Britten Connections
A guide for performers and programmers

by Paul Kildea
The twentieth century’s consummate musician

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The twentieth century's consummate musician

In his tweed jackets and woollen ties, and with his plummy accent, country houses and royal connections, Benjamin Britten looked every inch the English gentleman. This image belied a more modest upbringing in the Suffolk town of Lowestoft, however, where he was born in 1913 to a dentist father and amateur musician mother. Precocious and single-minded, the young Britten was perfectly primed to follow in the footsteps of the preeminent nineteenth-century British composers: a chair in one of the music colleges or universities, perhaps; guest conducting on the oratorio circuit and ever so occasionally with one of the London orchestras, if only he could get over his dislike of the podium; a string of honours and pupils, both of diminishing returns; and a tidy bundle of works, probably not much performed following their initial outings.

The real story, however, was very different. And far more intriguing.

When asked as a boy what he planned to be when he grew up, Britten confidently replied: "A composer." But what else? was the quite sensible comeback. The adult Britten denied this comment and the cultural philistinism he thought it represented. Yet the fact remains that Britain in the 1920s had no sustained opera culture, no orchestra to rival the Vienna Philharmonic, no real engagement with musical modernism, no tradition of the composer-conductor dominating the great concert halls and opera houses of the land. The boy's interlocutor was closer to the truth at the time than the adult composer later allowed.

Yet Britten was determined to change this culture of complacency. And for all his evident Englishness, he looked not to his countrymen for inspiration, but to the European giants of the Romantic and post-Romantic age. His childhood fascination with the great symphonies of Brahms and the piano music of Beethoven were in his teenage years replaced with a wide-eyed appreciation of Mahler, a skittish adoration of Stravinsky and huge enthusiasm for Berg. Yet it was not only their music that caught his ear. He began to consider also how they had gone about the business of being a composer and set about emulating them.

He had, of course, a great guide and mentor. The English composer Frank Bridge began teaching composition to the teenage Britten at exactly the time that his own musical language was shifting from well-crafted pastoralism to a more modernist dialect. This gentle pacifist had been left distraught by what had taken place on the muddy pastures of France during the First World War, and sought a greater engagement with the Continental ideas swirling about post-war Europe. Britten was a willing and receptive pupil, lapping up the new sounds and ideas Bridge presented to him, finding himself comfortable in his teacher's artistic milieu, improving his craft all the while.

Additionally, he was such a child of his time. He may have thought little of most of the performances he heard broadcast by the infant BBC – in his diary he daily took a big stick to the British orchestras and their conductors, Henry Wood and Adrian Boult in particular, but with Thomas Beecham and Malcolm Sargent faring little better – but he gobbled it up all the same. At the Royal College of Music he had hardly bothered with student life and performances: instead he stalked the Queen's Hall and the BBC's Maida Vale Studios and Covent Garden, sharpening his ear and tongue, stitching the disparate works he encountered into a glorious European tapestry. When in 1934 he visited Vienna for the first time the jig was more or less up. Encountering an orchestra of such luminosity, virtuosity and authority, he decided there and then that his adolescent musical instincts were correct: standards were simply too low in Britain. He was going to be not just a full-time composer: with the example of Vienna and Mahler, of Berg and Stravinsky with Bridge as his mentor and WH Auden as his tutor, he was going to be a composer the like of which England had never before produced.
Britten Connections: A guide for performers and programme makers

To a degree he became hostage to his own success. He was in his mere early thirties when he composed the two works through which orchestral players, opera lovers, record collectors and children the world over really got to know him: Peter Grimes and The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra. Some audiences then as now never looked beyond these two great works – the Four Sea Interludes filleted from the former for concert performances, The Young Person’s Guide a seat-of-the-pants joyride through the different instruments of the orchestra. They were content instead to look upon these pieces and the important song cycles for his partner, the tenor Peter Pears, as his signature works. Yet those who used these pieces as a starting point, no turn end point, discovered a composer of great complexity and moral authority. They discovered, too, a mass of contradictions.

Opera dominated his career from the early 1940s onwards, itself an extraordinary occurrence given Britain’s musical culture in this period, and it is certainly true that words unlocked in him his great gifts as a storyteller, as the countless brazenly original songs and cycles attest. Yet each genre influenced the other. When Britten decided to make his operas the way into his instrumental works, in turn, the easy virtuosity of his orchestral writing changed the face of British opera. In the 1940s he became more even as a composer, producing a series of orchestral works that deserved a more secure place in the repertory: Diversions (1940), his lyrical riposte to Ravel’s Piano Concerto for the Left Hand; an American Overture (1945); Preludes and Fugues (1943), and his affecting Overture to Paul Bunyan (1944). Yet to say that he became more even is not to undervalue the breakthrough works of the 1930s, his Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge (1937) among them. As a fifty-year-old he observed that the dedicatee and subject of this work ‘sprang out of his fingers person I have ever met and I have ever known. It always seemed to me that music sprang out of his fingers when he played the piano, as it did out of his mind when he composed.’

His wartime arrangements of British folk-songs (and his late orchestral work, the Suite on English Folk Tunes) were not born of the pedagogic and nationalistic impetus that drove Bartók’s transcriptions and arrangements, but they were nonetheless intended to celebrate Britain’s rich folk heritage: if in the same breath they drew a line between Britten and Vaughan Williams and his ilk, whose folk arrangements the newcomer considered pious and clumsy in equal measure, so much the better. So too his realisations of Purcell and John Gay, whose settings Britten thought clothed the English language in the finest cloth. And John Dowland too, whose sweet melancholia infuses a number of Britten’s instrumental works. Such excavations were responsible for reproducing much so-called early music into the repertory.

In short, Britten was the twentieth century’s consummate musician. His works for film, television, radio, theatre, children, the opera house, the ballet stage, the concert hall and the church chart some of the century’s great troubles and preoccupations – from war to sexuality, from morality to religious faith, from loyalty to betrayal! In the decades since his death his music has found even larger audiences, as performers and listeners throughout the world have come to realize his universal appeal. Works that failed or misfired in his lifetime have slowly entered the repertory. Yet there remain virtually unknown works of genius, every bit the peer of the Four Sea Interludes. It is the intention of this guide to familiarize and entice musicians with the other side of Britten, a composer of singular vision, brilliance and humanity, who found his true voice as a young man, and spoke with it all his life.


I want to say here, personally, that Britten has been for me the most purely musical person I have ever met and I have ever known. It always seemed to me that music sprang out of his fingers when he played the piano, as it did out of his mind when he composed.’
Heroes and villains

Some of Britten’s childhood heroes became the villains of his adulthood, although not before he had learnt all he could from them. Beethoven’s piano sonatas and Brahms’s symphonies informed his youthful musical vocabulary and set him up for encounters with the music he admired all his life. Mozart, Schubert, Mahler, Schoenberg (guardedly), Berg, Stravinsky (apathetically as time went on) and Shostakovich. He admired his contemporaries Walton, Tippett and Berkeley, although by no means uncritically. Bridge was a hero, although not exclusively for his music. In the 1940s in England he encountered the operas of Verdi, which he thought brilliant and which helped shape his own dramatic works.

Putting together Britten and Mozart (which he played and conducted incomparably) and Britten and Schubert on a concert programme is an obvious starting point for any exploration of Britten’s musical influences and overlaps. Yet there are many other great pairings.

Hearing Britten and Mahler programmed together is often a revelation. The Nocturne alongside Mahler’s Symphony No. 5, Phaëdra with Mahler’s Ruckert-Lieder, two early symphonies, Mahler’s first and Britten’s Sinfonia da Requiem, (as Illuminations with Mahler’s Symphony No. 4 (using the same soloist), Britten’s Suite on English Folk Tunes with Mahler’s Kindertotenlieder, Britten’s Ballad of Heroes with Mahler’s Symphony No. 2, Britten’s Violin Concerto or Sinfonia da Requiem with Mahler’s Symphony No. 7.

Britten and Shostakovich are equally good together. Les Illuminations programmed with Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 14 (dedicated to Britten) contrasts the old Russian’s sombre imagery with the young Brit’s ecstatic vision. There is something incredibly touching about hearing the Sinfonia da Requiem followed by Shostakovich’s ‘Leningrad’ Symphony, written at exactly the same time, while Britten’s Cello Symphony in a series including the two Shostakovich cello concertos (and both men’s works for solo cello) gather together the great works of the twentieth century for this instrument. Britten’s complete works for string quartet form a thrilling counterpart to Shostakovich’s works in this genre.

Britten and Stravinsky form a great orchestral pairing, the programming chemistry deriving from the men’s mutual admiration, competitiveness, stylistic and chronological overlaps, and the occasional disdain they felt for each other. Britten’s St John Passion is a natural bedfellow of Stravinsky’s Symphonies d’Instruments à vent or his Mass. Britten’s Cantata missaecordiam is a good companion piece for Stravinsky’s Oedipus rex or programmed instead of his Requiem Canticles or Cantatum vacuum. Britten’s Noye’s Fludde and Stravinsky’s Firebird or Rite of Spring presents a riot of rhythmic orchestral energy and momentum.
Early works

A number of pieces composed as Britten was finding his own voice have been released since his death. These include his Two Portraits and Double Concerto (CD 98), his exquisite miniatures Quatre chansons françaises (CD 99), and a number of finely crafted works for string quartet. Colin Matthews has overseen these releases, rejecting unsuitable works and editing others as necessary. Matthews took his cue from Britten, though, who in the last years of his life revisited a number of early works, including his String Quartet in D (1936) (CD 12), which he edited for performance and publication.

It is fascinating to see Britten’s emerging voice in these pieces, as it is to programme them alongside the composers whose influence can be heard in them (see Heroes and villains).

Britten and dance

Britten only seventeen when he composed his first ballet, Plymouth Town – a dockside morality tale slightly indebted to Stravinsky’s Petrushka – while his startlingly original The Prince of the Pagodas (CD 90), teeming with the music he had recently heard in Bali, is one of the important and neglected scores of his maturity. In between, Britten wrote two other ballets, Soirées musicales and Matinée musicales, each a witty reworking of Rostropin, and included substantial dance scenes in his operas Gloriana (CD 92) and Death in Venice.

Yet dance rhythms and forms also influenced Britten in his non-balletic scores, as his Cello Suites attest (CD 96, 97, 97). Enterprise and choreographers have long used his music as the basis of their work, from John Cranko’s early choreography for Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge to Hans van Manen’s classic staging of the same work and Jiří Kylián’s choreography for his classic staging of the same work and Jiří Kylián’s choreography for The Red Cockatoo (CD 39), and his string quartets (CD 12, 41, 23), which dance off the page.

Britten and love

Britten’s partnership of almost forty years with the tener Peter Pears resulted in some of the most extraordinary and important vocal music of the last century. From Being Beethoven, the sublime, suggestive movement of Le Illuminazioni (CD 87), to the late works Death in Venice and Sacred and Profane, Pears’ voice and artistry was never far from Britten’s mind. Other works expressly dedicated to Pears include the Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo, The Holy Sonnets of John Donne, the second and fourth Canticles, and the touching Second Lute Song of the Earl of Essex from Gloriana.

There remain, however, many pieces that have rarely been exploited in this way and which would work brilliantly – not least the Cello Suites. These include the moody, ecstatic Violin Concerto (CD 34), the Bravour Piano Concerto (CD 87), the Serenade (CD 40), the various suites from Pagodas, the episodic Divertimenti (CD 2), the Symphony for Cello and Orchestra (CD 9), the Suite on English Folk Tunes (CD 98), and his string quartets (CD 12, 41, 23), which dance off the page.

Britten and popular music

Blessed with an astute mimic’s ear, Britten first drew on popular music for his own work in the 1930s. Auden had demonstrated the power of parody in his poetry, and Britten responded immediately in a string of incidental scores and cabaret songs for the theatre, the latter making their way into the concert repertory. In addition to the well-known Cabaret Songs there are the settings collected in The Red Corridors & other songs, which are almost as effective. The folksy ballads in Paul Bunyan and the beautiful, poised Inklings’s love song are essays in a popular style, while Peter Grimes contains one of the great dance-band scenes in the entire operatic literature – equal to that in Berg’s Wozzeck. Britten’s Clarinet Concerto (CD 14) was conceived for one of the best jazz soloists of the century, Benny Goodman, who makes it a sibling of Bartók’s Contrasts (1932), written at Goodman’s behest for violin, clarinet and piano. More recently Baz Luhrmann harvested the very end of A Midsummer Night’s Dream for the single Now Until the Break of Day, while Jeff Buckley’s haunting arrangement of Britten’s Corpus Christi Carol still has currency.

Britten and his jazz

Britten had a kindred spirit in Francis Poulenc, who mined popular French music for his songs and parodies, as did Darius Milhaud and Maurice Ravel. Britten’s songs in many ways prefigured William Bolcom’s whip-smart cabaret miniatures, while his chamber textures complement Kurt Weill’s music of the 1920s and 1930s. (Daryl Runswick’s arrangement of Britten’s Cabaret Songs for voice and cabaret band emphasizes this connection.) Britten’s friend Dmitri Shostakovich made his own forays into popular music in the 1930s, as evident in his jazz suites and his two piano concertos. Bernstein took Shostakovich’s cue in the 1940s and 1950s, writing some terrific jazz-fused music for full orchestra. Hindemith and Krenek experimented with jazz idioms in their art music at around the same time that George Gershwin was plundering the new sounds of his country for his big concert works and, soon enough, his opera Porgy and Bess.

Britten’s night music

The world of night and dreams captivated Britten from a fairly young age, and he wrote some of the most affecting nocturnes penned since Chopin’s time. Quite apart from the named works (Morrado and Nocturne, Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal and the Onion, and potential of night infuses many of his scores, including On This Island, Divertions (CD 2), Movements for a Clarinet Concerto (CD 14), Serenade (CD 4), four Sea Interludes, A Charm of Lullabies and Lachrymose (CD 8)).

Who are the other great composers of night music? John Field, naturally, whose nocturnes influenced many nineteenth-century Romantics, Liszt and among them. Mendelssohn’s incidental music for A Midsummer Night’s Dream is one of the most celebrated examples of orchestral nocturnal music, an achievement Debussy equaled in his Thoïs nocturnes, influenced to a degree by James Whistler’s evocative nocturne paintings. The first movement of Shostakovich’s Violin Concerto No 1 is a nocturne, influenced to a degree by James Whistler’s evocative nocturne paintings. The first movement of Shostakovich’s Violin Concerto No 1 is a nocturne, influenced to a degree by James Whistler’s evocative nocturne paintings.
No other composer in the last century wrote so often and so inventively for children. From his early settings of Walter de la Mare’s ‘Three Two-Part Songs’ to his late, harrowing Children’s Crusade (CD 36), Britten created a body of exceptional works of varying difficulty and scale. *His Fiddler Afternoons* (CD 41) are playful, skittish songs, while his *Carnival of CARNELIS* is a showcase for children’s voices. Missa brevis (CD 42) is a demonstration of his great practicality: a work scored for more or less for whatever instruments are to hand. Boys’ voices are at the heart of the Spring Symphony (CD 24), *War Requiem*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and Saint Nicolas, although increasingly children’s voices are used in these works to great effect. The Little Sweep is a touching children’s opera, as is Noye’s Fludde (CD 29), while his late *Welcome Ode* is a spirited work for young voices and orchestra.

**Children**

A staunch pacifist from childhood, Britten—-from the mid-1930s onwards used his music as a soapbox to protest against the iniquity of war. The artistic crowd with which he walked did much the same, and so Britten cut his teeth writing scores for anti-war films and plays. Such ideas soon enough seeped into his concert music, including the brilliant, free-wheeling *Our Hunting Fathers* (CD 12) and the lighter *follow-up* (although still teeming with ideas and anger), *Ballad of Heroes* (CD 37). There is, of course, his powerful *Symphony da Requiem* (CD 10). In addition to his extraordinary public protest of 1940, *War Requiem*, and his television opera *Owen Wingrave*, Britten composed a handful of anti-war works, including *Who are these Children?* and *Children’s Crusade* (CD 36). It is also difficult to listen to *Peter Grimes* without discerning the sounds and savagery of warfare.

Unlike Elgar’s imperialistic oratorios from the First World War, none of this music dates like other wartime works — *Haydn’s Missa in tempore beli*, *Shostakovich’s* Symphony Tippett’s: *A Child of Our Time*, Prokofiev’s so-called *War Sonatas* — and those elegies to a lost friend or epoch — *Bridge’s* Piano Sonata, Schoenberg’s: *A Survivor from Warsaw*, Penderecki’s: *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima*, Strauss’s Metamorphosen and valedictory *Vier Letzte Lieder* — Britten invested his works with a universal message, timeless in its resonance.

**Britten and war**

Britten lived in North America between 1939 and early 1942, most of it spent in New York or on Long Island. The people and music he encountered there had a huge impact on his own compositions. In this period he wrote *Canadian Carnival* (CD 20), *An American Overture* (CD 38), *Paul Bunyan* and its terrific, discarded overture, later orchestrated by Colin Matthews. In addition, he planned the clarinet concerto that Matthews later conjured so well from his sketches. All of these works are infused with the open-plains sounds Copland was then exploring in his own music.

In America he also completed *Les Illuminations* (CD 25), a return to the French language of his childhood *Quatre Chansons*; *Les Illuminations* and composed his Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo: *Auden* egged him on in his choice of texts and poets, although the shy composer also realized it was easier to express certain thoughts in a foreign tongue. No such disguise was needed for his settings of folksongs from France, Ireland and the Southern Appalachians in this period and later: these were just good material, which he transformed in versions for voice and piano and in his artful arrangements for voice and *Mozartian orchestra*.

Any of these works programmed alongside *Copland’s* symphonies and orchestral works, or those of the more expressly modernist *Samuel Barber* and *Charles Ives*, helps highlight the debt Britten felt to the American sounds and ideas he encountered in this incredibly fruitful period. Moreover, some of the basic principles of the Eastern music Britten heard in America and later in the Far East also influenced the *American minimalist composers* in the second half of the century. To hear these works programmed together is a fascinating experience.

**Britten in America**

Britten first visited the Continent as a twenty-year-old and in the final year of his life made a short trip to Bergen. In between he travelled to a great number of countries in a handful of continents, absorbing their culture and music. Even those countries that fixed or disappointed him left their mark on his music.

The greatest scenic shift in his compositions followed his 1955/56 travels through East Asia. He had known of Balinese music since meeting the composer and ethnomusicologist *Colin McPhee* early in his time in America, and used these magical sounds in *The Turn of the Screw* — much as *Debussy* incorporated them into his works after encountering gamelan at the Paris World exhibition in 1889. Hearing these sounds in the flesh, though, overwhelmed him and spurred him on to new heights in his ballet *The Prince of the Pagodas* (CD 40). These sounds and harmonies helped shape and colour all his remaining stage works to a greater or lesser extent.

Britten’s songs from the Chinese were also composed in the wake of his Asian travels, although these represented more Britten’s general interest in other cultures than direct exposure or tribute to the music of China. The same cannot be said of Schönhöfer’s: *Fragmente*, his only setting of German text (apart from the song *Los Mitmachte*) and his nod towards *Schubert* — whose larger songs greatly influenced Britten’s own song cycles — and the German Lieder he played so incomparably.

In Japan he encountered traditional Noh theatre and was hugely impressed by the economy of means and the disproportionate impact of the drama. These dramas and their music percolated away for some years, finally revealing their influence in Britten’s 1964 Church Parable *Curlew River* and its two successors. The Japanese story had been transformed to an English setting but so many other aspects of the original drama remained. More, the orchestral economy displayed in the Japanese theatre — a few traditional instruments — chimed with Britten’s desire to pare down his music to its most basic elements, which characterized his style more and more as the 1960s progressed.

In this same period Britten became intimate with the cellist *Mstislav Rostropovich*, who introduced him to the music and customs of Russia and Armenia. Britten’s *Pushkin* song cycle *The Poet’s Echo* is only one consequence of this strong friendship and exposure to Soviet culture.

**Britten’s travels elsewhere**

*The symphony orchestra has become to the twentieth century what the virtuoso singer was to the eighteenth. In skill and quality of sound, as is now universally recognized, the great American orchestras have no superior.*

Britten, 1942

Opposite: Britten’s conscientious objector’s certificate, 1943

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Programming tips for selected Britten works

**Orchestral**

**Canadian Carnival**
(Kermesse Canadienne)
op.19 (1939) 14' (CD 20)

A product of Britten’s travels to North America, infused with the French Canadian folksongs he heard in the Laurentians, La penitrole and Alouette among them. Notwithstanding these local influences, this effective concert opener is a close relative of the Sinfonia da Requiem, which was already occupying Britten’s thoughts. It works brilliantly in concert as a curtain-raiser to the larger works of Copland or Ives.

2(II=picc) 2(II=ca) 2—4 III(ad lib) 3 — timp perc(2)—harp—strings

Boosey & Hawkes

**Sinfonia da Requiem**
op.20 (1940; rev.1940) 20’ (CD 10)

Three movements

A key work in Britten’s development, full of Mahlerian effects, brilliant brass fanfares, a trudging funeral march, and virtuosic orchestral writing. Dedicated to the memory of his parents, its programme is equally that of the catastrophe of the war that was then engulfing Europe and the Pacific. It has a cumulative power to it, resolving in the third movement in a radiant apotheosis. A good alternative or complement in concert to Shostakovich’s symphonies.

3(III=picc & bass fl) 3(III=cl m fl) alto sax (ad lib) 3 — timp perc(2)—zharsps

Boosey & Hawkes

**An American Overture**
(1941) 10’ (CD 3)

Left behind in America when the composer returned to England in early 1942, unperformed and forgotten, An American Overture is Britten’s tribute to his adopted country in the form he juxtaposes his friend Aaron Copland’s open-air prairie sounds with the orchestral techniques he had perfected in his Sinfonia da Requiem. An apt counterpoint to the music of Copland, Bernstein and Ives.

3(III=picc) 3(III=bass fl) 3 — timp perc(2)—zharsps(ad lib) — cel+pf—harp—strings

Faber Music

**Men of Goodwill**
(1947) 8’

Variations on a Christmas Carol

An orchestral rhapsody on ‘God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen’, with variations that do not wander too far from home, but which nonetheless demonstrate Britten’s considerable flair in this genre.

3(III=picc) 2.2 — timp perc(2)—harp—strings

Faber Music

**Sympohnic Suite ‘Gloriana’**
op.53a (1953) 26’

For orchestra and tenor solo (ad lib.), in four movements

Text: Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex

CD 42

Determined not to give up on Gloriana without a fight (a conviction vindicated in recent decades), Britten fashioned this suite from the opera soon after its troubled premiere, incorporating the plangent, lyrical ‘late Song’ and the ‘Courly Dances’— thrilling orchestral show pieces, full of Elizabethan sounds and instrumental colours.

3 5.3.3 — timp perc(4)—harp—strings

The tenor voice in the second movement may be replaced by an oboe

Boosey & Hawkes

**Pas de six from ‘The Prince of the Pagodas’**
op.57a (1956) 12’ (CD 40)

The Prince of the Pagodas is a Britten’s longest orchestral work, a dazzling score influenced by the music the composer encountered on his recent travels through South East Asia. A good substitute on concert programmes for the Stravinsky ballets and an interesting point of comparison to the same composer’s neo-classical works.

3(III=picc) 3(III=cl in B) 3 — timp perc(2)—harp—pf—strings

Boosey & Hawkes

The Building of the House
Overture to opera (CD 2)
From the same year as its opera text, Britten's Overture to the opera 'The Building of the House' is a tightly constructed symphonic essay, with much of the work's power to be found in the orchestral writing. The final passacaglia—a spell-out with great invention by the orchestra—is a barnstorming marriage of ground bass and theme and variations. The relatively slim scoring harks back to that of the great Romantic cello concertos, to which this is a worthy successor. A good alternative to concertos by Schumann, Dvorák, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Saint-Saëns and Elgar.

Young Apollo
Op. 16 (1936) 9'
For piano, string quartet and string orchestra (CD 27)
Written in the final flushes of love or infatuation, 'Young Apollo' uses a line from Keats's Hyperion as a classical disguise: 'and lo! from all his limbs celestial Glory gaudied he was a god!' It is a slight yet muscular, radiant piece, and counts pianist Paul Lewis among its fervent advocates.

Diversions
Op. 21 (1940; rev. 1950, 1954) 10'
For piano (left hand) and orchestra (CD 2)
A set of variations on a theme, commissioned by the one-armed pianist Paul Wittgenstein. Diversions boasts a remarkably diverse collection of styles and moods. There is a touch of Faust's Night in the Gardens of Spain to the 'Nocturne', and the example of Ravel's concerto for the same forces is never far away.

Violin Concerto
For violin and orchestra, in three movements (CD 39)
A work of real originality and fantasy. Less hidebound by structural conventions than the Piano Concerto, the Violin Concerto represents a real milestone in Britten's development. The orchestral sound-world is new and assured, the solo writing brilliant and idiomatic, and the cumulative impact is considerable. Little wonder Janine Jansen is a recent and enthusiastic champion of the work (as is the Double Concerto). A stunning, welcome alternative on concert programmes to the better known Shostakovich, Berg and Sibelius concertos.

Movements for a Clarinet Concerto
(1942) 18'
For clarinet and orchestra, in three movements (orch. Colin Matthews) (CD 14)
Britten commenced work on this concerto in his final months in America, intending it for the exceptional musician Benny Goodman. Colin Matthews has fashioned a 'what might have been' from Britten's sketches, an unmissably Britten-esque score of the period, full of poised solo writing and a still, nocturnal slow movement of considerable beauty. A great counterpoint to Mozart's Clarinet Concerto, and would be a good fit in a programme featuring the last century's jazz-inspired composers.

Lachrymae
For viola and small string orchestra (CD 8)
Another Britten meditation on a song by Dowland, this is an extraordinarily touching and affecting set of variations. Its coup de théâtre is in placing the theme at the end of the piece, following the many hints and snippets along the way, which is stated with regal simplicity Britten took much care over the virtuosic solo writing: it was his own instrument, after all. It counts the Walton and Bartók concertos as its siblings.

Concertos

Double Concerto
(1938) 25'
For violin, viola and orchestra, in three movements (CD 4)
From the same year as its opus 1, Britten's Double Concerto is a mature showcase for solo violin and viola. Its Mozartian orchestra reinforces the concerto's classical structure, although the harmonic language is all Britten's. A neo-classical work, in which fanfare-like horn solos punctuate spinning top solo lines, from a time in Britten's life when Stravinsky's music had captured his imagination, only months before Berg's. Music would do the same.

2(II=picc).2.2.2(II=ca).2—4.3.3.1—
timp.perc(2)—harp—strings
Boosey & Hawkes

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For violin and orchestra, in three movements (CD 39)
A work of real originality and fantasy. Less hidebound by structural conventions than the Piano Concerto, the Violin Concerto represents a real milestone in Britten's development. The orchestral sound-world is new and assured, the solo writing brilliant and idiomatic, and the cumulative impact is considerable. Little wonder Janine Jansen is a recent and enthusiastic champion of the work (as is the Double Concerto). A stunning, welcome alternative on concert programmes to the better known Shostakovich, Berg and Sibelius concertos.

3(II,III=picc).2(II=ca).2.2—4.3.3.1—
timp.perc(2)—harp—strings
Boosey & Hawkes

Symphony for Cello and Orchestra
Op. 54 (1965; rev. 1964) 34'
For cello and orchestra, in four movements (CD 11)
Although a showcase piece for the cello soloist, this is nonetheless a tightly constructed symphonic essay, with much of the work's power to be found in the orchestral writing. The final passacaglia—spelled out with great invention by the orchestra—is a barnstorming marriage of ground bass and theme and variations. The relatively slim scoring harks back to that of the great Romantic cello concertos, to which this is a worthy successor. A good alternative to concertos by Schumann, Dvorák, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Saint-Saëns and Elgar.

2(II=picc).2(II=ca).2.alto sax(=ad lib)—3.3.1—
timp.perc(2)—harp—strings
Boosey & Hawkes

Chorus (SATB) (CD 13)
Faber Music

Suite on English Folk Tunes
'A time there was...' op. 91 (1951) 14
Five movements (CD 28)
A late work that nonetheless recreates the freewheeling optimism of Britten's orchestral works of the 1920s, when the composer first discovered the brilliance and potential of English folksong. It is full of open-stringed folk dances, the sounds of pipe and tabor, and a final movement of pure Mahlerian melancholy, a composer a work that would sit next to brilliantly in concert. It is full of open-stringed folk dances, the sounds of pipe and tabor, and a final movement of pure Mahlerian melancholy, a composer a work that would sit next to brilliantly in concert.

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2(II=picc).2.2.2—2.2.0.0—
timp.perc(2)—strings
Faber Music

Harmonic Language
A showpiece for Britten as soloist as much as composer, with the influence of Prokofiev's successful essays in this genre—and Liszt's before him— keenly felt. Younger pianists, such as Steven Osborne and Dejan Lazic, have in recent years championed the piece, convinced it is unjustly neglected.

2(II=picc).2(I=ca).2.2—4.3.3—
timp.perc(2)—harp—strings
Boosey & Hawkes

A virtuosic showcase for Britten as soloist as much as composer, with the influence of Prokofiev's successful essays in this genre—and Liszt's before him— keenly felt. Younger pianists, such as Steven Osborne and Dejan Lazic, have in recent years championed the piece, convinced it is unjustly neglected.

2(II=picc).2(I=ca).2.2—4.3.3—
timp.perc(2)—harp—strings
Boosey & Hawkes

Boosey & Hawkes
Chorus and orchestra

**Ballad of Heroes**
op.12 (1950) 21'
For tenor (or soprano) solos, chorus (SATB) and orchestra, in three movements
Text: Randall Swingler, W.H. Auden
(CD 19)

A unique and eloquent testimony to both the period in which it was written and Britten’s style and preoccupations at the time. The influence of Mahler is strong throughout, although the closest connection – not least through its formal march and subsequent dance of death – is with Britten’s **Sinfonia da Requiem**.

**Spring Symphony**
op.44 (1950) 45'
For soprano, contralto and tenor solos, chorus (SATB), boys’ choir and orchestra, in four movements
(CD 24)

A notable reaffirmation of Britten’s roots, the **Spring Symphony** combines all of Britten’s favourite things: fine English poetry, solos for him to spoil, boys’ voices. It is an uncompromisingly joyful work, with none of the fussiness that characterises many English oratorios from the first half of the century and with a final movement every bit as thrilling as that of the Young Person’s **Guide to the Orchestra**. A fitting (English) alternative to **Off’s Carmina Burana**.

**Cantata academica, carmen basilense**
op.61 (1959) 21'
For soprano, alto, tenor and bass solos, chorus (SATB) and orchestra
Text: Edith Sitwell
(CD 24)

An unfinished fragment when Britten died, this **Praise We Great Men** was subsequently crafted into a surprisingly vibrant piece by Colin Matthews. It is a poised setting of Sitwell’s poems, encased in exquisite orchestral details.

**Cantata misericordium**
op.69 (1963) 20'
For tenor and baritone solos, small chorus (SATB), string quartet and orchestra
Text: Patrick Williamson (in Latin)
(CD 30)

From the same stable as the **War Requiem**, the **Cantata misericordium** is another of Britten’s many parables. Written for the centenary of the Red Cross, this dramatic telling of the biblical story of the Good Samaritan was intended in part as a strong rejoinder to the century’s catastrophic anti-Semitism. A powerful piece, full of beautiful, often plaintive writing for chorus and soloists, **Cantata misericordium** contains striking resonances with **Stravinsky’s** **Latin**. Works:
tharp—perc—Strings
Boosey & Hawkes

**Praise We Great Men**

<table>
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<td>Spring Symphony</td>
<td>Britten</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Anon., Spencer, Nashe, Peele, Clare, Milton, Herrick, Vaughan, Auden, Barnfield, Blake, Beaumont, Fletcher</td>
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<td>Cantata academica, carmen basilense</td>
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<td>Edith Sitwell</td>
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**Solo voice and orchestra**

**Les Illuminations**
op.18 (1993) 25'
For high voice and orchestra
Text: Arthur Rimbaud (in French)
(CD 26)

Exquisite miniatures, drawn together as a cycle for soprano or tenor and string orchestra, in which Britten pays tribute once more to the sounds and colours of French music and language. Matthews slipped on Britten’s shoes for his recent orchestration of three poems sketched and then discarded by the composer to produce these stand-alone orchestral songs. A great alternative or counterpoint to Berlioz’s **Les nuits d’été**.

**Serenade**
op.31 (1954) 24'/27'
For tenor, horn and strings, with one extra song ‘Now sleeps the crimson petal’
Text: Charles Cotton, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, William Blake, Anon, John Keats
(CD 5)

On home territory now after Les Illuminations, Britten’s tribute here is to England’s great poets and pastoral traditions. It is a showpiece equally for tenor and horn, each playing off the other with great wit and beauty.

**Fourteen Folk Songs**

<table>
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<td>1954</td>
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**A Charm of Lullabies**
op.41 (1947) 17
For mezzo-soprano solo and orchestra (arr Colin Matthews)
Text: William Blake, Robert Burns, Robert Greene, Thomas Randolph, John Philip 
(CD 19)

A welcome addition to a relatively small repertoire. **Collins** has crafted Britten’s five lullabies for mezzo-soprano and piano into a unified orchestral cycle. A good alternative to Elgar’s ubiquitous **Sea Pictures**.

**Nocturne**
op.60 (1958) 25
For tenor solo, seven obbligato instruments and string orchestra
Text: Shelley, Tennyson, Coleridge, Middleton, Wordsworth, Owen, Krats, Shakespeare
(CD 31)

Britten’s bookend to his earlier **Serenade**, in which the world of sleep, dreams and nightmares is charted with great drama. The cycle’s connection to Mahler is formalized in its dedication to his widow Alma, yet the great composer’s musical fingerprints are ever discernible. Orchestral musicians love playing this: each obbligato instrument forms a perfect colloquy with the voice.

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Phaedra
op. 99 (1975) 19’
Dramatic cantata for mezzo-soprano and small orchestra
Text: Robert Lowell, after Racine’s Phèdre
(CD 15)

Phaedra could rightly be considered Britten’s final opera—a short work, in which the death of the incestuous, mythological Phaedra, wife of Theseus, is played out in real time. The work’s debt to the Baroque cantata is apparent, not least in the recitatives accompanied by harpsichord, yet its language shows Britten at his most vital and lyrical, one eye on Schoenberg’s Erwartung. It works brilliantly in concert alongside Handel and Bach.

When Phaedra arrived, I was overwhelmed by its passion and feeling. Even more awesome was to collaborate with the composer on it, to create the interpretation in his presence. That moment is mine for ever.”
Janet Baker

Works involving children

Friday Afternoons
op. 7 (1934) 12’
Twelve children’s songs with piano accompaniment
Text: Anon., Thackeray, Taylor, Udall, Walton, Farjeon
(CD 45)

A collection of varied miniatures, each of which demonstrates Britten’s great empathy with children and their voices.
Boosey & Hawkes

Chamber music

Britten’s works for string quartet chart his development as a composer. It’s all there—from the continental preoccupations in his Quartetino (1930), to the emergence of Britten’s own unmistakable voice in his first string quartet (1941) and his debt to Purcell in his second (1945), to his String Quartet No. 3, written one year before his death, a restless, troubled, profound work.

The suites for solo cello were a product of a more confined period in the composer’s life; yet they too show a marked evolution in his thinking.

The chamber works have remarkably varied lives these days—from the complete quartet cycle performed by the Beaux Arts Quartet at Aldeburgh Festival in 2002, to their appropriation as ballet scores. They are dramatic, virtuosic, visual, often profound essays in their genres.

No. 1 in F major (1930–1936) 12’
For string quartet
(CD 7)

Quartetino
(1930–1931)
For string quartet, in three movements
(CD 32)
Faber Music

Phantasy in F minor (1932; rev. 1932) 11’
For string quartet (2 vn, vla, vc)
(CD 37)
Faber Music

Alma marcia (1935) 5’
For string quartet
(CD 19)
Faber Music

Three Divertimenti
(1933–1936) 12’
For string quartet
(CD 5)
Faber Music

String Quartet No. 1 in D
op. 25 (1941) 26’
Four movements
(CD 12)
Boosey & Hawkes

String Quartet No. 2 in C
op. 36 (1945) 31’
Three movements
(CD 43)
Boosey & Hawkes

Three Divertimenti
(1933–1936) 12’
For string quartet
(CD 5)
Faber Music

String Quartet Nos. 4 and 5
op. 35 (1951) 18’
For string quartet
CD 32)
Faber Music

Sonata in C
op. 65 (1965; rev. 1975) 19’
For cello and piano,
in five movements
(CD 39)
Boosey & Hawkes

First Suite for Cello
op. 80 (1967) 22’
Five movements
(CD 26)
Faber Music

Second Suite for Cello
op. 81 (1970) 22’
Nine movements
(CD 17)
Faber Music

Third Suite for Cello
op. 87 (1977; rev. 1979) 22’
Nine movements
(CD 17)
Faber Music

String Quartet No. 3
op. 94 (1975; rev. 1975) 28’
Five movements
(CD 23)
Faber Music

The Golden Vanity
op. 78 (1966) 15’
Vaudeville for boys and piano
Text: Colin Graham, after the old English ballad
(CD 21)

A children’s Billy Budd, The Golden Vanity is a work of great charm and pathos. It is not difficult to sing, yet it packs a musical and dramatic punch.
Faber Music

Children’s Crusade
op. 82 (1969) 19’
Ballad for children’s voices and orchestra
Text: Bertolt Brecht (German and English, trs. Hans Keller)
(CD 36)

It is a bleak landscape these fifty-odd Polish orphans tread. It is 1939, and their country and families have been destroyed by war. They set off in search of peace, yet their journey is marked by starvation, a criminal trial, and a funeral: adult territory not so far from Golding’s Lord of the Flies. There are strong solo parts for children, and the ingenious orchestral sounds—of war, of dogs barking—round out this atmospheric tale. There is simply no other piece like it for children.
6 solo perc—tuttiperc—2 pf—chamber or electronic org
Faber Music

Noye’s Fludde
op. 59 (1958) 50’
A work of great charm and pathos. It is not difficult to sing, yet it packs a musical and dramatic punch.
Faber Music

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(1930–1931)
For string quartet, in three movements
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**Britten Connections A guide for performers and programmers**

**Treaty of Versailles signed.**

The Rite of Spring

S. Stravinsky, the sea and air during the war.

Father’s dentist surgery.

The ground floor was his father’s dental surgery.

Lowestoft: 21 Kirkley Cliff Road.

**Time line**

Earliest attempt at composition: a song entitled ‘Do you know that my Daddy has gone to London today.’

Treaty of Versailles signed.

Elgar, Cello Concerto

Starts attending South Lodge Preparatory School in Lowestoft, and also begins private viola lessons with Audrey Alston.

Ravel, L’fant smoking and the sortileges

Berg, Wozzeck

Is ‘knocked sideways’ hearing Frank Bridge’s orchestral suite The Sea in Norwich.

Death of Puccini.

Sibelius, Symphony No. 7

Janáček, The Cunning Little Vixen

Passes Grade VII piano exam with honours, and receives edition of Beethoven Piano Sonatas as a birthday present from Miss Astle.

General Strike in Britain.

The Rite of Spring

S. Stravinsky, the sea and air during the war.

**Timeline**
Britten and Pears in Venice,
The Anschluss in Austria.

Begins regular performing as a visiting artist.

Moves into the Old Mill, where Aaron Copland is in residence.

Piano Concerto, op. 13

Canadian Carnival

Quebec. When Britain declares war on Germany, the pair—by then in the US and a couple—are advised to remain.

Ballad of Heroes, op. 14
Violin Concerto, op. 15
Young Apollo, op. 16
Le Illuminazioni, op. 18
Canadian Carnival, op. 19

In May, sets sail with Pears for North America on the SS Ancon, arriving in Quebec. When Britain declares war on Germany, the pair—by then in the US and a couple—are advised to remain.

String Quartet No. 1 in D, op. 25: An American Overture

Premiere of Peter Grimes, 7 June. Visits, and performs at, liberated Belsen concentration camp with Yehudi Menuhin, 7 July.

Copland, Symphony No. 3

Begins the composition sketch of Peter Grimes at the Old Mill.

Serenade, op. 31

Gives wartime recitals with Pears and others for the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA).

Copeland, Symphony No. 3

A Charm of Lullabies, op. 41: Men of Goodwill

Moves to Aldeburgh, buying Craig House on the seafront overlooking the North Sea. Co-founds the English Opera Group.

Britten Connections A guide for performers and program-makers

Britten and Pears in Venice. September 1954

Communist countries sign Warsaw Pact.

Billy Budd commissioned as part of the Festival of Britain.
Festival of Britain celebrates the end of post-war austerity. London’s Royal Festival Hall opens on the South Bank.

NBC televises Billy Budd: Britten’s first opera to be broadcast on television.

The Turn of the Screw premiere in Venice.

Premiere of The Prince of the Pagodas: Moves to The Red House, Aldeburgh.

Russian Sputnik satellite launched.
Bernstein, West Side Story

Stockhausen, Gruppen

Britten and Peter Pears in Bali. 1956.

Visits Japan and Bali, during a tour of the Far East, and is impressed by Noh theatre and gamelan music.

British Connections A guide for performers and program-makers

Britten and Pears in Venice, May-June 1939

Britten with Paul Wittgenstein

Britten at the Old Mill, Snape.

Britten at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam after the premiere of (premier symphony at the 1949 Holland Festival).

Premiere of Peter Grimes, 7 June. Visits, and performs at, liberated Belsen concentration camp with Yehudi Menuhin, 7 July.

War in Europe ends, May US drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, August.

A Child of Our Time

Tippett, A Child of Our Time

Spring Symphony, op. 44

Mao Zedong proclaims the People’s Republic of China.

Symphonic Suite ‘Gloriana’, op. 53a

Coronation opera Gloriana

Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Death of Stalin.

Cage, 4’33”

With Pears and Eric Crozier establishes the Aldeburgh Festival of Music and the Arts.

Start of the Korean War.

Communist countries sign Warsaw Pact.

Premiere of The Prince of the Pagodas: Moves to The Red House, Aldeburgh.

Russian Sputnik satellite launched.
Bernstein, West Side Story

Stockhausen, Gruppen

Programme book for the first Aldeburgh Festival.

With Pears and Eric Crozier establishes the Aldeburgh Festival of Music and the Arts.

Start of the Korean War.

Communist countries sign Warsaw Pact.

Premiere of The Prince of the Pagodas: Moves to The Red House, Aldeburgh.

Russian Sputnik satellite launched.
Bernstein, West Side Story

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Britten Connections: A guide for performers and programmers

1958
Noye’s Fludde, op. 59.

1959
Nocturne, op. 60.

1960
Premiere of A Midsummer Night’s Dream, written to celebrate the extension of the Jubilee Hall as a larger venue for the Aldeburgh Festival.

1961
War Requiem premiere in the new Coventry Cathedral.

1962
Cultural revolution announced in China.

1963
Noel Coward, ‘Love Me Do’

1964
The Beatles, ‘Love Me Do’

1965
Nelson Mandela jailed in South Africa.

1966
First Suite for Cello, op. 72

1967
Premiere of Curlew River. Conducts Cello Symphony in Moscow.

1968
The Golden Vanity, op. 78

1969
Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia.

1970
Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

1971
Protests in London against Vietnam War.

1972
The Beatles, ‘Love Me Do’

1973
Nixon visits China.

1974
Children’s Crusade, op. 82

1975
Praise We Great Men

1976
Children’s Crusade, op. 82

First Suite for Cello, op. 80

Third Suite for Cello, op. 87

Sydney Opera House opened by Queen Elizabeth II.

Britten conducting a rehearsal of a Midsummer Night’s Dream in Aldeburgh’s Jubilee Hall.

Britten with Sarah Bradbeer in The Red House garden.

Britten at Snape Maltings conducting a rehearsal for A Midsummer Night’s Dream in Aldeburgh’s Jubilee Hall.

Britten with Peter Pears, his partner for nearly four decades, towards the end of the composer’s life. Photo: Victor Parker.


Britten with Peter Pears, his partner for nearly four decades, towards the end of the composer’s life. Photo: Victor Parker.

Britten conducting a rehearsal of A Midsummer Night’s Dream in Aldeburgh’s Jubilee Hall.

Britten rehearsing with Mstislav Rostropovich at the Festival of British Music in Moscow.

Children’s Crusade, op. 82

Sympathy for Cello and Orchestra, op. 68; Cantata academicia, carmen basiliense, op. 62

Cuban revolution.

Cantata academia, carmen basiliense, op. 62

Cuban revolution.

First visit to Aldeburgh by Mstislav Rostropovich and Galina Vishnevskaya.

Construction of Berlin Wall.

Homosexuality becomes legal in UK.

Assassination of John F Kennedy.

Owen Davies, Eight Songs for a Mad King

Shostakovich, Symphony No. 14

Praise We Great Men

Created a Life Peer, Baron Britten of Aldeburgh, in June; dies at home in The Red House, 4 December.

Neil Armstrong sets foot on the moon.

Maxwell Davies, Eight Songs for a Mad King

Children’s Crusade, op. 82

Snape Maltings Concert Hall badly damaged by fire on the eve of the Aldeburgh Festival.

Neil Armstrong sets foot on the moon.

Maxwell Davies, Eight Songs for a Mad King

Shostakovich, Symphony No. 14

Praise We Great Men

Created a Life Peer, Baron Britten of Aldeburgh, in June; dies at home in The Red House, 4 December.

End of Franco’s rule in Spain. Surrender of Saigon to North Vietnamese forces.

Visits USSR for the Festival of British Music. Fiftieth birthday celebrations.

Assassination of John F Kennedy.

Tippett, Concerto for Orchestra

The Building of the House, op. 79; Second Suite for Cello, op. 80

Snape Maltings Concert Hall opens as a new venue for the Aldeburgh Festival. Queen Elizabeth II opens the Concert Hall and visits The Red House.

Homosexuality becomes legal in UK.

Homosexuality becomes legal in UK.

Faber Music established.

Symphony for Cello and Orchestra, op. 68; Cantata academicia, op. 62

Cuban revolution.

First visit to Aldeburgh by Mstislav Rostropovich and Galina Vishnevskaya.

Construction of Berlin Wall.

Homosexuality becomes legal in UK.

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Symphony for Cello and Orchestra, op. 68; Cantata academicia, op. 62

Cuban revolution.

First visit to Aldeburgh by Mstislav Rostropovich and Galina Vishnevskaya.

Construction of Berlin Wall.

Homosexuality becomes legal in UK.
CD sampler tracks

01. Cantata academica, carmen basilense op 62
02. Part II: Ognon sumum omnium
London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus/George Malcolm
Decca 475 6040

03. Diversions op 21
Vonynson 6: Nocturne
Steven Osborne/BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Ian Volkov
Hyperion CDNA65625

04. Three Divertimenti 2 Waltz
Belcea Quartet
EMI Classics 577 9682

05. Serenade op 31
5 hymn
Ian Bostridge/Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra/Simon Rattle
EMI Classics 557 0492

06. Our Hunting Fathers op 8
3 Dance of Death
Ian Bostridge/Britten Sinfonia/Daniel Harding
EMI Classics 565 34

07. Oliver Cromwell (Nursery Rhyme from Suffolk)
Ian Bostridge/Britten Sinfonia/Daniel Harding
EMI Classics 557 9682

08. Third Suite for Cello op 57
6 Fuga: Andante allegro
Paul Watkins
Nimbus NO 1504

09. Lachrymae op 48a
1. Lento
Roger Chauv/Nash Ensemble/Lionel Friend
Hyperion CDH 54525

10. Double Concerto
Peter Schoeman/Alexander Zemstov
London Philharmonic Orchestra/Vladimir Jurowski
LPO-007

11. Sinfonia da Requiem op 20
2 Dies irae: Allegro con fuoco
City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra/Simon Rattle
EMI Classics C25759852

12. Symphony for Cello and Orchestra op 68
4 Passacaglia: Andante allegro
Peter Wispelwey/Flanders Symphony Orchestra/Selkyo Kim
ONXY 40578

13. String Quartet No. 1 in D op 25
1. Andante sostenuto - Allegro vivo
Belcea Quartet
EMI Classics 577 9682

14. Phaedra op 91
‘My time is too short, your highness...’
Ann Murray/English Chamber Orchestra/Steuart Bedford
Naxos 8.557099

15. Movements for a Clarinet Concerto
II Michael Collins/Northern Sinfonia/Thomas Zehetmair
NMC D140

16. First Suite for Cello op 72
Mstislav Rostropovich
Decca 421 892

17. A Charm of Lullabies op 41
5 The Warbler’s Song
Catherine Wyn-Jones/Northern Sinfonia/Steuart Bedford
Naxos 8.557205

18. Piano Concerto op 13
1. Lascia
Liszt Orpheus/London Symphony Orchestra/Paavo Järvi
EMI Classics 2577562

19. Quatre chansons françaises
4 Chanson d’aoutarme
Ian Bostridge/Britten Sinfonia/Daniel Harding
EMI Classics 565 34

20. Canadian Carnival op 19
Wesley Warren/City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra/Simon Rattle
EMI Classics C25759852

21. The Golden Vanity op 78
8 Oxford Christ Church Cathedral Choir/Stephen Darlington
Lammas LAMM 1460

22. The Building of the House op 79
Chorus of East Anglian Choirs/English Chamber Orchestra/Britten BBCR 800-2

23. String Quartet No. 3 op 94
4 Burlesque: Fast, con fuoco
Belcea Quartet
EMI Classics 557 9682

24. Praise We Great Men
Robert Tear/Alison Hargan/Mary King/
Willard White/City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Chorus/
Simon Rattle
EMI Classics C25759852

25. Les Illuminations op 18
4a Phrase
Felicity Lott/English Chamber Orchestra/Steuart Bedford
Naxos 8.5570206

26. Second Suite for Cello op 80
Mstislav Rostropovich
Decca 421 892

27. Young Apollo op 16
1. Overture
Peter Donohoe/Felix Kok/Jeremy Ballard/
London Symphony Orchestra/Simon Rattle
EMI Classics C25759852

28. Suite on English Folk Songs op 90
4 Hunt the Squirrel
City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra/Simon Rattle
EMI Classics C25759852

29. Noye’s Fludde op 59
Owen Brannigan/David Pinto/
Darian Angadi/Stephen Alexander/
Clare Solomon/Sheila Rest/English Opera Group Orchestra/Merlin Channon/Normal Del Mar
Decca 475 6040

30. Cantata misericordium op 69
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Peter Pears/Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau/
London Sinfonietta/Ernst Kusnerr
EMI Classics 2177562

31. String Quartet No. 2 in C op 36
2 Vivace
Belcea Quartet
EMI Classics 557 9682

32. Symphonic Suite ‘Gloriana’ op 53a
Currie Dance No 8
London Symphony Orchestra/Simon Rattle
Naxos 8.557196

33. Friday Afternoons op 7
1 Begone, dull care
Viola Turnard/Downside School Choir/Britten
Decca 475 6040

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Mark Lubbock/English Chamber Orchestra/Britten
Decca 475 3082

35. Ballad of Heroes op 14
3 Funeral March
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EMI Classics C25759852

36. Children’s Crusade op 82
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Stephen Darlington
Lammas LAMM 1460

37. Haydn’s Flute Concerto op 104
3a phrase
Les Illuminations
Willard White/City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra/Simon Rattle
EMI Classics C25759852

38. Double Concerto
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London Philharmonic Orchestra/Leif Ove Andsnes/City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra
Decca 417 3082

39. The Nurse’s Song op 85
1. Allegro molto vivace
Ensemble/Eric Thomas
Les Illuminations
Willard White/City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra/Simon Rattle
EMI Classics C25759852

40. The Prince of the Pagodas op 57
Act III: Scene 2 Pas de six
London Sinfonietta/Ernst Kusnerr.
EMI Classics 2177562

41. String Quartet No. 4 in C op 57
2 Allegro
Belcea Quartet
EMI Classics 557 9682

42. Phantasy in Minor
Endellion String Quartet
EMI Classics 2175262

43. Canadian Carnival op 19
Wesley Warren/City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra/Simon Rattle
EMI Classics C25759852

44. The Prince of the Pagodas
London Sinfonietta/Ernst Kusnerr
Emi Classics 2177562

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Paul Kildea

Paul Kildea is a conductor who has written extensively on Benjamin Britten and twentieth-century music and culture. His books include Selling Britten: music and the market place and Britten on Music (both OUP). Penguin Press will publish his major new biography of Britten in time for the composer’s 200th anniversary. He is a former Head of Music at the annual festival founded by Britten in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, and former Artistic Director of London’s Wigmore Hall.
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Selected further reading
www.brittenpears.org for full details of all Britten’s published works, biographical information and much more.
The Faber Pocket Guide to Britten John Bridget (Faber, 2010).
Britten David Matthews (Haus Publishing, paperback 2009).
Benjamin Britten: A Biography Humphrey Carpenter (Faber and Faber, new edition 2003).
Journeying Boy: The Diaries of the Young Benjamin Britten 1928-1938 Dr John Evans (Faber and Faber, paperback 2006).
Britten’s Children’s John Bridget (Faber and Faber, paperback 2007).
February House Sherrill Tippins (Pocket Books, paperback 2006).

Selected DVDs
The Hidden Heart - A Life of Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears Jake Martin (2001). Released on DVD by EMI Classics, 2008.