imagination," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 66, no. 2 (2013): 437-74, 441.
[17] LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy*, 182.

social stratification in mid-twentieth century Britain. Holly Tessler described RP as a 'democratising device intended to promote a standardised form of spoken English, with the goal of ameliorating inequalities fuelled by the negative connotations a regional accent and dialect assigned to even the most educated speakers'.[18] It is not hard to identify that the BBC's aims in the centralisation of various regional accents into one of RP was made in promotion of Britain as an unified political entity amalgamated regardless of class, racial or regional tensions. Michele Hilmes argues that the study of radio, here in the case of America hardly paints 'a naturally rising, consensus-shaped, and unproblematic reflection of a pluralistic society', rather it demonstrates 'a conflicting, tension-ridden site of the ruthless exercise of cultural hegemony'.[19] I argue that this was the same for Britain in the case of the BBC, where its education and enculturation hegemony aimed to construct a unified aural and national image of Britain. Given that RP was a pronunciation that was largely identified as 'posh' and Southern rather than working class and Northern, it served to consolidate imagination of Britain with an upper class and Southern partiality.[20] This is of particular concern to Kathleen Ferrier, who went through elocution lessons and adopted RP by way of speech to cover her Northern Lancashire accent and identity.[21] The case of RP indicated how in creation of a national voice and vocality appropriated for the purposes of broadcast, the BBC articulated far better than any medium the conflicting social and class issues that occurred within the constructions of nationhood and national identity in the mid-twentieth century.

These singers' engagement with the BBC signified the corporation's evolving policies and position within the shifting highbrow and lowbrow distinctions of mid-twentieth century Britain's art and music scene. The Third Programme's highly selective and highbrow orientation was an obvious advantage for Ferrier, Deller and Pears since they broadcast most frequently in it. Before the Third Programme, the Home Service's varied and mixed programmes meant that art music repertoire could only be slotted in between examples of lighter music, and there were often large discrepancies within programmes in the same network. For example, a browse through the Home Service's listings on 2

[18] See Holly Tessler, "Dialect and Dialectic: John Peel's 'Stylised Scouseness' and Contested Contexts of Englishness in Broadcast Radio," *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media* 4, no. 1-3 (2006): 49-67, 60.
[19] Hilmes, *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting , 1922-1952*, xvii.
[20] Tessler, "Dialect and Dialectic," 60.
[21] Jack, "Klever Kaff," 94.

January 1939 shows Elgar's Pianoforte Quintet, Op. 84 at 6.40 pm sandwiched between 'Last Year's Crop of Hit Tunes' at 6.15 pm and the BBC Military Band at 7.20 pm.[22]

The BBC's stratification and division of cultural tastes and interests in the postwar music scene was especially evident. On the other hand, the emergence of a predominantly middlebrow culture also catered to listeners that were increasingly removed from either ends of the music consumption spectrum, with an appreciation for music depicted as neither highly elitist nor entirely lowbrow. This represented Britain's position as a country that was at odds in situating itself within the European cultural and music scene despite the international recognition that Britten was gaining in the 1950s: neither comfortable with the *avant garde* progressions of the Continent nor completely at ease with its problematic musical past.[23] The BBC's programming of Ferrier, Deller and Pears can help us to identify the cultural tensions that the BBC had to negotiate in its pursuit of a national and international version of British identity. While Deller and Pears's careers in the Third Programme catered to a specialized niche with careful art music programming, Ferrier's career illustrates the navigating and transcending of highbrow/lowbrow distinctions in British broadcast culture.

What is more, all three singers' employment with the BBC highlights another issue of the Corporation's supposed obligation towards the promotion of national interests and talents. Ever since the start of the BBC, there have been incongruities in obtaining the highest possible musical standards with the employment of local musicians and nurturing home grown talent.[24] Issues over performers' employment in the BBC were debated – would nationality or musical excellence be the prime consideration in the employment of performers? This conflict was especially well documented in surviving papers from 1933 between the BBC's Music Advisory Committee and Music Department: while the former was intent on protecting the interests of British musicians and composers, the latter was unwilling to do so at the expense of musical standards.[25] The nationality issue continued to exist from 1930s to 1940s in meetings between the committee and the department where

[22] See "BBC Genome Project: Radio Times 1923-2009," for detailed listings of the Home Service on 2 January 1939.
[23] Arguably, some have challenged the musical positioning of Britain as conservative especially after Britten's works are gaining precedence in the Continental musical scene. However, I argue that Britten's version of a musical *avant garde* is still comparatively different from Modernist tendencies that were foremost in the music scene at that time, most obviously with the Second Viennese School.
[24] Jenny Doctor's book provides detailed description of the Music Advisory Committee and the BBC's arguments surrounding issues on nationality in employment and programme policies securing musical standards. See Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922-1936: Shaping a Nation's Tastes*, 232-36, 92-95.
[25] See pages 232 to 236 for the meetings between the Music Advisory Committee and the Music Department in Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922-1936: Shaping a Nation's Tastes*.

conductor Adrian Boult challenged assaults thrown at the BBC for its lack of support for local composers and performers supposedly because local artists were incapable of the Corporation's most important performances.[26] Tensions over the nationality issue culminated in Boult's confrontation of Landon Ronald's attack of the BBC in the *News Chronicle* for playing works by foreign composers, engaging a German soprano to sing with three English singers in the Ninth Symphony and promoting a London Music Festival that was not English.[27] Ultimately, it became clear that the Music Advisory Committee's commitment in favouring British music and musicians became an overriding BBC principle where British artists where given preference over foreign artists in broadcasts and concerts despite concerns over lowering artistic standards.[28]

Tensions surrounding this issue were much more prevalent in the Third Programme. Its programmes, 'designed to be of artistic and cultural importance', were for audiences 'already aware of artistic experience and will include persons of taste, of intelligence, and of education; it is therefore, selective not casual, and both attentive and critical.'[29] Such highly specialised and selective appetites for music would require an unlimited pool of talent resourced from the best musicians in the world. The employment of these three singers illustrated the BBC's dual efforts on the one hand in ensuring the highest musical standards and on the other, in the protection of Britain's national interests, an aim that is parallel with promotion of the BBC's image as a national institution.

4.2 Peter Pears – The Voice of the Future

Peter Pears's engagement with the BBC – from BBC Chorus and BBC Singers' member during the pre-Britten and Grimesian period, to one of its most sought after singers and (together with Britten) staunch member of the English music scene – provides an insight into the shifting and precarious relationship of the singer with the mid-twentieth century British Musical Establishment. Pears's relationship with the BBC started earlier than 1939. He joined the BBC Singers B, a vocal octet group that ran parallel with the BBC Singers,

[26] Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922-1936: Shaping a Nation's Tastes*.
[27] BBC WAC, R6/46, 12 May 1933 cited in Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922-1936: Shaping a Nation's Tastes*, 235.
[28] See BBC, WAC R6/47/1, 4 October 1934 and BBC, WAC R27/432: Music General, Public Concert Policy (1933-5), 20 November 1934, cited in Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922-1936: Shaping a Nation's Tastes*, 293.
[29] R34/602, 'Programme C Terms of Reference', 16 January 1946, cited in Carpenter, *The Envy of the World: Fifty Years of the BBC Third Programme and Radio Three*, 11-12.

while he was still a student at the Royal College of Music in 1933. His first broadcast with the BBC on 11 December 1935 was a relayed performance of Purcell's *King Arthur* from the Queen's Hall. After the expiration of Pears's contract with the BBC in 1938, his failure to secure an audition led to a three-year hiatus with the Corporation. Friend and BBC programme builder, Basil Douglas's recommendation of Pears as a 'Lieder singer' to BBC's Arthur Wynn was futile when Pears was rejected in a letter dated 19 January 1939.[30]

Pears's second audition for the BBC in 1942 was more positive. A document entitled 'Music Production Auditions' detailed the four pieces that Pears chose for his audition on the 24 August 1942 at Maida Vale Studios. He sang 'The Bloom is on the Rye', Donizetti's aria 'Come gentil' from *Don Pasquale*, 'M'appari' from Flotow's opera *Martha* and 'Trottin' to the fair'. The report generally applauded Pears for his 'light easy lyric voice' and 'good words'. Criticism nonetheless was directed at his 'M'appari' for 'lacking the necessary passion and despair' and 'Trottin' to the fair' where 'the smile on his face didn't come over'. Stephen Thomas's delight in Pears's performance was undeterred by the fact that his review categorised Pears primarily as the Victorian-style ballad singer:

> Lyric tenor, nice words. Pretty boy. If could act might be useful in a part where one small song had to be sung tastefully – Victorian. "Week-end" house-party, leaning over piano after a very good dinner – Charming, Percy, charming![31]

Additionally, Charles Grove's assessment of the same audition generated almost similar reviews:

> Trottin' to the fair –
> Not much charm. Couldn't tell he was smiling! Was he? Has done Hoffman on tour!
> M'appari – Martha: –
> Very musical. Good style. Quite unromantic.
> My pretty Jane: –
> A thin voice – sings well – with taste. Enunciation first-rate. Excellent voice for shows like "The Two Bouquets".
> Aria from Don Pasquale – "Come gentil": –

[30] Basil Douglas to Arthur Wynn, 14 September 1938, 'Mr. Peter Pears –Tenor', Peter Pears: 1935-1943, File 1A, BBC WAC.
[31] Music Production Auditions (Continued). BBC WAC, 24 August 1942.

> Sung with style. Italian good. Can use for light lyric work. Well in tune. Inclined to throatiness.[32]

These reviews show that faults in Pears's vocal quality were identified right from the start of his engagement with the BBC. His voice, frequently branded as thin and dispassionate, was not at all what would be expected from vocal conventions of leading operatic tenors of his time. Such comments indicate how Pears, despite the limitations of his voice, was able later to gain significance in the mid-twentieth century British music scene: first, through broadcasts on the BBC and then later through Britten's compositions.

Pears's awareness of his own vocal abilities was apparent in a letter addressed to a Stanford Robinson on 28 August 1942:

> I have been thinking over the criticism you made of my broadcast last Sunday, at Monday's audition – And I think the trouble was largely that not having done much broadcasting recently I had forgotten that in a certain sense one might not 'give' so much in front of the mike as one does in a concert hall or, more particularly on the stage. I have too quite possibly got into a habit of 'over-singing' as a result of my Hoffman work. If you think it worth while, I should like to sing to you again, purely lyrical stuff, bearing this in mind – As far as the dialogue is concerned, I don't think I should have much trouble – I am rehearsing now with '… opera', and I don't find that part of it very difficult. Perhaps I could have a test for that too?[33]

In the letter, Pears put his apparent inclination to force down to his preoccupation with stage work, which consequently affected the result of his broadcasts. Nonetheless, Pears recognised that opera was not his strongest suit and asked for another go at 'purely lyrical stuff'. The discrepancies that singers such as Pears faced in catering to the differing needs of stage and broadcast work were partial manifestations of how technological advancements such as radio increasingly interfered and blurred expectations that listeners and audiences had of singers. In comparison with singers a century before, mid-twentieth century radio singers needed a voice and vocal style that was a far cry away from the powerful and well projected voices created for the operatic stage. *Radio Times* listings from the BBC Genome online database show Pears's broadcasts as mostly confined to the 'light opera and folk-song' category. The BBC's initial engagement of Pears during his

[32] Charles Grove to Mr. M.P.D., 25 August 1942, 'Auditions: Peter Pears', Peter Pears: 1935-1943, File 1A, BBC WAC.
[33] I am unable to discern through Pears's handwriting which opera was he referring to in this letter. Peter Pears to Stanford Robinson, 28 August 1942, Peter Pears: 1935-1943, File 1A, BBC WAC.

early broadcasting years in 1942 reflected uncertainty in the employment of his voice, where he was relegated to 'For the Forces' programmes such as 'Songs for Everybody', 'Music of the Sea' and 'Music from the Opera-House'. Pears's case, like that of Ferrier's, as we will see later, demonstrated that pronunciation, style, voice control and quality were very much upheld at the expense of big gestures and dramatic ability generally expected from operatic singers.

1943 to 1944 marked an increase in the BBC's employment of Pears for more significant performances. Pears sang the role of Tamino in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* with the Sadler's Well Opera Company, was the tenor soloist in Bach's *St Matthew Passion* and Poulenc's song-cycle 'Tel jour, telle nuit' in 1943 with Britten as accompanist.[34] There was also an increase in the number of Pears's broadcast performances that featured Britten either as performer or composer, signifying a gradual consolidation of the Britten-Pears partnership on and off stage, that helped to establish Pears as a 'voice of the future' in broadcast media. Such performances included Britten's *Michelangelo Sonnets*, *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* and various other chamber music ensembles and vocal recitals. Pears's partnership with Britten was, unsurprisingly, one of the reasons for his rising demand at the BBC. However, it would be unfair to claim that the BBC merely employed Pears due to his connections with Britten. Nevertheless, Britten's growing status as national composer of Britain would equally mean that his preferred tenor would rise in status and performance opportunities. Evidence that suggested Pears's voice as neither attractive nor especially notable, did little to change the fact that Britten insisted upon having Pears in almost every broadcast performance that required a tenor. It seems that Britten accustomed the BBC and their listeners to the voice and performing styles of Pears, in the same way that he accustomed Pears's voice to his tenor operatic roles.

Two events that happened in 1945 helped to secure Pears's uprising reputation as Britain's most well known tenor in the later half of the twentieth century. The first was the casting of Pears in the title role of Britten's opera *Peter Grimes*, which was hailed as a watershed for British opera. Pears's role was distinctive not only for the fact that Britten's first opera garnered enough headlines to cast the title singer in the limelight, but also for the fact that the character Peter Grimes was written according to Pears's voice, taking into account his *tessitura* and vocal characteristics. The second was the employment of Pears to sing Britten's song-cycle *Les Illuminations* on 11 September in that year's Proms. The

[34] Composed in 1937 by Poulenc, who was also a homosexual composer, the song-cycle 'Tel jour, telle nuite' was Britten and Pears's way to voice solidarity with new Continental works on the radio while establishing themselves as a performing duo on the BBC during early years of the British-Pears collaboration.

Proms, a national icon of music making in Britain since its inception in 1895, was envisaged as a means of making the concert hall and its repertoire accessible to the public. When John Reith obtained broadcasting rights for the Proms's Queen Hall performances in 1927, the BBC-Proms collaboration resulted in the BBC taking on the Prom's financial and administrative responsibilities. The collaboration further endowed the then-new BBC with status, recognition and identity usually associated with that of a national institution.[35] Featured as the highlight of the BBC's annual concerts, the artistic and music programming of the Proms is significant. Pears's engagement in the Proms signifies a concerted effort on Britten's part to secure Pears as prime performer of his music.

The choice of Britten's song-cycle for Pears's Proms performance was probably due to Pears's limitations in the performance of operatic arias. According to the 1945 audition report, Pears sang Handel's aria 'Love sounds th' alarm' from the pastoral opera *Acis and Galatea*, Bizet's 'Agnus Dei' and an American folk song arranged by Britten. It was clear from the adjudicator's comment that Pears's voice lacked qualities that enabled him for an operatic performance:

> The actual voice is thin [in] quality and rather artificial resonance has been superimposed. Diction excellent, intelligent singing, divisions clear and well regulated. The quality of the voice prevents this being cast for almost any aria – a great pity.[36]

Nevertheless, Pears's performance in the Proms was, according to Julian Herbage, a success.[37]

The irreconcilable attitudes that BBC programme organisers had towards Pears in performing opera juxtaposed strongly against his performances in *Peter Grimes*, especially since the opera premiered only three months before the Proms performance. While the BBC had problems engaging Pears for any operatic role, Britten had no qualms securing the tenor in the title role of his first major opera. It is no surprise that as Britten's partner, Pears would inevitably be highly involved in the performances of Britten. However, Britten insisted on keeping Pears in the limelight long enough so that the BBC and critics would come to accept Pears's voice. In a way, Britten appropriated Pears's voice for his

[35] Doctor, The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922-1936: Shaping a Nation's Tastes, 93, 94.
[36] Prom Auditions: Peter Pears. Peter Pears: 1944-1945 File 1B, BBC WAC, 21 January 1945.
[37] Julian Herbage to D.M. Director of Music, 12 October 1945, 'Promenade Concert 1945: Report on Artists', Peter Pears: 1944-1947 File 1B, BBC WAC. Julian Herbage was an important figure in the music programming of the Henry Wood Promenade Concerts and BBC's concerts from the 1920s to 1940s. Herbage's comments of Ferrier and Pears's Proms performances survived in the artists' personal files and provide insights into the review and decision making policies of the BBC.

operas, but more specifically, the introduction of *Peter Grimes* necessitated a different type of voice for Britten's leading tenor roles: a voice that was unconventional yet crucial to the creation and sound of a new English opera.

Despite premiering most of Britten's operatic tenor roles, previous audition material would have confirmed that conventional opera was not Pears's strong suit. Britten used Pears's voice as both a vocal and an operatic reassessment for Britain. The lack of British opera – both in terms of an operatic composer or an operatic singer – were generally recognised as symptoms of Britain's 'unmusical problem'. With the potential of a great national composer and his singer, British media, especially the BBC seem determined to shift negative preconceptions of Britain's twentieth-century musical scene.

Pears's earlier BBC broadcasts highlights the drastic shift that he went through from singing light fare to major operatic and vocal works with one of the most prominent composers in Britain. The shift not only consolidated future operatic and stylistic conventions for future English tenors wanting to sing Britten's operatic roles, but also cemented Pears's position as leading tenor in the British music scene. It is easy to see that promotion of Britten's opera went hand in hand with the promotion of Pears and his distinctive voice. Given Britten's increasingly prized status as leading composer of Britain, what is significant here was the rate of acceptance that promoted and established Pears as an invaluable singer of the BBC. The level of recognition that was offered to Pears inevitably helped validate Britten as national composer and icon of Britain, which goes to say that in promoting Britten, the BBC promoted Pears and his voice as well. This was most prominent after the introduction of the Third Programme in 1946.

The Third Programme played a huge part in securing and sustaining Pears as part of the Britten-Pears and British Music establishment. The correspondence below between Third Programme staff Herbert Murrill to Music Booking Manager and John Lowe showed difficulties in striking a balance between securing the duo and featuring them too much in the programmes. BBC's assistant Director of Music, Herbert Murrill questioned the BBC in using too much of Britten and Pears throughout the week. Murril's statement featured the duo in a wide range of music from Mahler's songs, Purcell's airs to duets and cantatas of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[38] In John Lowe's reply to Murrill, justification was based upon the fact that Britten and Pears were extremely busy and when the BBC had a chance to broadcast them they tended to have them in longer stretches of period. Lowe's

[38] Herbert Murrill to Music Booking Manager, 24 November 1947, 'Third Programme 23-29 November 1947', Peter Pears: 1944-1947, File 1B, BBC WAC.

emphatic reply shows the BBC's keenness and pride in securing Britten and Pears in their programmes:

> I think we can feel satisfied that these three appearances will add distinction to the programme. Surely we cannot, on the one hand, cut out foreign artists in order to make as much use as possible of British artists and, on the other hand, fail to make as much use as we can of the best English artists?[39]

Murrill's reply in the same memo again stressed good spacing and most importantly, quality performances as key to the Third Programmes' broadcasts, something that he felt was lacking in Pears:

> No: it's all a matter of good spacing. Do we agree that we have the best in Peter Pears? I thought his Mahler this week definitely poor.

This issue of discrepancy between the performer's nationality and the quality of the performance was frequently debated, as we will see later in Ferrier's case. In Murrill's reply to Lowe, he opposed Lowe's fervent promotion of local talent at the expense of musical standards. In Pears's case, the BBC's promotion of him conflicted with the fact that the quality of his singing did not match up with his over-usage. It was, however, Pears's English identity and his connection with Britten rather than his voice that secured his BBC employment.

Pears was nonetheless, especially noted for the part of Evangelist in Bach's *St Matthew Passion*. Two reviews of the same broadcast in the Third Programme on 15 April 1949 revealed that Pears's performance was commended, despite retranslations in the Evangelist's part and blemishes in the performance. According to Basil Douglas:

> Peter Pears gave the most distinguished performance – his Evangelist has developed in range and variety of expression, and it was only unfortunate that his diction, very clear for the most part, should tend to be cloudy when he was singing pianissimo, and occasionally when he was making an unconventional departure from the Novello text.[40]

John Lowe's review showed uncertainty about Pears's vocal interpretations where 'there is too much sanctimonious hush and slowing up in the more tragic moments. Nevertheless,

[39] John Lowe to Herbert Murrill, 1947, 'Peter Pears & Benjamin Britten', Peter Pears: 1944-1947, File 1B, BBC WAC.
[40] Basil Douglas. St. Matthew Passion: 15th April, 1949, Peter Pears: 1944-1947, File 1B, BBC WAC, 20 April 1949.

the perfect intonation and intellectual force compel one's respect.'[41] Pears's broadcast of the Evangelist represented a liminal and uncertain acceptance of his voice: one characterised by his diction, intelligence, interpretation and intonation but never appreciation of the sheer timbral qualities of his voice. Pears's vocal strengths resonated, or perhaps were restricted to, the genres of oratorio and *lieder*, for which he was particularly noted. In other words, Pears's voice embodied the sound of the new radio voice: one that relied heavily on clarity, pronunciation and articulation for expression. The BBC was, in this case, instrumental in promoting a voice that is seen as ideal for broadcast and used that to emphasise control, lyricism instead of power and drama.

To the BBC, Pears's voice was bound to notions of nation and nationhood. There was an implicit understanding by the BBC of perceptions and constructions that were made behind Pears's voice: that the national broadcasting medium needed strong representatives to be able to showcase and display the nation's musical strength and prowess. The Britten-Pears duo was a British musical powerhouse, intended to reinvigorate what was thought to be a bleak musical scene. The artistic and private partnership of Britten and Pears was securely established and sustained by Pears's voice, one that is unique yet problematic in terms of fitting to the conventions of opera. Nonetheless, it was prominent in the twentieth-century British musical scene because of Pears's heavy involvement in the premiere of new works by British composers. Besides the twelve operatic roles of Britten that he premiered, Pears gave voice to works by Boaz, Walton and Tippett. In his realisation of these works, Pears's voice embodied an actualisation of ideals brought forth and shaped by the English Musical Renaissance in the previous century but executed through the BBC. Pears's voice, besides being Britten's mouthpiece effectively voiced the works of British composers. In other words, the Britten-Pears Establishment's status was conferred not only through the careful and conscious implementation of the BBC and their broadcasting policies and ideals, but also because of its correlation with nationhood and national identity, there was a keenness for posterity to institutionalise it as a national icon.

[41] John Lowe. St Matthew Passion (Bach): April 15th 1949: Third Programme, Peter Pears: 1944-1947, File 1B, BBC WAC, 21 April 1949.

4.3 Kathleen Ferrier – An Ordinary Diva[42]

The BBC's employment of Ferrier illustrated the high/low culture tensions that the BBC was negotiating in building a national and international version of British identity. While Ferrier broadcast predominantly light entertainment music in her earlier BBC years, her rising artistic profile and broadcasts both locally on the Home Service and internationally on the Overseas Service reflect how her performances and programme choices negotiated the precarious relationship with German music and language during the war and post-war period. By understanding the inner workings of Ferrier's career with the BBC, I elucidate how her voice transcended cultural barriers through notions of high/low culture and navigated the emergence of highbrow/lowbrow distinctions significant in Britain's music and broadcast culture.

Ferrier's broadcasting debut with the BBC was as a pianist instead of a singer on the Regional Programme. According to a *Radio Times* listings, Ferrier was scheduled to broadcast 'A Ballad Concert' in a Manchester Studio on 3 July 1930, from 12 to 1 pm.[43] Her first broadcasting opportunities as a singer came nine years later, when she performed in four variety and light entertainment programmes broadcast from Newcastle, entitled 'Quick Change', 'Ballad Concert', 'All the Best' on 1 May, 18 May, 20 June and 10 July. Producer of 'Quick Change', Cecil McGivern's favourable reply to Maurice Johnstone (then Music Director of the BBC North Region) on advice regarding Ferrier's request for an audition might be one of the reasons for Ferrier's successful entry into BBC's Manchester studios.[44] Her first major BBC broadcast for Home Service on 11 January 1942 featured light music in a programme titled 'Alfred Barker and his Orchestra'.

1944 to 1945 was a prolific year in broadcasting for Ferrier and represented a gradual change in the kind of programmes in which she featured in, shifting from English folksongs in variety programmes to more prominent roles, for example in the BBC's starred programme *Messiah* at the end of 1944. The first few Home Service broadcasts featured Ferrier in collaboration with other artists, performing miscellaneous programmes such as 'Voice and Viola' with two songs by Brahms (7 August 1943) and 'English Music for Voice and Organ' with three songs by Maurice Greene (17 February 1944). Basil Douglas was responsible for Ferrier's major break with the BBC, after he enlisted her as a contralto soloist with the BBC Northern Orchestra to sing Debussy's *Blessed Damozel (La*

[42] This title was taken from a BBC documentary on Ferrier by Suzanne Philips, "Kathleen Ferrier- An Ordinary Diva," (BBC 4 Television: Decca Music Group Limited, 2012).
[43] *Radio Times*, 27 June 1930.
[44] Fifield, *Letters and Diaries of Kathleen Ferrier*, 243.

demoiselle élue) and the brief part of Mary in the Spinning Chorus of Wagner's *Flying Dutchman*. This performance was held in Stockport's Centenary Hall and broadcast on 26 February 1944 with the distinguished soprano, Joan Cross. On 26 August 1944, Ferrier sang in a programme of Brahms *Four Serious Songs* with the BBC Northern Orchestra, the first of many broadcasts of the same repertoire with soloists Henry Cummings, Isobel Baillie and Heddle Nash. Steuart Wilson, English tenor and then Music Director of the BBC Overseas Service, made a report on the four singers' performance of Brahms that was extremely critical of all but Ferrier. Wilson credited Ferrier as having 'a fine voice, the best singer of the four. A natural sense of interpretation, tempo, phrasing and a long flow of rhythm.'[45]

Ferrier's performances of repertoire translated into English during her early broadcasting years for the Home Service indicate the BBC's effort to cultivate an appetite for art music in the more accessible English language.[46] However, what was surprising here was the usage of Germanic repertoire by the likes of Brahms and Wagner, even when the Second World War was still on-going. This is further exacerbated by the anxiety felt in comparison with Austro-Germanic models and compositions that had tainted much of the musical discourse and activities in Britain since the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. It became clear that Ferrier's career with the BBC illustrated how her voice within a few years came to signify the shifting cultural and artistic changes in programing policies of the BBC towards foreign, especially Germanic, repertoire. While Ferrier's performance of Wagner and Brahms in English reflected the BBC's keenness in broadcasting art music in the vernacular, it also portrayed the Corporation's reluctance in programming sung German repertoire, especially when both appreciation and national morale was low in the country.

The next few years from 1945 showed Ferrier's rising status in the BBC especially in her engagements to broadcast and represent English musicians on overseas networks such as the London Overseas Programme for Africa. Besides promoting a national image of Britain at home, the BBC sought to extend and sustain the imperial rule of an unstable and soon-to-be dissolved British Empire through the medium of broadcasting from the 1930s. The BBC Empire Service was first set up in 1932 and was replaced later by the BBC Overseas Service in 1939. According to John MacKenzie, John Reith's set up of the

[45] See Wilson's report dated 15 September 1944 in Fifield, *Letters and Diaries of Kathleen Ferrier*, 248.
[46] Laura Tunbridge's work gives an indication of how *lieder* were seldom programmed during the BBC's early broadcast years and even those that were broadcast were mostly sung in English. Ferrier's career with the BBC was evidence of this. See Tunbridge, "Singing Translations: The Politics of Listening Between the Wars," 66, 83.

Empire Service was 'part of this great internationalist process under Anglo-Saxon leadership', hence an important tool in uniting and solidifying the imperialist rule of the British Empire.[47] This shows that the programmes and musicians selected to broadcast on the Overseas Service were especially important in promoting a strong national musical image of Britain, by putting out the best of native musical, especially elite, culture.

Ferrier's broadcast for the African Service on 31 March 1945 was a twelve-minute programme of English-translated songs consisting of 'Prepare thyself Zion' from Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, 'Margaret by the spinning wheel' by Schubert, (translated by Fox Strangways and Steuart Wilson), 'Love's answer' by Schubert, 'Why go barefoot my pretty one' and 'The Blacksmith' both by Brahms and translated by Whistler. This performance earned an enthusiastic review from BBC London's Leonard G. Dennis:

> This was a superb performance in every respect. That she is probably the finest contralto voice in the country is her own good fortune. That she uses it with perfect artistry is, however, what really matters. In Bach, Schubert and Brahms she combined voice intellect and heart in a way that put her among the finest singers of this or any other time. Presentation and timing were good and if the report shows that the recording was successful I would strongly recommend that this be used somewhere other than just the usual Pacific reproduction.[48]

Dennis's review was an important indication of how the BBC gradually came to value and prize Ferrier's voice. In the report, Dennis praised Ferrier's performance to the extent of possibly retransmitting her recording more widely beyond the Africa and the Pacific region. This was April 1945, a few months before the end of the Second World War, while Britain was still engulfed in battle against Nazi Germany and the Axis power, and more importantly two years after the ending of the North African Campaign in 1943. The entirely English translation of Austro-German song repertoire sung by an English contralto in the Overseas Service was perhaps an attempted display of musical prowess by the BBC to the then-fragmenting British Empire. On the other hand, it was might also be seen as an attempt to counter German influence in Northern Africa and to ensure a post-war English-dominated African cultural scene. Of course, it was hardly surprising that the BBC would employ translations of German *lieder*, especially since it matched the Corporation's motto for musical enculturation and education to the British public. Issues of

[47] Mackenzie, "'In Touch with the Infinite' The BBC and the Empire, 1923-53," 186.
[48] L.G. Dennis. Kathleen Ferrier: African Service: Saturday 31st March, Artists' Personal File Kathleen Ferrier File, 1942-1946, 910, BBC Written Archives Centre, 3 April 1945.

translation in *lieder* during wartime were problematic less for the musical genre itself than for the idea of singing in the language of the enemy.[49] Hence, besides being a less offensive way in the continuation of music making, translations were more of an attempt to remove German culture from German repertoire. For Dennis to realise the capabilities that Ferrier's voice and singing could bring to the representation of Great Britain during the hostile war years shows understanding of how the war against German occupation was fought on more than one front. Even though the repertory risked reinstating Austro-Germanic hegemony in music, vocal translations of Austro-German *lieder* into English clearly demonstrate that, by imposing their own singers and language on the music, the BBC sought to assert their own power over the repertoire and its interpretation.

Ferrier's broadcasting career with the BBC also established her as an important promoter of English vocal works. Her performance repertoire of folk songs and English art songs from composers such as Landon Ronald, Maurice Greene, Gustav Holst and Charles Villiers Stanford with the BBC Home Service were direct consequences of the English Musical Renaissance instigated in the last century. On the other hand, her voice exposed the British public to a wide array of vocal works otherwise inaccessible due to language barriers. Before the advent of the Third Programme, repertoire for her broadcasts had been, except for a few miscellany items of English songs, oratorios and masses, built strongly on the vocal repertory of English-translated foreign vocal works. These were, for example: Cécile Chaminade's 'L'anneau d'argent' as 'The silver ring'; 'La speranza e guinta', translated as 'Spring', from Handel's *Ottone,* HWV 15; and 'Come, come my voice', Alfred Whitehead's adaptation of Bach's 'Bist du bei mir'. Ferrier's voice and broadcast of English-translated songs, represented the backlash, spurred earlier at the end of the First World War, against songs sung in German, the language of the enemy's vernacular.[50] Aversion to German songs was one of the reasons for the promotion of native English songs and translations of foreign works. This lined up with the anxiety felt by local musicians and resulted in apprehension against working foreign musicians in the United Kingdom because they were deemed better singers and performers. The government's invoking of the 1920 Aliens Order for the prohibition of certain musicians to Britain was evidence that the threat of unemployment for local musicians was genuinely felt to an extent that measures were to be taken to protect local musicians' interests.[51]

[49] Tunbridge, "Singing Translations: The Politics of Listening Between the Wars," 55.
[50] Tunbridge, "Singing Translations: The Politics of Listening Between the Wars," 54-55.
[51] See Tunbridge, "Singing Translations: The Politics of Listening Between the Wars," for safeguarding of British musician's interests in the Incorporated Society of Musicians' imposing of income tax against foreign musicians' earnings in 73, 74.

Despite two decades after the Order, Ferrier's voice and performances were still reflective of a culminating reaction against the British music industry's reliance on foreign singers. Her increasing employment by the Corporation indicated their attempt to make full use of her voice due to her rising popularity and profitability. When the Third Programme was inaugurated in 1946, Ferrier disproved her role as singer merely for the Home Service and became, according to Fifield, 'what half a century later would clumsily be termed a "crossover artist"'.[52] A 'crossover artist' might best describe the work that Ferrier undertook in the following years with the BBC, as records reveal that her broadcasts ranged from a Schubert song recital on the Third Programme to a 'Music in Miniature' series at the Light Programme.[53] BBC Genome records give an idea of how popular Ferrier was on the BBC airwaves, showing that she broadcast in two different programmes and networks on the same day. Both the Third Programme and the Home Service broadcast Ferrier on 1 May 1948. The Home Service aired her 'Music in Miniature' series at 8.45 in the morning, while the Third Programme had pianist Frederick Stone and violist Frederick Riddle accompanying her in a recital later in the evening at 7.45 pm.[54]

Similarly to Pears, Ferrier's BBC career also highlighted discrepancies between the BBC's policy of high musical quality with protection of national interests. The Third Programme Etienne Amyot's (Assistant for Planning) belief that there were no outstanding musicians in Britain was strongly contested by others in the department. In a memo to George Barnes (BBC Executive and Third Programme Station Controller), Kenneth Wright (Acting Director of Music) expressed unease with Amyot's position and wrote that: 'we must not tacitly assume that there are few, if any British artists who can give us fine performances of a lot of this music which you want'.[55] Amyot's despair in the engagement of world-class musicians in Britain directly challenged the ideals that Wright (or the BBC for that matter) stood for in raising standards of local musicians. In the backdrop of such bleak disappointment with the British local performing scene, Ferrier's increasing musical profile proved advantageous for the BBC. Due to her British nationality, she satisfied both the BBC's policies of possessing high musical standards and profiting national artists.

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[52] Fifield, *Letters and Diaries of Kathleen Ferrier*, 249.
[53] 'Music in Miniature', described as 'a musical entertainment', was one of the many music programmes that Basil Douglas arranged and built with the idea of attracting a wider range of listeners to art music. Despite its portrayal as a 'light entertainment music' programme, it featured prominent artists of the art music scene in chamber-like musical settings. All three singers, including Deller and Pears, performed in parts of the programme, which broadcast in both the Light Programme and the Home Service.
[54] See "BBC Genome Project: Radio Times 1923-2009," for detailed listings on 1 May 1948.
[55] Kenneth Wright to George Barnes, 17 November 1947, 'Third Programme Schedule', R2/500/2, BBC WAC; cited in Carpenter, *The Envy of the World: Fifty Years of the BBC Third Programme and Radio Three*, 61, 62.

It is plausible that Ferrier's and certainly Britten and Pears's favourable disposition in the BBC were attempts to quell general dissatisfaction with British performers in the local music-performing scene. Ferrier's popularity with the BBC, especially from 1947 until her death in 1953, was further attested to the fact that John Lowe, the Third's Music Organizer insisted on incorporating Ferrier along with Britten and Pears in the planning of two song recitals per week for the Third Programme. Lowe's comment to Douglas suggested that the song recitals should have the highest quality of singing by engaging 'only first rank singers, from any country', especially 'when big singers are coming for opera' and would rather use gramophone records rather than have a second rate replacement.[56] Lowe envisaged Pears, Ferrier and Britten as British artists whose quality would be compatible with the description of 'first rank'. A year later, Lowe's desperation to secure Ferrier showed the BBC's anxiety in employing the singer as her surging popularity meant increasing difficulties in scheduling. Lowe's successful request to the Music Booking Manager in reserving Ferrier for 'three dates per quarter – even twelve months or more in advance' from June 1949 indicated how the BBC prized Ferrier's rising star status.[57] Ferrier was, in a way, used as a means to defend local musicians and as an example of high music-making standards that Britain could attain through the BBC. Ferrier embodied and represented the BBC's envisaging in the revival of musical standards among British musicians through the Third Programme.[58]

Ferrier's broadcasts in 1948 were wide ranging, from songs by Stanford to Bach's *St Matthew's Passion* at the Royal Albert Hall; the BBC exhausted every opportunity to include Ferrier in their broadcasts. Other prominent broadcasts include the Holland Festival on the Third Programme where Ferrier sang Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* under Georg Szell and the Concertgebouw Orchestra on 3 July. Another broadcast of Ferrier singing Schumann's *Frauenliebe und Leben* in German on 11 November earned Douglas's praise, despite criticisms for her lack of interpretation:

> I have seldom heard a more beautiful vocal performance than this – it was a model of finely-controlled tone, musical phrasing, and excellent German diction. As an interpretation, it lacked imagination – the impeccable line of tone was untroubled

[56] 'When big singers', R27/500/2, 'Song recitals in the Third Programme', 10 March 1947, cited in Carpenter, *The Envy of the World: Fifty Years of the BBC Third Programme and Radio Three*, 54.
[57] Music Booking Manager to John Lowe, 22 September 1948, 'Kathleen Ferrier', Artists' Personal File Kathleen Ferrier File 1, 1942-1946, 910, BBC WAC.
[58] Etienne Amyot's response after hearing a Schnable piano recital at the Albert Hall in May 1946 declared that 'such a standard [has] not been heard in an English concert hall since 1939'. His aspiration in reviving such musical standards was raised with the advent of the Third Programme, see Carpenter, *The Envy of the World: Fifty Years of the BBC Third Programme and Radio Three*, 10, 19.

> with the extremes of passionate exultation and sorrow which are the life-blood of this cycle. But you can't have everything – it was lovely singing.[59]

The acclaim attributed to her singing here was notable for the fact that she was already singing in German only a few years after the end of the Second World War. While previous discussion showed how antipathy against German triggered efforts to discard German sung repertoire from concert halls, Ferrier's vocal repertoire represented gradual appreciation for authenticity and accuracy for singing in the original language. Good articulation and diction became, as evidenced in Douglas's review of Ferrier's performance, increasingly prized as crucial performance criteria.[60] Such ideals of clear pronunciation and diction are, in a way, versions of vocal disembodiment embraced by the BBC that tended to remove the singer's voice from body. This contributes to the BBC's promotion and adoption of a sound – effective for broadcast, but passionless and unemotional – as English and a national ideal.

The same year saw Ferrier as a guest in the Light Programme's 'Woman's Hour' on 6 December. This programme invited famous women personalities as guests and previously featured former ballerina and director of the Royal Ballet Ninette de Valois, singer Joan Cross and pianist Harriet Cohen. The programme was an indication of Ferrier's star appeal, propelled by her performances in the premiere of Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* in 1946. The talk given for Woman's Hour was 'My First Opera', where she described her experiences in performing the title role that Britten had written for her. Although Ferrier appeared in only two operas, this did not limit her popularity as an international singer. Her worldwide fame was evidence of how she achieved international stardom and recognition not as an operatic singer but through promotion of her as an 'ordinary diva' – a title supported by the low range of her contralto voice; her repertoire of oratorios, lieder and song cycles and her ability to attract a wide range of audiences surpassing beyond the programmes of Home Service, Light Programme and Third Programme.

Ferrier's voice in the BBC during the 1940s and 1950s signifies the breaking down of barriers between either the low or the highbrow musical tastes of audiences during the mid-twentieth century. Despite that, reports nearing the end of Ferrier's life in 1953 showed that BBC personnel were still at a loss in categorising the singer. Discussions of

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[59] Basil Douglas to John Music Booking Manager Lowe, 16 November 1948, 'Kathleen Ferrier: Frauenliebe und Leben: Third [Programme] 11th Nov', Artists' Personal File, Kathleen Ferrier File 2 1947-1948, BBC WAC. See also Fifield, *Letters and Diaries of Kathleen Ferrier*, 259, 60.
[60] Tunbridge, "Singing Translations: The Politics of Listening Between the Wars," 66-68.

BBC personnel Michael Wharton with Dennis Mitchell of the Features Department in proposal for four half-hour Light Programme broadcasts indicated differing opinions towards the singer. Wharton's reply to Dennis Mitchell reported that:

> Kathleen Ferrier began her career as a singer of ballads. She is not primarily an operatic singer, but will shortly be appearing in 'Orfeo'. She is particularly noted for her singing of Brahms and Mahler. She could not be expected to sing 'popular' music. The half-hour programmes would each include about fifteen minutes of music in two or three groups, e.g. arias from oratorios, groups of folk-song, Brahms' Alto Rhapsody.[61]

While Pears's and Deller's voice appealed and were consumed mostly by audiences of specialised musical interests, Ferrier's career transcended fluidly between the stratifications of highbrow and lowbrow music. Ferrier's varied repertoire and her wide appeal signified that she did not conform to either distinction of musical tastes. Her listeners were wide-ranging; there was no discredit to her abilities nor lack of professionalism as listeners were quite happy for her to shift between singing 'Kitty, my love' to singing German in Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*. Ferrier's career at the BBC and her voice illustrates the changing political, artistic and cultural scenes that the Corporation was negotiating in building a national and international version of British identity: firstly, through wartime and postwar relations with German language and music, secondly, through the navigation of emerging tensions between lowbrow/highbrow distinctions in British broadcast culture.

4.4 Alfred Deller – Hearing History

Deller's debut broadcast in 1945 for the 250th anniversary of Purcell's death was a prominent move for his broadcast career. As we have seen in Chapter Two, Deller was engaged for this performance because of his countertenor voice that was deemed as historically appropriate for performances of Purcell's odes. The BBC participated fully in the glorification of Purcell as England's national musical icon. For this event, a series of three concerts on the Home Service was broadcast in commemoration of his death. The promotion of Purcell went hand in hand with the promotion of the countertenor voice.

[61] Michael Wharton to Arthur Spencer, 22 January 1953, 'Kathleen Ferrier', N18/428 North Region: Artist Ferrier Kathleen 1939-1955, BBC WAC.

Hence, a voice that was previously confined within ecclesiastical means could now be heard nationally through broadcasts. The third concert in the Purcell series featured his Ode for St Cecilia's Day, *Hail, bright Cecilia* and marked the start of Deller's relationship with the BBC. The Purcell-Deller connection was further strengthened by the myth that Deller's voice was deemed 'authentically accurate' for the repertoire of the Renaissance and Baroque period, especially for the music of Purcell.

However, Deller's entry into broadcasting with the BBC, as demonstrated in the second chapter of this thesis, was also a particularly difficult one. He was turned down at least three times: the first time on account of the male alto voice not being a voice type that was recognised by the BBC, the second for a solo part in Handel's *Admeto*[62] and the third time in Handel's *Messiah*. In January 1947, Deller wrote to BBC artists' booking Arthur Wynn, asking about decisions regarding an interview he had attended for an invitation to perform a solo part in Handel's *Admeto*.[63] According to the letter, Deller did not receive a reply since the interview and was anxious when he saw it being advertised for February. There were no further correspondence from any of the BBC files regarding this matter and there were no records of Deller performing in any Handel performances for 1947. It was assumed that Deller was turned down for the actual broadcast.

The last rejection occurred after Alfred Deller wrote in a letter dated 16 July 1947 to Arthur Wynn for an opportunity to perform as soloist in Handel's *Messiah*. In Music Director Herbert Murrill's note to Music Booking Manager, there were two reasons for Deller's rejection. Firstly, Murrill indicated that 'Home Service rarely books artists for *Messiah*, [as] most performances are taken O.B. [outside broadcast].' Secondly, Murrill claimed that since Deller maintained that he is a countertenor and not a male alto, the absence of a countertenor part in *Messiah* meant that it would be unlikely to use him in the performance.[64] Unbeknown to Murrill, Deller was unfairly turned down if judgement was based upon issues of accuracy. Handel rewrote the solo parts of *Messiah* for alto castrato Gaetano Guadagni in 1750 even though it is more commonly performed and known for contralto.[65] Even after three successful performances, BBC directors and managers still did not wholeheartedly embraced Deller's voice. However, Deller's performance of *Messiah*, advertised 'as it was originally written by Handel' in St. Paul's Cathedral three years later

[62] Interestingly the Third Programme did broadcast *Admeto* on 1 February 1947 at 7 pm but with Trevor Anthony, a bass, singing the title role. See *Radio Times* listings on http://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/5cc73a1d3d80442aba33f16f18759903, "BBC Genome Project: Radio Times 1923-2009."
[63] Alfred Deller to Arthur Wynn, 11 January 1947, Alfred Deller File 1: 1935-1950, BBC WAC.
[64] Deller to Wynn, 16 July 1947.
[65] Donald Burrows, *Handel: Messiah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 37.

on 18 March 1950, indicated changing attitudes towards the countertenor especially during the 1950s. A *Times* critic credited detailed study of original manuscripts that restored the importance and employment of the countertenor soloist in solos and duets of the oratorio.[66] It is clear that such musicological efforts in the performing and advocate of early to Baroque music equally influenced Deller's BBC broadcasting career.

The Corporation's policies towards the countertenor especially in the 1940s to 1950s reflect the drastic shifts that the countertenor underwent. There was much uncertainty about the countertenor voice in the early half of the 1940s. The BBC as prime broadcast station in the country, was then still reluctant to acknowledge a voice type that was tainted by negative perceptions of alto voices in church choirs. As we have seen, BBC personnel and managers then were apprehensive in using a lesser-known voice type for great sacred masterworks such as *Messiah*. However, they might have countenanced using Deller for less familiar works of Purcell.

The advent of the Third Programme by the BBC brought new broadcasting opportunities for Deller where he broadcast mainly English madrigals, Purcell anthems and Baroque operas for high male voices. Hodgson asserted that the BBC had previously ignored the voice type until the inception of the Third Programme.[67] There was slight trepidation in the usage of the countertenor voice within the BBC, a fact demonstrated by Deller's anxious letter regarding his billing in the Third Programme's inaugural concert. He wrote to Arthur Wynn on 5 September 1946, detailing his insecurities:

> I much prefer to be known as a Counter-Tenor and not as an Alto (need I tell you why!) and would be most grateful if this would be made clear in any printed programme or announcement.[68]

Arthur Wynn's reply: 'We certainly intend to bill you as a Counter-Tenor, and not an Alto', signifies the BBC's gradual acceptance of the countertenor voice.[69] Deller had reasons to be uncertain about his billing, as the previous engagement with the Home Service for the broadcast of the 250th anniversary of Purcell's death cast him as an 'alto', a voice type commonly attributed to female singers. The countertenor's sexually ambiguous voice, as detailed in Chapter Four, might have been the cause for gender confusion. Even though it would be unavoidable that listeners might form their own misconceptions about the

[66] ""Messiah" in First Version," *The Times*, 25 February 1950.
[67] Hodgson, "The Countertenor," 216.
[68] Alfred Deller to Arthur Wynn, 2 September 1946, Alfred Deller File 1: 1935-1950, BBC WAC.
[69] Arthur Wynn to Alfred Deller, 5 September 1946, Alfred Deller File 1: 1935-1950, BBC WAC.

countertenor, Deller was determined that, at least in print, the BBC's programme should be clear of unwarranted confusion.

During the post-war austerity years, the Third Programme was applauded by music critics and writers for promoting and playing lesser-known works, a move that attests to what Tom Wintringham declared in the *New Statesman*: 'From what the "Third" gives us …I get the feeling that we are becoming a musical nation again.'[70] There were certainly high musical hopes for the Third Programme to be what Edward Sackville-West envisaged as the 'greatest educative and civilising force that England has known since the secularisation of the theatre in the sixteenth century.'[71] Based on listings of Third Programme broadcasts in the year 1947 alone, there was widespread promotion of Purcell's music. Recognizing the Third's aims to educate the British public, its especially fervent education in Purcell and his music shows that the network had a priority on its agenda – to instil national and musical pride in Purcell.

There were altogether three series of musical lectures on Purcell. Most of them involved Michael Tippett who, as detailed in Chapter Two, played a central role in the promoting of Deller's countertenor career. The first series, 'Purcell and the English Tradition' was given by Tippett on interpretations of Purcell and encouraged by George Barnes, Controller of the Third Programme. Launched on 5 April 1947 and subtitled as 'the Singing of the English Language' for the first programme, this series ran for four programmes with Tippett himself as conductor and promoted Deller and Tippett's own Morley College Choir in the musical illustrations. A few months later on the 5 October, the Third Programme started the 'Purcell Anthology', which was a new eight-programme series devised by Anthony Lewis and devoted to the choral, orchestral and chamber works of Purcell. While the 'Purcell Anthology' was still running, Tippett and his Morley College Choir returned for a second series of Purcell's music entitled 'Purcell and the Elizabethans' nearer the end of the year.

Such opportunities in the Third Programme had a direct and enormous impact on Deller's broadcasting career, as a by-product of the early musical revival movement and the revival of Purcell's music. All three of these series featured Deller as soloist in at least two of the programmes. He was billed as countertenor in Purcell's *Indian Queen*, and was heard twice in a relatively short period of two months. His first few broadcasts with the

[70] Tom Wintringham, *New Statesman*, 27 September 1947, cited in Carpenter, The Envy of the World: Fifty Years of the Bbc Third Programme and Radio Three, 70.
[71] Edward Sackville West, *Picture Post*, 30 November 1946, cited in Carpenter, The Envy of the World: Fifty Years of the Bbc Third Programme and Radio Three, 51.

Third Programme in 1947 were almost entirely based on the repertoire of Purcell except for a few programmes by Britten, and Heinrich Schütz. The employment of Deller by the Third Programme increased opportunities for broadcasts of Purcell to be heard on British airwaves. The *Daily Telegraph*'s Robert Erskine noted the Third Programme's contribution in resuscitating interest in Elizabethan music with the engagement of artists such as Deller.[72] Hence, Deller's countertenor voice was an extension towards the didactic aims that the Third Programme had for its listeners.

In conjunction with the Third Programme's determination to educate the British public about the musical riches of their own country, the nationality issue that we have already seen in the broadcast careers of Pears and Ferrier emerged clearly in its approach to programming. There was apprehension in the engagement of more foreign than native composers in the Third's music broadcasts. This theme played out distinctly when its music personnel were commissioning a series of work for the Third Programme's first anniversary in 1947. Approaches to Tippett, Walton, Britten, Vaughan Williams, Alan Rawsthorne, Patrick Hadley and even Richard Strauss and Francis Poulenc for commissions of new compositions were all futile. Among them, Vaughan Williams strongly opposed the idea of commissioning new works. He wrote to John Lowe:

> PLEASE do NOT have specially written works for your celebration, they are always DUDS – choose a programme of all the best works of our own & other countries (especially ours) starting with that wonderful mass by an unknown English composer which was done at St John's College Cambridge a few years ago. I wish Mr Tippett would do more of that kind of thing instead of being seduced by his foreign companions into wasting his efforts over the dreary Monteverdi stuff.[73]

Suffice to say that there were no commissioned works for the Third Programme's first anniversary concert. It is unclear if Vaughan Williams's specific advice was heeded, but the concert on 28 September featured previously composed music by Walton, Bax, Holst, Purcell, Matthew Locke, Boyce and Rawsthorne. Vaughan Williams's sentiments against new works by foreign composers were undoubtedly part of a bigger national identity issue that was symptomatic with anxieties felt by British composers against Continental strides in musical modernism. Philip Rupprecht identified similar strands of anxiety in British musical identity during the early 1950s with notions of 'critical hostility

[72] Robert Erskine, "Cathedral Music," *Daily Telegraph* 1953.
[73] Ralph Vaughan Williams to John Lowe, 21 February 1947, RCONT1, BBC WAC; cited in Carpenter, *The Envy of the World: Fifty Years of the BBC Third Programme and Radio Three*, 62.

to artistic abstraction; skittishness in the face of postwar artistic "internationalism" and the prospect of European political alliances; and above all, a reliance on stereotyped notions of "self" and "other" in both cultural-political and music-historical spheres'. [74] Despite the enthusiastic promotion of national composers and works, Vaughan Williams's ideology, principally associated with the English pastoral, folk-song strand in British music, suffered criticisms as insular and inhibiting.[75] The Third Programme's preoccupation with Purcell, legitimised as a valid foray into the world of early music, was a means to break away from such declaredly parochial attitudes of nationalist English music, yet it still insisted upon national identification offered by a prominent English composer.

The promotion of English music was clearly felt in music broadcasts of the Third Programme. Nonetheless, the BBC equally played their role as prime instigators of the early music movement. George Barnes, Third Programme Station Controller's letter to John Lowe in 1947 detail an indication of the Third's attitudes towards 'historically-informed' performances: 'Broadcasting can lead the musical ear back to an appreciation of the subtleties [of pre-classical music] impossible to concert-giving organisations where masses alone draw money.'[76] Barnes saw the Third's role as champion of the early music-making scene in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s due to it being supposedly unaffected by threats of commercialisation and ignorance to which public performances were constantly exposed.

Deller's role in the Third Programme helped the BBC define its involvement and participation in the early music scene, most notably with broadcasts in which Deller's own consort was involved. The Deller Consort, founded and directed by Deller himself in 1950, was created while he was still engaged with the Golden Age Singers, another five-voiced consort founded by Margaret Field-Hyde. The Deller Consort's first engagement with the BBC on 7 February 1951 was a Third Programme broadcast on Guillaume Du Fay. Introduced by musicologist Denis Stevens, the five-voiced consort featured soprano April Cantelo, Deller as countertenor, tenor Max Wortbley and baritone Norman Platt accompanied by the instrumental ensemble, Schola Polyphonica. Henry Washington, director of Schola Polyphonica, directed the performers in a programme that featured an assortment by Du Fay including sacred pieces such as the *L'homme armé* Mass and his

[74] See Philip Rupprecht, ""Something Slightly Indecent": British Composers, the European Avant-garde, and National Stereotypes in the 1950s," *Musical Quarterly* 91, no. 3-4 (2009): 275-326, 276.
[75] Among other criticisms of the national folk and pastoral music scene was Elisabeth Lutyens' terminology of the 'cowpat school', see Stradling and Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance 1860-1940: Construction and Deconstruction*, 208; cited from M. Harries and S. Harries, *A Pilgrim Soul: The Life and Work of Elizabeth Lutyens* (Michael Joseph, 1989), 53.
[76] Carpenter, *The Envy of the World: Fifty Years of the BBC Third Programme and Radio Three*, 56.

ballades and rondeaux.[77] Stevens's work on medieval, Renaissance and Baroque music resulted in the programming of music by composers such as Tallis, Machaut and Dunstable. His participation in the BBC Music Department as programme planner and producer in 1949 was part of an increased effort of the Third Programme to include 'pre-classical programmes'.[78] Stevens's training at Oxford equipped him to produce stylistically aware programmes aimed to attract listeners on the airwaves. String players, according to him, found it easier to cultivate a historically-informed awareness; the vocalists on the other hand, were an entirely different matter:

> But it was the vocalists with whom we had to work the hardest, because they'd been brought up in the tradition of cathedral singing. I had to teach them about ornaments. Fortunately I had several facsimiles of late sixteenth and early seventeenth century vocal books, and we could discuss them and they'd try them out. We soon had Deller doing the most magnificent tremolo. He was phenomenal – he could bring tears to your eyes.[79]

Dennis Stevens's description of Deller shows key aspects of the Third Programme's broadcasting ideals: on one hand, there was tendency to lose the trappings of tradition that come, in Deller's case, from the choral tradition in Britain; on the other, there was a willing affiliation with the past in Stevens's incorporation of earlier singing styles from old pedagogical books. Deller's voice inadvertently represented stark juxtapositions for the BBC as the nation's controller of musical tastes: as a voice that harked back to a distant past yet cultivated new listening tastes of early music performances for British listeners. Apart from nine broadcasts in the Light Programme and Home Service of the 'Music in Miniature' series, Deller's broadcasting career was completely dominated by the Third's production of Purcell series and early music performances. Without the Third Programme, Deller's broadcasting career would not have been as successful, nor would there have been as many broadcasts of early music repertoire. The joint relationship of Stevens, Deller, the Deller Consort and the Third Programme was an alignment that worked during that specific time frame of the mid-twentieth century. Deller's voice, though presented as anachronistic in a twentieth-century context, catered specifically to the mid-twentieth century listener where fragmentation of cultural, historical identification and national identity was particularly recognized in the countertenor's dislocation: the adaption

[77] See *Radio Times* listings of the Third Programme on 7 February 1951, "BBC Genome Project: Radio Times 1923-2009."
[78] Carpenter, *The Envy of the World: Fifty Years of the BBC Third Programme and Radio Three*, 103.
[79] Carpenter, *The Envy of the World: Fifty Years of the BBC Third Programme and Radio Three*, 104, 05.

and making sense of the present through the past. Deller's voice provided a means of looking to the idealized English past through the nationalisation of Purcell and his repertoire, and the BBC helped cement and secure that reputation.

4.5 Conclusion

The distinctive voices of Ferrier, Deller and Pears provided an insight into the mid-twentieth century musical scene in Britain at a time when the broadcast medium offered a collective and imagined sense of national identity to the public. The BBC's role as national broadcasting medium was beyond mere intentional promotion of Britain's musical culture; it provided renewed means of unifying culturally and nationally disparate communities in Britain through a widely accessible medium. It locates a more tangible version and sense of national identity through the simultaneity and commonality provided by the broadcasts and helped to voice and shape the national culture of Britain.[80] By understanding the specific roles that each of these singers were envisaged to play in the BBC, I uncover how these singers' voices embodied national ideals that helped in the establishment and construction of British musical identity.

Pears's career and voice epitomised such notions of the musical present in his collaboration with then current English composers. The Britten-Pears partnership afforded such an opportunity for the promotion of a new renaissance in British music and provided linearity between Deller's voice of the past and Pears's voice of the future. Ferrier's career represented the culminated reaction against reliance on foreign musicians, which was countered by her Overseas Service broadcasts, her promotion of folk songs and her usage of English-translated songs. Her career, which was supported by a middlebrow culture and offset by a certain fluidity in her voice, transcended cultural and musical barriers by not being fixed to highbrow/lowbrow distinctions. Deller's voice on the other hand, reconciled difficult notions of musical identity through an idealised past of Purcell. His career and voice consolidated by the adulation and fixation of English masters such as Purcell was to encourage motivations of the early music revival and the Purcell Revival. The countertenor's revival and foray into the musical scene were events that the Third Programme used to its advantage, securing and establishing the fictitious ties of invented English traditions with a ready-made and constructed musical present through a

[80] Susan J. Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 24.

historically-anachronistic voice. Underpinned by strong Reithian broadcasting ideals, the BBC broadcasts were part of the construction of present musical culture and ideals that perpetuated the continuation of a sense of national musical belonging and identity. With the promotion of national identity bound up within the voices of Ferrier, Deller and Pears, the BBC's participation helped to realise and establish a sense of commonality and connectivity for the musical future of Britain.

Conclusion: Voicing British Musical Identity

Throughout this thesis, I locate the reception of singers Kathleen Ferrier, Alfred Deller, Peter Pears and their voices as a nexus of Britain's national musical identity. I identify how tropes of nation and national belonging found in the understanding of their voices were, and still are, frequently associated with these singers. By shifting attention away from works and toward performance, voices and vocality, I incorporate their voices in a new methodological approach to answer the question of musical nationalism in Britain. This approach demonstrates how performers, more specifically English singers, figured in the construction of a national musical identity that was heavily marked by work-centred historiography that subsequently portrayed Britain as a non-musical nation. By analysing the workings that framed and addressed these singers' voices as national, I offer a chance of musical redress for Britain's national musical identity.

This thesis suggests two ways in which, by employing the reception of these singers in the study of national musical identity, British music historians and musicologists may arrive at a richer understanding of the nation's musical past. Firstly, by understanding how these singers' voices were not crucial but foundational to the creation of a national voice and vocality of Britain, I am recognising their cultural agency. Addressing singers as historical agents of British music situates performers not as mere voices or utterances of sound to a musical end, but as performing bodies whose singing voices embodied authority and autonomy. Through the appropriation of British composers such as Britten who employed their non-normative voices in the conception of a new type of English opera, I understand how aspects of non-normativity were incorporated as the norm in the pursuit of a distinctive national music identity for Britain.

Secondly, I demonstrate how the restoration of performers and their agency to the discourse of British music history can contribute toward a reassessment of Britain's national musical identity. The envoicing of Britain with a national voice highlights how performers in the mid-twentieth century British music scene participated in and supported the fabrication and construction of a national musical history and identity. With that in mind, I investigate how the reception of these singers and their voices has been marked by issues of class especially in the strategies of inclusion and exclusion adopted by the BBC in presenting Britain as unified homogenous identity. Yet, my case studies highlight the fact that Britain's national music identity is neither singular nor homogenous. Through these singers' voices, I hope to present a Britain unified aurally in how they voiced

alternative versions of Englishness through their transgression of socio-cultural and gender codes in mid-twentieth century Britain.

Previous research on voice and vocality has been concerned primarily with questions of gender and sexuality. Given how national identity consists of various constituents, I demonstrate how identification of national tropes in these singers intersects with other social concepts such as gender and sexuality. My work contributes foremost to the literatures of voice, vocality and its embodiment; more precisely expanding on how the location of bodies in these voices inform gendered and sexual ideals of national identity and highlight discrepancies between their voices and bodies. Through my singers, I identify that as much as gender and sexuality were both unstable constructs in bodies, they are also precariously variable in voices.

This is addressed in the case studies of Ferrier, Deller and Pears. The promotion of Deller's countertenor voice was advantageous in the connection to a glorious historical past where the very strangeness of the voice seems to offer access to the remote and ineffable as demonstrated in my first chapter. However, his distinctive voice type posed problems in reconciling ideals of nation with gender and sexual models in the second and third chapter. Pears's voice figured heavily in the third chapter as well, where his voice, seen as representing the future of Britain due to his professional and personal association with Britten, was deemed compromising to the nation's musical and social outlook. This is viewed differently in the fourth chapter, where Pears's voice was employed by the BBC as a strong portrayal of the Britten-Pears musical partnership in an effort to promote not only works by Britten and other British composers, but also to establish ideals of an English voice and sound that proved to benefit voices that differed from the prevailing operatic model. Ferrier's voice, on the other hand, offered a sense of fluidity that helped in the BBC's projection of a national aural image. The very flexibility of her voice, which appealed to both high/low cultural distinctions in BBC broadcasts, was also rendered as gender and sexually ambiguous in her operatic and oratorio roles onstage, as shown in my third chapter.

As outlined above, the way these singers' voices were couched in national rhetoric exemplified how voice studies intersected in the constructions of nationhood and national identity. Through this, I analysed promotional and review material from both old (press) and new (radio) media of these singers in order to piece together the historical reception of singers in the mid-twentieth century British music scene. While this method has been recently employed for singers from the nineteenth century, there have been fewer studies

of twentieth-century voices that focus on questions of reception. Through this, I uncover attitudes of national musical identity that framed the overarching portrayals of British music critics and historians' responses in mid-twentieth century Britain. While the first half of the mid-twentieth century from the 1930s to 40s indicated an underlying sense of anxiety that pointed to uncertainties about Britain's national identity, the 1950s and 60s post-war reconstructive efforts were very much built on a collective sense of national pride. Events such as the 1951 Festival of Britain, for example, celebrated various national and technological achievements that echoed the nation's victory in the Second World War.

These nation-building efforts of the British government were seen as effective promotions of national and social cohesion that the nation relied on for stability, especially after the atrocities of the World Wars. My research expands in the understanding of how national promotion of music and performers revealed ruptures and continuities of British national musical identity. My first chapter introduced the employment of music as an expression of national identity and nationalism, and explored how the voice can be identified as a locus of national identity. By making 'voice' the subject of my research, I discuss how events such as the British folk music movement and the English Musical Renaissance assert autochthonous roots and locality as integral aspects in the construction of a national musical identity. This search for an authentic national 'voice' in a metaphorical sense could be extended to incorporate not only sounds, but also an articulation of a national vocality where stylistic gestures, identifications and representations were equally featured. That is, Britain's identification of a national voice is ultimately a manifestation that shifts from a compositional to a singing one. The nation's envoicing figures not only as a need for a national operatic idiom but also a need for a national vocality through the voices of Ferrier, Deller and Pears.

This is particularly relevant for Ferrier and Deller in the first chapter, given how both of their careers were built on the precedent of the past. The identification of Ferrier as the next Clara Butt showed how her association with Britain's most popular contralto in the previous century was complicated by the negative connotations of the contralto voice. For Deller, the nationalising of his countertenor voice show how history was constructed around his voice and how that led to claims of legitimacy for past traditions. Through identifications of the English choral tradition where the accreditation of tradition was forged for the sake of continuity, the countertenor voice represented an extension of an invented English 'Golden Age'. Despite how notions of regeneration and the past encouraged the initiation of projects such as the early music revival especially in the

rediscovery of Purcell's music, it was Deller who practically voiced and realised these efforts through his performances as a countertenor. Not only did Deller embody the past in performances of Purcell's music, Deller was effectively seen as the reincarnation of the English composer Henry Purcell himself.

In the second chapter, I address how Ferrier and Deller were both representatives of national voices in Britain, given how the contralto and the countertenor voice have to negotiate the gendered discrepancies between pairings of their voice and body. By showing how voices were precariously tied to their vocal embodiment of roles onstage, I highlight the potential mismatches of voice and body and how that was problematic to mid-twentieth century British audiences. Yet, I also show how such gender blurring and suspension was employed as important aspects in the tradition of cross-dressing for female contraltos in the operatic and music hall. This is apparent in Ferrier's portrayal of Orfeo where her diction and pronunciation were emphasised as ideal vocal qualities in continuation of the contralto-oratorio tradition in Britain. Ferrier's envoicing of Britain reconciled a potentially difficult British operatic historiography by positing a voice that was not only disassociated with Continental operatic styles but was deemed appropriate for English musical tastes. Besides offering a national vocal redress for Britain, she presented the nation with a new vocal identity.

The third chapter further expands on the intersections of voice and national identity by considering notions and ideals of sexuality in the voices of Deller and Pears. This chapter summarises how British music critics and writers' identification of a national voice were concomitant with national ideals of male sexuality. Through written reviews of Deller and Pears, I identify an underlying anxiety towards effeminacy and homosexuality that signified tension in the breaking down of heteronormative and domestic values that were entrenched in early twentieth-century Britain. For Deller, I proposed that his high countertenor voice was deemed inappropriate to his audiences because it contradicted ideals of male sexuality and masculinity offered from the physiological aspects of his body. While his beard and his well-built physique offset antagonisms directed at his virility and sexuality, they were deemed appropriate for the operatic role of Oberon that Britten wrote for him. In Pears's case, his closeted relationship with Britten increasingly heightened the risks of coming out. Their musical collaborations onstage effectively established the Britten-Pears partnership, while offstage insinuations directed at their homosexuality problematized the private and public spheres in which they moved. Nonetheless, I show how such non-normativity of their voices were influential in the shaping and forming of a

new type of vocality and sound expressly for the creation of a new English opera. By capitalizing on the distinctive qualities of notably Pears's but also Deller's voices, I demonstrate how Britten was forging a new voice as national idiom in promotion of the national and musical status of Britain.

My research also contributes to the field of British media studies, and especially the history of the BBC. In my fourth chapter, I show how the BBC's programming and promotion of these singers and their voices indicated attitudes that framed the Corporation's approach to broadcasting in the mid-twentieth century. While the BBC's seeming monopoly of the broadcast medium did further its aims of national education and enculturation, it was equally charged with advocating a national aural image that reflected English hegemony and was mainly elitist. The positioning of these singers in the BBC illustrates the gradual stratification of cultural and musical tastes evident in the mid-twentieth century. While Ferrier's voice and broadcasts negotiated both the highbrow and lowbrow tensions of British broadcast culture pertinent in the 1930s, Deller and Pears catered to the emergence of a highly specialised musical niche in the Third Programme from the 1950s. Promotion of early music and English composers from Purcell to Britten were crucial for the BBC, serving not only to encourage audience's interest in national composers and their works, but also to increase appreciation of art music as a component of a particular vision of national culture. I show how these singers voiced new vocal ideals and navigated such discrepancies found in the BBC's early broadcasting years. Through identification of Ferrier, Deller and Pears's voices as national, I assert how their voices were crucial in the envisaging and building of a national and international version of British identity.

This thesis proposes a new methodology to address how singers and their voices can illustrate and delineate cultural constructs that contribute to the definition of national musical identity. This discourse of using voices to map out various constructs of national music identity and nationhood could open up various possibilities that situate music as a strand in the wider issues of social and cultural policy. My findings could be used as a new approach to understand the broader implications performances and performing culture had on the presentation of British music history. Ultimately, it features singers and performers more generally, as important 'voices' in the construction, articulation and manifestation of a national musical identity in Britain.

In light of my study, further research could potentially uncover new areas on performers and how reception of their performances figured in the elaborate constructions

of national musical identity. For example, potential research areas could be extended in consideration of other voice types and singers, or in thinking about the relation of 'voice' to instrumental performances. More specifically, this thesis on the national voice also highlights the participation that ensemble vocal performance such as cathedral and collegiate choirs have in the collective understandings of 'voice' through the construction of national myth, suggesting ensemble performance as a fruitful area for further study.[1] Through this research, I also discover other important concepts such as class and race that could be helpful in this discourse, but were not in the remits of this thesis to discuss in detail. Studies on the voice such as those by Nina Sun Eidsheim have posed important cultural manifestations on ideas of race and nation especially in her propositions on 'racial timbre' and 'sonic blackness'.[2] Similarly, Melanie Marshall has investigated notions of vocal 'whiteness' as both an idealised race and sound, marking 'voice' as an important articulator of national identity.[3] Such ideas projected the normalised voice – upper class and white – as unmarked 'British' entities that cast deviations from this ideal as peripheral. This potentially could have crucial ramifications on racial, colonial and imperial discourse especially in constructions of national identity in the fragmentation of the British Empire during the twentieth-century.

Further research on voice as marker of national identity could also embrace work on popular music and jazz as forae for exploring issues of alternative voices. More could be done in the incorporation of these performers and their reception into the construction of British national identity through this aspect. Scholars such as Irene Morra have highlighted popular music's reception and identification as an important locator of national and cultural identity in the making of modern Britain.[4] On the other hand, research on international contexts of the 'British' voice, especially in promoting national political interests and national culture abroad, could be used to advance national implications of British identity in the colonies. Simon Potter's book, *Broadcasting Empire: The BBC and the British World, 1922-1970* (2012) is a crucial contribution to the wealth of media studies especially on the BBC.[5] It shows how the BBC's role as imperial promoter in the twentieth-century British Empire employed both radio and television as tools of national

[1] See recent study on 'choral sound' and English understandings of tradition in Caroline Amy Vince, "Discograpy and Discovery: Investigating Independent and Institutional Approaches to Byrd and Tallis Through Their Recorded History" (PhD in Musicology, University of Southampton, 2016).
[2] See Nina Sun Eidsheim, "Marian Anderson and "Sonic Blackness" in American Opera," *American Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (2011): 641-71.
[3] Marshall, "Voce Bianca: Purity and Whiteness in British Early Music Vocality."
[4] See Morra, *Britishness, Popular Music, and National Identity*.
[5] Simon J. Potter, *Broadcasting Empire: The BBC and the British World, 1922-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

and cultural integration. However, Potter's studies of the BBC as a tool in the promotion of Britain's imperial agendas could be expanded. By incorporating the BBC as an important marker and establisher of national ideals and national identity, I foresee how a detailed study of its music broadcasts and performers in both its local (Home Service) and international (Overseas Services) networks would uncover various constructions of a culturally diverse nation and empire.[6]

I also acknowledge how analysis of recordings of my featured singers could be useful in attaching discourse to musical sound. More studies could be done through issues of voice and its (dis)embodiment, especially in the areas of recordings and how the reception and impact of these recordings could contribute to the establishing or inventing of national musical identity. Research questions such as: how does issues of disembodiment figure in the creation of abstract concepts such as 'nation', what happens when singers' bodies become regularly invisible to audiences through recording and broadcast and what complications do the introduction of visual aspects through mass media such as television and film add to the performing opportunities and dimensions of national music discourse, could be answered by future scholars in research areas that I could not address within the given time and spatial constraints of this thesis,. Such questions provide an idea of the far-reaching implications that this thesis has posited by looking at aspects of the national voice.

The issues of national musical identity brought up in this thesis offer only a partial understanding of an especially complex and fascinating subject. Nonetheless, having opened this topic and demonstrated something of the richness that attention to voices can provide to discussions of nation in music, I hope that future research will continue to take account of the manifestations and impact that performance culture has in the incorporation of performers and their voices in the discourse of music history.

[6] Christina Baade has done pioneering work in locating the BBC's broadcasts and reception of popular music and performers as a discourse for the complexities and tensions that arose between the Corporation and its wider society, see Baade, *Victory Through Harmony*. However, none so far has been done in the context of BBC's programming of art music, which I intend to research for postdoctoral projects in the future.

Appendix Guide

The appendices listed are catalogues of written reviews about the singers: Kathleen Ferrier, Alfred Deller and Peter Pears, which were gathered from mostly British newspapers, magazines and journals from 1930 to 1960. These lists are not a comprehensive record of the singers' public performances; nevertheless they give an idea of their overall reception history in mid-twentieth century Britain. These were compiled using various methods – from online newspaper databases to archival material at the Britten-Pears Foundation Library. In Ferrier's case, most reviews were sourced from the Gale Newspaper Database and the British Newspaper Archive; Deller's reviews were taken from Mark Deller's personal collection and scrapbook of press cuttings while Pears's reviews were mostly from online newspaper databases and the Britten-Pears Foundation Library in Aldeburgh (BPF). I have taken care to ensure that the dates and titles of every entry in the catalogues are listed accordingly. Some entries, especially those from Mark Deller's scrapbook (MDS) have to be left blank or incomplete, hence it is impossible to provide the complete dates and sources for them. ‘

Column One lists the publication date of the review article.

Column Two lists the source of the review, which might be from an online database or an article from a specific publication.

Column Three shows the title of the review article.

Column Four lists the name of the reviewer or in some cases, the acronyms used by the reviewers.

Appendix

Kathleen Ferrier's Concert Reviews

DATE	SOURCE/REVIEW ARTICLE	ARTICLE TITLE	REVIEWER
1944	Worcester County Express	Stourbridge Town Hall	
1944	Nuneaton Observer		
24/08/42	Liverpool Evening Express	Philharmonic Hall: Salon Orchestra	Orpheus
21/10/42	Manchester Guardian	Tueday Concerts	Granville Hill
18/05/43	The Times	The Bach Choir: "Messiah" In Westminster Abbey	
26/05/43	Liverpool Evening Express	Lunch-Hour Music	Orpheus
03/10/43	Hinkley Times		
06/12/43	Western Daily Press	Leon Goosens at Theatre Royal	
16/02/44	The Manchester Guardian	Tuesday Concerts	Granville Hill
21/02/44	The Times	"The Kingdom": Oratorio in Southwark Cathedral	
05/10/44	Western Daily Press	Amadio Trio and Miss K. Ferrier	
16/02/45	Gloucester Citizen	Big Audience at Guildhall Concert	
13/11/45	Western Daily Press	Choral Society's Concert: Handel's "Messiah" at Central Hall	
13/12/45	Derby Daily Telegraph	Messiah' Triumph by Choral Union	
06/05/46	Hull Daily Mail	Miss Kathleen Ferrier: Popular Contralto at Hull Concert	
05/07/46	Evening Standard	Opera Optimism	Philip Whitaker
13/07/46	Daily Express	Mr Britten's Opera of Parts	Roy Johnson
13/07/46	The Times	Glyndebourne Opera	
13/07/46	BPF	At Glyndebourne	Ralph Hill
13/07/46	Scotsman, Edinburgh	Glyndebourne Opera "The Rape of Lucretia" Britten's New Work	
14/07/46	Sunday Times	Glyndebourne Again	
20/07/46	The New Statesman and Nation	The Rape of Lucretia	
31/07/46	Manchester Guardian	The Rape of Lucretia	G.A.H.
06/08/46	Liverpool Echo	The New Britten Opera	B.A.
24/09/46	The Times	The Gramophone	
24/01/47	Daily Express	She Sang it Few Could	Roy Johnson
25/01/47	The Times	St. Bartholomew's Church Concert: Rubbra's "Three Psalms"	
28/04/47	Hull Daily Mail	Hull Choral Night	

20/06/47	The Times	Glyndebourne Opera	
03/07/47	The Listener	Critic on the Hearth	Dyneley Hussey
14/02/48	Western Morning News	Elgar Popularity	
26/02/48	The Listener	Broadcast Music: French and English	Dyneley Hussey
05/03/48	Hull Daily Mail	Choral Union's Third Concert	
15/06/48	Western Morning News	Anglo-Austrian Concert	
19/08/48	Western Morning News	Brahms Concert	
09/12/48	Gloucestershire Echo	Choirs Excel in St. Matthew Passion	
14/01/49	Western Morning News	Our London Letter: Norwegian Pianist	
30/09/49	Western Morning News	Two talented artists	
04/10/49	The Times	Recitals of the Week: Notable Interpretation of Lieder	
17/11/49	Hull Daily Mail	Kathleen Ferrier: Hull Song Recital	
13/12/49	Western Daily Press	Recital of Music in Cathedral: Vocal and Instrumental Performances of Merit	
25/04/50	Western Morning News	Song of the Earth	
21/09/50	The Listener	Critic on the Hearth	Dyneley Hussey
08/01/52	The Times	Albert Hall: Winter Promenade Concerts	
26/03/52	The Times	Royal Festival Hall: London Philharmonic Orchestra	
04/06/52	Daily Express	Crowning all, one woman's voice	Arthur Jacobs
09/10/53	Daily Express	This was a singer, this was a woman	David Burk
09/10/53	Daily Mail	A Shining Voice is Stilled Forever	Percy Cater
09/10/53	The Manchester Guardian	Obituary: Kathleen Ferrier	Neville Cardus
12/10/53	Daily Express	Beethoven Emptied the Hall	Andrew Porter
22/10/53	The Listener	Critic on the Hearth	Dyneley Hussey
09/05/54	Daily Express	Silence so Moving	Andrew Porter
02/10/58	The Listener	Critic on the Hearth	Dyneley Hussey
Feb-48	The Penguin Music Magazine	Opera in London	Stephen Williams
May-47	The Penguin Music Magazine	Opera in London	Stephen Williams

Alfred Deller's Concert Reviews

DATE	SOURCE/REVIEW ARTICLE	ARTICLE TITLE	REVIEWER
1932	MDS	Handel's Messiah: Beautiful Music at Christ Church, St. Leonards	
1945	MDS	Cathedral Music Recital: Army Artists' Fine Work	W.S.E.D.
1950	MDS	Concert at The Barber Institute	
1950	MDS	Renaissance Singers: Christmas Concert	
1950	World of Music	Counter This and Countra That	J.F. Waterhouse
1950	MDS	The Alfred Deller Concert	H.M.
1950	Music	Man Who Sings Like A Boy: How Counter-Tenor Overcame The "Break"	A.R.W.
1950	MDS	Extravaganza at City Gallery	J.F. Waterhouse
1950	MDS	Alfred Deller	
1951	The Harrovian	School Concert	
1951	MDS	Handel's 'Messiah' at St. Paul's: A Reconstruction of the Original Score	
1951	MDS	Arias and Lieder: Some New Recordings	
1951	MDS	Purcell Concert Series	R.C.
1952	MDS	Flawless Hour: Deller-Dupre Recital	E.K.
1952	MDS	Successful "Messiah"	A.M.S.G.
1952	Daily Express	A Masterpiece: And only Britain could do it	Cecil Smith
1952	MDS	Music	Charles Reid
1952	MDS	The Golden Age Singers: Performance of madrigals	by our Music Critic
1953	MDS		
1953	MDS	Music at the Parish Church	
1953	Daily Telegraph	Cathedral Music	Robert Erskine
1979	The Journal of the Association of Men of Kent and Kentish Men	MKKM Gold Medalist Dies	
09/01/32	Hastings and St Leonard Observer	Splendid Handel Singing: "The Messiah" at Christ Church	
30/04/32	Hastings and St Leonard Observer	A Lovely Alto Voice	
13/08/32	Hastings and St Leonards Observer	Christ Church Recital: Fine Organ and Alto Singing	
29/07/33	Hastings and St Leonard Observer	White Rock Pavilion	
19/01/35	Hastings and St Leonard Observer	Christmas Music: Selections from "The Messiah"	
16/01/37	Hastings and St Leonard Observer	Music at Christ Church	
24/10/44	The Times	Concert at Morley College: The Countratenor Voice	
01/01/45	The Times	Morley College Concerts	

12/10/45	Hastings and St Leonard Observer	St. Mary Magdalene Organ By Alan Biggs: Notable Singer	R.D.
Nov-45	MDS	Alfred Deller Broadcasting	W.S.E.D.
22/11/45	News Chronicle	Superb singing of Purcell's Role	Scott Goddard
17/01/46	The Leicester Mercury	Music of the 17th Century	L.C.
01/10/46	The Times	The New B.B.C. Programme	
29/11/46	New Statesman	The Arts and Entertainment:Old Music and New	Desmond Shawe-Taylor
21/08/47	Gloucestershire Echo	Fine Tone	
22/05/48	The Times	Morley College Concerts: The Coronation of Poppea	
22/05/48	The Times	Note on the Counter-tenor voice	Michael Tippett
24/05/48	The Daily Telegraph	Monteverdi Opera	R.C.
Jun-48	Musical Times	L'incoronazione di Poppea	William McNaught
08/04/49	Daily Telegraph	Rare Pieces at Wigmore Hall	
08/04/49	The Times	Amphion Ensemble: Early Instrumental and Vocal Music	
24/06/49	The Times	Southwark Cathedral: Rural Music Schools Concert	
21/07/49	News Chronicle	Rare Music at Haslemere	Scott Goddard
24/10/49	The Times	Recitals of the Week	
25/10/49	MDS	Counter-tenor: Mr Alfred Deller's Recital	
08/11/49	The Times	The Gramophone: Voice and Orchestra	
16/02/50	Western Daily Press	Recital of Music at St Mary Redcliffe	
25/02/50	The Times	"Messiah" in First Version: Performance at St. Paul's	
20/03/50	The Manchester Guardian	Handel's 'Messiah' Restored	William McNaught
24/03/50	The Times	"The Messiah": A New Approach	by our Music Critic
13/05/50	Hastings and St Leonard Observer	Bach Recitals at Christ Church: Distinguished Counter-tenor	Edmund Niblett
26/06/50	The Manchester Guardian	Aldeburgh Festival	J.W.
26/02/51	The Times	London Choral Society: "The Messiah"	
28/02/51	The Times	Aldeburgh Festival: Purcell's Dido and Aeneas	
09/05/51	The Times	Purcell Series: First Concert	
10/05/51	The Times	The Golden Age	
16/05/51	The Times	Festival of Britain: Purcell Series: Second Concert	
29/05/51	The Times	Festival Music	

06/06/51	The Times	Purcell Series: Fifth Concert	
20/06/51	The Times	Purcell Series: Seventh Concert	
02/07/51	The Times	London Choral Society: “The Messiah”	
28/01/52	The Times	Deller Consort: Tudor and Restoration Church Music	
16/05/52	The Times	Bel Canto: Sancta Simplicitas	
19/06/52	Widening Horizons	Critic on the Hearth,	Scott Goddard
21/06/52	The Manchester Guardian	Schutz's St Matthew Passion	Colin Mason
13/09/52	Hastings and St Leonard Observer	Christ Church Event	
27/09/52	Hastings and St Leonard Observer	Memorable Recital at Christ Church: Allan Biggs and Alfred Deller	N.W.
18/12/52	Tour de Force	Critic on the Hearth	Dyneley Hussey
08/01/53	Birmingham Post	Elizabethan Song Recital: Alfred Deller and Desmond Dupre	W.H.P.
Jun-53	East Anglian Daily Times	Aldeburgh Festival's Notable Attractions: An Impressive Opening	
14/06/53	The Times	The Kalmar Ochestra: "Yggdrasil"	
19/06/53	The Times	Sociable Music: Songs and Strings	
30/09/53	The Times	Cathedral Music	
03/10/53	The Times	English Church Music: Future of a Great Heritage	
07/08/55	The Observer	Music: Hovingham	Eric Blom
22/09/55	The Times	New Work by Fricker: Wigmore Hall Concert	
05/07/56	Daily Mail	This is No Oratorio	Percy Cater
30/04/57	The Times	Deller Consort: Italian and English Partsong	
11/06/59	Daily Mail	Boy Sopranos Do Justice to Purcell	Percy Cater
15/06/59	The Manchester Guardian	Purcell's “Fairy Queen” in concert version	Colin Mason
11/06/60	The Guardian	Benjamin Britten's “Dream”	Colin Mason
11/06/60	Daily Mail	Enchanting – But will it be a Success?	Percy Cater
12/06/60	The Observer	Music and Musicians: Recapturing the Dream	Peter Heyworth
13/06/60	BPF	Britten Opera Praise in US	Howard Taubman
18/06/60	Western Mail	The Dream – with a New Vision	
30/06/60	The Listener	Britten's Dream	Jeremy Noble
	Musical Opinion	Amphion Ensemble	Clinton Gray-Fisk
	Musical Times	The Bryanston Summer School	Robert L. Jacobs

Peter Pears's Concert Reviews

DATE	SOURCE/REVIEW ARTICLE	ARTICLE TITLE	REVIEWER
20/02/37	The Times	The New English Singers: Madrigals and Songs to the Lute	
20/02/37	Daily Telegraph	The English Singers	F.B.
21/02/37	Sunday Times	Friday – Wigmore Hall	H.F.
May-41	The Christian Science	I.S.C.M Festival in America	L.A. Sloper
25/11/41	BPF	Unusual Song Cycle Given by English Tenor	Edward Barry
Nov-41	Eliz Mayer Collection	Two British Musicians Delight Audience Here	M.S.K.
19/12/41	North Fork Life	North Fork Hears Pears, Britten in Southold Concert	K. DeW.
23/12/41	New York Herald	Music	Virgil Thomson
23/12/41	New York World Telegraph	New Work by Britten Has Premiere	
23/12/41	New York Sun	Saidenberg Leads New Britten Work	Irving Kolodin
23/12/41	New York Times	Britten Work Offered	
24/09/42	Daily Telegraph and Morning Post	Britten's Sonnet Settings: Notable New Work	F.B.
24/09/42	The Scotsman		
25/09/42	The Times	Boosey and Hawkes Concerts	
25/09/42	Liverpool Daily Post		
27/09/42	The Observer	The Week's Concerts	G.A.
01/10/42	Jewish Chronicle		H.C.S.
03/10/42	The New Statesman & Nation		Edward Sackville West
10/11/42	The Times	Entertainment: "The Song of the Earth"	
Dec-42	Modern Music, Volume XX. Number 2 (Jan-February 1943): 118	London: Fourth Winter of the Blackout	Mark Blitzstein
20/12/42	The Observer	Music	William Glock
16/01/43	The Times	Entertainment: The Gramophone: Two Novelties	
31/01/43	BPF	Fine Singing at Wigmore Hall	Ralph Hill
02/02/43	The Times	Mr. Walter Goehr: An Unusual Programme	
01/03/43	The Times	Boosey and Hawkes Concerts	
12/04/43	The Times	The Bach Choir: Passion Music	

May-43	BPF	French Music: Milhaud and Poulenc	
04/05/43	Liverpool Daily Post	A Song Recital	A.K.H.
04/05/43	Liverpool Echo	Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears	B.A.
20/06/43	The Times	Opera at the New Theatre: Rigoletto	
22/07/43	The Times	New Theatre: Barber of Seville	
Aug-43	BPF	Mr. Gerald Cooper: English Music of Two Centuries	
Aug-43	BPF	Michelangelo in Music-I	Ernest Newman
17/10/43	Sunday Times	Two New British Compositions	R.H.
24/10/43	The Observer	Music	William Glock
Nov-43	BPF	The Battered Bride	William Glock
02/05/44	The Times	Wigmore Hall: A Schubert Recital	
15/05/45	The Times	Entertainments: Peter Grimes	
08/06/45	The Times	Sadler's Wells Opera: Peter Grimes	
08/06/45	Daily Sketch	New Opera is Savage and Cruel	Elspeth Grant
08/06/45	Daily Telegraph and Morning Post	Peter Grimes' Opera: Another Success for Composer	F.B.
08/06/45	News Chronicle	Sadler's Wells Drew Its Old Crowds	Scott Goddard
10/06/45	The Observer	Music	William Glock
14/06/45	Time and Tide	Peter Grimes	Philip Hope-Wallace
14/06/45	News Review	New Opera	
15/06/45	Britten-Pears, The Times	Peter Grimes: Second Thoughts	
Jul-45	Our Time, Vol. 4, No. 12	Opera for Tomorrow	H.G. Sear
24/11/45	The Times	Purcell Celebration	
30/11/45	The Spectator	Music: Purcell and Britten	Dyneley Hussey
05/01/46	Daily Mail	Music by Night: Mr. Britten advances	Ralph Hill
07/01/46	The Times	Concert at Wigmore Hall	
13/07/46	Daily Mail	At Glyndebourne	Ralph Hill

13/07/46	The Times	Glyndebourne Opera: Rape of Lucretia	
20/07/46	The New Statesman & Nation	The Rape of Lucretia	Desmond Shawe-Taylor
19/08/46	Time Magazine	Music: Mountain Music	
01/05/47	The Penguin Music Magazine	Opera in London	Stephen Williams
09/10/47	The Times	Covent Garden Opera	
08/03/48	Daily Mail	Superb for the Voice	Stanley Bayliss
30/03/48	The Times	The Gramophone: Britten and Stravinsky	
19/02/51	The Times	Recitals of the Week: Songs and Singers	
08/05/51	The Times	Festival Music: English Song	
06/06/51	The Times	Museum Gallery Concerts: Purcell and Britten	
Jun-53	East Anglian Daily Times	Aldeburgh Festival's Notable Attractions: An Impressive Opening	
04/06/53	The Times	Coronation Concert	
11/06/53	The Listener	Broadcast Music: With Inward Glory Crowned	Dyneley Hussey
24/06/53	The Manchester Guardian	Aldeburgh Festival of the Arts: Wolf's Music and Modern Sculptors	
06/08/53	The Listener	Critic on the Hearth	Dyneley Hussey
20/06/54	The Observer	Aldeburgh	Eric Blom
26/06/55	The Observer	Music at Aldeburgh: Festival of Britten	Peter Heyworth
06/09/58	The Manchester Guardian	Mastery and Absorption – but with Something Missing: Song Recital by Pears and Britten	Neville Cardus
04/06/59	The Manchester Guardian	The Arts: Purcell Rediscovered	Michael Tippett
11/06/60	The Times	A New Midsummer Night's Dream	
18/06/60	Western Mail	The Dream – with a New Vision	
20/11/60	The Observer	Two Britten Operas	Peter Heyworth

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