INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600



Downloaded from SHAREOK. Persistent Handle URL: https://hdl.handle.net/11244/534

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

MICHAEL HEAD'S LIGHT OPERA, *KEY MONEY*

A MUSICAL DRAMATURGY

A Document

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

By

MARILYN S. GOVICH
Norman, Oklahoma
2002

UMI Number: 3070639

Copyright 2002 by
Govich, Marilyn S.

All rights reserved.

UMI

UMI Microform 3070639
Copyright 2003 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

MICHAEL HEAD'S LIGHT OPERA, *KEY MONEY*
A MUSICAL DRAMATURGY

A Document
APPROVED FOR THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

BY

Dr. Eugene Enrico, Chairman

Dr. Dolores Leffingwell

Dr. Meryl Mantione

Dr. William Henry McDonald

Dr. Michael Rogers

© Copyright by MARILYN S. GOVICH 2002
All Rights Reserved

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The ardent interest and valued support of my committee members have greatly contributed to the realization of this document. I wish to thank Dr. Eugene Enrico for his enthusiasm, thoughtful guidance, and generosity of his time and expertise. I am especially grateful to Dr. Meryl Mantione for her personal encouragement throughout this study, as well as her ongoing support through all the recitals of the degree. Appreciation is extended to Dr. Michael Rogers for encouraging a creative approach to musical analysis; Dr. Dolores Leffingwell for her insightful questions which helped define the study; and to Dr. William Henry McDonald for his continuing interest in the project.

Special acknowledgement is given to the family of Nancy Bush—Dr. Rachel O'Higgins, Mrs. Catherine Hinson and Ms. Maeve O'Higgins—for their efforts and assistance in providing vital information to this study. I am also extremely grateful to Dr. Barbara Streets for making available all her materials from the Michael Head Collection and her research on this composer, as well as for sharing her personal library.

I wish to thank my mother and father, and my three extraordinary children, Milena, Mateja and Nikola, for their invaluable support and encouragement. Most of all I am indebted to my teacher, mentor and husband, the late Professor Emeritus, Dr. Bruce M. Govich, to whom I respectfully dedicate this work. Besides teaching the highest level of skills and artistry in music, he inspired an intellectual curiosity in all his students and identified and encouraged their academic potential which was often beyond their imaginations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....1

Purpose of the Study.....1

Need for the Study.....1

Procedures.....8

Limitations.....10

Related Literature.....12

CHAPTER II: THE CREATORS OF THE OPERA.....19

Michael Dewar Head.....19

Nancy Bush.....42

The Genesis of the Opera, *Key Money*.....70

CHAPTER III: PERFORMER'S ANALYSIS.....78

Dramatic Values of the Libretto.....78

Musical Dramaturgy.....90

CHAPTER IV: CRITIQUE / INTERPRETATION.....200

The Genre.....200

Relationship to Twentieth-Century Chamber Opera.....214

Other Operas by Michael Head.....218

Conclusion.....226

Recommendations for Further Research.....229

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....231

APPENDICES.....246

A. Libretto of *Key Money*.....246

B. Dramatic Works of Michael Head.....256

C. Other Works by Nancy Bush.....258

MICHAEL HEAD'S LIGHT OPERA, *KEY MONEY*: A MUSICAL DRAMATURGY

By: Marilyn S. Govich

Major Professor: Eugene Enrico, Ph.D.

The reputation of British composer Michael Dewar Head (1900-1976) rests primarily on his compositions for solo voice, most of which remain in print. Head also wrote two children's operas and four light one-act operas. The unpublished manuscript of one of the light operas, *Key Money*, with a libretto by Head's sister, Nancy Bush, is examined from historical, analytical and critical aspects, with an emphasis on informing directors and singers on aspects of performance.

The historical chapter presents the musical environment and influences on Michael Head's compositional style, much of which was taken from his personal diaries. The life and career of librettist Nancy Bush is discussed, with emphasis on her libretti for three full-length operas by Alan Bush, which were published and performed in East Germany. Her extensive work as a published translator and writer of English versions of songs is noted in an appendix. The genesis of the opera, which was commissioned and performed by the British Intimate Opera Company, is addressed, as well as its performance history.

The analytical chapter consists of a determination of the dramatic values of the libretto and a full musical analysis, with particular emphasis on how the composer has articulated and defined these values and the dramatic events, in essence, how music serves the drama. The uses of musical parody and musical motives are identified and discussed.

The one-act chamber opera is placed in perspective by noting its numerous commonalities with the Italian comic intermezzo of the eighteenth century and its relationship to miniature chamber operas of the present day, particularly Menotti's *The Telephone*. Michael Head's other operas are described.

As an experienced professional singer, Head wrote music that not only enhanced dramatic values, but was highly singable. He achieved the desired dramatic effects with greatest ease for the singer and utmost intelligibility for the audience. Because *Key Money* is extremely well-crafted and it requires only two singers with piano accompaniment, this chamber work could be valuable in the repertoire of college studios, opera workshops and opera touring companies.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to examine and analyze the interrelationship of the music and libretto in the one-act light opera *Key Money*, by British composer Michael Head and librettist Nancy Bush.[1] This will be accomplished by determining the opera's dramatic values, the appropriateness of text setting, and the ways in which the music articulates and supports the dramatic elements. This study will bring this unpublished opera to light and contribute to the director's and performers' understanding and interpretation of this work.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

"While well over 2500 operas have been written by English and American composers and librettists during the twentieth century, almost all of them are unknown except to a very small audience."[2] This estimate of numbers of operatic works was given by Cameron Northouse in the preface to his book, *Twentieth Century Opera in England and the United States*, which was published in 1976. Obviously that number would be larger now. "While composers and librettists have continually produced operas of merit, they have not been given the substantial financial and social support of the dominant opera culture, at least not the high

---

[1]Light opera is a designation given by the composer. In the context of this study, the term will refer to a short, chamber comic opera which is sung throughout.

[2]Cameron Northouse, *Twentieth Century Opera in England and the United States* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1976) vi.

degree of support that has been expended on the institutionalization of pre-twentieth century opera."[3] Northouse undertakes to list the details of 1,612 operas by date of their first performance and another 941 lesser known operas by their title and composer. He acknowledges that the listings are by no means complete. George Martin confirms that since many twentieth century operas were composed for small venues, their performances frequently do not appear on the repertoire lists of major opera houses.[4] Although Michael Head's published children's opera, *The Bachelor Mouse*, is listed by Northouse, his unpublished operas do not appear.

During the course of the past century the reputations of English composers have fluctuated greatly. According to Stan Meares, "Britten's reputation as a composer did not suffer significantly at his death, though it did as a man, but Elgar was in the critical 'dog house' for about thirty years and Vaughan Williams for about twenty before their reputations returned."[5] At the time of his death in 1900, Arthur Sullivan was the most respected and popular composer of his day, but his reputation fell and never returned. "He was patronizingly acknowledged as a master of operetta, but Gilbert and Sullivan were considered trifles, and Sullivan was pigeonholed as a composer of "light" music."[6] Meares has undertaken an investigation into the reputation of Sullivan and his musical compositions, including his operas. The 1999 Edinburgh revival of *Ivanhoe* confirmed the writer's

---

[3] Ibid.

[4] George Martin, *The Opera Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1979), 576.

[5] Stan Meares "An Investigation into the Reputation of Arthur Seymour Sullivan (1842-1900): Man of Contrast: Man of the Theatre," *British Music* 22, (2000): 54.

[6] Ibid.

conviction that the maligned opera is stageworthy.[7] Similarly, Michael Head, perhaps because of the commercial success of his songs, has been looked upon rather condescendingly by the critics as only a composer of ballads and light popular music, or art song that has nothing significant to say.[8] He is virtually ignored by the musicologists and critics who have written about the English musical renaissance.

There has recently been a rediscovery and an appreciation of the music of Fanny Mendelssohn, Amy Beach, George Butterworth, Ivor Gurney, C. W. Orr and many others. Operas by Arthur Bliss, Charles Stanford, Ethel Smyth, Rutland Boughton, Hamish MacCunn and others were revived in a 1985 opera performance project by The British Music Society.[9] This organization was founded in 1979 in order to promote and give public exposure to works of deserving but lesser known British composers. Many of these were not considered commercially viable by publishers or promoters. In addition to making recordings and sponsoring live performances, the Society publishes an annual journal *British Music*, which provides scholarly articles on composers and allied subjects. Volume 22 of the journal for the year 2000 featured the composer, singer, and pianist, Michael Head in his centenary year. The editor Roger Carpenter stated that, "Peter Warlock apart,

---

[7]Ibid., 63

[8]Stephen Banfield *Sensibility and English Song, Vol. 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1985) 308.

[9]British Music Society. Data on-line; available from http://www.musicweb.uk.net/BMS/intro.html; Internet; accessed 4 June 2002.

no one did more to enrich the repertory of twentieth century British art song than Michael Head."[10]

Michael Head (1900- 1976) was well-know throughout his career as a performer. He made numerous appearances as a one-man recitalist, performing solo piano works and accompanying his own singing. He presented Italian art songs, French *mèlodies*, German *Lieder*, songs by early and contemporary English composers, as well as songs that he himself composed. As a recitalist he toured extensively in Britain and the British Empire, made several recordings and was broadcast frequently. In 1927 Head was appointed professor of piano at the Royal Academy of Music, a position he kept until 1975. In later years he was made a Fellow of the academy. He served as an examiner for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music and as an adjudicator for competitive music festivals throughout the British Isles. The Associated Board examining tours took him to Malta, Cyprus, Canada, New Zealand, Rhodesia, South Africa, the West Indies, Hawaii, Hong Kong, Singapore, India and Japan.[11] In addition to his academic duties, these travels included lectures and recitals. Michael Head also visited the United States to sing recitals and teach master classes for the National Association of Teachers of Singing workshops.[12]

---

[10]Roger Carpenter, ed. "Editorial," *British Music* 22 (2000), 3.

[11]Nancy Bush, *Michael Head: Composer, Singer, Pianist* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1982), 57-8.

[12]Barbara Sue Streets, "Michael Head: His Contributions as Composer, Performer, Educator with an Analysis of Selected Solo Songs," (Ph.D. diss., University of Oklahoma, 2002), 17.

Michael Head's reputation now, however, rests primarily on his compositions, and although he wrote for a variety of instrumental and vocal combinations, "it is as a song-writer that he takes his place among British composers."[13] His first song was published when he was only nineteen[14], and many of his near one-hundred published songs have remained in print. Some of them, like "The Little Road to Bethlehem" continue to be enormously popular. At competitive festivals the popularity of Head's vocal music led to the establishment of classes of Michael Head songs. Because his songs were valued as teaching repertoire, the (British) Music Teachers' Association chose Michael Head as the Composer of the Year for 1967.[15] In addition, his songs continue to appear on academic and professional recitals throughout the British Isles and the United States, as well as on many recordings.

In addition to his known 124 songs and various choral and instrumental works, Michael Head wrote two children's operas, *The Bachelor Mouse* and *Through Train*, as well as four light one-act operas: *The Bidder's Opera* (libretto by Mary Dunn); *Key Money* (libretto by Nancy Bush); *Day Return* (Nancy Bush); and *After the Wedding* (Nancy Bush.)[16] Since the only opera to be published (and still in print) was *The Bachelor Mouse*, the other operas, though performed and well-

---

[13]Eric Blom, ed. *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 5th ed.* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1954. S.v. "Head, Michael (Dewar)" by Kenneth Avery.

[14]Michael Dewar Head Diary, January 23, 1919, Michael Head Collection in the possession of Dr. Rachel O'Higgins, Cambridge, England.

[15]Bush, *Michael Head*, 56.

[16]Bush, *Michael Head*, 55

received in their time, have been lost to a later generation of performers. Manuscripts for two of these operas, *Key Money* and *After the Wedding* have recently been found. *Key Money* is the subject of this document.

Harries and Harries point out that Benjamin Britten's long experience as an accompanist contributed to his understanding of the mechanics of speech production in his songs.[17] This was likely one of the factors for his enormous success in writing operas. It is Tom Sutcliffe's observation in considering twenty-first century opera, that "song remains what draws the public to an interest in operatic material. Song is what is memorable. Song is the means whereby the themes and ideas of past operas are brought to life. Song is the essence of the drama..."[18] He promotes the idea that the "tradition of music for singing has to be respected by composers and served."[19] Michael Head has firmly established himself in this tradition. Perhaps it is because he was a singer and accompanist himself that he has proven to be outstanding in his expertise of setting the English language to music. Head has exhibited a striking and well-crafted lyricism, and has created songs that fit voices exceptionally well, in other words, works that are highly singable. It is the premise of this study that his one-act light opera *Key Money* will demonstrate these same strengths. In addition, because this delightfully entertaining, witty opera was originally written for performance with piano accompaniment, (and only later orchestrated for a small chamber ensemble) it can be authentically performed with

---

[17]Meirion Harries and Susie Harries, *Opera Today* (London: Michael Joseph, 1986) 300.

[18]Tom Sutcliffe, *Believing in Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 425.

[19]Ibid., 419.

piano accompaniment alone. Considering that the work is written for only two singers and that the stage and costume requirements are economical, this work could serve many purposes. It is ideal for opera workshops, opera scene classes and apprentice programs, and could be used for educational and community tours. Unlike many comic operas, its theme and humor remain relevant to today's audience.

In this study, analysis will focus on performance of the work for both directors and singers. In his recent article on analysis and criticism in *The Musical Quarterly*, Leon Bostein states that,

> Nothing is more informative and suggestive than the sort of traditional musical analysis that frequently comes under attack now, even though it is neither normative nor complete, but partial. From a performer's point of view, analysis is interesting insofar as it suggests strategies for creating a work through performance. Analysis ponders routes to selective hypotheses regarding meaning. ...Analysis opens up a level of cultural significance and meaning not otherwise obviously present. Analysis can also be to music what translation is to literature. The translation from one language to another articulates something new out of a text. It may even change our view of the so-called original.[20]

For a study of an opera, however, one must go beyond simply a musical analysis, and combine it with a determination of dramatic values of the libretto, and further examine how the music interacts with and defines the text—the inter-relationship of the two. In his guide to writing about music, Richard Wingell stresses that the music of song and opera cannot adequately be appreciated without understanding the text setting. "The complex relationship between text and music is one of the

---

[20]Leon Bostein, "Analysis and Criticism," *The Musical Quarterly* 85, no.2 (Summer 2001) 226.

major questions to consider in the process of analysis."[21] Joseph Kerman in his book, *Opera as Drama* confirms that, "A serious search for dramatic values...can begin to provide a basis for standards. The postulate is that opera is an art-form with its own integrity and its own particular limiting and liberating conventions. The critical procedure involves a sharpening of musical awareness and an expansion of our range of imaginative response to drama."[22] Music articulates the dramatic orm in conjunction with the plot structure. This understanding is essential to defining the meaning of the work and to performing the work with imagination and sincerity.[23]

PROCEDURES

This study will follow the basic format of the Cambridge Opera Handbooks, "a series of studies of individual operas, which were written for the serious opera-goer or record-collector as well as the student or scholar."[24] The main concerns of each volume have been historical, analytical and critical or interpretive.

1. History. Chapter II of the document will present biographical information about composer Michael Head, with particular attention to the influences on his musical style. The chapter also will give background information on the life of Nancy Bush, sister of the composer. Her work as a translator of songs

---

[21]Richard J. Wingell, *Writing about Music: An Introductory Guide, 2nd ed.* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997) 13.

[22]Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama* (New York: Random House, 1956) 6.

[23]Ibid., 268.

[24]Philip Brett, ed. *Benjamin Britten: Peter Grimes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) v.

and choral pieces by various composers and her work as a lyricist and librettist will be noted, especially the three major operas she wrote with composer Alan Bush, which were presented in East Germany. This discussion will be followed by information about the genesis and stage history of the opera, *Key Money*, and the collaboration between librettist and composer. Part of the information for this chapter will be obtained by written interviews with the two daughters of Nancy Bush (Michael Head's nieces) and from Dame Felicity Lott and Sir Simon Rattle, both of whom were involved in the first production of another of Michael Head's light operas, *After the Wedding*. The interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

2. Analysis. Chapter III will consist of a performer's analysis of the opera. The determination of dramatic values of the libretto will be based on a guide written by Dr. Bruce M. Govich which he prepared for use in his class, Opera Styles and Production. This analysis will include identification of the type of drama, its purpose and theme; the plot structure, including conflict, protagonist, antagonist, exposition, rising action, climax and denouement; mood and pace; character and motivation. The musical dramaturgy, that is, how the music serves the drama, will be examined, and include such things as the musical structure, harmonic language, rhythmic style, textual declamation, melodic style and expressive markings. The analysis will determine the vocal demands of the opera, such as range, tessitura and type of voices suitable for the work.

3. Critique/Interpretation The fourth chapter will place the work in perspective by looking at the genre of miniature chamber opera, whose roots lie in

the Italian comic intermezzo of the eighteenth century. The use of musical parody as a comic device will be observed in works leading up to this opera. The opera's relationship to its contemporary drama and chamber operas will help to place it in context, and Michael Head's other operas will be described within the limitations of available information. The critical evaluation will be concluded with a brief discussion of the relevance of *Key Money's* theme for today's opera audience and the relationship of this theme to the development of 20th century opera. Recommendations for further study will conclude the document.

The intention of this document is to inform both directors and singers of the musical and dramatic possibilities of the opera, *Key Money*. By presenting the information on the historical, analytical and critical aspects of the work, the perception of its nature can be brought into focus.

LIMITATIONS

Since this study is meant to serve the performer and director of the opera *Key Money*, Chapter III on analysis will not present a typical, all-encompassing theoretical analysis. Nor will it present a phrase-by-phrase description of the music. Because the music is so dependent upon the text, it is necessary that the music and text be discussed simultaneously and in an equivalent manner. Richard Elfyn Jones states in the preface to his book on the early operas of Michael Tippett, that his analysis "method is chronological in the sense that the analysis of words and music

follows the pattern of dramatic events from first to last."[25] In his examination of Act Two, Scene One, of Britten's *Peter Grimes*, David Matthews's first area of concentration is "the precise relation of music and text, and Britten's choice of particular musical phrases for particular lines."[26] Patricia Howard in her overall view of Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* refers to the impact of the opera which "results from the reciprocal relationship between the independent but simultaneously enunciated musical and dramatic structures."[27] In her discussion of the comic opera *Albert Herring*, Patricia Howard uses this approach to the dramatic structures showing how they are interrelated with the musical language.[28] Erwin Stein, likewise, in his survey on *Albert Herring*, presents "examples of how stage action and musical form in *Albert Herring* are interlocked. Music in opera, and particularly in comic opera, does not exist entirely in its own right. The interest of a comedy rests primarily in the action, but the music enhances the enjoyment by re-creating the events of the stage in a new medium."[29]

This study will not treat the libretto in isolation to consider only its literary merits. Eric Walter White in his book on the life and operas of Britten, says that the librettist for *Albert Herring*, Eric Crozier, "aimed at clarity and simplicity in his

---

[25]Richard Elfyn Jones, *The Early Operas of Michael Tippett: A Study of The Midsummer Marriage, King Priam and The Knot Garden* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1996) viii.

[26]David Matthews, "Act II scene i: An Examination of the Music," in *Benjamin Britten: Peter Grimes* comp. Philip Brett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 121.

[27]Patricia Howard, ed., *Benjamin Britten: The Turn of the Screw.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 72.

[28]Patricia Howard, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten: An Introduction* (New York: Frederick A Praeger, 1969) 51-62.

[29]Erwin Stein, "Albert Herring," in *The Britten Companion* ed. Christopher Palmer (London: Faber and Faber, 1984) 132.

libretto and wrote 'to be sung, not to be read from a printed page.' "[30] White also quotes C. Day Lewis from his series of lectures on *The Poetic Image* which explains this distinction, " 'The writing of words for music demands an entirely different technique from the writing of lyric poetry as we now understand the term. Words for music are like water-weed: they live only in the streams and eddies of melody. When we take them out of their element, they lose their colour, their grace, their vital fluency: on paper they look delicate perhaps, but flat and unenterprising.' "[31]

In Chapter IV, on the critical and interpretive evaluations of the opera, references will be made to other works in the genre or similar genres, both historical and contemporary, but there will be no side-by-side 'compare and contrast' approach with any individual work. Neither will this be an all-inclusive or exhaustive list of works in the genre, but significant, representative works which share some similarities to the opera *Key Money*. The discussion of Michael Head's other operas will be purely descriptive in nature and limited in that most of the scores are unavailable.

RELATED LITERATURE

From approximately 1880 to 1945, there was a rebirth of the English musical culture after years of foreign domination. This period is now referred to as the English musical renaissance. This movement to reestablish a distinctly English

---

[30]Eric Walter White, *Benjamin Britten: His Life and Operas, 2nd ed.* John Evans ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983) 156.

[31]Ibid.

musical tradition was not a school, but involved many different types of composers of many artistic styles. Several books have been written which chronicle composers' careers during this time and examine the social and political developments which brought about such an environment in which these composers could flourish. Peter Pirie[32] presents a chronological narrative, including history as well as criticism. He takes into account the influence of society and politics and tries to place the music in a world context. In Michael Trend's *Music Makers*[33] he provides a description of composers' lives and the character of their music, and, in addition, draws in the general background against which they lived and worked. Frank Howes divides his book of history and criticism into three sections—gestation, birth and growth.[34] He concentrates more on the Victorian era to establish the base of the pyramid. Hughes and Spradling[35] begin their study from an earlier date and present the history and politics of the renaissance, in addition to an examination of aspects of cultural formation. Lewis Foreman has compiled a chronological anthology of correspondence by and about British composers from 1900 to 1945, which reflects the varied musical output of this period.[36] These letters chart the history and social context of British music from the Edwardian age to the

---

[32]Peter J. Pirie, *The English Musical Renaissance: Twentieth Century British Composers & Their Works* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1979)

[33]Michael Trend, *The Music Makers: The English Musical Renaissance from Elgar to Britten* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1985)

[34]Frank Howes, *The English Musical Renaissance* (New York: Stein and Day, 1966)

[35]Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance 1840-1940: Constructing a National Music, 2nd ed.* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2001)

[36]Lewis Foreman, *From Parry to Britten: British Music in Letters 1900-1945* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1987)

aftermath of World War II. Otto Karolyi moves forward and farther into the twentieth century in his *Modern British Music*[37] and submits individual articles on each composer grouped loosely within the type of style in which they wrote. He refers to the book as a guide to the music included in its content. Although Michael Head himself is not discussed in these books, they provide a comprehensive picture of the social and musical culture in which he lived and worked.

Head is acknowledged in a recent book by Geoffrey Self.[38] He attempts to show how the history of British light music knits together the social and economic history with the general musical heritage of the country. Stephen Banfield's chapter on "Vocal Art Music" in the *Blackwell History of Music in Britain: The Twentieth Century*[39] refers only twice to Head's music. The article on Head written by Michael Hurd in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*,[40] lists Kenneth Avery's article on Michael Head in *Grove 5*[41] as the only bibliographic source. Michael Hurd also is the author of the Michael Head article in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*[42], which does give a complete accounting of Head's operas, including *Key Money*, written for the Intimate Opera Company. This

---

[37]Otto Karolyi, *Modern British Music: The Second British Musical Renaissance—From Elgar to P. Maxwell Davies* (London: Associated University Press, 1994)

[38]Geoffrey Self, *Light Music in Britain Since 1870: A Survey* (Aldershot, UK, 2001)

[39]Stephen Banfield, ed. *Music in Britain: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) 464, 466.

[40]Stanley Sadie, ed., *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1980) S.v. "Head, Michael (Dewar)," by Michael Hurd.

[41]Eric Blom, ed., *Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1954) S.v. "Head, Michael (Dewar)," by Kenneth Avery.

[42]Stanley Sadie, ed. *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*. (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1992) S.v. "Head, Michael (Dewar)," by Michael Hurd.

dictionary of opera provides additional information on the Intimate Opera Company, opera in Great Britain, afterpieces, burlesques and burlettas.

Although many books on opera history address opera in England, the most comprehensive are the works by Edward J. Dent (*Opera*[43] and *Foundations of English Opera*[44]) and those by Eric Walter White (*The Rise of English Opera*[45] and *A History of English Opera.*[46]) A recent dissertation by Jean Marie Hoover (advisor Nicholas Temperley) provides thorough and insightful research on the development of an independent English opera tradition.[47] In tracing the history of the genre of this comic chamber opera, Charles E. Troy's book on the comic intermezzo[48] offers a systematic and discerning study of its origins, the repertory and its diffusion, the libretti and the music. In *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century*, Roger Fiske tracks the intermezzo and its derivatives in England.[49]

---

[43]Edward J. Dent, *Opera*, rev. ed., (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1949)

[44]Edward J. Dent, *Foundations of English Opera: A Study of Musical Drama in England During the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1965)

[45]Eric Walter White, *The Rise of English Opera* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951)

[46]Eric Walter White, *A History of English Opera.* (London: Faber and Faber, 1983.)

[47]Jean Marie Hoover, "Constructions of National Identities: Opera and Nationalism in the British Isles," Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1999.

[48]Charles E. Tory, *The Comic Intermezzo: A Study in the History of Eighteenth-Century Italian Opera* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1979.

[49]Roger Fiske, *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973.)

Works that were informative on analysis of libretti included a Ph.D. dissertation on the early operas of Menotti by Mary Casmus,[50] as well as *Opera as Drama* by Joseph Kerman[51] and Paul Robinson's chapter on reading libretti and misreading opera in *Reading Opera.*[52] Also helpful for operatic analysis were Sutcliffe's *Believing in Opera*[53] and Charles Hamm's book, *Opera.*[54] Since Benjamin Britten (1913-1976), considered to be the icon of English opera of the twentieth century, was a contemporary of Michael Head, a number of articles about Britten's operas were examined. These include writings by Philip Brett, Britten himself (in the Introduction to *Peter Grimes,*) John Culshaw, Patricia Howard, Hans Keller, David Matthews, Donald Mitchell, Christopher Palmer, Ned Rorem, Erwin Stein, Rosamunde Strode and Eric Walter White. As mentioned in the procedures section of this proposal, the Cambridge Opera Handbooks were excellent sources of information and served as a model for this study.

There are several interviews with Michael Head and a number of reviews of his music in various journals. One of the most informative articles is by Head himself, in the *National Association of Teachers of Singing Bulletin*, May 15, 1959, on "Contemporary English Song." The editor notes that Head would be

---

[50]Mary Irene Casmus, "Gian-Carlo Menotti: His Dramatic Techniques: A Study Based on Works Written 1937-1954," Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1962.

[51]Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama* (New York: Random House, 1956)

[52]Paul Robinson, "A Deconstructive Postscript: Reading Libretti and Misreading Opera," in *Reading Opera*, ed. Arthur Groos and Roger Parker (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988) 328-346.

[53]Tom Sutcliffe, *Believing in Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996)

[54]Charles Hamm, *Opera* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1966)

highlighting the NATS 1959 Workshop Program as its most distinguished guest faculty member. Recent articles include those in the journal of the British Music Society, *British Music*, 2000: "The Solo Songs of Michael Head: A Critical Re-evaluation in his Centenary Year" by Barbara Streets[55] and "Michael Head Remembered" by John Carol Case.[56]

The richest source of biographical information on Michael Head is Nancy Bush's *Michael Head: Composer Singer Pianist—A Memoir, including "The Vocal Compositions of Michael Head" by Alan Bush.* She was Michael Head's sister and shared in his musical activities throughout his career as a lyric writer and librettist. Only two dissertations are written about Michael Head. Loryn Frey[57] investigated the Georgian poetry settings by Head and his stylistic procedures. Her biographical information on Head was taken almost entirely from Nancy Bush's book. The other dissertation, "Michael Head: His Contributions as Composer, Performer, Educator with an Analysis of Selected Solo Songs" is a recent Music Education Ph.D. dissertation by Barbara Streets.[58] Much more extensive and thorough information about Michael Head was obtained by Streets, who in her five trips to England, has met with Nancy Bush's daughters and acquired access to Head's diaries, programs,

---

[55]Barbara Streets, "The Solo Songs of Michael Head: A Critical Re-evaluation in his Centenary Year," *British Music: Journal of the British Music Society* 22 (2000) 5-25.

[56]John Carol Case, "Michael Head Remembered," in *British Music: Journal of the British Music Society*, ed. Roger Carpenter. 22 (2000) 25-6.

[57]Loryn E. Frey, "The Songs of Michael Head: The Georgian Settings (and Song Catalogue)" D.M.A. diss., Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1990.

[58]Barbara Streets, "Michael Head: His Contributions as Composer, Performer, Educator with an Analysis of Selected Solo Songs," Ph.D. diss., University of Oklahoma, 2002.

reviews, lecture notes and broadcast scripts. In addition Streets has two letters which she received from Nancy Bush with information about the genesis of his light operas and her working relationship with the composer. (All of this material has been made available for this study.)

Many biographical facts about Nancy Bush can be obtained through her book about her composer husband, *Alan Bush: Music, Politics and Life*.[59] The Alan Bush Trust website[60] has a wealth of information about Alan Bush's operas (Nancy was the librettist for all but one) and an article written by Nancy Bush on "Writing for Music." An Online Computer Library Center "FirstSearch" led to published titles of Nancy Bush's translations of song and choral texts, which can be seen in Appendix C.

Additional information is taken from the author's written interviews with Nancy Bush's daughters, Catherine Hinson and Dr. Rachel O'Higgins, the nieces of Michael Head.

---

[59]Nancy Bush, *Alan Bush: Music, Politics and Life* (London: Thames Publishing, 2000.

[60]Alan Bush Music Trust. Data on-line; available from http://www.alanbushtrust.org.uk/articles/article_nbush.asp?room

CHAPTER II

THE CREATORS OF THE OPERA

Michael Dewar Head

The last days of January 1919 were described by Michael Head in his diary as "surely some of the most momentous days of my life."[1] On Wednesday, January 22, he had made up his mind as to his profession, and stated with conviction,

> I am to take up composition firstly as profession, secondly singing. It is such a very difficult question how I shall actually earn any living out of the four things. Composition, piano, singing and organ.[2]

The very next day, five days before his nineteenth birthday, the young Michael Head had "a most astonishing surprise." He went to see Mr. Boosey in order to show him some of his manuscripts,

> with no hope of him liking anything as they had all been to him before! Well! The very first song he accepted. Claribel. He seemed greatly taken with it and suggests Jordan (a tenor) shall sing it! He was very agreeable and I played him many others...[3]

On the following Wednesday, January 29, Head learned that a sponsor, Mr. Debenham, was to give him one hundred pounds to go towards his musical education.

> Oh if only I make the very most of it. What is the best branch to take on beside composition? Well I ought to be really grateful and if I don't do something in this world I'm a bit of a fool?[4]

Thursday, January 30, 1919 was yet another wonderful and momentous day, as the

---

[1]Michael Head Diary, 30 January 1919, Michael Head collection in the possession of Dr. Rachel O'Higgins, Cambridge, England.

[2]Head Diary, 22 January 1919.

[3]Head Diary, 23 January 1919.

[4]Head Diary, 29 January 1919.

young Mr. Head went with his piano teacher, Mrs. Adair to meet with the highly esteemed composer and teacher of composition, John Ireland.

> (I was) expecting to be squashed absolutely, but he never criticized at all except one tiny detail and said that my work was most promising and that he thinks it is quite safe me going into the profession. He talked most intensely about things and I like him personally. He is to give me lessons I hope if it can be arranged financially.[5]

Thus in one week, the week of Michael Head's nineteenth birthday, the course of his life was put into motion. His own description of "momentous" was not just his youthful enthusiasm speaking, for this was still a time in England when men were not encouraged to go into music as a profession. "The cultivation of musical talents was considered to be an essentially feminine undertaking."[6] In addition, there was not a great appreciation of the music of British composers, and without patronage, one had to supplement income with teaching, adjudicating, etc. Even when Benjamin Britten (who was thirteen years younger than Michael Head) announced that he would become a composer, the discouraging response had been, 'and what else?'[7]

Michael Dewar Head was born in Eastbourne 28 January 1900 to Frederick Dewar Head, a barrister turned legal journalist, and Nina Watson Head, who had come from a musical family and had been an amateur singer of promise.[8] Both families had a rather exotic background. Frederick was the son of a master of a

---

[5]Head Diary, 30 January 1919.

[6]Michael Trend, *The Music Makers: The English Musical Renaissance from Elgar to Britten* (New York: Schirmer, 1985) 4.

[7]Ibid., 5.

[8]Nancy Bush, *Michael Head: Composer, Singer, Pianist: A Memoir* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1982) 7-8.

sailing ship "which plied between England and the West Indies with sugar for cargo."[9] Nina's family had been connected with India in the days of the British Raj, having worked as magistrates, engineers, soldiers or tea-planters, and her father having served as chaplain to the Indian Army.[10]

Michael's father Frederick was educated at Queen's College, Oxford as a classics scholar and then went to Lincoln's Inn. Frederick Head was a great storyteller and spent much time with his children telling tales of adventure, with separate characters invented for Michael and for his younger sister, Nancy. This certainly must have sparked the imagination of the children for their own creative activities. From an early age their father introduced to his children the English literary classics, in particular, Charles Dickens. One of Michael and Nancy's early theatrical collaborations was "an adaptation by (their) father F. D. Head, of *The Magic Fishbone* by Dickens, with music by Michael Head, and dramatized by Nancy Head, which was put on at the Adair-Marston School of Music (n.d. but likely to be before 1918)."[11] Michael's mother gave him his first piano lessons when he was four, and he played with facility by age seven.[12]

At his first school, Monkton Combe, along with other studies, Michael had religious instruction. He played end-of-term concerts as an accompanist and soloist, primarily playing the Chopin black-note study. A letter from the headmaster

---

[9]Ibid., 7.

[10]Ibid., 8.

[11]Rachel O'Higgins to Marilyn Govich, 2 September 2002, interview.

[12]Nancy Bush, *Michael Head*, 8.

attested to the young Michael's "extraordinary gifts as a musician...his power to transpose at sight any song, his taste as an accompanist, and his precocity as a composer, gave him a position here that no boy has ever held."[13]

Next, Michael went as a day-boy to the rather unorthodox, modern Home School, Highgate, which was co-educational. The diet was vegetarian, and the girls, instead of school uniforms wore embroidered tunics, sandals and no stockings. The teaching methods were considered unconventional at that time and were sometimes quite imaginative: the pupils made their own history books, complete with written text and illustrations. "Dalcroze Eurythymics were taught and Monsieur Jaques Dalcroze once came down to coach some of the classes...in a demonstration of his method of music and movement which was held in a London theatre."[14]

Not only was young Michael musical, he was interested in engineering. He constructed working models of a railway signal in the garden and an elaborate model railroad which ran on a spiral of lines round his bedroom wall.[15] Michael would sometimes draw diagrams of sections of houses or hotels, complete with plumbing and heating, or of passenger liners with detailed decks, cabins, engines and boiler rooms. Perhaps this kind of thinking contributed to his interest in the structures of musical compositions. His early plays with music demonstrated both his interest in the musical and the mechanical.

> Michael built a theatre with sets of scenery, workable electric lighting and cardboard puppets on wire with which he often entertained us. The plays

---

[13]E. Easterfield, n.d., Michael Head Collection.

[14]Ibid., 10.

[15]Ibid., 10.

> were written as well as spoken by himself, prefaced by an overture which he played on the piano.[16]

He later considered engineering as a career, and was strongly encouraged by his father to do so. In a letter from his mother Nina Head, probably written in 1918, she states,

> After writing my letter last night, I thought I would like to hear Father's opinion on your letter, so I woke him up in the early hours (!) to discuss it. He said at once that it would be a good thing for you to have Engineering as a background—"say Electrical Engineering—just to make a couple of hundred pounds a year" I am telling you this as it is always wise to keep both sides of a question before you—& of course there is much to be said for Father's views.... So dear, cultivate the practical side now...Nothing is ever lost or useless that we strive for. It may be that it will give balance and strength to your music.[17]

Nancy (Head) Bush recalls that the Head family seemed to always be moving, either to suit her father's work, or more likely, to find someplace more inexpensive to live. However, all their homes were within reach of London. When their mother became caught up in a new belief which was in vogue, Christian Science, Michael and Nancy were expected to participate. The children were treated by the local Christian Science practitioner instead of seeing a physician when they were ill. The Christian Science period, though intense, did not last long.[18] The children's mother, Nina Head, was unconventional and progressive in other ways, as well. She was a vegetarian for several years, dressed herself and her children in comfortable clothes, was a suffragette and worked as a policewoman at one time.

---

[16]Ibid., 12.

[17]Nina Head to Michael Head, n.d., Wednesday, 11:30 p.m., Michael Head Collection in the possession of Dr. Rachel O'Higgins, Cambridge, England.

[18]Nancy Bush, *Michael Head*., 13.

Her progressive attitudes may have contributed to Michael's decision to pursue music as a career instead the more practical field of engineering.

Up until 1912 Head had apparently studied piano and composition from F. Stoverton Beeching, organist and choirmaster at The Annunciation, Bryonston St. West. While still at Highgate School, Michael's serious education in music began in 1912 at the private Adair-Marston School of Music at Emperor's Gate, London, at first in weekly lessons and later as a full-time student. Mrs. Jean Adair, a pupil of Clara Schumann, carried on the Schumann tradition in her teaching of Michael Head. He had sung a great deal as a boy soprano; when his voice changed he studied singing with Mr. Fritz Marston, who had been a pupil of the English tenor, Charles Lunn. Lunn was a proponent of the Italian school of singing associated with Manuel Garcia. "Evidently Mr. Marston passed on this method to his students; he taught Michael voice production of such excellence that he was able to sing in public without problems until the end of his life."[19] Programs of student performances of the Adair-Marston School, given at Wigmore Hall for a Red Cross Fund in 1917, list a group of partsongs composed by Michael Head, and two vocal solos, accompanied by Michael.[20] Pianist and broadcaster Maurice Cole had been a fellow student with Head in 1916 or 1917 and recalled his abilities as a pianist:

> We both did a lot of accompanying for the other students and it is in this connection that I remember first feeling admiration, later perhaps tinged with slight envy, for his ability to sight-read and transpose difficult accompaniments far better than I could. Also he hardly ever seemed to play any wrong notes (a further cause for envy) and this neatness and

---

[19]Ibid., 16.

[20]Mrs. Jean Adair, director, Concert, "In Aid of 'Our Day' Red Cross Fund," Wigmore Hall, London, England, 28 October 1917 and 18 November 1917. Programs in the Hinson Collection.

> precision remained a feature of his playing always, even when accompanying himself, with his face turned towards his audience and only giving an occasional fleeting glance at the keyboard.[21]

According to his sister Nancy, this ability to sing to his own accompaniment had dated from an early age, when he had played and sung in musical evenings at home for family and friends. This was to become his most outstanding performance talent.[22]

Musical studies were interrupted when Michael Head reached the age of eighteen (January 1918) and volunteered for the Royal Air Force. Much to his disappointment he failed to pass the last medical exam, and was assigned to work in a munitions factory in Acton and later to work on a farm in Dorset owned by Sir Ernest Debenham. He continued to compose during this time and was even able to practice music at the Debenham house on occasion.

When the war ended Head resumed his studies with Marston and Mrs. Adair, and began composition lessons with John Ireland.[23] His diary entry for the first lesson on 21 February 1919 stated,

---

[21]Maurice Cole in *Michael Head* by Nancy Bush, 16.

[22]Nancy Bush, *Michael Head*, 17.

[23]John Ireland, (1879-1962) was an English composer and student of Stanford at the Royal College of Music. Professionally a choirmaster and organist for over 40 years, he taught composition at the Royal College of Music between the wars. His reputation was established with piano music, chamber music and a substantial literature of songs. He became celebrated, literally overnight, after the first performance of his *Second Violin Sonata* in 1917. Of his orchestral works *The Forgotten Rite* (1912) and *Mai-Dun* (1921) were both inspired by place, while his Piano Concerto (1920) was perhaps the best-known example by a British composer for two or three decades. He also composed church music, the cantata *These Things Shall Be* and the film score *The Overlanders*. Lewis Foreman, ed. *From Parry to Britten: British Music in Letters 1900-1945* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1987) 302.

> Had my first lesson with John Ireland. My word how lovely it is to learn with somebody who's every little touch is a bit of genius. He has given me lots of hints in criticizing my piano writing. He was shocked at my counterpoint....very. He has given me food for thought about Boosey and Co. I haven't signed yet. I think I better ask his absolute advice.[24]

John Ireland's career placed him in the middle of the English musical renaissance and he was most influential between the wars. He was a pupil of the old generation, as a student of Charles Stanford at the Royal College of Music, and he was a teacher of the new generation—Alan Bush, Humphrey Searle, E. J. Moeran and Benjamin Britten.[25] As a song composer, Ireland "was not directly influenced by folk-song, but the modal quality of his writing, both melodic and harmonic, is the outcome of the folk-song and Tudor revivals."[26] The composer E. J. Moeran gave an account of John Ireland as a teacher whose belief was that "every composer must make his own technique," as John Ireland, himself had managed to do. Moeran further states,

> But he insisted on his pupils having a sound grounding in counterpoint. He did not allow any padding in the youthful works of his pupils and got them to think very carefully about all parts of their compositions. He also stressed the need to be able to stand outside the details of a work and see its logical continuity and shape; all these things being the marked characteristics of his own successful style.[27]

Perhaps significant to the theme of traditional versus modern in Michael Head's opera, *Key Money,* is an endorsement by John Ireland in 1941 of a work for violin and orchestra by Julius Harrison, "a most poetic and deeply-felt piece of writing...lovely in colour, thought and construction--& most heartening to hear in

---

[24]Head Diary, 21 February 1919.

[25]Michael Trend, *The Music Makers: The English Musical Renaissance from Elgar to Britten* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1985) 135.

[26]Frank Howes, 83.

[27]Michael Trend, 135-136.

these days of dissonance, & ugliness for its own sake."[28]

Later in the spring of 1919 Head refers to an unusual kind of performance for him, that of an operetta role, Sir Marmaduke Poindextre in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Sorcerer*, presumably at the Marston-Adair Music School. From his diary entry this appears to have been a role he had performed before. The acting on stage and the interaction with the cast was apparently quite an enjoyable experience for the shy, retiring young man.

> A very jolly rehearsal of The Sorcerer in which I played my old part Sir Marmaduke. Really it is great fun and so good for me, especially regarding being natural and jolly with girls, etc. I'm glad I'm in it again.[29]

This experience may likely have been a pleasant memory when he decided to write the light operas much later in his career. His familiarity with the Gilbert and Sullivan style and characterizations may have also had some influence in his writing of the comic chamber operas. Since this story is a burlesque of Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*,[30] it may have also given him ideas of musical parody for his light opera, *Key Money*.

In the fall of 1919, Michael Head entered the Royal Academy of Music, having won the Sir Michael Costa Scholarship for composition. Actually, he won this scholarship for each of his five years at the Academy, and, in addition, the Cuthbert Nunn Prize, the Matthew Phillimore Prize, the Philip L. Agnew Prize in

---

[28]Lewis Foreman, ed., *From Parry to Britten: British Music in Letters 1900-1945* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1987) 241.

[29]Head Diary, 26 May 1919.

[30]Stanley Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1992) S.v. "The Sorcerer" by David Russell Hulme.

composition (twice), the Charles Lucas Prize, the Henry R. Eyers Prize, the Oliveria Prescott Prize and the Messrs. Chappell & Co. Prize.[31]

Michael Head chose as his first study, composition with Frederick Corder (1852-1932.) Like many other British composers of the late nineteenth century who had been attracted to Germany to study music, Corder had traveled to Cologne to study with Ferdinand Hiller. Corder admired Liszt and was an avowed Wagnerite. He wrote two grand operas himself, of which the most well-known and widely performed (by the Carl Rosa Company) was *Nordisa.* In a lecture on "English Opera after Purcell" in 1904, F. J. Sawyer had this to say about Corder:

> Another English composer possessing great powers of writing for the stage is Mr. Frederick Corder, whose *Nordisa* was produced in 1887. To what extent the stage avalanche in it was the result of its ultimate burial one cannot say, but the opera undoubtedly showed great talent, as did also the little operettas produced at various times by the same composer.[32]

(Incidentally, according to Eric Walter White, the avalanche was inserted into the opera by the impresario, Carl Rosa.)[33] In addition to the several operettas which were performed at Brighton, the annual musical reviews recounted in Hazell's Annual has the entry, "1899—Mr. Frederick Corder composed an overture and incidental music for 'The Black Tulip' at the Haymarket."[34] Corder also wrote

---

[31]Barbara Sue Streets, "Michael Head: His Contributions as Composer, Performer, Educator with an Analysis of Selected Solo Songs," Ph.D. diss. University of Oklahoma, 2002, 313.

[32]F. J. Sawyer, "English Opera after Purcell." In *English Music (1604-1904) Being the Lectures Given at the Music Loan Exhibition of the Worshipful Company of Musicians, held at Fishmonger's Hall, June-July, 1904*, 2d ed. (London: Walter Scott, 1911) 287.

[33]Eric Walter White, *A History of English Opera* (London: Faber and Faber, 1983) 337.

[34]Lewis Foreman, ed. *Music in England 1885-1920 as Recounted in Hazell's Annual* (London: Thames Publishing, 1994) 60

librettos and collaborated with his wife Henrietta Louisa (Walford) to write the first English translations of eight Wagner operas, an important project for the dissemination of the works of this composer to the British people.[35] Frederick Corder was also a charter member of the Folk Song Society founded in London in 1898 for the purpose of "the collection and preservation of folk-songs, ballads and tunes, and the publication of such."[36] In addition, Corder founded the Society of British Composers in order to facilitate publication of native composer's works.[37]

Frederick Corder, a graduate of the Royal Academy of Music himself, was appointed professor of composition in 1888. His best-known pupils had been Arnold Bax, Granville Bantock and Joseph Holbrooke. In the opinion of the writer Peter Pirie, Corder was mildly progressive and a permissive teacher whose students lacked discipline.[38] One of Corder's first students (1888-1893), W. H. Bell, thought that Corder "relied almost entirely on the student's own enthusiasm, which he fostered in every way, to find out for himself the way to do things."[39] In the same article, however, Bell admitted that at the time he studied with him, that Corder had not yet "gained the experience or skill as a teacher that was afterwards to make him,

---

[35]Stanley Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (London: Macmillan Reference Limited, 1997) S.v. "Corder, Frederick" by John Warrack.

[36]Frank Howes, *The English Musical Renaissance* (New York: Stein and Day, 1966) 79.

[37]Lewis Foreman, *From Parry to Britten: British Music in Letters 1900-1945* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1987) 2.

[38]Peter J. Pirie, *The English Musical Renaissance: Twentieth Century British Composers & Their Works* (London: Victor Gollancz Limited, 1979) 39.

[39]W. H. Bell, "W. H. Bell's Reminiscences" from unpublished memoirs in *From Parry to Britten: British Music in Letters 1900-1945*, ed. Lewis Foreman (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1987) 2.

together with Sir Charles Stanford, one of the two finest teachers of composition England ever had."[40]

The highly respected Frederick Corder had been teaching composition for over thirty years at the Royal Academy of Music when Michael Head began there, and according to Head's diaries, there was no lack of discipline in his studies. Less than a month after classes began, Head wrote,

> Had a ripping lesson with Corder. My word. What an insight he has in all the great composers' work. How he knows their weak points! I managed to get him to let me play some of my own work to him. I want to gradually let him know that I've got something in me and mean to be something![41]

Apparently Corder was also concerned with Michael Head's weakness in counterpoint, just as John Ireland had been, for at the end of the term Head stated,

> The last day of one of the most busy terms I think I've had. I finished off at the Academy on Saturday. My work for Mr. Corder for the term consisted of heaps of counterpoint and the first movement of a piano sonata. I consider it nothing but an exercise just feeling my way in putting together something big....Corder says nothing about it in the criticism sense on the big scale.[42]

A year later he wrote,

> I had a jolly lesson with Corder after two very bad ones. (Having a cold seems to give me no inventive qualities at all.) His is still tremendously particular but I think he was interested in my two-piano scherzo as he made heaps of suggestions, etc., and generally approved.[43]

It seems that in his composition lessons with Frederick Corder, Michael Head wrote mostly instrumental works, which were quite successful. His piano

---

[40]Ibid.

[41]Head Diary, 10 October 1919.

[42]Ibid., 16 December 1919.

[43]Ibid., 15 October 1920.

concerto was featured with the orchestra for the Centenary Concert of the Royal Academy at Queen's Hall in 1922, played by fellow student Alan Bush. There were later performances by pianist Maurice Cole with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, and a broadcast with the Wireless Symphony Orchestra conducted by Percy Pitt.[44] Head won the numerous prizes for composition that have already been mentioned. Although Corder had composed operas and operettas, and was deeply involved in the translation of the Wagner operas, there is no mention by Head in the available diaries of any study of such literature. Corder did in 1909, however, publish a technical treatise for his students, *Modern Musical Composition*, which contained a chapter called, "Of Rudiments—How to Write a Song," and also included a chapter on "The technique of Emotion."[45] In the Introduction, Corder wrote,

> Beauty is our one aim: purely scientific compositions...no longer appeal to the modern mind, and the goal of our ambition is the orchestral tone-poem. Formerly when the student wrote something imaginative his teacher advised him to put it in the fire and to write a parody of a Mozart Sonata. Today one would rather find out what his aims and intentions are...and point out to him how such aims...have been achieved by other earnest minds and what are the technical means by which they can be carried out....Every material result requires material means—that there is a technique for everything, including the portrayal of the subtlest emotions, and that no amount of "inspiration" or mental fine frenzy can obviate the necessity of learning how to handle the tools of one's trade, or employ the resources of one's art.[46]

It may be presumed that Michael Head would have used this manual as a student,

---

[44]Nancy Bush, *Michael Head*, 18.

[45]Frederick Corder, *Modern Musical Composition: A Manual for Students* (London: J. Curwen & Sons Ltd. [1909])

[46]Ibid., 5.

since it also contained composition exercises based on each chapter, and may have been referred to by Head when he wrote the musical parodies in his light opera, *Key Money*. The analysis chapter of this study will point out passages which, perhaps even unconsciously, could have been taken from this manual.

Frederick Corder was criticized for never getting beyond Wagner, and not understanding Debussy,[47] but he evidently encouraged his students to seek out the modern in developing their own individual compositional style. "The student finds the idiom of the past irksome and repellent; it is the vernacular that he desires to learn: he does not wish to take as his models the unapproachable gods of antiquity, but his immediate contemporaries."[48]

Although Michael Head's music was considered to be harmonically conservative, he was apparently excited by the "modern" music of his contemporaries and actually performed some of their works. This is especially of interest when considering the topic of the light opera *Key Money* deals with the modern versus the traditional. According to Nancy Bush, Michael Head found Schoenberg, Bartók and Webern stimulating.[49] In 1934 he wrote the following about Alban Berg's music:

> A thrilling experience. Listened to a concert version of Wozzeck. It was the real thing, modern music absolutely justified, satisfying and most exciting. What variety and orchestration.[50]

---

[47]Peter Pirie, 37.

[48]Ibid., Preface.

[49]Nancy Bush, *Michael Head*, 19

[50]Head Diary, n.d., quoted in Nancy Bush, *Michael Head*, 19.

In a later entry Head stated,

> Gorgeous—gorgeous—What music. Heard Scriabin's *Divine Poem.* It really is a magnificent great work."[51]

In 1953, when rehearsing for the premiere performance of the John Gardner Sonata for Oboe and Piano, Op. 18 with Lady Evelyn Barbirolli, he wrote in his diary,

> Terrific sessions with Evelyn working at the new Gardner Sonata for recital on Thursday night. Heavens. How one needs to keep one's head, so easy to get wrong. Only a little over 10 days to learn 'T' in! Very rugged & modern, but good.[52]

Also with Lady Barbirolli he performed works by Edmund Rubbra, William Wordswoth and Poulenc.[53] In a diary entry in 1954 Head was even somewhat critical of his own work,

> All five Hymns—Ave Maria V, Sancta Immaculata, O glorioso, Sficious forma (new), Stabat mater. A great effort for me. So long is Stabat mater. They are all very melodious but, hope they are worth while. I only wish they were more modern in style.[54]

A further diary entry from January 1965 states,

> Made myself go in interest to a Park Lane Grove Concert. I was thrilled. A lively Trio for violin, cello, clarinet by John Cage. Full of cleverness and color. Then the whole of the Messaien "Quartet to the End of Time" a long work. But thrillingly imaginative. Piano, Clar. Violin, Cello. Most delicious luscious sounds especially the beginning, also the two lovely slow movements, one cello, one violin, right up to heaven were sent. I feel inspired.[55]

When the festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music was

---

[51]Ibid.

[52]Head Diary, 9 February 1953.

[53]Nancy Bush, *Michael Head*, 41.

[54]Head Diary 8 October 1954.

[55]Head Diary, 25 January 1965.

held in London in 1938 Head attended many concerts and found "only a few real works of value but much musical stimulation."[56] Head played the Scriabin Second Piano Sonata and in 1941 sang nine songs from the Schoenberg cycle, *Das Buch der hängendenGärten* (with Alan Bush as accompanist.)[57] His recital programs included selections by Britten, Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Manuel de Falla, John Gardner, Granados, Honegger, Ireland, Pizzetti, Quilter, Respighi, Cyril Scott, Vaughan Williams and Warlock.

More modern harmony can sometimes be found in Head's own music. At a rehearsal of Michael Head's orchestral tone poem *Babbulkamul* in November of 1922 he relates in his diary,

> A most unusual experience for me. The principal tried twice my orchestral tone poem and thoroughly abused me and the composition!! Apparently the very tame discords (B maj. & C min.) rubbed him up the wrong way. And we had an awful time over a C & C# together.[58]

Alan Bush, in a discussion of Michael Head's music, points out the use of a Wagnerian chromaticism to express intense emotional content in a text. Late in Head's career he attempted to incorporate some features of twelve-tone serialism, which proved successful in the satirical opera *Key Money*. In his more serious works like the song, "The World is Mad" (Louis MacNeice) and the choral work "New Town" (Nancy Bush) Alan Bush found the serialism to be less convincing.

---

[56]Nancy Bush, *Michael Head*, 19.

[57]Ibid., 21.

[58]Head Diary, 10 November 1922.

Because the atonal and tonal passages alternate with each other, he thought that Head "failed to avoid a pronounced eclecticism of style."[59]

> There are songs of his in the major key from the whole long period of his creative output where the harmonic progressions, though logical and always flowing, seldom reach beyond the agreeable conventionality of the 19th Century harmony textbooks. But in minor and modal songs the harmony is often expressive and sometimes quite unusual. Furthermore he employed at times a highly chromatic style which is not Wagnerian. It would be a mistake, therefore, to underestimate his range of harmonic originality.[60]

Michael Head's secondary areas of study at the Royal Academy were piano with T. B. Knott and organ with Reginald Steggall, with additional study in horn and viola. He did not study voice there, but continued to work with Fritz Marston. His only performance in an opera during the academy years was actually a private performance of an opera by one of his friends and classmates, Alan Bush. The libretto for this opera, *The Last Days of Pompeii*, was written by Alan Bush's brother Brinsley, and based on the story by Bulwer Lytton. Michael wrote of the opera in his diary on 28 April 1922,

> Alan Bush came over here...for the day to take me thro' the part of Phradates which I am singing in his little opera. We had a terrific morning of it. My <u>what</u> music the chef writes! Sort of super-Strauss. Agonizing chords and convulsions...It's an extraordinary effort for a first opera! I wonder if in later years I shall be proud of singing in Alan's first attempt, if he becomes a great composer? He really <u>must</u> do something with such opportunity and brain.[61]

Then on 4 May 1922 he wrote further of his opera experience,

---

[59]Alan Bush, "The Vocal Compositions of Michael Head," in *Michael Head Composer, Singer, Pianist: A Memoir by Nancy Bush* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1982) 68.

[60]Ibid.

[61]Head Diary, 28 April 1922.

> Stayed the night at Alan's place, at Highgate. We all had a very long rehearsal, commencing very frivolously amid storms of laughter (at Alan's brother in particular) and finishing up with a really magnificent performance of Miss May Murphy's scenes. She is really a fine actress with an excellent, woeful (not very beautiful) voice. She taught me a tremendous lot in acting my part "Phadates."[62]

Although Michael Head obviously enjoyed performing in this opera and the previously mentioned Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, he apparently never thought his voice was big enough for the stage: "I have not the physique for a great singer."[63] Additionally, his personality, described by his sister as shy and retiring, would probably not have been well-suited for such a career.

All during his student days at the Royal Academy of Music, Michael Head continued to write songs and to have them published by Boosey. On 23 February 1920, he entered in his diary the following:

> Another 1000 copies of "ships of Arcadie" printed! That means that 1000 have already been sold. Who could have thought that there would ever be thousands of copies of that little song I wrote while at Turnham Green in that little room! Claribel has also just come out. Really I am lucky. So many chaps have to wait years before anything is published. Well, Well.[64]

Many of his songs were performed at the London Ballad Concerts, which were promoted by Boosey and presented at Albert Hall or the Queen's Hall. These concerts, which used well-known singers, provided publicity for the publisher and composers, and the literature ranged from popular to classical. Head's songs were sung by Astra Desmond, Isobel Baillie, Arthur Jordan, Carrie Tubb and Keith

---

[62]Head Diary, 4 May 1922.

[63]Head Diary, 1 January 1924.

[64]Head Diary, 23 February 1920.

Falkner, with sometimes Michael Head, himself, accompanying the singers. Later, in 1937 Head met Kirsten Flagstad after her recital at the Albert Hall, in which she had sung one of his songs. She wrote to him saying, "It always gives me such pleasure to sing *Nocturne* and I would very much like to have the other two songs (from the cycle *Over the Rim of the Moon.*)"[65] Kathleen Ferrier, with whom Head became good friends, included a number of his songs in her repertoire, including "October Valley" (Nancy Bush) which he dedicated to her.[66] Joan Sutherland accepted Head's dedication to her of his "Bird Song" with piano and flute.[67]

Beginning in 1929 Michael Head had several lessons with Sir George Henschel, who was famous for singing serious music to his own accompaniments.[68] Henschel encouraged Head to pursue this kind of performing, and in January of 1930 he gave his first song recital to his own accompaniment at the Wigmore Hall in London. He wrote the following in his diary:

> Have just got through the 'ordeal.' My goodness it really was rather a nerve-racking performance. To start with I had 'the throat' at its worst,

---

[65]Nancy Bush, *Michael Head*, 19.

[66]Ibid., 39.

[67]Head Diary, 1 January 1966.

[68]George Henschel (1850-1934) was a British baritone, conductor, pianist and composer of German birth. He studied at the Leipzig Conservatory and later the Berlin Conservatory, and was a close acquaintance of Brahms. In 1881 he was appointed conductor of the newly founded Boston Symphony Orchestra and remained for its first three seasons. Henschel settled in England in 1884 and worked as a singer and vocal teacher (succeeding Jenny Lind-Goldschmidt as professor of singing at the Royal College of Music, 1886-1888.) He established the London Symphony Concerts, which were an important feature of musical life in London during the eleven years they existed, as he revived forgotten works and featured many new British and foreign compositions. Henschel had numerous important appearances as a singer, and he composed operas, choral and orchestral works, as well as vocal and piano solos. He directed the Handel Society of London and was a frequent conductor of the Scottish Orchestra. Stanley Sadie, ed. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, S.v. "Henschel, Sir (Isidor) George" by J. A. Fuller Maitland.

> (nervous constriction of the pharynx or whatever it is called) then the thought that there might be critics there and finally, all to my own accompaniment. I sang some of the songs really fairly well, specially the slow ones, and from the audience point of view had a real popular success, with many repeats and encores. 'Steal away' is my most moving song, and I feel it and make the audience feel quite moved I can tell. Now the point is has this recital been the right step for me to take I wonder. It is certainly what I adore doing but shall I get any criticisms I wonder that will be of use.[69]

The program for that recital included some of his own songs, but also songs by Dowland, Ford, Scarlatti, Purcell, Schubert, Richard Strauss and two spirituals—all performed by memory! A critic from the Daily Telegraph described his voice as though not large, "undeniably pleasant in quality and smoothly produced....His own songs, like his singing, are pleasantly unaffected, English in feeling and free from the over-elaboration which is the besetting weakness of not a few modern song-writers."[70] Nancy Bush remembered that he was able to completely control his breathing, a difficult task for a singer at the keyboard. And although his nervousness evidenced itself in a tightness of the throat, he would overcome this once he began singing. He never feared that he would forget either the words or the accompaniment, and he never did so.[71]

In 1952 Michael Head undertook a different kind of assignment when he was asked to compose incidental music to several plays produced for the British Broadcasting Corporation Third Programme. These were 'reconstructions' based on episodes from the Proust novel, *A la Recherche du temps perdu.* For the first of

---

[69]Head Diary, 9 January 1930.

[70]Nancy Bush, *Michael Head*, 25-26.

[71]Ibid., 26.

these, *Swann in Love*, Head played his music, along with a violinist. Later 'reconstructions' followed at intervals, and some included an instrumental septet: *Madame de Charlus, Albertine Regained, St. Loup* and *A Window at Montjouvain.* Head had to write music that would create the period atmosphere of these unusual plays. Fitting the incidental music to radio scripts required many rehearsals of recitation against the musical background, and numerous alterations.[72] After one of the long rehearsals of the last episode, Head wrote in his diary that the music was rather scrappy, but that some of it sounded good. However, for the final performance of the broadcast he seemed to be more pleased:

> A nice relaxed feeling. Home after all the rehearsing, and recording of A Window at Montjouvain. Is complete. How well they acted! I am not at all shy this time, & anonymously enjoyed the unique experience of watching this complete productional work all around Le 'Mike'. My music did sound good! Altho' the scoring of the septet could be better, especially the end.[73]

It seems that Michael Head had little exposure to opera until he went to London for school, for in a letter from his mother (not dated, but probably 1918) she said, "It is wonderful to me that you can write as you do with the small amount of help which you have had— & the little you have heard—for training sake—in the way of operas, etc."[74] After settling in London, he took advantage of the opportunity to hear serious works of music. "I am tempted to go to so many concerts. I ought to be working but I simply cannot resist them."[75] In 1922 Michael

---

[72]*Ibid.*, 42-43.

[73]Head Diary, 29 March 1956.

[74]Nina Head to Michael Head, October 22, (n.d.) Sunnyside, Kings Langley, Herts., Michael Head Collection in the possession of Catherine and Michael Hinson, Birmingham, England.

[75]Head Diary, quoted in Nancy Bush, *Michael Head*, 18.

Head wrote of a memorable experience of seeing and hearing the opera by the English composer Rutland Boughton, *The Immortal Hour*.

> A most touching and extremely beautiful thing. The acting, music and whole ensemble of The Immortal Hour as produced at the Royal King's Birmingham Repertory Co., ...I feel the music is most imaginative, appealing and exquisitely beautiful, but is never great or big. It wants some great sustained climaxes. But the writing is most artistic and beautiful and wonderfully simple. I have the theme singing in my head now.[76]

There were other opera performances which were memorable to him, that included Verdi's *Falstaff* in Salzburg in 1935 with Toscanini conducting. He heard Kirsten Flagstad sing "Isolde" in New York in 1937 and later in London in the role of "Brünhilde." He saw Britten's *Turn of the Screw* in October of 1954:

> It's brilliant! Holds one's attention from the first and to the last note. Pears' 'Quint' is for that "take it" hit! The boy playing the piano, too, Jennifer Vyue was most talented. Britten is indeed gifted.[77]

Michael Head was enthusiastic about the operas written by his colleague, friend, and brother-in-law Alan Bush. (Both Alan Bush and Michael Head were professors at the Royal Academy of Music for some fifty years each, Bush having taught composition and Head, piano.) Michael traveled to Leipzig in 1966 to see the production of Bush's *The Sugar Reapers* and attended the premiere performance of *Joe Hill* at the State Opera House in Berlin in 1970. When Bush's opera *Wat Tyler* was performed at Sadler's Wells Theatre in 1974 by the Keynote Opera Society, Michael Head attended all three performances.[78]

---

[76]Head Diary, 18 November 1922.

[77]Head Diary, 8 October 1954.

[78]Nancy Bush, *Michael Head*, 46.

Alan Bush remained a significant influence to Michael Head throughout his musical career, not that Head imitated Bush's style or tastes in composition. Because they both had been students under Frederick Corder and had both studied with John Ireland, there was a great deal of mutual respect. Their relationship had begun as students at the Royal Academy when, in order to study the works of the great masters, they would play duet arrangements on the piano. During bombings of London in the second world war, Michael stayed with Alan and Nancy in their home outside the city. Nancy Bush recalled, "While here he seriously discussed and studied composition with Alan, as they now had the opportunity of spending some time together."[79] They also gave a joint concert in Radlett in 1941. Nancy related that particularly in his later years Michael "liked to bring his compositions to Alan from time to time, sing and play them through and then together they would study and discuss the score." Although the two men were not in agreement on politics or world affairs, they remained friends throughout their careers, "liking much in each other's music and supporting each other's public performances."[80] Regarding Alan Bush's influence on Michael Head, it should be noted that in Bush's over fifty years of teaching composition at the Royal Academy, he was considered to be a teacher "who went out of his way not to influence stylistically or politically and indeed to guide his students away from the notable influences they might fall prey to."[81] Thus, all three of the composition teachers with whom Michael Head worked—

---

[79]Ibid., 32.

[80]Nancy Bush, *Alan Bush: Music Politics and Life* (London: Thames Publishing, 2000) 91.

[81]Ibid., 145.

Corder, Ireland and Bush—shared a teaching philosophy that, although it is essential that a composer learn excellent craftsmanship, he must develop his own creativity and thereby find his own voice in his musical composition.

This overview of the influences and experiences that helped to prepare Michael Head to become a performer and composer, has not attempted to include all the many activities of his musical life—broadcasting for the British Broadcasting Corporation 1924-1964, adjudication for competitive festivals, world-wide examining tours for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, piano professorship at the Royal Academy of Music from 1927 to 1975, activities with the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts, lecture recitalist, accompanist and music educator. (A thorough description and evaluation of these aspects of Michael Head's life may be found in the recent Ph.D. dissertation by Barbara Streets, "Michael Head: His Contributions as Composer, Performer, Educator with an Analysis of Selected Solo Songs.") This study has attempted only to show some aspects of the musical environment and education of Michael Head, highlighting his tastes and preoccupations of music heard and played, especially in regards to opera and to modern music.

Nancy Bush

Nancy Rachel Head Bush (11 March 1907—12 October 1991), who wrote the libretto for *Key Money*, was the sister of composer Michael Head and the wife of composer Alan Bush. She was "also an artist—a writer of poetry and prose, including short stories and plays—and an excellent linguist, fluent in both German

and Italian."[82] In a letter written late in her career, she described herself as follows: "I am by profession a librettist and writer of texts for composers and have provided quite a number, notably for full length operas for my husband Alan Bush."[83]

Although Nancy Bush worked with other composers, most of her work was a result of her sixty-year artistic partnership with her husband. In addition to song and choral lyrics for him, she provided the libretti for three of his four full-length operas—*Wat Tyler* (published by Novello and Henschelverlag of Berlin), *Men of Blackmoor* (Williams and Henschelverlag) and *The Sugar Reapers* (Henschelverlag.) The librettos for Alan Bush's children's operas include *The Press Gang* (published by Mitteldeutscher and the Workers' Music Association,) *Spell Unbound* (Novello) and *The Ferryman's Daughter* (Novello.) She wrote the libretto for all but one of Michael Head's light operas and his children's opera—*Key Money, Day Return, After the Wedding, Through Train* and *The Bachelor Mouse* (Boosey and Hawkes.) For C. Armstrong Gibbs, she provided the libretto for the children's opera, *The Great Bell of Burley* (Novello), and for composer John Miller she wrote the libretto for the opera scene, *Sir Thomas Moore.*

Nancy Bush is noted for her numerous translations and English versions of song and choral texts, which were published by Boosey and Hawkes, Universal Edition of Vienna, Editio Musica of Budapest, the London Labour Choral Union, the Workers' Music Association and the Soviet Weekly. These included works by

---

[82]Maeve O'Higgins, "Introduction" in *Alan Bush: Music, Politics and Life* by Nancy Bush (London: Thames Publishing, 2000) 5.

[83]Nancy Bush, Radlett, Hertsfordshire, England to Barbara Streets, Oklahoma City, 14 October 1986, letter in the possession of Barbara Streets, Bethany, Oklahoma.

Bela Bartók, Beethoven, Alban Berg, Hans von Bulow, Hans Eisler, Xuan Hong, Dmitry Kabalevsky, Zoltán Kodály, Gustav Mahler, Bohuslav Martinu, Mozart, Ernst Meyer, Vano Muradeli, Modest Mussorgsky, Novikov, Arnold Schoenberg, Richard Strauss, Mikis Theodorakis, Paul Tortelier and V. Zakharov.[84]

The noted critic, publisher and editor of Boosey and Hawkes, Dr. Erwin Stein,[85] apparently was quite pleased with Nancy Bush's expertise in translating musical works. In a letter from Nancy Bush to Dr. E. Stein, 24 November 1941, she says, "I am returning my versions of the Mahler songs."[86] (These were "Far over the Hill," "Life on Earth," "Rhine Legend," "Solace in Sorrow" and "Where the Shining Trumpets Blow.") In a letter dated only four days later, 28 November 1941, Stein states, "Don't be alarmed if you get the Mahler songs again. It is not for more alterations but for some new translations which I should be very glad if you would do."[87] (These Mahler songs were "Primeval Light," "Sentinel's Night Song"

---

[84]Rachel O'Higgins, Histon, Cambridge, England to Marilyn Govich, Norman, OK, 9 September 2002, written interview in possession of the author.

[85]Erwin Stein (1885-1958,) an Austrian writer on music and editor, studied with Schoenberg from 1906 to 1910 and became a close friend of Berg and Webern. During World War I he was *répétiteur* and conductor at various German opera houses. From 1920 to 1923 he was director of performances in Schoenberg's *Verein für musikalische Privatauffuhrungen*. He edited the periodical (for conductors,) *Pult und Taktstock* from 1924 to 1930, and was until 1938 artistic adviser to Universal Edition in Vienna, making ...a vocal score of the unfinished third act of Berg's *Lulu*. In 1938 he emigrated to England ...(where he) secured a post with Boosey & Hawkes. Stein was an ardent champion of Schoenberg and the 12-note school in general and wrote many articles analyzing and explaining the technical aspects of this music. In England he also became interested in the work of Benjamin Britten. Stanley Sadie, ed. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan, 1980) s.v. "Stein, Erwin" by Mosco Carner.

[86]Nancy Bush to Dr. E. Stein, 24 November 1941, letter in the possession of Dr. Rachel O'Higgins, Histon, Cambridge.

[87]Dr. Erwin Stein to Mrs. Alan Bush, 28 November 1941, in the possession of Dr. Rachel O'Higgins, Histon, Cambridge.

and "St. Anthony and the Fishes.") In her letter of reply, Nancy Bush refers to her work as "English versions" of the Mahler songs, rather than translations.[88]

This distinction in vocabulary is significant, in that Nancy Bush realized that a translation for music had to go far beyond merely giving the meanings of the words in a different language. In the Introduction to Edward J. Dent's book, *Foundations of English Opera*, comments by Arthur Jacobs are quoted regarding Dent's skill as a translator of foreign operas into English: "Dent is no narrow translator; some of his happiest touches seem less to translate the original than to reinterpret it in a style suited to English-speaking audiences."[89] Above all, he believed in creating texts that were "suitable for singing" and easy to comprehend. Edward J. Dent stated in a paper read at The Musical Association of London that "the translator must try to give the impression that his words were those to which the music was originally composed."[90] Dent developed his theories and principles of opera translation by examining the treatment of rhymes, the difficulties peculiar to various foreign languages, and the problems created by the musical structure. Dent further stated that,

> A translator must necessarily know something of the language from which he is translating, but it is more important that he should have a good

---

[88]Nancy Bush to Dr. Erwin Stein, Boosey and Hawkes, 1941, in the possession of Dr. Rachel O'Higgins, Histon, Cambridge.

[89]Arthur Jacobs, "Edward J. Dent: The noted English scholar celebrates his 75th birthday," *Musical America* LXXI/9 (July 1951) 5; quoted by Michael M. Winesanker in "Introduction" to Edward J. Dent, *Foundations of English Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928; reprint edition, New York: Da Capo Press, 1965) xi.

[90]Edward J. Dent, "The Translation of Operas," *Proceedings of the (Royal) Musical Association, 61st Session* (1934-5) 81, quoted by Michael M. Winesanker in "Introduction" to Edward J. Dent, *Foundations of English Opera*, xii.

> command of his own, and perhaps even more important still that he should have a sensitive understanding of music, and understanding based not merely on inborn musical feeling, but on scientific analytical knowledge.[91]

Because of her success as a published translator, one may assume that Nancy Bush possessed a solid command of her language as well as the musical understanding and knowledge to which Dent referred. She was skillful in writing texts that were singable and easy for an audience to comprehend.

Upon examining Nancy Bush's considerable output, it also becomes evident that her work was international in scope. In addition to her original texts and translations for composers, her English translations (or versions) of the folk music of other cultures made a great contribution to the accessibility of this music to English-speaking people—African, Czech, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Philippine, Polish, Rumanian, Russian, Slovakian, Swedish, Swiss and Vietnamese. Many of these settings of folksongs were published abroad, or although performed, remained unpublished.[92] A complete list of works by Nancy Bush (beyond the opera libretti she wrote for Michael Head) can be found in Appendix C.

An examination of Nancy Bush's biography can shed some light on how she gained her understanding and knowledge of literature, music, theatre and languages,

---

[91]Ibid.

[92]Rachel O'Higgins, Histon, Cambridge to Marilyn Govich, Norman, OK, 9 September 2002, letter in possession of the author.

and how she came to be involved in a career as a "librettist and composer of texts for composers."[93]

One of the problems encountered when writing about Mrs. Nancy Bush is the fact that she kept herself in the background, choosing to be the collaborator behind the scenes, especially with regard to her husband Alan Bush. His prodigious output as a composer of many different genres and his remarkable career as a composition professor at the Royal Academy of Music were due in part to her dedication to his profession. This is not to imply that Alan Bush did not also encourage and promote his wife's career, for he was responsible initially for involving her in the writing of libretti and song translations. AlanBush not only set her poetry and libretti, he also dedicated compositions to her, notably the piano pieces written in 1986, *Two Pieces for Nancy*. He spoke very highly of her exceptional skills as a librettist in his essay on "The Problems in Opera:"

> It was my unique good fortune to find in my own wife a librettist with whom many basic difficulties could be faced. In her libretto (*Wat Tyler*) explanation and narrative are reduced to a minimum, occupying less than ten minutes in a whole of more than two and a half hours. In order to reconcile and satisfy the rival claims of musical requirement and realistic development of the story, there are a number of set pieces in the shape of solo songs, but these only occur where, in the actual circumstances of the time, the persons concerned might in reality have broken into song or found themselves plunged in meditation.[94]

Besides her own creative work, Nancy Bush spent a great deal of time and energy researching, writing and publishing a memoir of her brother, Michael Head.

---

[93]Nancy Bush to Barbara Streets, 14 October 1986.

[94]Alan Bush, *In My Eighth Decade and Other Essays* (London: Kahn and Averill, 1980) 35.

This work went far beyond the author's own recollections, by describing aspects of the English musical scene in the first half of the twentieth century. This included adjudication at competition festivals, the beginnings of British broadcasting in the twenties and the part played by musicians during World War II under the sponsorship of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts.[95] On the acknowledgements page of this book, Nancy Bush thanks not only the friends and colleagues who gave their recollections, but also the Associate Music Director of the Arts Council of Great Britain and the staff members of the British Broadcast Corporation Written Archives Centre where she did research. She offered special thanks "to my husband for the essay which he has contributed and for his great encouragement throughout my work on this memoir."[96] This again shows Alan Bush's reciprocal support of his wife.

In a letter dated 4 May 1982 to Sir Keith Falkner, (Director of the Royal College of Music, 1960 to 1974) which apparently accompanied the autographed copy of the memoir (now owned by the author of this document,) Nancy Bush wrote,

> Dear Sir Keith,
>
> Michael's Memoir has just come out and should like to send you this copy with my best wishes and thanks again for the help you gave in telling me about the early Ballad Concerts.
>
> With kind regards
>
> Yours sincerely,
> Nancy Bush[97]

---

[95]Nancy Bush, *Michael Head: Composer, Singer, Pianist* (London: Kahn and Averill, 1982) cover.

[96]Ibid., 3.

[97]Nancy Bush, Radlett, Hertsfordshire, 4 May 1982 to Keith Falkner, letter in the Bruce M. Govich Library in possession of the author.

The Michael Head Memoir is inscribed:

> For Keith Falkner
> With best wishes
> From
> Nancy Bush
> May, 1982[98]

Another large project taken on by Nancy Bush was the writing of the biography of her husband, which was published in 2000, the centenary of his birth, although it was written some twenty years before. Described by her granddaughter and literary executrix, Maeve O'Higgins in the introduction of the biography, "This is Nancy's personal account of the main events of Alan's long and very active life, told with characteristic modesty and self-effacement."[99] Nancy and Alan's daughter, Rachel O'Higgins, also referred to her mother's modesty when asked about Nancy Bush's other works:

> Part of the problem was my mother, herself. She rarely discussed her own work with my sister and myself, and indeed, many of the short stories and poems I only discovered after she died.[100]

Because of Nancy Bush's humility, most of her biographical material is taken from the biographies she wrote of her brother and husband, and, additionally, from recollections by her daughters, Dr. Rachel O'Higgins and Mrs. Catherine Hinson.

Born 11 March 1907, Nancy Rachel Head was the second of the two children born to Frederick Dewar Head and Nina Watson Head. Apparently the seven-year old Michael was at first indifferent to the idea of a sister, but after a few

---

[98]Ibid.

[99]Maeve O'Higgins, "Introduction" *Alan Bush: Music, Politics and Life* by Nancy Bush (London: Thames Publishing, 2000) 5.

[100]Rachel O'Higgins to Marilyn Govich, 9 September 2002, letter.

years the two of them became companionable. Nancy related, "During his school holidays we spent a good deal of time together; he would look after me when my mother was busy, and considering the difference in our ages he showed patience and good nature."[101] Nancy, like her brother Michael attended the co-educational Home School, Highgate, which included the study of Dalcrose Eurythmics. "As a child, she learnt the piano at the private Adair-Marston School of Music, Gloucester Road, London. This was the school where Michael Head was taught the piano."[102] She was naturally very musical as was her brother, was a singer and became an able amateur pianist.[103] As a young girl, Nancy was introduced to the classical repertoire. Although especially fond of Handel[104], she otherwise seemed to prefer 19th-century romantic composers such as Chopin, Liszt and Grieg.

> Because of Michael Head, she heard a great deal of piano music and as he began composing songs very young, she became familiar with a great many songs. She liked Elizabethan music very much, but was less interested in Beethoven and Bach.[105]

Nancy was influenced in the area of politics by her association with E. D. Morel and his family, when the family moved to King's Langley in Hertfordshire in the last years of World War I. Morel was best remembered for his protest against conditions of labor in the Congo Free State under King Leopold II of Belgium. He

---

[101]Nancy Bush, *Michael Head*, 9.

[102]Rachel O'Higgins to Marilyn Govich, 9 September 2002, interview.

[103] Catherin Hinson, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, England to Marilyn Govich, Norman, OK, 10 September 2002, written interview in possession of the author.

[104]Ibid.

[105]Rachel O'Higgins to Marilyn Govich, 9 September 2002, interview.

was active in the Congo Reform Association and wrote books on West Africa and the rubber slave trade. Soon after the outbreak of the war in 1914, he founded the Union of Democratic Control, with proposals not unlike those President Wilson espoused in 1918. But these principles were unpopular at the time, and he was charged with an offence under the Defense of the Realm Act and imprisoned for six months. It appeared that the offence was purely technical and the sentence designed to silence Morel. "We knew little about politics, and this outstanding and courageous man gave us an introduction to liberal ideas which was never forgotten."[106] This influence on the impressionable young girl obviously had an impact years later, in her writing libretti on topics of historical political oppression for Alan Bush's operas.

Nancy spoke of village life in those days following the Great War as sociable in an unsophisticated way. There was tennis on garden courts, winter dances and skating when the lake in the fields behind the village froze over, even after dark by moonlight or the light of bonfires on the shore. Many of her days were spent cycling about the countryside with her brother Michael on the lightly-traveled rural roads of Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Michael had some free months to spend at home before he was to enter the Royal Academy of Music. Since organ was to be one of his studies, he was given permission to practice in the King's Langley village church. Nancy recalls,

> The bellows of the organ there were hand-worked and he would sometimes persuade me to blow for him while he climbed up to the organ loft to play. In a small room on the ground level there was a long wooden handle and

---

[106]Ibid., 14.

> above it an air gauge, consisting of a piece of lead at the end of a length of string, which rose to its zenith near the ceiling when the bellows were full, only gradually descending as the air ran out. This process took several minutes and sometimes when the lead was high I was tempted to run outside into the churchyard. I was nearly always back in time, and only occasionally the lead on its string reached the bottom, the sound of the organ in the church died away in a dismal whine and the irate organist came down to find I had deserted my post and was playing among the tombstones.[107]

In the spring of 1921, when Nancy was fourteen years old, Michael brought a fellow student from the Royal Academy of Music to their home in Blackheath. This was the first time for her to meet Alan Bush, the man she would marry ten years later. Bush would visit the Head family in the various villages in Hertfordshire, and go for long rambles through the country with Michael and Nancy, often walking barefoot over the fields, which he had never been allowed to do as a child. Nancy contrasted their childhoods in this statement,

> As children we had had rather a hazardous upbringing, mostly due to lack of money, but Alan's youth had been more orderly and secure. His had been a sheltered Edwardian childhood in that untouched England of before the First World War, where safety and prosperity seemed likely to go on for ever.[108]

When she was sixteen years old Alan went to a Christmas dance with Michael and Nancy, and the brother and sister would occasionally spend weekends at Alan's home in Highgate.

> I used to look forward to these visits as the most exciting events of my life, but much as I longed to shine, I was always shy and tongue-tied when I got there. My brother, rather irritated with me, would say: 'You talk enough at home; I can't understand why you are so quiet when we go to see Alan.' Though Alan himself was always friendly and natural, the atmosphere of the house was, for me at least, almost overpoweringly correct; there were large,

---

[107]Ibid., 15.

[108]Nancy Bush, *Alan Bush: Music, Politics and Life* (London: Thames Publishing, 2000) 8.

> closely furnished rooms, Turkish carpets everywhere, meals announced punctually by a gong and served by a parlourmaid.[109]

Nancy and Alan's lives took a different turn in 1925 when she went to Cambridge, and Alan went to Germany to study piano with Artur Schnabel and to become a student at Berlin University. When lack of money threatened to end Nancy's education at Cambridge, Michael helped her from his meager income and she borrowed the rest from Newnham College itself.[110] While a student she sang in the Cambridge University Music Society. In her academic studies Nancy "took English in Part I and obtained a First Class. She took History in Part II and obtained a Class 2.I. She gained a BA Hons. Degree (though women were not formally given degrees until after World War II)."[111] In 1940 she received a Master of Arts from Cambridge University.[112]

At university Nancy immersed herself in the literary works of Shakespeare, Marlow, Milton, Pope, Dryden and others of the 16th and 17th centuries, and 19th and 20th century, studying both English novels and poetry. She enjoyed contemporary authors of her day, including Margaret Drabble, Fay Weldon and Elizabeth Jenkins, who had been Nancy's best friend at Cambridge.[113] Jenkins was a great admirer of

---

[109]Ibid., 14.

[110]Ibid., 14-15.

[111]Rachel O'Higgins to Marilyn Govich, 2 September 2002, interview.

[112]Ibid.

[113]Catherine Hinson., interview.

the work of Jane Austen, so it is very likely that Nancy knew Jane Austen's work well.

> At university, her tutor in English was Dr. Leavis. My mother (Nancy) was taught by him along with other Newnham students and such was the quality of his teaching that they almost, if not all, got 1st class degrees in their exam. He was very keen on D.H. Lawrence and other modern writers of the time. I am sure Dr. Leavis introduced his students to American writers, such as Henry James, and possible Eugene O'Neill and Hemmingway. She also learnt German while in Germany from 1928 to 1931. Here she was introduced to German writers in addition to Goethe, Heine, and Schiller, which she had already read in translation anyway. She didn't talk much about French and Italian literature, though I am no doubt she read the classics in translation anyway.[114]

Nancy Bush had always been very interested in the theatre. In her student days at Cambridge she became the theatre critic for the student newspaper. This entitled her to free tickets to the Cambridge theatres every week and allowed her to view a great number of avant-garde plays during this period. She continued to be a great theatre-goer throughout her life.[115]

In the summer of 1930, after becoming engaged to Alan, Nancy went back to Berlin with him. He continued his university course and she lived with a German Jewish family, to teach the children English and learn German herself. She recalled the strained and oppressive atmosphere of the city with its increasing anti-Semitism, the rioting and attack of Jewish professors at the university, as well as the public speeches of Hitler. "I remember the shouting and the slogans, the marching and counter-marching through the rain on election day, together with the sense of strained anxiety in the Jewish household where I lived as danger took a step nearer

---

[114]Rachel O'Higgins, interview.

[115]Ibid.

the great city."[116] This experience must have also had an influence on her later work writing libretti about political uprisings.

Nancy Head and Alan Bush were married in March of 1931, and after a honeymoon in Nürnberg and the Austrian Tyrol, settled for six months in Berlin again. Nancy studied at the Language Institute for Foreigners as Alan continued in Philosophy and Musicology at the university. They returned home to England to settle in the village of Radlett in Hertfordshire, fifteen miles from London, where they were to live, with intervals of travel, for the next sixty years. Their first child, Rachel, was born in 1932 and twins, Catherine and Alice, in 1936. Nancy followed a purely domestic routine for several years before going back to work writing and translating songs for the London Labour Choral Union, which later became the Workers' Music Association. In 1933 Nancy went with the London Labour Choral Union (which Alan conducted) on a trip to Belgium and Holland. Nancy stated, "I had had little to do with politics up to this time, apart from belonging rather passively to the Fabian Society before I married and translating German socialist songs for the Choral Union, which I did in the first place to please Alan."[117] In 1935 she also took part in a workers' choral festival in Strasbourg, along with Alan's old friend from school days, Michael Tippet who sang with the tenors.

---

[116]Nancy Bush, *Alan Bush*, 25.

[117]Ibid., 30-31.

Also in 1935, Alan changed his political affiliation to the Communist Party, and remained an active member for the rest of his life. Nancy did not follow her husband in his choice of political philosophy.

> I myself never felt able to join the Communist Party. I believed in socialism as the most just economic system in an over-populated world, and remained a member of the Labour Party even when real socialism seemed no longer part of its programme; but it was a large and powerful party and I always thought it would return to this when the situation got worse. I always admired Alan for his Communism and for keeping to it through thick and thin, even to his personal disadvantage. Any differences in our outlook were never enough to spoil our personal relations. On big practical issues we nearly always agreed.[118]

In November of 1938 Nancy and Alan visited the United States for the first time. Most of the four weeks was spent in New York, where they met the composer Mark Blitztein and heard a performance of his work *The Cradle will Rock*. This made a great impression on them both, as may have also been reflected in the choice of subjects for their full-length operas. They also spent time with Aaron Copland and visited the folk-song collector Charles Lomax and his son Alan near Washington.

In September of 1940 the Blitz over London began, and since the Bushes lived fifteen miles outside the city, the locale was safer from air raids. For this reason, they took in the composer William Alwyn with his wife and two sons, and later John Ireland, who spent some weeks with them. Nancy recalled, "...at first I thought there might be a problem with two musicians and one piano but John seemed too unsettled and depressed to do any work just then and so the difficulty

---

[118]Ibid., 39-40.

never arose."[119] Later Michael Head and Nancy's mother and father lived with them several months for this same reason. In 1941 Alan was called up to join the Royal Army Medical Corps and served as a private until 1945. In 1944 Alan and Nancy Bush suffered the most tragic personal loss of their lives when their seven-year old daughter Alice lost her life in a street accident.

Although Nancy Bush had been translating choral songs for the repertoire of the London Labour Choral Union and later the Workers' Music Association, her first collaboration between herself and Alan Bush took place in 1943. Alan set a short poem of hers, "Toulon," which described the scuttling of the French fleet in that city's harbor in defiance of the Vichy government during the German occupation of France.[120]

The next, more ambitious collaboration was a children's opera in 1946, *The Press Gang*, on the historical subject of the naval press gang of the 18th century. It was followed in 1954 by *The Spell Unbound*, a story of 16th century witchcraft, with music in the Elizabethan style. This was also the year Nancy's opera for children written with Michael Head was published, *The Bachelor Mouse*, which had a much lighter subject. In the early 1960s followed the next children's opera with Alan Bush, *The Ferryman's Daughter*, which was about the Thames Watermen at Wapping Old Stairs in the 18th century.[121] In 1947 they wrote a work for unaccompanied choir, "Lidice" which was sung by the W.M.A. Singers (conducted

---

[119]Ibid., 43.

[120]Nancy Bush, "Writing for Music" in *Time Remembered: Alan Bush, an 80th Birthday Symposium*, ed. Ronald Stevenson (Kidderminster, UK: Bravura Publications, 1981) 141.

[121]Ibid.

by Alan Bush) on the site of the Czech village by that name which the Nazis had razed as a reprisal during the war.[122]

Rachel O'Higgins, the oldest daughter of Nancy and Alan Bush, thinks it was unlikely that her mother had much knowledge of opera before meeting her father.

> He introduced her to Wagner and later Verdi, but in the early part of the 20th century, apart from Covent Garden in London, and the opera houses in the major cities of Europe, it was quite difficult to go to opera and expensive too. So I am not sure that when she was young she saw very many operas. After the Second World War, however, both my parents were regularly to Covent Garden and the English National Opera, when it was formed. Here, they saw a wide range of operas, and always attended the first performance of Michael Tippetts's operas, as he was a close friend of both Alan and Nancy Bush.[123]

Their daughter Catherine Hinson recalled that her parents enjoyed going to Covent Garden and sometimes Sadlers Wells, and that they used to go and see any productions by Ralph Vaughan Williams, Sir Michael Tippett, Benjamin Britten and Sir William Walton.[124]

It was in 1947 that Nancy and Alan Bush collaborated on their first full-length opera, *Wat Tyler*. Nancy recalled the beginning of this collaboration.

> This new departure for both of us was intensely exciting. The dramatic story of the Peasant Rising of 1381 attracted us both; it seemed heroic, realistic and very English, but at first we were not sure if the wide-ranging epic material could be compressed satisfactorily into a stage work of three hours.[125]

---

[122]Ibid.

[123]Rachel O'Higgins, interview.

[124]Catherine Hinson, interview.

[125]Nancy Bush, "Writing for Music," 142.

The idea of the general subject for each of their three operas came first from Alan. After discussing the possibilities of the subject, Nancy would begin the necessary research and background reading on the historical events on which the operas were based.

> From this I plan the story, the characters and the suggested dramatic line, even to acts and scenes, all of which we discuss together at each stage and alter if necessary. If we are so far agreed, I now write the actual libretto in more or less complete dramatic form. Alan does not begin to compose until he has been able to read the finished text in detail. Most of his alterations are at this point in the nature of cuts...(which) show judgment, because they usually have the effect of tightening the dramatic line or of taking out some purely descriptive passage, which we both agree is a weakness in opera...[126]

The libretto of *Wat Tyler* kept closely to actual historical events and used early sources such as contemporary songs and Froissart's Chronicles. The opera won a prize in the Arts Council Festival of Britain Competition in 1951. Its premiere was in Leipzig in September of 1953, where it is on record that it was applauded for 25 minutes. The first British production was at Sadler's Wells Theatre in 1974 by the Keynote Opera Company.[127]

The libretto for *Wat Tyler* was highly praised in the 1950s for the beauty of the language, which added significantly to the quality of the opera as a whole. "In fact one critic claimed that Alan Bush had kept too closely and depended too much

---

[126]Ibid.

[127]Rachel O'Higgins, "*Wat Tyler*," Alan Bush Trust Website, data-on-line; available from http://www.alanbushtrust.org.uk/music/operas/wat_tyler.asp?room=Music; Internet, accessed 15 May 2002.

on the libretto when writing the music!"[128] In the review in *The Musical Times*, Hugh Ottaway referred to *Wat Tyler* as the first English opera to use an English historical theme. He stated,

> The design is compact, there are no loose ends, and the build of the libretto shows a skilful reduction of narrative and explanatory material to the barest minimum—less than ten minutes, in fact, from a total of two and a half hours. The librettist is Nancy Bush, the composer's wife, and she uses a language that is simple and direct, generous in feeling, but unsentimental.[129]

Ottaway quotes the final statement of the peasants and says that "with its restrained eloquence...and its wonderful synthesis of Tyler's music, this is among the most affecting moments in modern English opera."[130]

> Who once puts forth his strength for right
> Sets free his spirit from its chain,
> Looks on the world with altered eyes.
> All that is great in Man still lives,
> And once again, and once again shall rise.[131]

The noted musicologist, translator and critic Professor Edward Dent in his review of *Wat Tyler* in Musical Opinion in the 1952 stated,

> The libretto, by Nancy Bush, is extremely well written in clear, straightforward English and combines dramatic force with very impressive dignity in its more serious moments. The opera, in its general conception, bears some resemblance to Mussorgsky's 'Boris Godonov;' it tells the story not so much of a single hero as of a whole people. The main burden of the drama falls on the chorus...this insistence on the chorus represents a common moral and social idealism...the chorus is a power in itself, generally in revolt against the tyranny of the individual.[132]

---

[128]Rachel O'Higgins, interview.

[129]Hugh Ottaway, "Alan Bush's 'Wat Tyler'," *Musical Times* 97 (6 December 1956) 633.

[130]Ibid., 636

[131]Ibid.

[132]Edward Dent, "*Wat Tyler*," *Musical Opinion*, January 1952, 231.

A review by Sir Thomas Armstrong of the much later 1974 production at Sadler's Wells noted the following about the libretto:

> Nancy Bush's libretto, one of her earlier ones, concentrates upon essentials and the basic factors of a complex story. Political, social, and religious influences are indicated, without any great subtlety of analysis being attempted except in the case of the young Richard II, whose character is in some respects the most interesting element in the drama, as his music is the most individual. The instinct behind Nancy Bush's method may be a sound one: but it means that the psychological factors in the conflict must be more fully exposed in musical than in literary terms: and in this respect Alan Bush does not fail.[133]

The review of this same production in 1974 in *Tempo Magazine* by Calum MacDonald refers to *Wat Tyler* as a revolutionary opera, with roots from early Verdi and *Boris Godunov*. "Its action is vividly dramatic, the conception is spectacular, and the characterization, if rather simplistically divided between paragons and villains, is admirably clearcut."[134]

Dr. Rachel O'Higgins, the oldest daughter of Alan and Nancy Bush has provided some excerpts from the libretto of *Wat Tyler*. It is her opinion that much of the best writing comes in the writing for the chorus. The opera begins with peasants singing,

> Dark at daybreak I drag my oxen
> Over the frozen fields, fast yoked to the plough.
> For fear of my lord I dare not linger,
> However cruel the cold of winter.[135]

---

[133]Thomas Armstrong, "Alan Bush's 'Wat Tyler'," *Royal Academy of Music Magazine* 207 (Spring 1975) 9.

[134]Calum MacDonald, "Wat Tyler," *Tempo* 110 (September 1974) 44.

[135]Rachel O'Higgins, interview.

Later in the same act, the crowd sings,

> Away with wantoning lords,
> With pride and avarice grown so great,
> That use King Richard's name
> To eat up all our poor estate...[136]

Wat Tyler sings of the coming struggle,

> Now the mill sails begin to swing,
> Through them the storm begins to sing;
> The word is given, the rhyme is sung;
> For us at last the bell hath rung,
> The fields and farms all empty show
> The men of Kent are gathering now.[137]

Dr. O'Higgins considers the highlight of the opera to be at the beginning of Act II, Scene 1, with the Minstrel's song, and King Richard's response to it when he recalls his life in Aquitaine:

> There is a forest in Aquitaine.
> I dreamed I rode there in the silence of morning.
> Over embroidered grass I rode.
> Silver and white were the numberless stars I ravished.
> And the boughs of the trees hung down
> Spell-bound in the glass of the pool.
> That is a fair country, the country of Aquitaine.
> Your music makes me remember it.[138]

Dr. O'Higgins noted that love scenes were always very potent in her mother's libretti and that this is a prominent feature of *Wat Tyler*. Margaret's aria in Act I, Scene 2 expresses her life with Wat Tyler—

---

[136]Ibid.

[137]Ibid.

[138]Ibid.

Long have we lived our lives in labour,
Toiling through troublesome days together.
In the soft season of summer we were happy
When were young, and weary in winter,
Yet we could comfort one another...[139]

Later, her lament at the begging of Act II, Scene 3 after her husband has been killed is most haunting to O'Higgins, and represents to her the loving relationship her mother and father had throughout their married life.—

Long is the road that I have taken
Through the cold night and rainy morrow;
The road that he once trod in joy
I walk in sorrow...
Though you may weep a leader lost,
I mourn my heart's companion.
For grief and pain my spirit now
Lies still as stone.[140]

Although the events and most characters in *Wat Tyler* were historical, Alan and Nancy's second opera, *Men of Blackmoor* was an original story based on 19th century miners in Northumberland, which was a center of the early struggles of the pitmen. Nancy recalled their research for the opera:

> We visited Newcastle together and spent some days in the city library over the Black Gate, where we were the only readers. Here the librarian gave us, amongst other things, a trunk full of little-known contemporary papers and pamphlets, not yet catalogued, and even an original Miner's Bond or contract of labour from the late 18th century, marked with crosses where the men could not write. From the list of pitmen here given I chose names later to be used for some of our characters. In gloomy November weather we sat reading beside a roaring coal fire and each day the kind-hearted lady caretaker, perhaps glad of a little company, insisted on providing us with a delicious loaded tea-tray for which she would take no payment.[141]

---

[139]Ibid.

[140]Ibid.

[141]Nancy Bush, "Writing for Music," 142.

On this trip to Newcastle they also saw one of the mining pits, which had a machine for operating the winding of the cages, which had been built in 1860 and was still in use.

The world premiere of *The Men of Blackmoor* took place on 18 November 1956 at the German National Theatre of Weimar that Nancy described as "this 18th century city with all its traditions of Goethe, Schiller and Liszt."[142] The commissioned opera ran for the whole winter season in Weimar and was given twenty performances.[143] There were later German productions in Jena Opera House in 1957, Leipzig Opera House in 1959 and Zwickau Opera House in 1960. In Britain *The Men of Blackmoor* was produced by the Oxford University Opera Club in 1960 and Bristol University Operatic Society in 1974, and it was given a BBC Third programme broadcast in 1969.[144]

One reviewer observed the following about the libretto of the work:

> Mainly by means of rhymed couplets, lyrics and blank verse that is never less than vivid and at times on the very brink of poetry, the Librettist, Nancy Bush, has suggested the grim smouldering spirit of the times. The action moves swiftly, with little if any digression, and the story is unfolded with sincerity and a compelling sense of urgency...It is not easy to be lyrical about the slow destruction of the human spirit, unrewarding toil and choke-damp, and despair induced by callous oppression.[145]

Critic David Drew wrote in the New Statesman, 18 December 1960:

---

[142]Ibid., 145.

[143]Nancy Bush, *Alan Bush*, 77.

[144]Rachel O'Higgins, "*Men of Blackmoor*," from the Alan Bush Music Trust.

[145]Unidentified reviewer, "*The Men of Blackmoor*," Rachel O'Higgins from the Alan Bush Music Trust Website.

> The chief virtue of '*Men of Blackmoor*,' and the reason why it particularly deserves a performance at this historical point, is its unfailing honesty. The work is respectful of the craft of composition: it is never cheap, and at its best achieves a genuine dignity.[146]

The language of this libretto also has a biblical tone, which reflects the importance of Methodism among the Northumbrian miners in the early 19th century.[147] For this opera, too, Dr. Rachel O'Higgins has provided examples of the libretto:

> All day long, away in the mine,
> With the dark of the hills stretched over my head,
> Working there in the seam, and drift,
> With the rivers and hills so high above,
> Only of you I've dreamt, my lass,
> When we should be together.[148]

As in *Wat Tyler*, the words of the chorus are unusual; in Act I the Pitmen and women sing:

> Silent the valley,
> Dark to my sight.
> Rain on the mountain
> Brings on the night.
> Cloudy be the mountain,
> Dark the day or clear,
> Working day or idle—
> All have I know here.[149]

At the beginning of Act I, Scene 2, one of the main characters, Jenny sings:

> Now turns the wheel of the world unheard.
> Far away sounds of the city's din,
> With noise of traffic and thunder of feet,

---

[146]Rachel O'Higgins, "*The Men of Blackmoor*," Alan Bush Music Trust Website.

[147]Rachel O'Higgins, interview.

[148]Ibid.

[149]Ibid.

And I to the valley have come again...
Often I thought of village and mine
As hour and day so slow went by—
The mine that stole the green of the fields,
The wheel of the pit against the sky...[150]

Later, in the same scene, a duet is sung by Daniel and Jenny almost in the form of a folk song, which reflects the strong evidence of Northumbrian folk idiom which Alan Bush incorporated into this opera.

The waters of Tyne, the waters of Wear,
Do flow so dark their banks between,
And black the gaping mouth of pit
Where once the fields were growing green.
Between the banks on either side
The tide do rise and seaward flow.
Of all the troubled days we live
No trace of it the waters show.
Of all the toilsome days and nights
No track nor trace is left, my dear,
Where float the keels to river mouth,
And deep do flow the Tyne and Wear.[151]

According to Dr. O'Higgins, "one of the most memorable moments in the opera comes at the beginning of Act III, Scene 2, where the young Leadminer (brought in to work the valves of the engine which worked wheel at the Pithead) sings a quiet lament."[152]

Turn, turn the wheel,
Till my arm no more can feel,
Till my back forgets the pain—
Rack and pinion, turn again,
Turn, turn again.[153]

---

[150]Ibid.

[151]Ibid.

[152]Ibid.

[153]Ibid.

For their third full-length opera, Alan and Nancy Bush chose a subject with a more contemporary theme to complete a trilogy of operas with the idea of freedom and the struggle towards it. The historical setting of *The Sugar Reapers* is British Guiana in the 1950's, when first efforts towards a democratic government by election had been made and then abruptly put down by the authorities. The story and characters are fictional, but set in a social background and events of history. Alan Bush and daughter Rachel O'Higgins traveled to the country for five weeks to record examples of the folk music, including songs and dance rhythms, and speech, both in Georgetown, the capital, and up and down the colony. Nancy Bush writes,

> ...from these recordings and photographs, from verbal descriptions and also the works of contemporary Guianese writers (including the novels of Jan Carew) I was able to build up a picture of life in the colony and, almost as important, to reproduce something of the vivid and idiomatic but ungrammatical turns of speech used by the African and Indian inhabitants.[154]

The flavor of speech in the country is especially apparent in the language of the African characters. In Act I, Scene 1, Joseph, the brother of the hero, sings:

> Some days I wake,
> Feel this ent no working day.
> Up jumps the sun,
> Boy, don't throw your chance away.[155]

Dr. O'Higgins is reminded of *Porgy and Bess* by this dialect, although she is not sure her mother ever saw that opera. Again, in this opera, the chorus is significant. In the same scene, a chorus of Sugar Workers sing:

---

[154]Nancy Bush, "Writing for Music," 144.

[155]Rachel O'Higgins, interview.

Short time! Short time!
Who is humbug us then, neighbour?
Who done take away work and money?
Don't the cane crop still be growing?
Why not we go down and cut it?
Short time! Short time!
Sure that ent no sense or reason.[156]

The Indian characters of *The Sugar Reapers* do not use the same idiom but something more familiar. Sumintra, the young Indian girl in love with Johnny, the African hero, sings of her love for him:

If there has come to me
A man of different creed and land,
Whose thoughts and dreams are mine,
Who speaks with words I understand,
Why must I call him stranger?
Lock up my thoughts and hide my face,
Because in far-back centuries
Some other country bore his race?[157]

The review in *Stage and Television Today* by the reviewer identified by "O. T." on 29 December 1966 read,

> Alan Bush's third full-length opera, 'The Sugar Reapers', commissioned by Karl Kayser, manager of the Leipzig Opera, had its world premiere at the Opera House there...Bush collected local colour and absorbed musical influences in the former British colony of Guiana, where the action is laid and many of his melodies have their roots in African, South-American or Indian folklore...Nancy Bush's libretto, in six scenes, concentrates on the workers' struggle and Johnny's fight against out-dated superstitions. With lively jazz rhythms, sambas and Indian dances, Bush enlivens a score that the Gewandhaus Orchestra...played with their accustomed authority.[158]

Nancy Bush recalled that the libretti for each of the three full-length operas

---

[156]Ibid.

[157]Ibid.

[158]Rachel O'Higgins, "*The Sugar Reapers*," from the Alan Bush Music Trust website.

were prepared and written in about six months, although the composition and orchestrations took considerably longer—*Wat Tyler*, two and a half years, *Men of Blackmoor* eighteen months, and *The Sugar Reapers* two years.[159]

> All three works were first performed in the German Democratic Republic—in Leipzig and Weimar—and the excitement of each first night was in great contrast to the months of almost solitary work which had gone before. Alan spent some time beforehand working with the opera companies in rehearsal. I joined him for the last dress rehearsals and for the performance itself. It was always a wonderful moment for me to see the characters which had only existed in imagination come to life on the stage; more than this, to hear for the first time the full orchestration of the score. Alan often sang and played parts of the operas to me as he went along and I knew the vocal lines of passages or of the whole orchestral setting until I heard these in the opera house.[160]

Less is known about the poetry of Nancy Bush, other than her song lyrics. A few of her poems were published in journals, but they were never published in a collection, and a full collection of her poetry is not yet made.[161] Her daughter Rachel has read most of her short stories, "which are often about children and often involved relationships between couples married or otherwise."[162] Nancy Bush also wrote several one-act plays, but, as far as is known, "these were rarely if ever performed outside the family and none were published.[163]

---

[159]Nancy Bush, "Writing for Music," 144.

[160]Ibid.

[161]Rachel O'Higgins, interview.

[162]Ibid.

[163]Ibid.

The Genesis of the Opera, *Key Money*

As noted in the above information on Michael Head, the light operas written to his sister's libretti were not their first collaboration. As children they had worked together to put on musical plays for the family using Michael's model theatre. According to Dr. Rachel O'Higgins, Nancy had dramatized an adaptation by their father of *The Magic Fishbone* by Dickens, to which Michael had written the music. This was performed at the Adair-Marston School of Music probably some time before 1918.[164]

Most of their artistic collaboration took place after 1950, when they were each well-established in their respective careers. Their children's operetta *The Bachelor Mouse* was published in 1954. A second opera for schools followed in 1961, *Through Train*, which may have been written because of Michael Head's fascination with trains. (According to Rachel O'Higgins, "From childhood he had been enthralled with steam trains and when he moved to Golder's Green he set up an elaborate train set in an attic room.")[165] Nancy also provided the texts for the song, "October Valley," published in 1951, "Child on the Shore," published in 1976, "Three Songs of Venice," published in 1977, an English version of his "Ave Maria," as well as texts for the choral cantata "Daphne and Apollo" in 1964, and the choral piece "New Town," composed in 1965. For this last piece, Michael Head

---

[164]Rachel O'Higgins, interview.

[165]Ibid.

and Nancy Bush had been commissioned by the Stevenage Male Voice Choir. A local writer said,

> I like what I heard of the music and felt that this is a song with "atmosphere." Mr. Head seems to me to have caught splendidly in his music the spirit of his sister's words. Nancy Bush took her part of the commission with some care; she came to see Stevenage for herself, having decided that the theme of her words should be the New Town. She wanted to see it, hear its sounds, and see its people going about their daily task.[166]

The travel to Stevenage by Nancy Bush shows that she was as serious about her work with Michael Head as she had been in researching the materials and places for the full-length opera libretti she wrote with Alan Bush.

Nancy Bush noted that her brother Michael "was not of a literary turn of mind and was never a great reader,"[167] so he was constantly seeking suitable texts and often had difficulty finding them. She tried to be of help to her brother in this area. In a letter to Michael dated 10 January 1960, Nancy said,

> Dear Michael,
>
> You often ask me to choose poems for you, and this Christmas Rachel and Paul gave me a book of Modern Verse. I looked right through it, and could only find these few that I liked at all, from the point of view of songs. So I send them for you to read.
>
> Of course, the Tennyson is not out of this book, but I have always thought it a wonderful little poem.
>
> I expect you have often read the Davies, and that it has been set. Also the Housman, "Tell me not here, it needs not saying," which is a most beautiful poem, I think. The really modern writers in this anthology are so dreadful, I think, I could not find one to include.[168]

---

[166]Hertfordshire Express and Stevenage Gazette, 22 October 1965, "Here a New Dream is Brought to Life: Composer comes to rehearse his choral work" by Lucas Green. Head Collection.

[167]Nancy Bush, Michael Head, 30.

[168]Nancy Bush 10 January 1960 to Michael Head, Head Collection in the possession of Michael and Catherine Hinson.

According to a letter written by Nancy Bush in 1986, the operas *Key Money* and *Day Return* were written at the request of The Intimate Opera Company, for two or three voices.[169] This English opera company had been founded in 1930 in order "to revive unknown opera of the chamber music genre,"[170] and first produced the comic opera of Thomas Arne, *Thomas and Sally*. Later called The British Intimate Opera Company, it claimed to be the oldest chamber opera company in the world. The company was made up of a soprano, a baritone and a tenor, accompanied by piano and sometimes a string quartet, and its repertory consisted of original, not rearranged, works from the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[171] In 1937 the company toured in Spain and the United States, and during World War II, gave many performances for both civilians and the armed forces. The company changed directorship in 1953 and began to also perform new works commissioned from British composers.[172] It then appears that the "request" to which Nancy Bush referred was actually a commission from Intimate Opera Company.

Nancy Bush states in her letter about the operas *Key Money* and *Day Return*,

> I wrote the texts quite independently of my brother and presented them complete to him...I also thought it would be something new for him to write a light opera for a change and was delighted when he liked them....I chose topical subjects, for example, a skit on Twelve Tone music in "Key Money."

---

[169]Nancy Bush, Radlett, Hertsfordshire 14 October 1986 to Barbara Streets, Oklahoma City, in the possession of Barbara Streets, Bethany, OK.

[170]Stanley Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (London: Macmillan Press Limited, 1992. S.v. "Intimate Opera Company" by Harold Rosenthal.

[171]Eric Walter White, *A History of English Opera* (London: Faber and Faber, 1983) 433.

[172]Ibid.

> Michael made few alterations, a word here and there only, and composed at the piano as I described. As he progressed he would come to sing and play what he had composed so far to see if I liked it! And I always did, he was brilliant at hitting off tunes, also he made a lot of the dialogue really amusing, a most difficult thing in music.
>
> So in a sense the operas were written first at the request of Intimate Opera, and *Key Money* and *Day Return* went into their repertoire. But we also wrote for pleasure![173]

It is not surprising that the brother and sister, who had been so close growing up together, would enjoy sharing their creative efforts on such a project. These one-act light operas were written in the 1960s following Nancy Bush's highly-praised librettos written for the serious, full-length operas for Alan Bush. Dr. O'Higgins observed that, "It is significant that Michael Head's one-act operas were intimate operas, involving only a very small cast, and were much lighter in character, with a considerable degree of light-hearted humour, which contrasted very considerably with the libretti she had written for the full-length operas with my father."[174]

There are missing diaries from December 1957 to July of 1964, (unless Head did not write during that time) so nothing is said by Head about the process of writing *Key Money*. The first reference to the light opera was on 30 November 1964.

> A surprise letter. I expected the usual polite return of my opera Key Money for ?? (writing illegible) but he says "we like it very much. We intend giving a series of performances, and bringing it to London Jan. 66 in a triple bill! Cheers![175]

An article about Michael Head written by George Baker for Music Teacher

---

[173]Nancy Bush 14 October 1986 to Barbara Streets.

[174]Rachel O'Higgins, interview.

[175]Head Diary, 30 November 1964.

Magazine in April of 1965, says that among Head's larger works was "a short opera, *Key-money*, to be produced in South Africa and brought to London (St. Pancras) in January 1966." No other presently accessible sources refer to a production in South Africa, or to a production in January of 1966. The next diary entry would indicate that the opera had yet to be produced.

On 11 February 1966 Head wrote in his diary, "Sudden(?) letter from 'Intimate Opera'. Yes. At last! *Key Money.*"[176] The next mention is not until 3 June 1966, when Head stated, "Intimate Opera is going to put on Key Money. I am to score it for the occasions. Small chamber orchestra. What a task."[177] Since Head wrote in his diary only sporadically, there is no entry that specifies the first performance he saw of his opera *Key Money*. The Intimate Opera performed it as part of the program of The Music Teacher's Association Composer of the Year Concert honoring Michael Head at the Royal Academy of Music on 14 January 1967. The production was by Stephen Manton and featured singers Patricia Blans and Lawrence Richard. His journal entry does not specifically mention the performance of the opera that night, but does tell why his diary entries had not been regular:

> My big day! "Composer of the Year Concert" given to me by M.T.A. What a long gap in my diary! 5 months in Singapore, Hong Kong and India for the Board—thousands of candidates. I gave many concerts "in good voice." Many glorious days in Hong Kong—how I loved it! ...Today I am worn out but happy. Gosh—I was nervous. The Duke's Hall, I suppose the M.T.A.

---

[176]Head Diary, 11 February 1966.

[177]Head Diary, 3 June 1966.

did me well £40. I paid Janet Craxton and Angela Beale.[178] (These were the oboe and soprano soloists for the concert.)

This diary entry shows to what extent Michael Head continued to be active in his performing recitals and traveling on examining tours for the Associated Board, even at the age of 67 years. (It should further be noted that he continued these same activities until the age of 76 when he contracted an illness and died in South Africa in 1976, while on yet another examining tour.)

In January of 1968, Head's diary refers again to the opera:

> Another delightful performance to cheer me of Key Money "I. Opera" at Wye College. Beautifully sung, and acted, making every point, especially by Francke, the baritone. Nancy & I stayed with the Healleys (Lewis, Theo)."[179]

A review of the three operas performed by Intimate Opera Company that evening of January 28, 1968 was printed in the Worcester Evening News:

> The evening ended on a high note, however, with Michael Head's amusing opera "Key Money." The text, in verse, a very clever piece of work by Nancy Bush, tells of a self-conscious avant-garde composer's efforts to get peace and quiet and of the nauseating practicing of an opera singer, and the effect the two musicians have on one another.
>
> The music is conventional enough—reminding one of Delius with its chromatic harmonies of 7ths, 9ths and 13ths. But there is nothing wrong with convention if, like "Key Money," the music is of fine quality. Moreover, the composer is still able to guy the atonality and clashing seconds of the avant-garde composer, as well as a 19th century Italian aria, without the slightest hint of incongruity.
>
> The work is tuneful and attractive, and none of the points of the story are either missed or laboured. Mr. Francke as the composer, made the most of his part. One really believed that creative artists would act exactly in the way portrayed by him. Patricia Blans, the opera singer, gave a creditable

---

[178]Head Diary 14 January 1967.

[179]Head Diary, 28 January 1968.

performance, in her role, though she could perhaps have been even more temperamental than she was.[180]

What a delight it must have been for brother and sister to watch together this product of their artistic collaboration. It may have been that they enjoyed the creation of this little opera with its musical satire and parody even more than the performance, for both had been intimately associated with the music business and the myriad challenges facing British composers in the twentieth century. Beyond the commission, there is no doubt that Michael Head and Nancy Bush wrote for their own "pleasure" and the rewarding satisfaction of the experience of working together.

Although the opera *Key Money* was never published, Boosey and Hawkes Music Publishers in earlier press materials listed the work along with Michael Head's published works as:

> **Key Money**
> *A light opera in one act for soprano, baritone and chamber orchestra or piano
> (Libretto by Nancy Bush)
> Vocal score and full score available from the composer.
> Duration: 28 minutes[181]

Further performance history shows that the light operas *Key Money* and *Day Return* were performed by Intimate Opera at the Mercury Theatre in April 1970.[182] Michael Head, in a diary entry in April of 1972, says that, "I took Key Money to be photostat. 6 more copies...A chance of Joseph Ward doing it up north with his

---

[180]Worcester Evening News, "Bright Hereford show—despite lights failure!" January 1968, Hereford, Head Collection.

[181]Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Limited (London: Westerham Press, 2.5M8.66) n.d.

[182]Stanley Sadie, ed. *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, S.v. "Head, Michael (Dewar)" by Michael Hurd.

students."[183] This indicates that, besides remaining in the repertoire of Intimate Opera, the opera *Key Money* may have also been performed by university students, as was Head's later opera, *After the Wedding*.

[183]Michael Head Diaries, 25 April 1972.

Chapter III

PERFORMER'S ANALYSIS

Dramatic Values of the Libretto

Joseph Kerman in his book *Opera as Drama* reasserts Richard Wagner's view "that opera is properly a musical form of drama, with its own individual dignity and force,"[1] and that in order to provide a basis for standards, there must be a serious search for dramatic values. "The critical procedure involves a sharpening of musical awareness and an expansion of our range of imaginative response to drama."[2] This information is essential for directors and actor-singers to develop a concept for the production, and maintain a consistency in style that is true to the intentions of the creators of the work.

The first step in determining the dramatic values of a libretto is to decide the type of "play"[3] that the opera represents. The opera *Key Money* can definitely be categorized as a comedy, as it fits the criteria of this type. A comedy is any play in which the main characters are victorious or in which the action ends happily, usually restricted to humorous, amusing or satiric plays.[4] *Key Money* has a happy ending, and is humorous in the way that the circumstances of events show the human foibles of the characters, such as the opera-singer singing off-key, or the composer stating

---

[1]Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama* (New York: Random House, 1956) 3.

[2]Ibid., 7.

[3]Bruce Govich, "Determination of Dramatic Values," guide for Opera Styles and Production, Music Techniques 315, University of Oklahoma, September 1972, in the possession of the author. For the purposes of this study, this guide will be used throughout the analysis chapter.

[4]Bruce Govich, "Glossary of Dramatic Terms," Opera Styles and Production, Music Techniques 315, University of Oklahoma, September 1972, in the possession of the author, 1.

that hearing music causes him pain. This work is intellectually amusing, calling for a detached observation from the audience rather than emotional involvement, which would be associated with a more serious drama. Satire is used for treatment of both characters' careers and is evident in the music of both the "Nine Tone" composer and the ballad-singing opera star. (The musical satire will be examined later in the chapter.)

Some of the scenes of *Key Money* could easily lean toward farce, but conceiving of the opera as farce would go against its type.

> Farce...relies mainly upon complicated plot structure, low humor, coincidence, and rapid action. Characters are neither well delineated, as a rule, nor motivated, and the dramatist generally has no theme, but writes to entertain.[5]

George Martin, in his analysis of Benjamin Britten's *Albert Herring*, refers to the scene in Act II in which the 'Wagnerian' Lady Billows drops her notes and continues her speech in absurd mixed clichés:

> Such scenes raise a problem in the opera's stage and musical direction, the same problem posed by Mozart's *Così fan tutte*: are these people real or caricatures? Should the opera be played as farce or comedy? In farce the characters, either at the end of an act or of the opera, merely take up new positions for the next situation. In comedy, which has a more serious purpose, some character, however comic the events and attitudes, must be changed inwardly by them.[6]

In Nancy Bush's libretto of *Key Money*, our modern composer is changed by his encounter with his opera-singing neighbor. The characters are not exaggerated types and the situations are not ludicrous, as would be the case in farce.

---

[5]Ibid., 3.

[6]George Martin, *The Opera Companion to Twentieth Century Opera* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1979) 494.

The next step in the determination of dramatic values is to state the author's purpose. The primary purpose of *Key Money* is to entertain with a secondary, more serious purpose, to inform. The aspect of entertainment is accomplished by the lighthearted look at the opposite ends of the spectrum of the musical world in the twentieth century—the most modern (12-tone music) with the most traditional (opera.) Nancy Bush uses no derision or ridicule, but playfully pokes fun at the composer Mr. Brown, who is insulted by the supposition that he composes at the piano.

MR. SMITH: (faintly) Play ... on the piano ...
Miss Brown, surely you don't suppose
I use the keyboard to compose?
I hope I have some conscience still;
My works are purely cerebral.
And what is more,
Written straight into the full score.[7]

The vocal exercises of Miss Smith, the opera singer, use such silly consonant and vowel combinations that they begin to sound like strange bird calls.

MISS BROWN: Ah ... Ah ... Ah ...
Mim, mim, mia mia mia mia mia mia mia mia mim
Mim, mim, mia mia mia mia mia mia mia mia mim
Mim mia m m m m m m m m mia
Coo coo coo coo coo kee yah
Coo coo coo coo coo kee yah
Coo coo coo coo coo kee yah[8]

---

[7]Nancy Bush, *Key Money: Light Opera in One Act*, unpublished libretto, Michael Head Collection in the possession of Barbara Streets (to be placed in the archives of The Royal Academy of Music, London.)

[8]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, *Key Money: One Act Light Opera*, unpublished piano-vocal score, Michael Head Collection in the possession of Barbara Streets (to be place in the archives of The Royal Academy of Music, London.) Since the libretto only refers to vocal exercises being heard, it is assumed that the composer may have contributed these syllables.

These are only two examples of humor from the plot. As in other comic operas, the humor "lies in the general situation and in the conduct of the characters."[9] The secondary, "more serious purpose" of *Key Money*, is to inform the audience about the difficulties encountered by a composer of modern music. Mr. Smith's complaints about the price of the flat and the extra money for the key (puns on the musical terms may have been intended) that he cannot afford to lose indicate that he is most likely financially insecure. The lack of recognition on the concert notice of the Nine-Tone Group leaves him at first angry and then depressed. However, one could not go so far as to say the purpose of the opera is to persuade, for it is unlikely that the outcome of the opera *Key Money* would persuade composers to change their methods of composition, nor would it persuade audience members to be more accepting of modern music. The opera's strength certainly lies in its primary purpose of entertainment.

Statement of the theme of the libretto is the third step in determining dramatic values. The theme is the thread that goes through the entire plot, the central thought of the work. It states the significance as to meaning in terms of ideas, or what the librettist has attempted to explain, illustrate or teach, and usually arises out of human conflict.[10] In this case the theme is closely related to the secondary and more serious purpose of the librettist. The struggle of the creative artist is the theme of *Key Money*. This concerns not only the effort to make a living

---

[9]Mary Irene Casmus, "Gian-Carlo Menotti: His Dramatic Techniques: A Study Based on Works Written 1937-1954." Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1962, 71-2.

[10]Bruce Govich, "Glossary of Dramatic Terms," 5.

practicing one's profession, but the struggle to get works performed, and the great effort to overcome the gulf that exists between the modern serious music composer and the public audience.[11] This theme is developed throughout the libretto by means of the dialogue and the plot. The composer, Mr. Smith, in *Key Money* must settle for an over-priced flat that is "rather slummy...down-at-heel"[12] in order to get absolute quiet for his work. He can only get his music performed on the Nine Tone Group concerts, not for a public audience. Even though he is insulted that his quartet is last on the program, he must concede, and refrain from withdrawing his work from the concert, for otherwise it would not be performed at all. He argues with his opera-singing neighbor to try to maintain conditions under which he can work. Ultimately he compromises his ideals of artistic expression in order to produce something more accessible for an audience.

The fourth step of the process is to examine the plot. The plot consists of the ordered arrangement of actions and characters that develops the "story" of the play.[13] It is the formal development of a dramatic situation through to a logical conclusion. One must first determine the conflict that causes the dramatic action—the pitting of two forces against each other. The conflict in *Key Money* is modernism versus tradition. The protagonist is Mr. Smith, the composer of modern Nine-tone music. The antagonist is Miss Brown, the singer who sings traditional nineteenth-century opera. The story is told from the point of view of Mr. Smith,

---

[11]Tom Sutcliffe, *Believing in Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 417.

[12]Nancy Bush, 1.

[13]Bruce Govich, "Glossary of Dramatic Terms," 4.

who is present onstage well before Miss Brown enters, and who never leaves the stage, while Miss Brown enters and exits from her apartment. Dramatic devices used by the librettist to bring out the dramatic action between the two include irony, foreshadowing, repetition and contrast. It is ironic that Mr. Smith congratulates himself on being so smart as to check up on his neighbors before taking the flat, and, of course, later learns that he was not as thorough as he had thought. The appearance of Miss Brown is foreshadowed in Mr. Smith's opening statement about the results of his research on the neighbors of his new flat.

MR. SMITH: On my right a single lady –
No, nothing in the least shady –
She's away, abroad, on tour,
At any rate, not there.[14]

The action of Miss Brown's singing interrupting Mr. Smith's work and his banging on the wall is repeated. Repetition is also used for the ballad aria itself, the last time being sung to Mr. Smith's accompaniment. There is certainly dramatic contrast in the two characters, with the serious, scholarly, pretentious Mr. Smith pitted against the carefree, flouncing, flamboyant Miss Brown.

The exposition of the plot takes place from the time the curtain rises to the time of Miss Brown's arrival at her apartment. This "process by which the dramatist informs the audience of the necessary background material"[15] to understand the conflict, is carried almost entirely by the character of Mr. Smith. The exposition is presented clearly and naturally. He explains how he came to rent the flat and for what purpose. After receiving the letter from Mamble (Chairman of

[14]Nancy Bush, 2.

[15]Bruce Govich, "Glossary of Dramatic Terms," 3.

the Nine-tone Group) he reflects on his plight as a modern composer who lacks an audience for his works.[16] Very little of Miss Brown's dialogue is expository:

MISS BROWN: I've lived here for a year or two –
Much longer, Mr. Smith, than you –
With no complaints of any kind.
I think you should bear that in mind
And act with more discretion.
Remember, music is also my profession.[17]

Further examination of the plot involves identification of the high points of dramatic action, including the rising action, the crux, the climax and the falling action (denouement.) The rising action, or complication, is the increase of dramatic intensity or mood which builds toward the climax of the play.[18] This complication begins in *Key Money* immediately when Mr. Smith first hears his neighbor singing vocal exercises. His anxiety can be detected in his reaction:

MR. SMITH: (listening aghast)
It isn't possible. I can't believe it, no.
I'm dreaming and it simply isn't so.
All my flat-hunting – all – is wasted labour.
I've got an opera singer for a neighbour.[19]

Mr. Smith reacts by knocking firmly on the wall, and, when the singing does not stop, he bangs angrily on the wall. This leads to the first confrontation with Miss Brown. She enters his apartment to check on the reason for his behavior. He explains why he must have quiet to compose, and Miss Brown suggests that he could just play the piano louder in order not to hear her. When Mr. Smith says that

---

[16]Nancy Bush, 2-3.

[17]Ibid., 5.

[18]Bruce Govich, "Glossary of Dramatic Terms," 2.

[19]Nancy Bush, 3.

this is impossible, she states that she has lived here for a much longer time, and unsympathetically suggests that he could leave. There is no resolution from this first encounter. The librettist has revealed the complication of the plot—"the way in which the characters are entangled or involved in difficulties."[20] The rising action is evident as the mood intensifies. Mr. Smith's anxiety increases when Miss Brown goes back to singing, and this time, under pitch.

MR. SMITH: She's singing flat and simply can't detect it,
Let alone correct it.
If she sings right, it will annoy me,
But if she's wrong, it will destroy me.[21]

After banging on the wall violently this time, Miss Brown re-enters, distraught. This brings us to the crux of the plot, that is, "the turning point in the action; the point in which the forces in conflict are evenly balanced..."[22] This time Miss Brown is not just receiving criticism, she is on the offensive, thereby becoming equal in force to Mr. Smith.

MISS BROWN: This is too much. Your conduct is outrageous!
It is, as far as I can see,
A case of mental cruelty.
My whole artistic life is now
Being destroyed
By the disgraceful methods you've employed.
Kindly explain
Why you knocked on the wall again?[23]

---

[20]Bruce Govich, "Glossary of Dramatic Terms," 2.

[21]Nancy Bush, 6.

[22]Bruce Govich, "Glossary of Dramatic Terms," 2.

[23]Nancy Bush, 6.

Mr. Smith points out her pitch problem, which makes the singer all the more furious. This leads to the climax, the most intense point of action in the play, which occurs as Miss Brown expresses her anger and indignation.

MISS BROWN: If I was wrong, the fault is yours;
You are most certainly the cause.
Your brutal knocking brought me to this state.
I can no longer concentrate.[24]

Mr. Smith attempts a resolution to the pitch problem by offering to help her with the score. As he plays piano for her, his accompaniment "gradually becomes more atonal and strange,"[25] and Miss Brown's positive response leads him to an unexpected revelation. He had only intended to make her singing more tolerable to bear, but as a consequence of his actions, he makes a discovery about his own compositional style. This solution to his artistic struggle (the theme of the work) marks the conclusion of the climax of the drama. The librettist uses reversal in the plot, that is, "a form of irony in which the situation is reversed; a man's fortune changes suddenly or sharply."[26] The former antagonist, Miss Brown, becomes the ally of the protagonist, Mr. Smith.

MR. SMITH: But now – an end to my humiliation!
Your voice, Miss Brown, has been my inspiration.
I'll write a melody into my score!
Why did I never think of it before?[27]

The falling action, or denouement, in *Key Money* immediately follows these lines of the dialogue. The denouement is defined as,

---

[24]Ibid., 7

[25]Ibid., 7.

[26]Bruce Govich, "Glossary of Dramatic Terms," 4.

[27]Nancy Bush, 8.

> The unraveling of the complications, the resolution of the conflict or the completion of the action. The skill of the playwright is generally evident at this point. The denouement should come about through the character and action of the plot itself, that is, it should convince the reader of its inevitability.[28]

Mr. Smith's complication is unraveled as he, himself, realizes the solution to his problems as a composer.

> MR. SMITH: The Nine Tone system and a tune as well:
> The old, the new, in heavenly parallel.
> Boulez below, a melody on top --
> Once I begin, I shan't know where to stop.
> The things unheard of, absolutely new,
> And let me own it, due
> Entirely to you.
> Let Mamble rave! Obscurity is past!
> The world will listen to my works at last.[29]

The following duet of the aria music with the new accompaniment concludes the denouement. The examination of the plot demonstrates that Nancy Bush has employed a "logical sequence of events"[30] for *Key Money*.

Motivation, which is also a factor of dramatic action, is the last aspect of plot to be considered. Nancy Bush succeeds in providing the characters in *Key Money* "with adequate and proper cause, reason or justification for their actions."[31] She systematically supplies acceptable reasons for each occurrence on stage. Additionally, she maintains a consistency of character, so that there are no unexpected acts, and every action is a result of what precedes it, and is a cause of a

---

[28]Bruce Govich, "Glossary of Dramatic Terms," 2.

[29]Nancy Bush, 8

[30]Casmus, 2.

[31]Bruce Govich, "Glossary of Dramatic Terms," 3.

following action. The well-motivated plot of *Key Money* gives verisimilitude to the opera. This "plausibility of action or character within the framework of the story... is the quality that makes art and experience compatible."[32]

After considering the plot of the opera, the fifth step in determining dramatic values is to identify the mood of the work and to see how it is accomplished. The mood is the overlying psychological feeling, the dominant emotional spirit that pervades the overall production. The mood results from the conflict and closely relates to the theme. In the case of the opera *Key Money*, the mood is frustration. This is the emotion that the audience perceives the actors to be feeling. Certainly Mr. Smith has been frustrated about previously not having had a quiet place to compose; he is perturbed with the Nine-tone Group about the placement of his quartet on the concert; he is discouraged that he has no other audience for his work; and he is most aggravated that he has an opera singer as a neighbor. Miss Brown is frustrated with her new neighbor interrupting her practice. Although the opera begins and ends with cheerfulness, and the rhymed verse of the dialogue gives a non-serious impression, frustration is still the dominant mood of the work. Although any part of production can contribute to mood—scenery, properties, dramatic action, costuming, lighting, dialogue, sound effects—the most significant is music. This will be discussed extensively when the musical dramaturgy is examined, later in this chapter.

Step six in the process of determining dramatic values is to describe the pace and tempo of the work. Often these terms are used interchangeably. Tempo is the

---

[32]Ibid., 6.

overall movement of a play from idea to idea, usually matched to the purpose of the dramatist and the mood of the action.[33] Pace varies within the play; it happens internally and functions in relation to something else. Pace doesn't relate to speed, but to style of movement. Although in opera the composer has a great deal of control in establishing both tempo and pace, the musical director and conductor must be aware of how these connect with the dramatic values. The purpose of each speech must be evaluated in terms of its importance to the plot, and the pace will thereby be determined by the amount of attention needed by the scene. In *Key Money*, as in most operas, the expository material (which has previously been identified) must not have too fast a pace so that the audience may have an understanding of necessary background information. During the rising action there is most often a quickening of the pace as the tension increases. But with the heightening tension, appropriate time must be given to the climax itself to reveal to the audience the resolution of the plot. Of course, this topic is most pertinent to the music and will be discussed in detail.

The last step in the determination of dramatic values is to analyze the characters, and to establish their unique contribution to the plot, mood and theme of the play. Mr. Smith is clearly delineated as the lead character, the one who carries the play forward and establishes the theme (struggle of the creative artist) and mood (frustration) of *Key Money*. His purpose is at first expository. Subsequently he carries the dramatic action throughout the rest of the work. It could further be speculated that the entire function of the play is to illustrate this particular character,

---

[33]Ibid., 5.

and what he represents. This is sometimes the case for plays whose purpose it is to inform. In this play Nancy Bush has provided ample character development. Mr. Smith undergoes change because of his experiences, which as stated earlier, is the reason *Key Money* is a comedy and not a farce. As also stated previously, Mr. Smith is the protagonist. Miss Brown would be classified as a main character. Although she has fewer lines and time on stage, she is essential to the execution of the plot, first as an adversary to Mr. Smith and later as more of a parallel character, who helps him find a solution to his problems. These two characters are not exaggerated as would be the case in melodrama, nor are they put in fantastic or ludicrous situations as would be the case in farce. They are quite realistic and are drawn within the bounds of possibility and probability. Their comedic value comes from their very human reactions to the situations of the plot. The characters of *Key Money* are believable; therefore, playing them as caricatures or stereotypes should be avoided.

Musical Dramaturgy

Before examining the musical dramaturgy of the opera, it is necessary to establish the form, or structure of the opera *Key Money*. Quaintance Eaton in his handbook for opera production lists structure as part of the essential information for producers.[34] He divides opera

[34]Quaintance Eaton, *Opera Production: A Handbook* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1961) 5.

> into two broad categories: (1) those with mainly set numbers (often specified as arias, duets, ensembles, etc.); these may be separated by recitatives, either patter (*secco*) or accompanied, or they may be closely knit into the orchestral texture; (2) those which are 'composed-through,' expressed here as 'continuous texture,' where the orchestral web is unbroken and often of texture.[35]

He noted that this classification was one of the most difficult tasks, considering the individuality of each opera. Charles Hamm in his book on opera, also addresses questions of structure and the integration of smaller units into a large form. He refers to the two different polarities as (1) opera (or number opera) and (2) music drama, and cites their differences in more detail. In the number opera, each scene is a separate unit that begins and ends in the same key, has a satisfactory form and is marked off by strong cadences. Each number could be extracted for a concert without changes, and has its own thematic material which is not usually carried over. Hamm describes the structure of the music drama as being more similar to the conventions and traditions of spoken drama. Characters converse with no differentiation between expository and reflective passages; usually a character has only a few lines before another speaks. Musically there are not extended sections for singers and not sections in which two or more characters sing simultaneously. In music drama the music unfolds freely with different types of text settings alternating rapidly, giving the music and drama a forward thrust. Melodic and rhythmic motives are associative in nature and may be used in the vocal line or accompaniment. The fluid, changeable smaller sections cannot logically be excerpted. Segregation is the principle of the number opera and integration rules the

---

[35]Ibid.

music drama.[36] Hamm emphasizes that "even though 'number opera' and 'music drama' have been presented here as two almost contradictory approaches to the problem of constructing a large musical-dramatic work, most operas, particularly of the past several centuries, represent some sort of compromise between the two."[37]

In Michael Head's opera *Key Money*, the musical structure is most certainly a compromise between the two categories of number opera and music drama. It is misleading to classify this opera as one type: he has drawn on both techniques of structure. The use of recurring, associative motives which occur in both the voice and accompaniment makes it more like a music drama. There is a fluidity of the varying types of text setting, with recitative blending into arioso and back out again. There is also much tonal ambiguity and modulation in some scenes, and most of the solos only make sense in the context of the opera. However, there are other features in common with the number opera. There are extended solo sections, areas of which are reflective, and several instances of the two characters singing at the same time. Some of the sections begin and end in the same key and with a definitive concluding cadence, especially when the composer has the opera singer singing her "aria," which is supposed to sound traditional. Overall the opera depends more on integration than segregation.

In his analysis of Benjamin Britten's only comic opera, *Albert Herring*, Erwin Stein discusses how Britten integrated transitions and recitatives, though the

---

[36]Charles Hamm, *Opera* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1966; reprint, New York: DaCapo Press, 1980) 197-208.

[37]Ibid., 210.

structure of the comic opera remained light and loose, with "fewer opportunities for slow movements and lyrical expansion than in musical drama."[38] The loose form could follow the vivid action easily and was readily adaptable to the dialogue. "The pace of the *parlando* may quicken or slow down, it may turn gradually or suddenly into song; the accompaniment may consist of supporting chords only, may gain more definite shape, or may cease altogether."[39] Patricia Howard also points out that Britten expressed drama through form by using arias in function rather than in form, and that usually he did not separate them from continuous action.[40] Although it is not meant to imply that Michael Head imitated Britten's approach, there is a similarity in the way integration of the forms of recitative and set pieces was achieved. Head did not formally set off numbers in *Key Money* as Britten did in *Albert Herring*, but both composers have instances where recitative and aria penetrate each other or are combined: "...the distinctive features of aria and recitative have partly been assimilated or reversed for the sake of dramatic expression; where necessary there may be reciting in an aria, or singing in a recitative."[41] This kind of integration is used extensively in the opera *Key Money*. Michael Head's integrated structure comes closest to the approach of dramaturgy in

---

[38]Erwin Stein, "Albert Herring," in *The Britten Companion*, ed. Christopher Palmer (London: Faber and Faber, 1984) 127.

[39]Ibid., 128

[40]Patricia Howard, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969) 227.

[41]Erwin Stein, 129.

which the music and drama are equally valued, as opposed to music serving the text, music over the drama, or music as equal but separate from the drama.[42]

Having discussed the musical structure of the opera, this study will proceed with a chronological examination of the score, "in the sense that the analysis of words and music follows the pattern of dramatic events from first to last,"[43] as presented in the procedures section.

The opera *Key Money* begins with a short overture, which Head labels "Introduction." He uses repeated chords played by both hands in the treble clef to create a fanfare effect. With a 4/4 time signature, the tempo marking is *Allegro vivace* and the music starts at *piano* with a crescendo up to accented chords at *forte* in the fourth and fifths measures. With an eighth rest on the downbeat of each measure followed by sixteenths and syncopated eighth and quarter notes, there is a rhythmic energy and drive causing the music to surge forward, announcing the importance of something which is to come. There is great anticipation harmonically as well: a B major chord with the added note E sets up an implied dominant "pedal" for five measures. (The key signature is E major.) Obviously Michael Head wanted the overture to sound as traditional as possible, for it could have been fashioned right out of the 1909 book on composition by his composition teacher at the Royal Academy of Music, Frederick Corder: "It has long been a tradition to make the principal subject of an Overture a wildly agitated one, sometimes without any

---

[42]Ulrich Weisstein, ed., *The Essence of Opera* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1964) 5.

[43]Richard Elfyn Jones, *The Early Operas of Michael Tippett: A Study of The Midsummer Marriage, King Priam and The Knot Garden* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1996) viii.

reason."[44] The following techniques used by Michael Head in the Overture correspond to Corder's techniques for achieving agitation: quick movement (easily achieved by using sixteenth notes); using a restless and indeterminate tonality; and use of syncopations and rugged accents to aid the effect.[45] Concerning the use of the dominant pedal, Corder made these suggestions:

> Suspense and expectation are generally indicated by either of two very different methods; a well worked up *crescendo* on a dominant pedal, or a pause of silence. ...but it should be pointed out that nothing is more easy to employ than a Pedal and that its mental effect (when on the dominant) being expectation of what it is to lead to, the composer should be very careful lest his mountain in labour only produce a mouse.[46]

It is logical that Head would choose such conventionality as a means of contrast for the "modern" sounds that are to follow. Relating this to the dramatic values, the composer, by setting up such a contrast in the very first seconds of the opera, draws the attention of the audience to the theme of *Key Money*, that is—modernism versus tradition.

After the fanfare, a glissando diminuendos to a *mezzo-piano* up to the pitch E above high C in the right hand, while the left-hand part reaches down to F# in octaves below the bass clef. (See Example 1.)

---

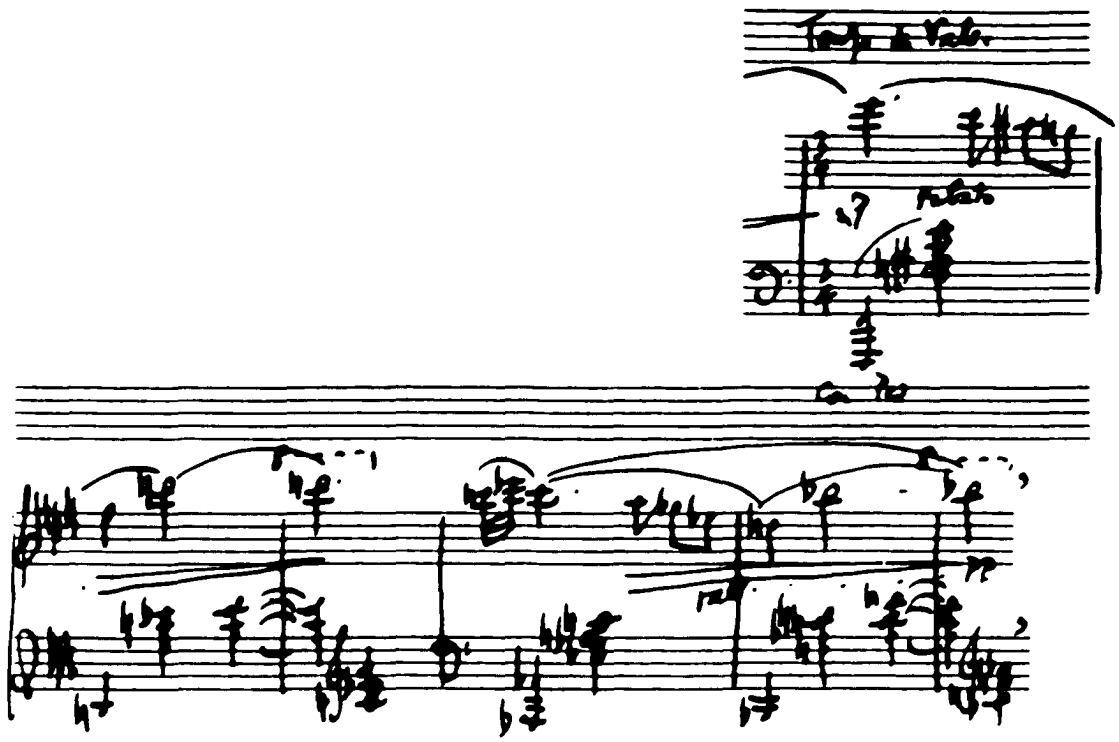
[44]Frederick Corder, *Modern Musical Composition: A Manual for Students* (London: J. Curwen and Sons Ltd., 1909) 69.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Ibid., 72.

Example 1. (measures 6-11) Motive I "Play on the Piano?"

(begins with four sharps)

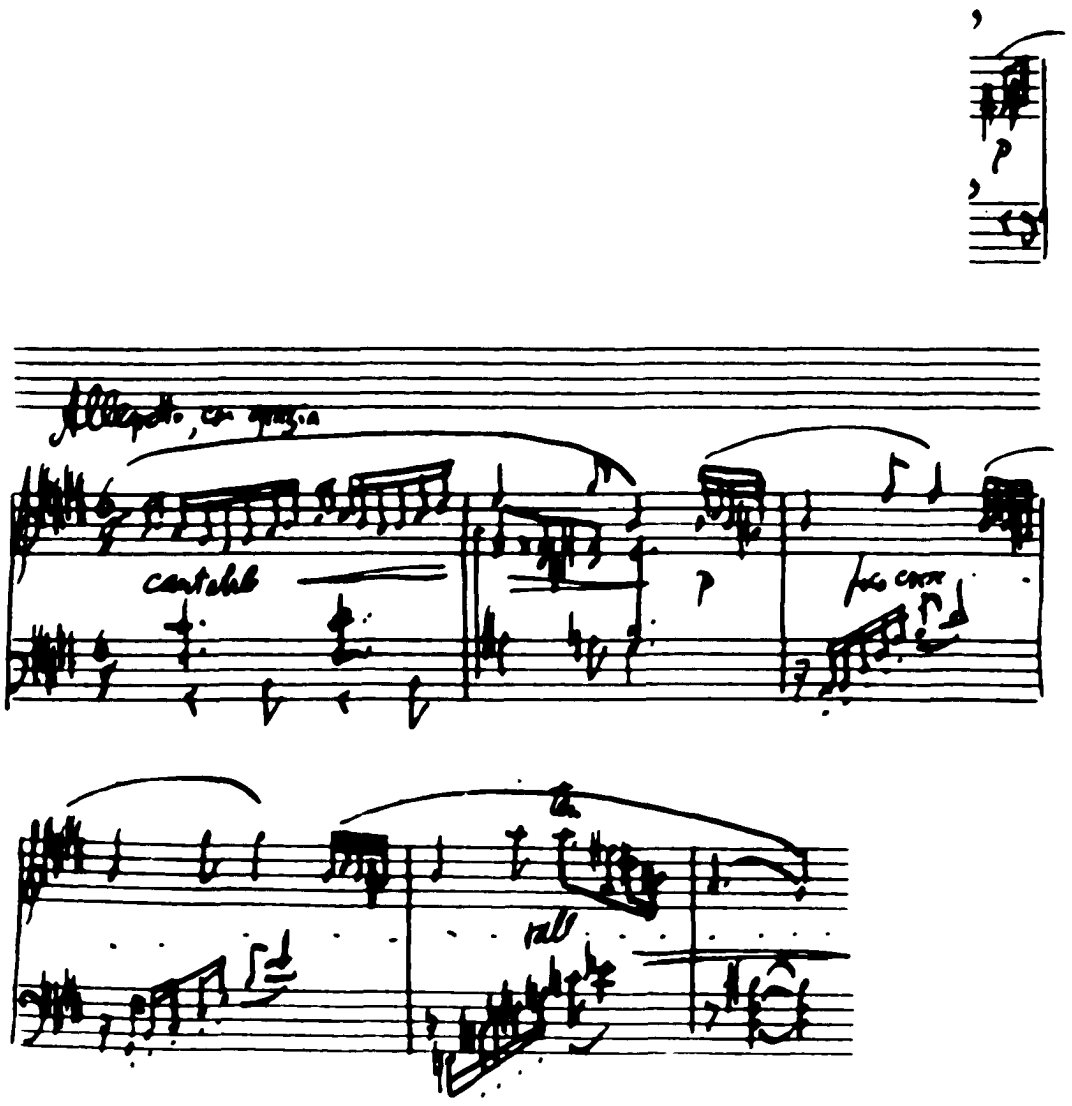


The highly anticipated E major harmony does not appear, but instead, an F# ninth chord, followed by a D ninth, then an A flat eleventh, followed by a B flat eleventh. This certainly fulfills the indeterminate harmony suggestion of Corder for a sense of agitation, but, more importantly in terms of the drama, these harmonic choices foreshadow the sounds of a modern musical composition. However, the time signature for these same measures is 3/4, with a marking of *Tempo di Valse*, to be played with *rubato*, which gives the six measures a neo-classical effect. Measures 6 through 11 comprise Motive I. In this study Motive I will be called the "Play on the

Piano?" motive. Its word association will be discussed when it occurs later in the opera with text.

The following, sharply contrasting motive (measures 12 through 17) in 6/8 meter is marked *Allegretto, con grazia* and *cantabile*, and sing it should, because it is the theme of the soprano aria. It will be referred to in this study as Motive II, the "Banal Ballad" motive. (See Example 2.)

Example 2. (measures 12-17) Motive II "Banal Ballad"



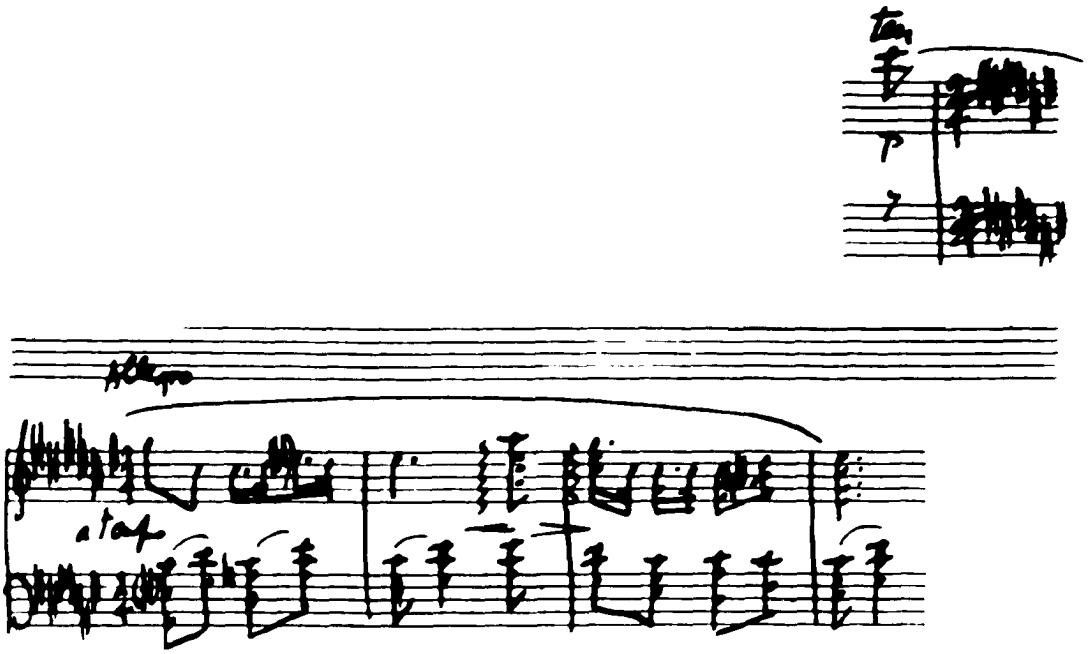
The common-sounding little melody stays in the singing range of the soprano voice, and the *rallentando* leading up to the *tenuto* on the pitch A5[47] is typical of how a musical phrase such as this might be sung, especially by a soprano who is fond of her high notes. This little tune is very obviously in E major throughout its six measures but the harmony keeps starting in the key and then going astray, chromatically in measure 13. A C#7 harmony in measure 15 is followed by the cadence with the bitonal chords of F7 in the bass under an outlined B7 in the soprano line, going to a fully-diminished seventh on D# in measure 17. The lack of resolution along with the *diminuendo* leaves the listener with an unsettled feeling. Dramatically and musically, however, the customary melody juxtaposed over the random, modern-sounding harmonies foreshadows the end of the opera, when Mr. Smith decides to incorporate a melody into his atonal score.

The next motive (measures 18 through 21) is in 2/4 and is marked *Allegro*. See Example 3.)

[47] The method of pitch citation used for this study is that of the American Acoustic Society, which refers to the lowest C on the piano keyboard as C1. Notes in subsequent octaves are named with the Capital letter and Arabic numeral. In this system middle C is shown as C4. As defined in Demar Irvine, *Irvine's Writing about Music*, 3d ed., rev. and enlarged by Mark A. Radice (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1999) 202.

Example 3. (measures 18-21) Motive III "Optimistic Opera-singer"

(anacrusis is a C#)

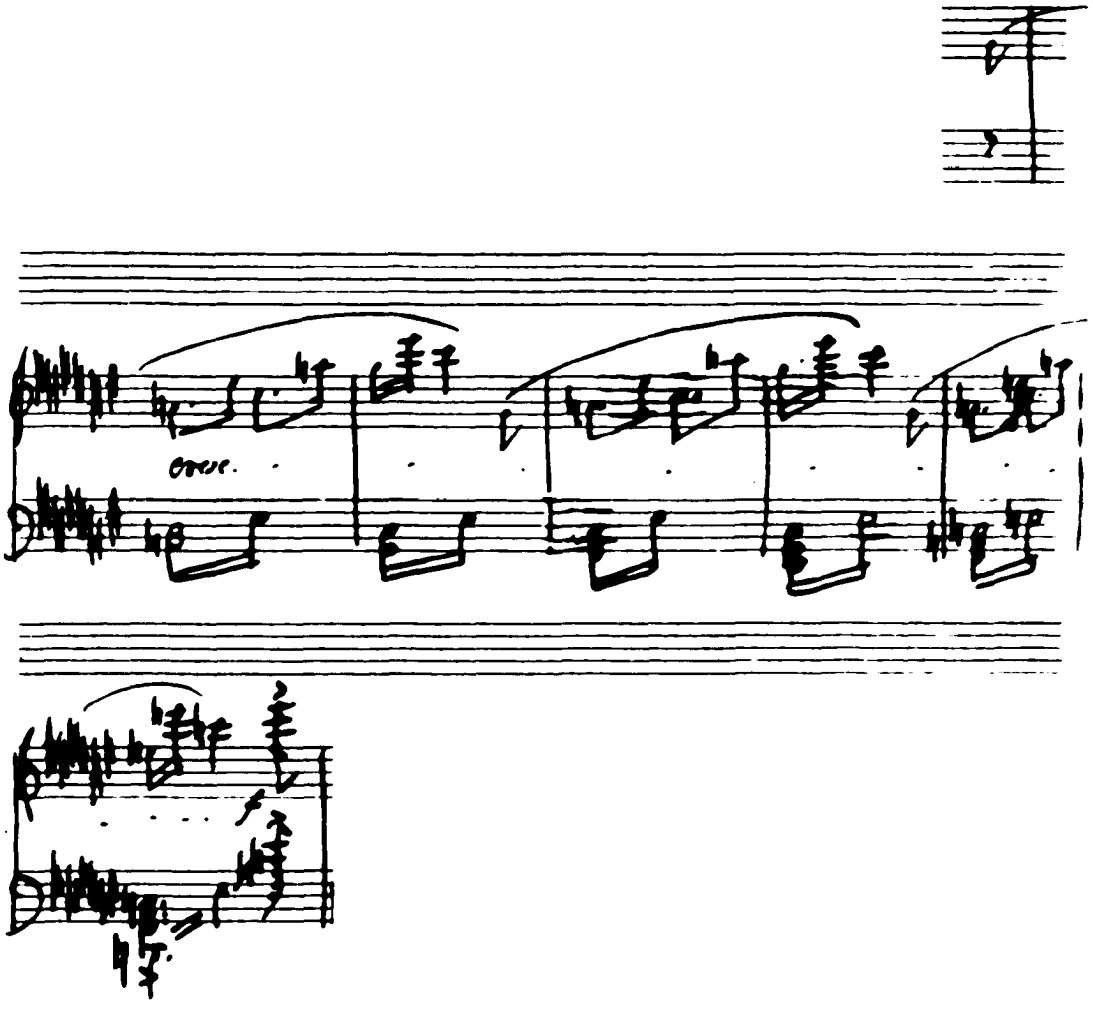


This bouncy, simple theme with its dotted sixteenths and thirty-seconds is clearly in the key of C# major and stays there, with no unexpected harmonic shifts. This very traditional, cheerful and uncomplicated little theme is that of the traditional, cheerful and uncomplicated Miss Brown. This is Michael Head's way of drawing the character musically. It will be referred to as Motive III, the "Optimistic Opera-singer" motive.

Immediately following Motive III, is the six-measure Motive IV (measures 22 through 27) in the same meter and key signature. This study will refer to this theme as the "Augmented Argument" motive. (See Example 4.)

Example 4. (measures 22-27) Motive IV "Augmented Argument"

(anacrusis is a G#)



It seems to barge in on Miss Brown's cheery C# major Motive III with threatening rolled chords in the bass on an augmented A major chord, followed by C# minor, then an F# minor with an added pitch E#, followed by a C# minor chord, an F# minor seventh, a D augmented ninth and coming to an abrupt halt on a D ninth chord. There is a crescendo marked throughout the six measures, ending on an accented nine-tone chord (the D9 chord) on the last beat of the theme (beat 6 of the

6/8 bar.) The use of the nine-pitch chord on a ninth chord at the end of the argument likely corresponds to the composer's adherence to the Nine-tone "method." The melody in the right hand surges up in disjunct intervals, with the augmented fifth beginning each figure in measures 22 and 24. How the leap of the wide intervals represent violent protest will be discussed when the motive appears with text at measure 302. This motive, which has just interrupted Miss Brown's motive, foreshadows the interruption by Mr. Smith of Miss Brown practicing her singing and the argument that ensues between them.

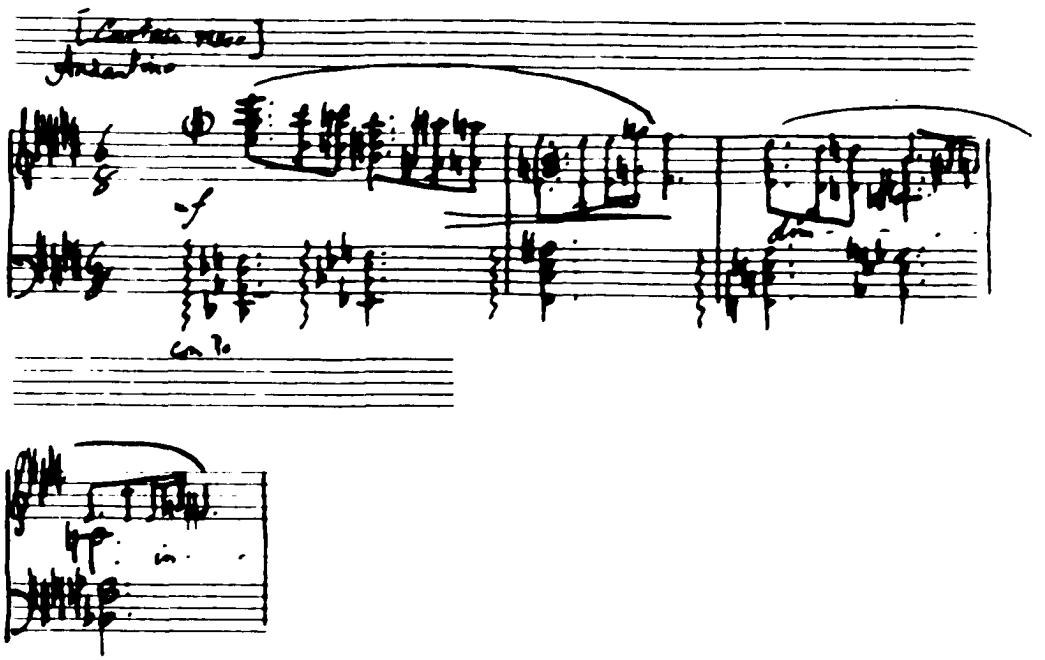
After this disturbance, Miss Brown's contented little motive (measures 28 through 33 is transposed) is transposed up a third to the key of E major, with a much more assertive statement: *marcato*, and with accents on beats one and two at the higher pitch level. Instead of a single line melody, the right hand plays three and four-note chords with each pitch of the melody and the bass with a similar texture to the previous statement. Only one discord appears in the theme, a nine-pitch accented chord on the last beat of measure 29 in the same pitch range and position in the measure as at the end of the argument theme. This more assertive statement of the theme foreshadows the undaunted attitude of Miss Brown, who is not intimidated by the confrontation with her composer neighbor.

The last three measures (31, 32 and 33) are an extension of the last two chords of Motive III, with a rhythm of a quarter-note followed by a dotted half-note in the right hand of each of these three measures. A dominant pedal in octaves on pitches B2 and B3 is played with the same syncopated rhythms that began the overture (eighth rest, two sixteenths, eighth, quarter, quarter, eighth.) In addition to

these musical devices which are extremely anticipatory, the chords in the right hand are accented strongly on the down-beat, with a secondary accent on beat two, and there is a crescendo to *fortissimo* (the highest dynamic level to this point) and a *rallentando* on the last measure, 33. All of these musical techniques create a strong sense of expectation of something about to happen: it is the raising of the curtain.

According to Nancy Bush's libretto (but not the score), the audience sees Henry Smith who "is alone for the first time in his new flat. A table is spread with musical manuscript paper."[48] The musical score maintains the key signature of E major, and there is a tonal center on E in the right hand octaves, alternating E major with E minor in a highly chromatic line. (See Example 5.)

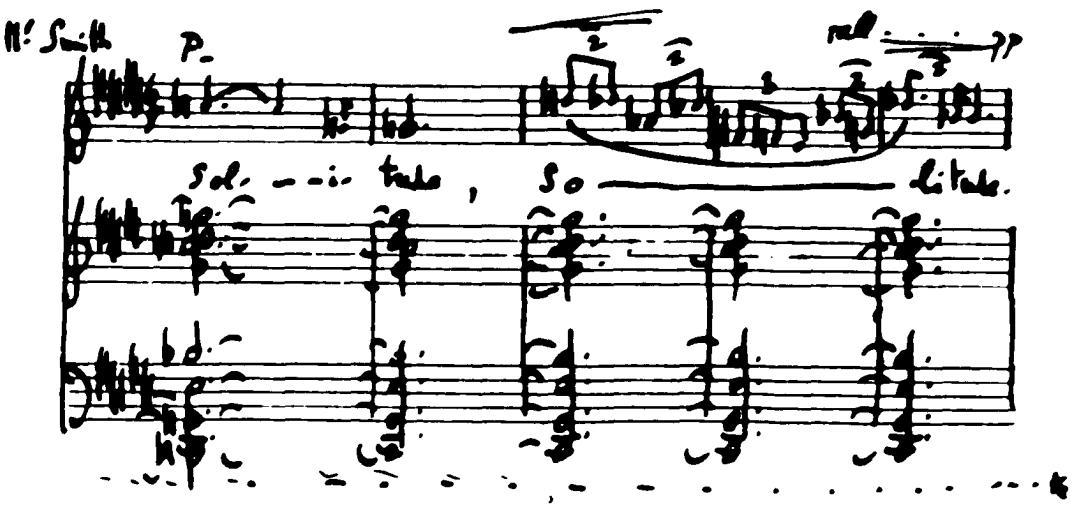
Example 5. (measures 34-37) Motive V "Misunderstood Modernist"



[48]Nancy Bush, *Key Money: Light Opera in One Act*, 1.

Extremely harsh dissonances—including many tritones and minor seconds—are created by the juxtaposition of unrelated bitonal chords against each other: D flat major under E major, E flat major under B major, F# eleventh under E minor, F major under A major, A flat ninth under a C diminished with and added B, finishing on a B flat seventh under a C major with and added F#. These four measures (34 through 37) represent the atonal composer. This is Motive V, and will be called the "Misunderstood Modernist" motive. The chromatic top line consists of nine pitches, beginning on pitch E6, obviously representative of the "Nine-tone" composer. The same nine pitches are then repeated an octave lower. The range begins with both hands spread, (bass on pitch D2) and then compresses in contrary motion as the dynamic level gets softer. The top line of the last three pitches of the theme are extended two more measures as unaccompanied lines in the low range of pitches E3, G3, F3 as the music continues to diminuendo. A quiet arpeggio comprised of a C ninth chord ascends from C2 up to C6 and is sustained by the pedal to lead to Mr. Smith's first line at the *piano* level. The thinning out of the texture to a single pitch being sounded at one time and the five-bar diminuendo gives the effect of a kind of hushed expectancy. The C9 chord is sustained for five measures, underlying Mr. Smith's two statements of the word, "Solitude." These measures (41 through 45) make up Motive VI, which will be called the "Soft, Solitude" motive. (See Example 6.)

Example 6. (measures 41-45) Motive VI "Soft Solitude"



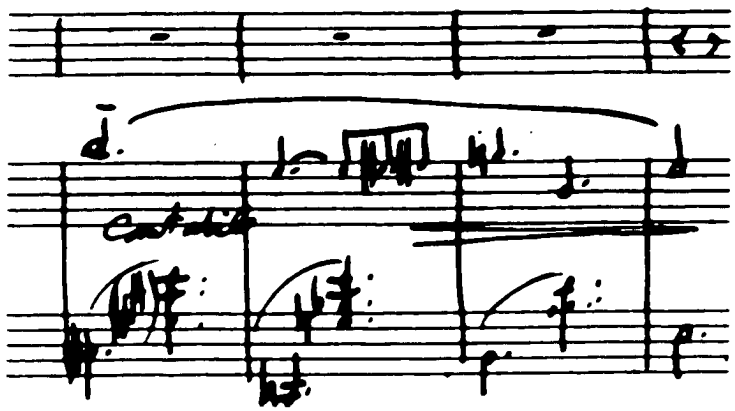
The first statement of the word is syllabic, but the second has a ten-pitch melisma on the first syllable. The vocal line sounds like it could be the presentation of a tone-row, but two of the pitches are repeated. Head's objective is to give the impression of serialism without strictly adhering to its method. He gives emphasis to the word "solitude" by repeating it. (It is only stated once in the libretto.) The long melisma also gives emphasis to the word and gives the sense that Mr. Smith, by lingering on the word, is reveling in its meaning. This is reinforced by the fading of the keyboard's sustained C9 chord under the theme and the *rallentando* in the vocal line which decrescendos to a *pianissimo*. The accompaniment has rests under the recitative pitches which are based on a C major chord, with the rolled C7 chord under the words "found it." After the serial-sounding melodic phrase preceding this, the C major tonality gives a sense of contentment and happiness.

The next section, beginning in measure 49, is marked *Allegro* and rhythmic, and comes close to what could be considered an aria. It is reflective in nature, but goes back and forth from sounding like arioso to recitative. The "aria" is in 6/8 meter and has the key signature of E major. The tonal center is on the pitch E, but both major and minor tonalities are used. All kinds of seventh and ninth chords, augmented chords and borrowed chords are used; rarely is a triad heard except as the final chord of a cadence. The accompaniment chords at the beginning of the "aria" are carefully placed at points when the singer is sustaining a pitch, so as not to interfere with intelligibility of the words. The setting of the words is almost entirely syllabic (except for the melismas on the word solitude) and the rhythms correspond closely to speech. These techniques aid in the clear and natural-sounding presentation of the exposition, which, as stated earlier, informs the audience of necessary background information.

There is a new motive presented in the interlude which is the second phrase of the "aria" (measures 53 through 56). This motive, Motive VII is not as clear in what it represents as the preceding ones. Six separate times it is associated with the flat about which the composer is so excited. Near the end of the opera, however, it is used when the composer's work is referred to. For this study, Motive VII will be called the "Flat/Craft Motive," referring to the flat where the composer practices his craft. Melodically, this little motive is first stated in E minor, with an unorthodox harmonic underpinning until the final two chords which cadence traditionally on B7 to E minor. (See Example 7.)

Example 7. (measures53-56) Motive VII "Flat/Craft"

(four sharps)



Michael Head uses tone painting after the words "chatter" and "clatter" (measures 57 and 58) by using a strongly accented *forte* bitonal chord (E major and C major.) The close voicing and the dissonance of the G# and G natural sound like a tone cluster—noise.

The "Flat/Craft" motive appears in an altered form in the next interlude (measure 61) transposed up a fourth. This time the vocal part overlaps the motive as the words, "From the city all around it"[49] are repeated. The cadence is extended another measure and a half. This overlap and extension takes the listener away from the predictable four-measure phrases.

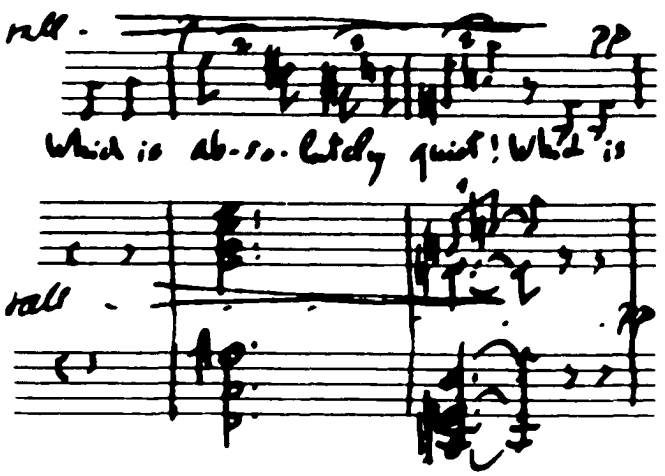
Measure 66 begins an area of the aria which sounds more recitative-like, since the vocal line consists mostly of pitches which outline chords, although not always the chord underneath. Still the accompaniment is carefully kept from

[49]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 4.

interfering with the intelligibility of the text, as many chords are sustained under the moving vocal line. Often open octaves are used, with the complex chords occurring on rests or in the interludes. Again, Head facilitates the clarity of the expository text with the accompaniment. Further word-painting is evident in measures 66 through 70, as the augmented C chord (and augmented 5th in the voice part) is used when speaking of the flat as "rather slummy" and "down-at-heel," giving the sense that the flat is not altogether ideal.

Michael Head emphasizes the importance of silence to Mr. Smith's work by stating the words that refer to the flat, "Which is absolutely quiet"[50] three times. (The libretto says it only once.) Again this repetition of text, along with the *rallentando* marking, highlights this important expository material for the audience to understand the conflict which will occur later. An abbreviated Motive VI, the "Soft, Solitude" motive, is used for the second statement, since the quietness is associated with solitude. (See Example 8.)

Example 8. (measures 75-76) Motive VI "Soft Solitude" (abbreviated)



[50] Ibid..

As might be expected, there is a diminuendo on the second statement down to a pianissimo final statement under sustained chords V7 to I (key of E major).

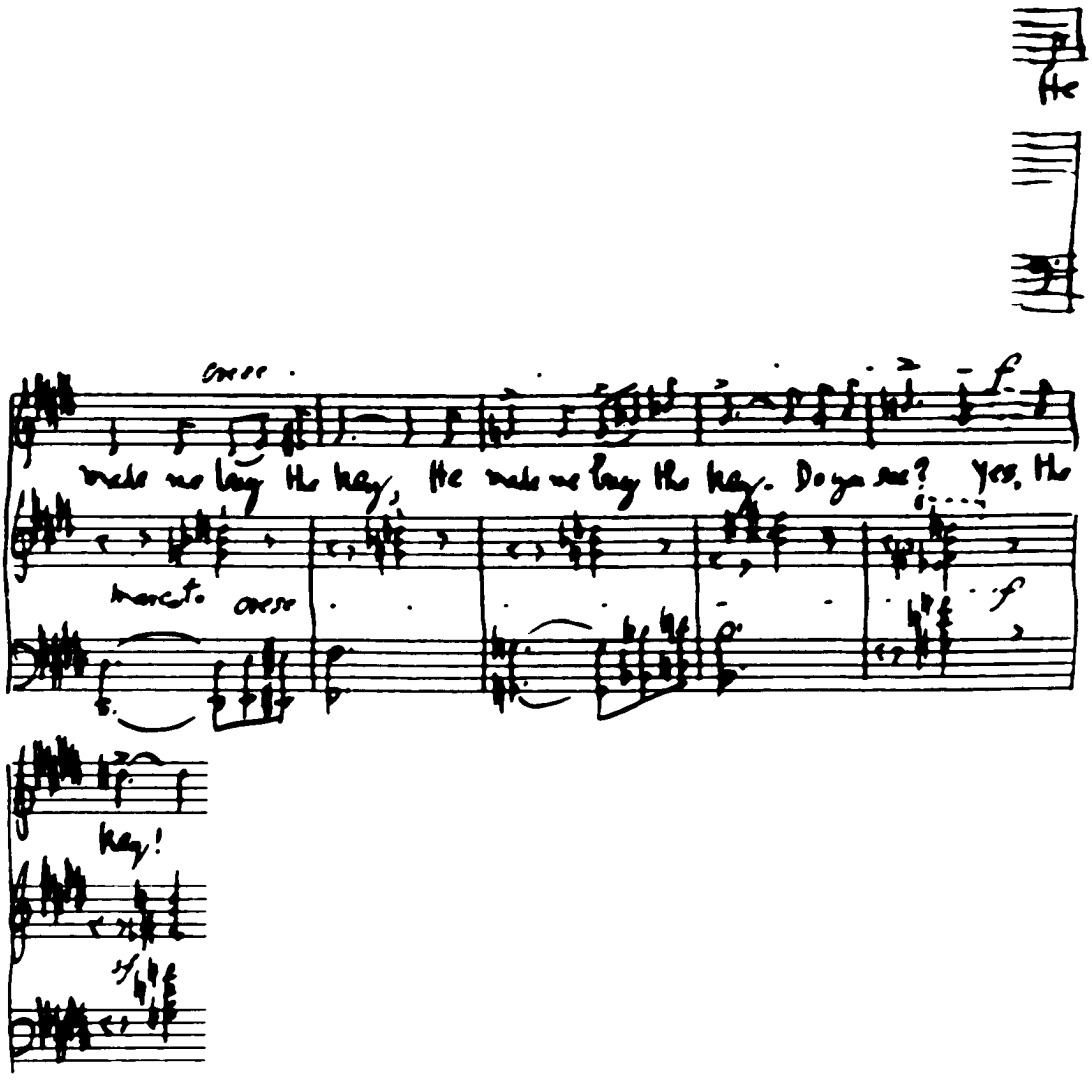
The next four-measure interlude, measures 79 through 82, is *a tempo* and is the transposed version (to E major) of Motive VII, the "Flat/Craft" motive. The harmonies sound even more atonal with four minor ninth intervals, which again emphasize the composer's choice of musical style. The recitative continues in measure 83 with the same music as measures 66 through 70, only this time a half step higher than when he described the flat. The raised pitch gives a heightened intensity to what Mr. Smith is saying. Accented augmented chords are played immediately after the words "cheap," "vandal" and "scandal," with a crescendo leading up to each of these words. The vocal line uses a major 7^{th} interval in the vocal line leading to the accented, *sforzando* first syllable of the word "scandal," with a *sforzando* bitonal chord (augmented G and G major) crashing on the beat of this first syllable. These devices show Mr. Smith's outrage at what he had to pay for the flat and his ill feelings toward the landlord.

Michael Head emphasizes the line "He made me buy the key"[51] by repeating it in order to call attention to the reason for the title of the opera, *Key Money*. (Again, it is only said once in the libretto.) He also doubles the singer's line with bass octaves marked *marcato* and crescendo. (See Example 9.)

[51] Ibid., 5-6.

Example 9. (measures 89-94)

(anacrusis is a D#)



The music ascends chromatically on the first statement and on the second ascends, outlining a G minor triad. Clashing dissonant chords follow the words "key," "see" and the last statement of "key." This last chord is marked *sforzando.* Again, these

devices call attention to and portray Mr. Smith's feelings of anger about his situation.

The following line, "But there you are, I had to take it,"[52] is all of a sudden at a *mezzo-piano* dynamic level and outlines a B major chord; the harmonies are also simpler and not at odds with the melody. On the words, "What a choice! I had to make it,"[53] the vocal line descends to the tonic B, with a steady V9 to I cadence. Thus the music calms down greatly after all the previous agitation, in order to show the character's resignation about his predicament.

Motive VII, the "Flat/Craft" Motive, overlaps the cadence in measure 101, beginning on the pitch B6. The motive is in its transposed and embellished form to connect to the next section of recitative, which has a tonal center of B.

MR. SMITH: Now, what about the neighbours?
Aha, I'm not so green
As others might have been.
Naturally I made enquiries.[54]

The lines, (measures 105 through 114) introduce the next section of the exposition in which Mr. Smith discusses the result of his investigation about each of his neighbors. To give optimum intelligibility to the text, Head sets a dry recitative style with three-tone open octaves on B2, B3 and B4 which are each sustained for two measures. He maintains a pedal on the B4 as the open octaves move chromatically up the scale. Head highlights the dramatic irony of Mr. Smith's claim

---

[52]Ibid., 6.

[53]Ibid.

[54]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, *Key Money: One-Act Light Opera*, 6-7.

that he is not naïve, by the use of a *forte* marking on that vocal line. He ends the statement with an upward leap of a M7 in the vocal line over an unresolved C major seventh chord. This musical ending is opposed to the conclusive attitude shown by Mr. Smith, and therefore foreshadows the irony that will be realized later in the plot.

Concerning tonal relationships in this section, Michael Head uses mediant relationships almost entirely. The introduction (measures 105 through 114) has B major as a tonal center. The music of the neighbor Mr. White (measures 115 through 130) begins with G major, modulates to E-flat major and ends back at G major. The people "overhead" (measures 131 and 132) music is clearly an outline of the B major triad in the vocal line, with a cadence of a G fully diminished chord with an added F# resolving to a B major six-four chord. Thus, for reference to the people overhead, the key goes up from G to B. Measures 133 through 139 about the man and wife down below are in the key of D major, (appropriately below the key of G of the first neighbor) while measures 140 through 145 about the lady on the right, have a tonality of B flat major. In summary, the keys in this section are as follows:

Text	Key
Introduction about neighbors	B
On the left, Mr. White	G, E flat G (both to the left of B)
Overhead	B (above the G)
Down below	D (bass drops to low D)
On the right	B flat (to right of the low D)

Interestingly, the last part in this section, which is in B flat, is about the opera singer, Miss Brown, who sings under pitch. Not only is there an evident pun, but the key of B flat means the music didn't get all the way back up to where it

started the section in B major. This is followed by a reprise of the earlier material of the composer, Mr. Smith, in E major, creating the key relationship of a tritone—the most opposing of forces. In this way Michael Head articulates the ensuing conflict between the protagonist and antagonist, another example of musical dramatic foreshadowing.

More examples of tone-painting can be found in the "neighbors" section of the aria, measures 105 through 145. When referring to the income-tax collector, the accompaniment is very pedantic, as a low pitch in the bass on the downbeat (6/8 meter) is followed by a chord in the right hand on beat 4 for four measures. Head uses a Neapolitan sixth for the line "then at night" (measure 124) with the entire accompaniment in the treble clef and above the staff at a *piano* dynamic level, giving a dreamy effect. On the words "Home he comes, tired out,"[55] the pedantic rhythm returns in 4/4 with a low bass note on the beat, a chord on beat two followed by another low note in the bass, giving a sense of weariness. Also for this purpose, he uses repeated diminished fifths in the vocal line for these two measures, 125 and 126. The accompaniment changes for "Goes to bed and goes to sleep,"[56] as it doubles the vocal line in the male singer's range on a *piano* descending line. "Goes to sleep" has a very simple tonal cadence or E flat seven to A flat major, sounding very pleasant and peaceful. In measure 134 on the words, "most unusual life," Head doubles the voice part an octave lower at the *piano* level on a descending chromatic scale which includes an augmented second, giving a sense of the mysterious. In

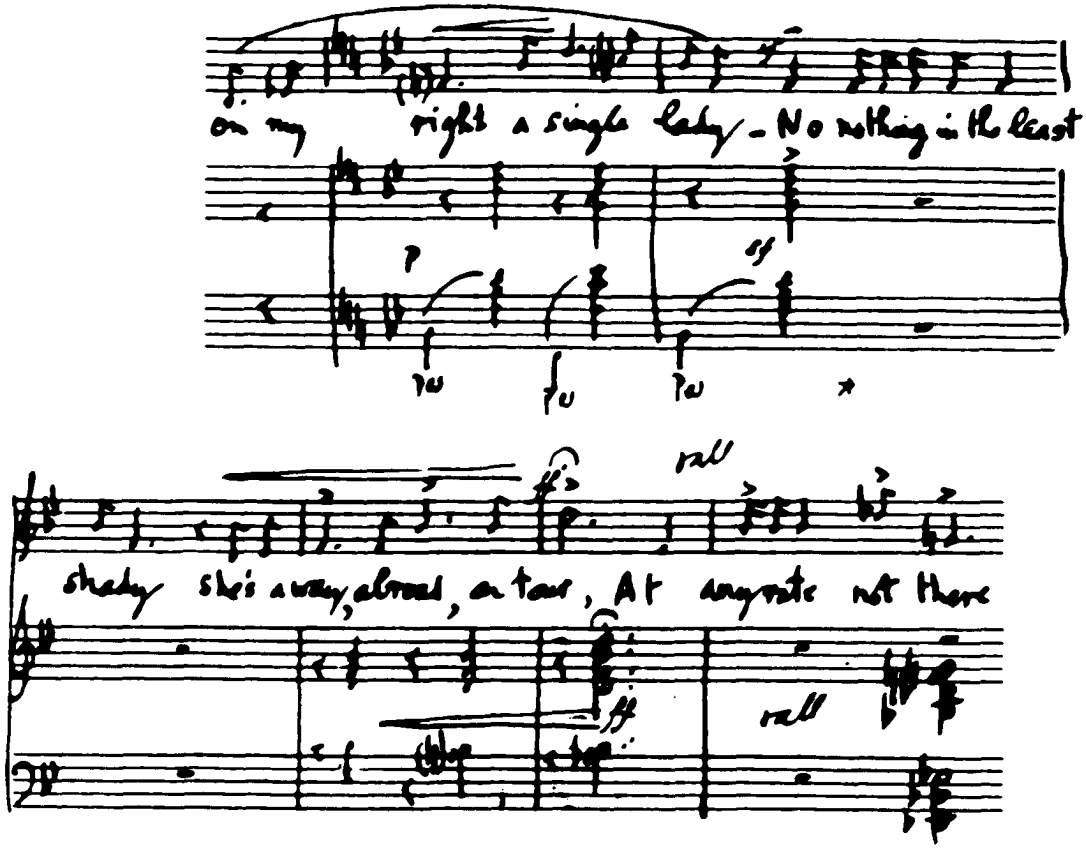
[55]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 7.

[56]Ibid.

measure 136 he uses a tritone, a lone E flat in the accompaniment against the pitch A in the vocal part on the word "strange."

Of all the neighbors, Head gives the most emphasis to the discussion of the neighbor who is away, which we later learn is the opera singer. (See Example 10.)

Example 10. (measures 140-145)



He sets up the statement, "She's away, abroad, on tour,"[57] first of all by silence in the accompaniment for six beats. The vocal line crescendos as it outlines an

[57]Ibid., 9.

ascending B flat major chord with accents on the strong syllables (beats one and three) and the accompaniment playing its chords on beats two and four. This treatment corresponds closely to Frederick Corder's techniques for achieving exhilaration: "Exhilaration, like Joy, demands imperatively the major key, plenty of noise, an animated, well-marked tempo and melody that leaps from one note of the chord to another."[58] This fanfare effect culminates in a *fortissimo* dotted half-note with a *fermata*, the longest sustained pitch in the opera to this point. This pitch D4 for the tenor or baritone is an easy pitch in the range to sing strongly and loudly, as well. This long, loud note is followed by the *rallentando* on "At any rate not there."[59] In the vocal line there is a descending diminished fifth, a tritone, on the words "not there," which, of course, is the interval with the most tension. The unresolved E flat ninth chord on the third beat of the measure provides a musically insecure ending to Mr. Smith's assured lines, pointing out to the audience that all is not as well as he thinks.

In measures 147 and 148, Head changes to 12/8 meter and returns to the tonic key center of E major to express the words, "What bliss!" (See Example 11.)

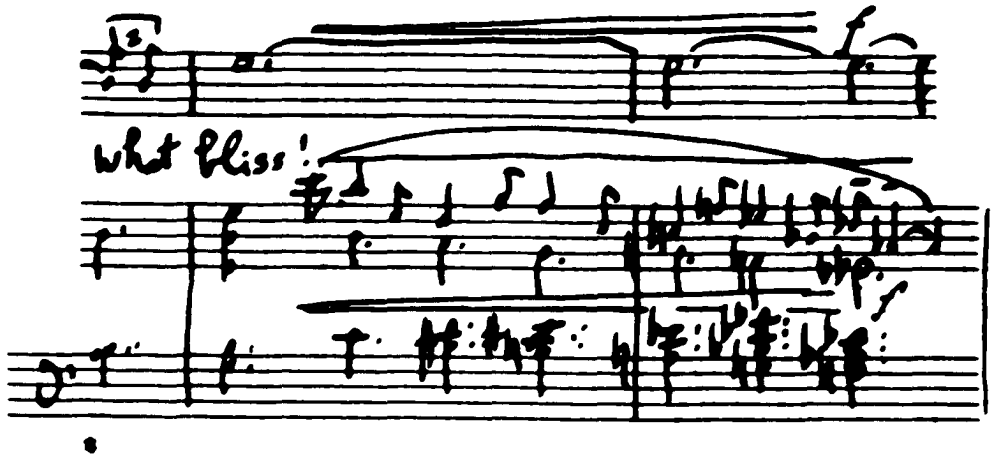
---

[58]Frederick Corder, *Modern Musical Composition*, 71.

[59]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 9.

Example 11. (measures 147-148)

(four sharps)



To paint the word "bliss" he strings together a collection of seven consecutive "color" chords: C# half-diminished seventh, B# fully diminished seventh, C# thirteenth, A half-diminished seventh, G fully diminished seventh with an F major chord, F fully diminished with an added D flat and a C major seventh. This meaningless succession of "pretty" chords is an exaggeration which gives it a comic touch. Corder in showing techniques for describing pathos, stated that, "The ordinary composer is apt to put in any nice Eleventh or Thirteenth he happens to light on, regardless of whether he needs a poignant spasm of misery or not, and only the real artist is capable of discarding beautiful things because they are not to the purpose."[60] Michael Head, known for his superior musical craftsmanship, obviously chose this musical hyperbole for its comic effect. Head's heavy use of color may have reminded him of Corder's criticism of Tchaikovsky for being too

[60]Ibid., 77.

lavish in his resources of pathetic effect, saying "he always lays on his colour with a trowel."[61] The C major seventh chord is sustained as Motive VI, the "Soft Solitude" motive reappears in a slightly extended version on the word, "Solitude." Although this long melisma begins at the *mezzo-forte* level, there is a diminuendo to a *piano* with a *fermata* on the last note, a dotted half. Since the text-setting has all been syllabic, the fifteen-note melisma brings much attention to Mr. Smith's desire for solitude.

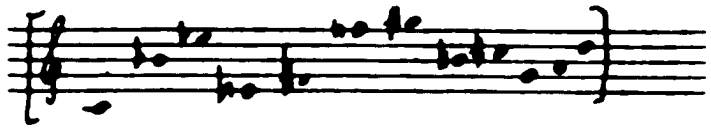
There is a rare exact repetition of text and music in measures 152 through 156 reprising the beginning of the opening aria. The interlude Motive VII, the "Flat/Craft" motive this time is overlapped by the next vocal line. The "Soft Solitude" motive is heard once again in a shortened nine-tone version on the words, "absolutely quiet." These words are repeated once more at a *pianissimo* level in the low register of the voice over a tonic E major chord in root position. One more statement of the "Flat/Craft" motive is heard, ending on open octaves, E2, E3 and E4, bringing an end to the aria.

Following this expository "aria," the composer Mr. Smith settles down to work on his composition. Although he talks later about belonging to the Nine Tone Group, the instrumental interlude is based on a twelve-tone row. The row will be considered as a motive for this study, and will be called Motive VIII, the "Solemn Serialist" motive. (See Example 12.)

---

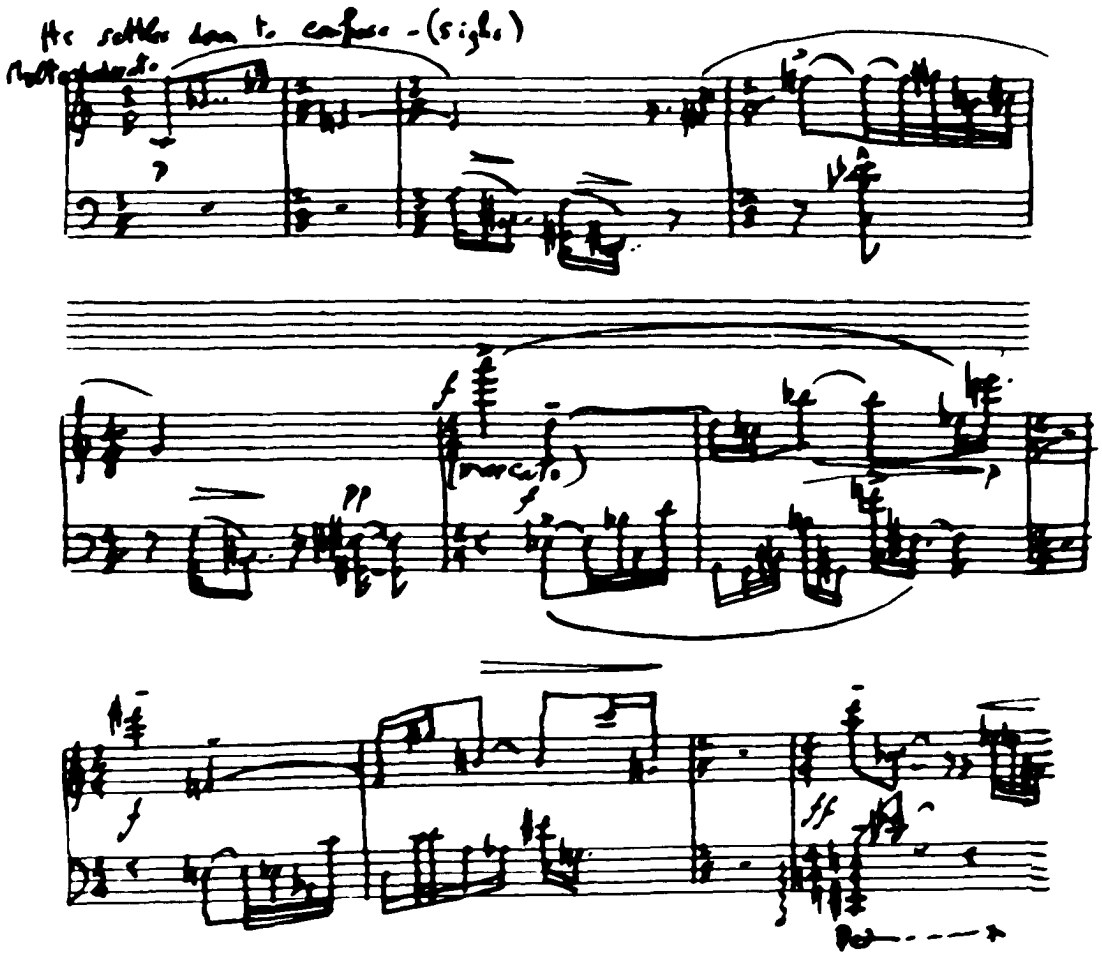
[61]Ibid., 77.

Example 12. (between measures 170 and 171) Motive VIII "Solemn Serialist"



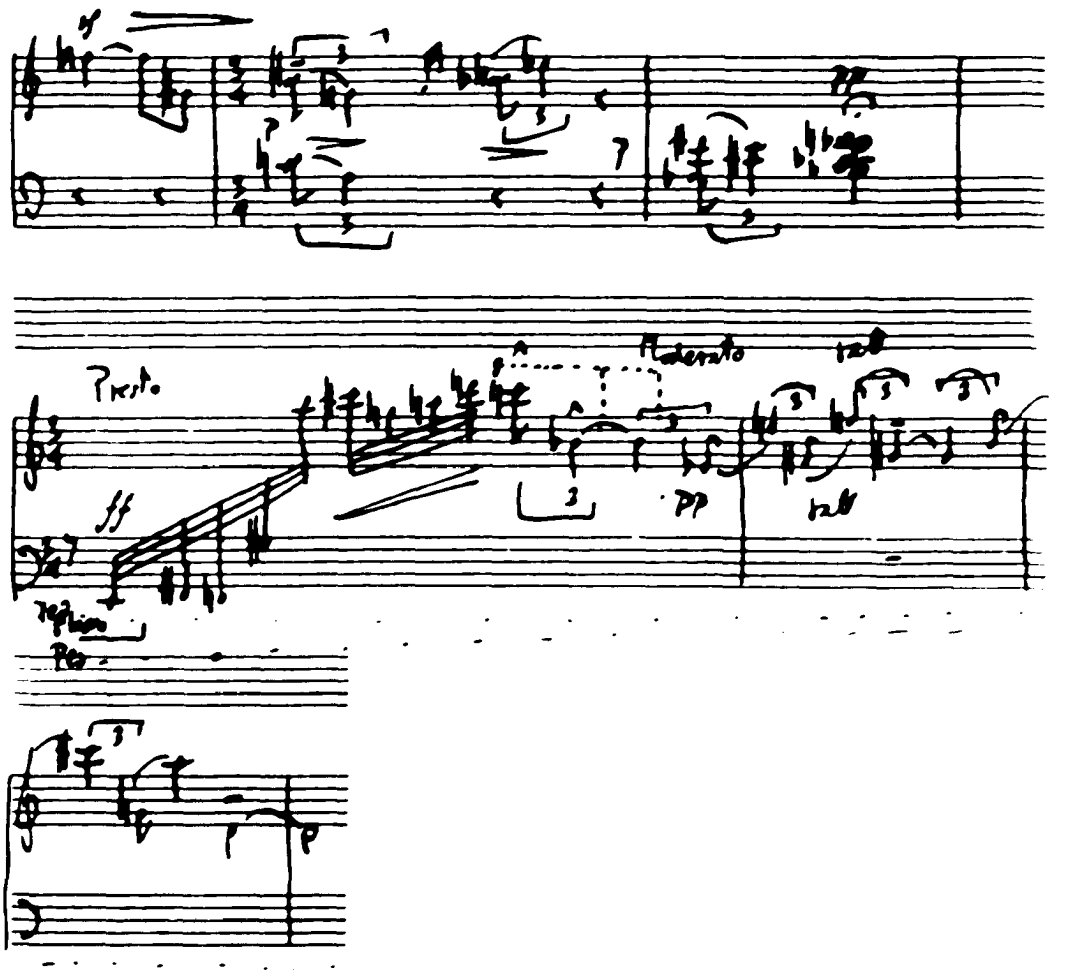
As Michael Head has musically made fun of the overuse of color chords, he also exaggerates the characteristics of serial music. The discords from earlier in the opera have mostly had a tonal center with a lot of dissonance for its own sake thrown in to give a modern sound. Here, however, Head does show his twelve-tone row in brackets in the score before the composition, and follows the twelve-tone method, with a few exceptions. (See Example 13.)

Example 13. (measures 171-188) Motive VIII "Solemn Serialist"



(continued next page)

(Example 13 continued)



The first time the row appears in the bass line (measures 173 and 174) it appears in retrograde, but is missing the note D which should be the first pitch. The D can be found in measure 174, but in the wrong order. The second statement in the bass (measures 175 and 176) also has a misplaced D pitch and is lacking the pitch E natural. Measure 180 has an accidental missing for the C#. (This could possibly

just be an error in the manuscript, but does occur the same way when this section is later repeated—measure 238.) The bass line in measure 180 has seven extraneous pitches which are not in any version of the tone row, and the rule of the method is broken by using the repetition of a pitch with only one pitch in between. The left hand part in measures 182, 183 and 184 does not correspond to any manipulation of the tone row, although, interestingly, measure 184 has nine tones, (Nine Tone Group). Except for the two retrograde presentations in the bass line, all the other five presentations of the row are in Prime 0 position.

By locating the "errors" in Michael Head's portrayal of Mr. Smith's composition, we can see that Head was really only working for a modernistic, atonal sound. Unless, that is, he wanted his composer Mr. Smith not to be too adept, which is also rather comical, but only to someone who can examine the score. Since the music must be judged merely from its being heard, it is assumed that Head only wanted to achieve a characteristic sound. Kosta and Payne discuss certain procedures which were operational in Arnold Schoenberg's music even before he had devised the serial method, and it seems that these procedures create the effect Head achieved with the purposely inconsistent use of his tone row:

1. Avoidance of the 8ve, either as melodic component or harmonic interval
2. Avoidance of traditional pitch collections, that is, any that might suggest major or minor triads, and hence a tonic
3. Avoidance of more than three successive pitches that might be identified with the same diatonic scale
4. Use of wide-ranging and extremely disjunct melodies[62]

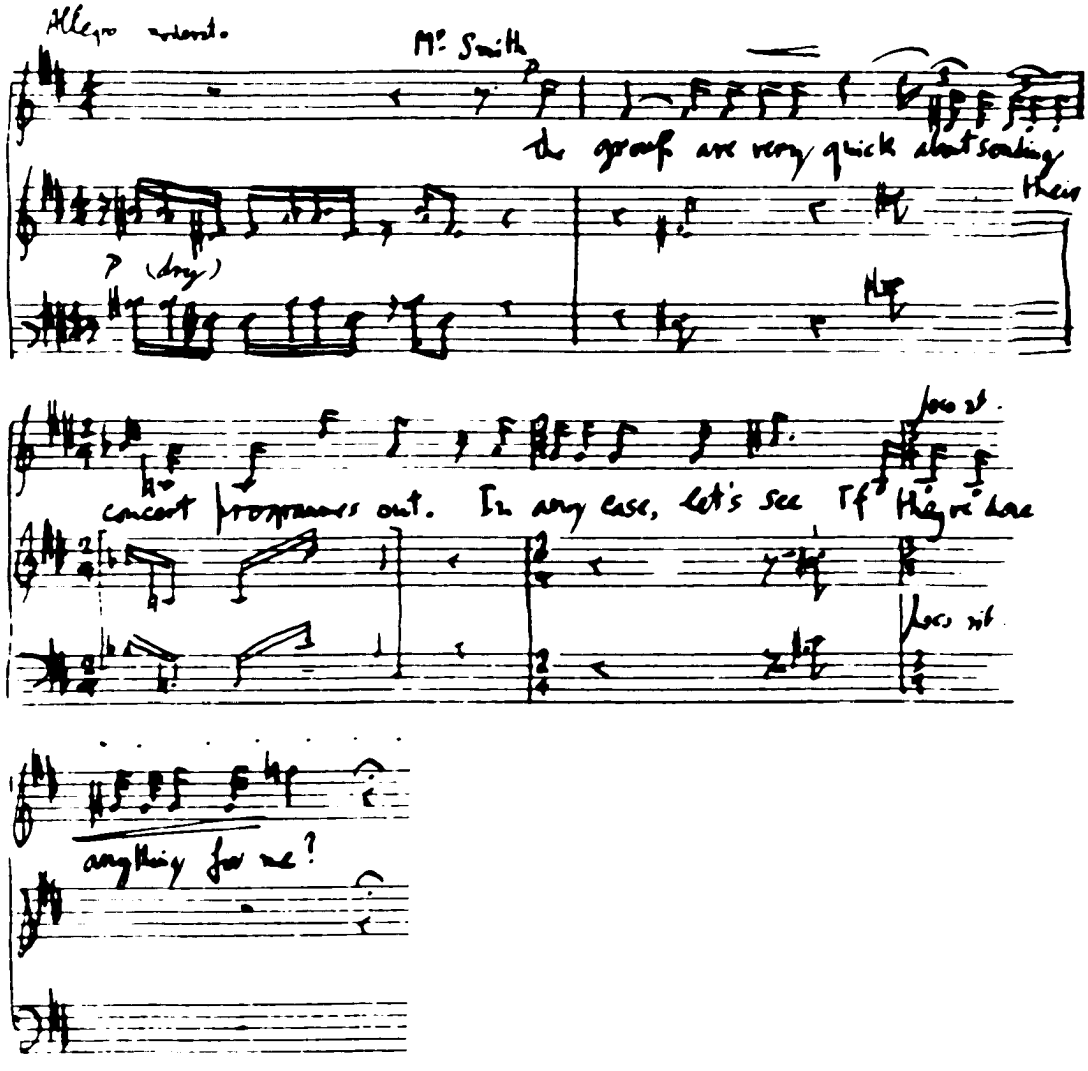
---

[62]Stefan Kostka and Dorothy Payne, *Tonal Harmony With an Introduction to Twentieth-Century Music*, 3d ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995) 513.

The last three pitches of his row (G, A and D) could be identified with the same diatonic scale, but Head uses displaced octaves most of the time for these pitches so that their apparent relationship is not detectable. He changes the meter constantly for the music to sound free of any bar lines, and he uses many expressive markings with a great deal of dynamic contrast. He achieves a dramatic effect in measure 182 by following a measure of silence with a crashing six-tone chord with both hands spread at the *fortissimo* dynamic level. Another exaggerated dramatic effect is achieved in measure 185 when, after a cluster is sustained with a *fermata* over a half-note at the pianissimo level, the *fortissimo* thirty-second note "arpeggio" is played at a *Presto* tempo beginning with E1 and ending on C7. The rhythms throughout this section include many thirty-second notes after longer notes, which tends to give the music a forward thrust followed by a pulling back of intensity. It is purposely extremely dissonant with numerous seconds and tritones. The pedal is used throughout the last two statements of the row in the ascending arpeggio-like pattern at *fortissimo* extending from the extremely low to extremely high range which was previously mentioned (measure 185.) The last statement is marked Moderato and is at the *pianissimo* dynamic level so that the overtones of the previous, pedaled *fortissimo* row would still be ringing through to the end, giving the desired ultra-modern effect. In measure 189, while the pedal is still down, the first two notes of the row are repeated as a pattern five times in sixteenth notes with a *decrescendo* and *rallentando*. The sound dies away as the postman pushes a letter under Mr. Smith's door, leading to the next scene.

Measure 190 begins the letter scene. (Many good operas have one.) The meter is 4/4 with an *Allegro moderato* marking. The scene is introduced with a series of repeated minor seconds, A# and B, in sixteenth notes in both hands, to be played dryly. The key signature is D major, but Mr. Smith's first line is delivered with a new twelve-tone row. (See Example 14.)

Example 14. (measures 190-194)



The letter is from Mr. Smith's modern music group. Michael Head has structured this melody to sound extremely angular and disjunct with wide leaps. The intervals are as follows: up a major 7th, down a minor 9th, up a diminished 6th, down a minor 7th, up a major 9th, down a 4th, up an augmented 4th, down a major 9th, down a major 6th, and ending on a rising diminished 7th interval. He also changes the meter from 4/4 to 2/4 to 3/4 and skews the rhythm at one point to remove the vocal line from the beat, using the following: sixteenth, sixteenth, eighth, dotted eighth, sixteenth. Again all these musical devices contribute to the expository material to reinforce that Mr. Smith is a modern composer.

There is a rest with a *fermata* to allow for the stage business of the composer opening his letter. When the letter is opened, the lines are in 6/8, *a tempo* and *forte* and the first four measures have a tonal center of D, first as major and then minor. Mr. Smith is disturbed that his quartet is at the end of the program of the coming concert. These lines (measures 195 through 198) are doubled by the bass line of the piano, with *sforzando* chords in the upper octaves punctuating the end of each clause with first a D major seventh with an added E#, and then with a chord that is almost a tone cluster, containing three minor seconds and two minor ninths. This treatment plays up Mr. Smith's distress, and the "restless and indeterminate ...tonality, syncopations and rugged accents greatly aid the effect" of agitation.[63] There is total silence in the accompaniment as Mr. Smith states, "The very worst place it could be,"[64] at the *forte* level with accents on his disjunct line, including

---

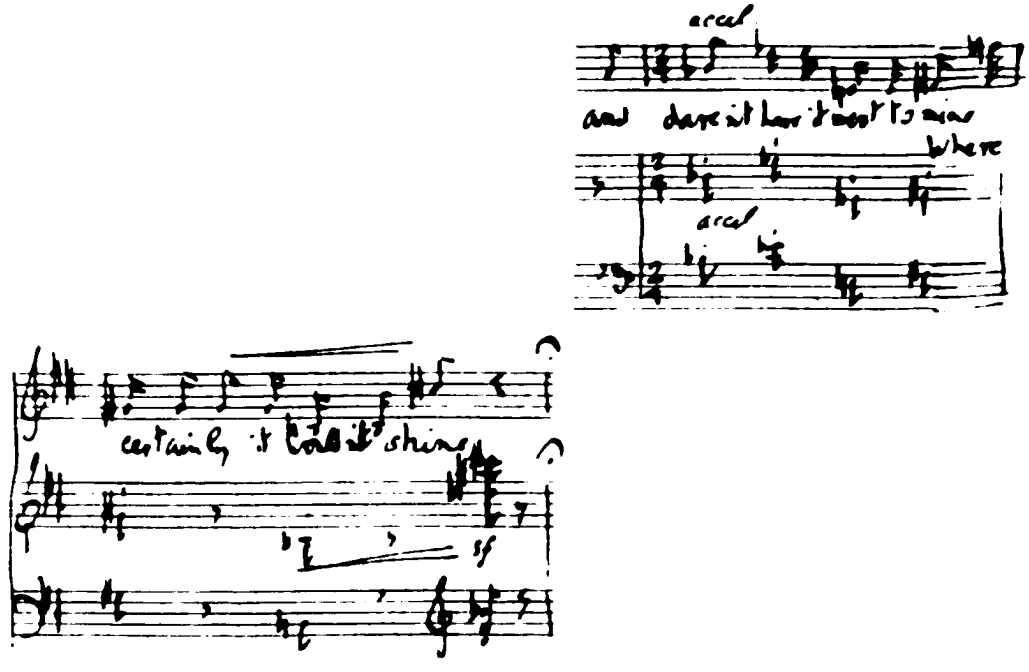
[63]Frederick Corder, *Modern Musical Composition*, 69.

[64]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 12-13.

intervals of a major 7th and diminished 5th. The music starts low in pitch and at the *piano* level when Mr. Smith speaks of jealousy, with the next two phrases getting higher and louder. An accelerando is marked as the vocal line is already mostly in sixteenths rushing to the end of the phrase which is followed by a *sforzando* chord with both hands in the treble. This last line (measures 205 and 206,) referring to Mamble's trio, "And daren't have it next to mine / Where certainly it wouldn't shine,"[65] is built on Mr. Smith's tone row, Motive VIII, the "Solemn Serialist" motive. It uses only the first nine of the twelve tones, and actually begins on a wrong pitch. This is an obvious demonstration of the serial, nine-tone composition in a discussion about this very style. (See Example 15.)

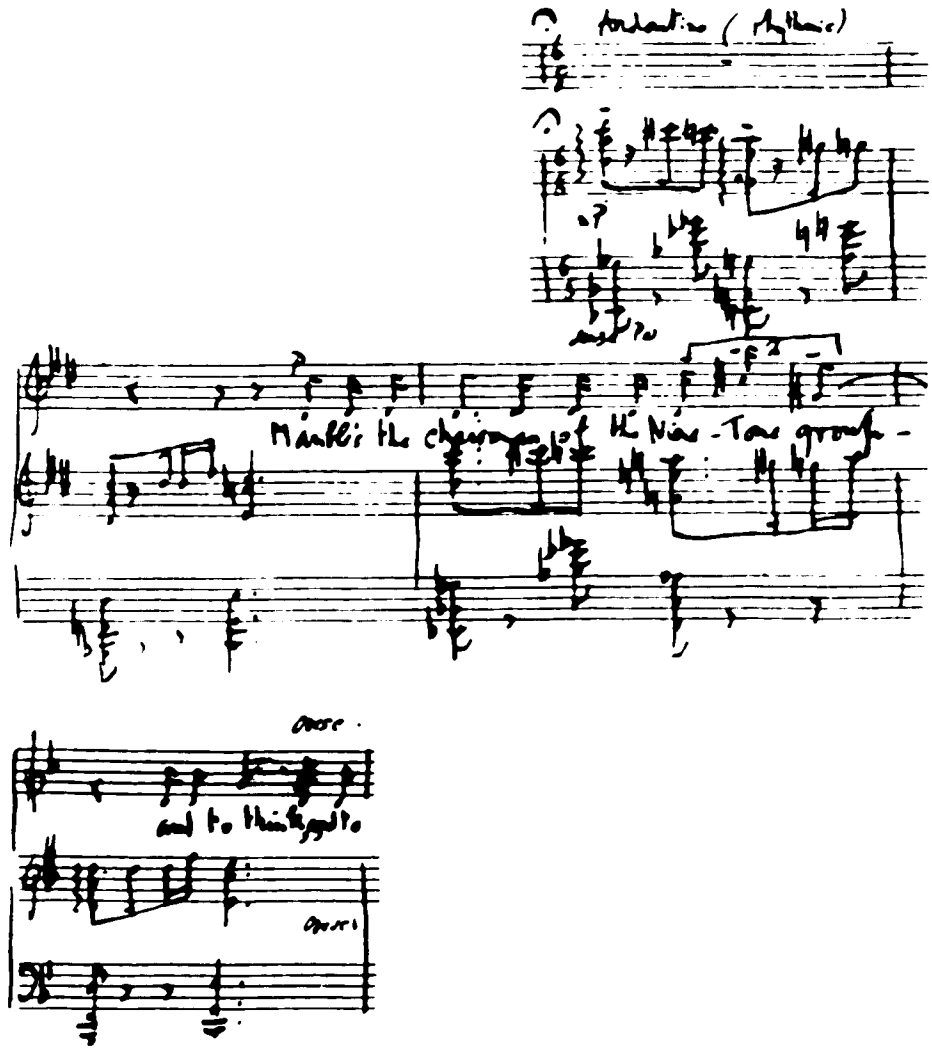
[65]Ibid., 13.

Example 15. (measures 205-206) partial Motive VIII "Solemn Serialist" (two sharps)



Two statements of motive V, the "Misunderstood Modernist" motive, with some slight alterations, appear in the accompaniment of measures 207 through 210. (See Example 16.)

Example 16. (measures 207-210) Motive V "Misunderstood Modernist" (two sharps)



The key signature changes from D major to F major, another tertiary relationship. The vocal part loosely centers around this key when not taking off on the atonal, disjunct intervals. For the words, "premeditated spite," Head includes two minor 9th intervals on the accented sixteenth notes with an ascending vocal line, as the accompaniment moves in contrary motion with parallel chords, ending with a *forte*

accent on the word "spite." The chord used on this word is A flat fully diminished with an added B flat, to achieve the grating dissonance of the minor 9th. The vocal line in measure 215 uses the first five pitches (transposed) of Motive V before finishing on the random-sounding intervals, as Mr. Smith thinks of the audience leaving. This placement of part of the "Misunderstood Modernist" motive emphasizes the struggle of the creative artist, the theme of *Key Money*.

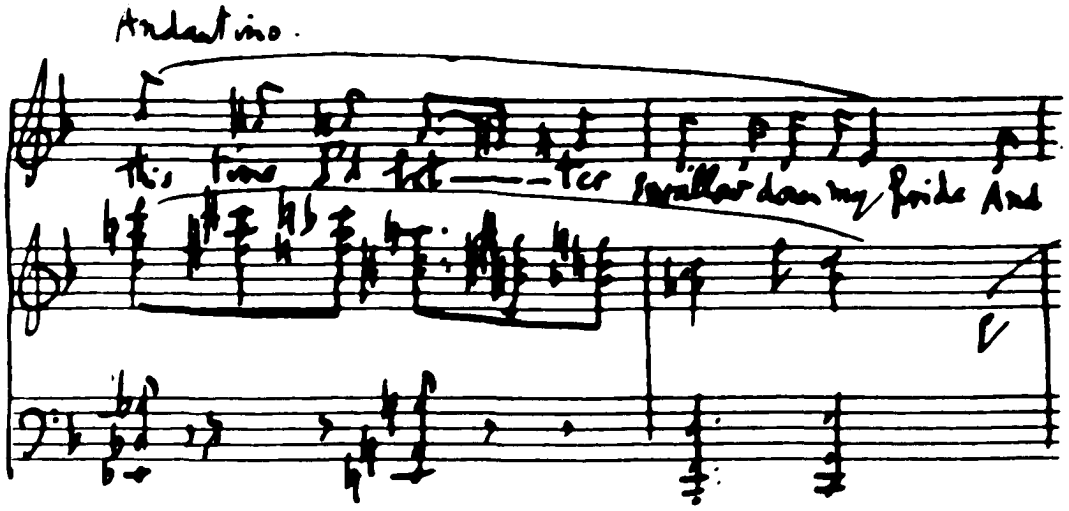
In measures 219 and 220, Mr. Smith feels very justified in demanding that his work be withdrawn from the concert. His line is delivered at a *Lento* tempo, outlining a D major chord, ending with pitches A, A, D—very conclusive. The harmonic underpinning is bright and cheerful with a D major seventh. Chords are rolled in the bass line with full chords under each pitch sung by Mr. Smith, all at the *fortissimo* level. Head uses this extremely bold statement to show that the composer in the opera is tremendously passionate about his work, and knows that he deserves respect. Having second thoughts, the words, "And yet," appear in D minor. The more anxious accompaniment pattern reappears in measures 222-225. Twice the beginning descending half-steps of the Misunderstood Modernist motive appear in the line, "Concert promoters always make it hard / Because I'm *avant garde*."[66] A tritone and two consecutive leaps in the same direction occur on the word, "*avant garde*." This comes on a *ritardando* and *decrescendo* leading to a *fermata* placed over the bar line. This silence serves to let Mr. Smith have a moment to come to a decision about what he should do.

---

[66]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 15.

The decision is to forget his pride and let his piece be played as planned. For this moment Head uses Motive V, the Misunderstood Modernist motive, once again. (See Example 17.)

Example 17. (measures 228-229) Motive V "Misunderstood Modernist"



This time it appears simultaneously in both the vocal line and the accompaniment in D minor, with only a small change of the rhythm, the first dotted rhythm changed to consecutive eighth notes. Frederick Corder in his discussion of the technique of Pathos, refers to the fact that "the reason why the minor key sounds more mournful than the major is not only the comparative depression of the third and sixth, but the fact that there are three minor seconds coming down the scale instead of two..."[67]

[67]Frederick Corder, 75.

If the use of three minor seconds is mournful, the four minor seconds that Michael Head uses in this motive is truly dismal and depressing.

Mr. Smith's last line of the letter scene, measures 230 through 233 on the line, "let things slide"[68] is very sustained—two full measures on the word "let"—and it is, of course, a descending line (D5, A5, D4) to paint the word "slide." Underneath this statement with a *rallentando* and *decrescendo* is again the dissonant Motive VII, which is associated with Mr. Smith's flat and his work, ending in open octaves on D. This ends Mr. Smith's lengthy expository material.

Once again, Mr. Smith settles down to work on his composition. Again he uses the twelve-tone row that has been identified as Motive VIII, the "Solemn Serialist" motive. In fact this interlude is an exact repetition of all but the first five measures of the previous interlude (measures 176 through 189.) In the top voice, the last two pitches of the row, A and D, are played first, and then the row begins in prime order. The first is A7 down to D5. This connects the interlude with the last two pitches sung by Mr. Smith on the words, "(let) things slide." By using repetition after five measures of the previous material, Head begins the bass line with the last three pitches of the retrograde prime row, and then proceeds to present the entire row in retrograde prime. In measure 238 the row is abandoned in the left-hand part for the remainder of this interlude, but, as stated before, the "composition" maintains atonal characteristics. This time the row is presented in the right-hand four times in its prime order, but this is not easily detected because of the range,

---

[68]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 16.

octave displacements and varied rhythms. Dramatically, Head shows the composer jumping back into his work in an odd place because of being interrupted.

After the repeated B flat 5 and C6 sixteenth notes fade at the end of the serial composition (measure 247), "A taxi draws up outside."[69] Minor seconds an octave apart are played in a rhymically catchy sixteenth-note pattern, the same that was played right after Mr. Smith was previously interrupted by the letter being delivered. There is a measure of rest provided for the sound effect of a door slamming. Next comes "The sound of high heels clicking up the stairs."[70] To paint this, Head continues to use minor seconds, but in an ascending, step-like fashion. The alternation between left and right hand on the even, accented, *sforzando* eighth notes rising in major or minor third intervals clearly illustrates a person climbing (measures 250 through 252). After twelve "steps" have been played there is a *fermata* over a check-mark, indicating a pause—perhaps for the person to reach a landing. After this the steps continue upward for eight more eighth notes on a decrescendo to a *pianissimo*. There is another *fermata* over the bar line indicating silence as a door is heard slamming. The rests for the sound effects not only assure that they are clearly heard, but the silence itself is suspenseful.

Two half-note rolled D flat major chords are played at *pianissimo* as a piano is played in the next room. They are followed by an ascending and descending D flat major arpeggio, then ascending and descending octave on D flat 4 to D flat 5. Next Miss Brown is heard in the next room vocalizing on the syllable "Ah" to this

---

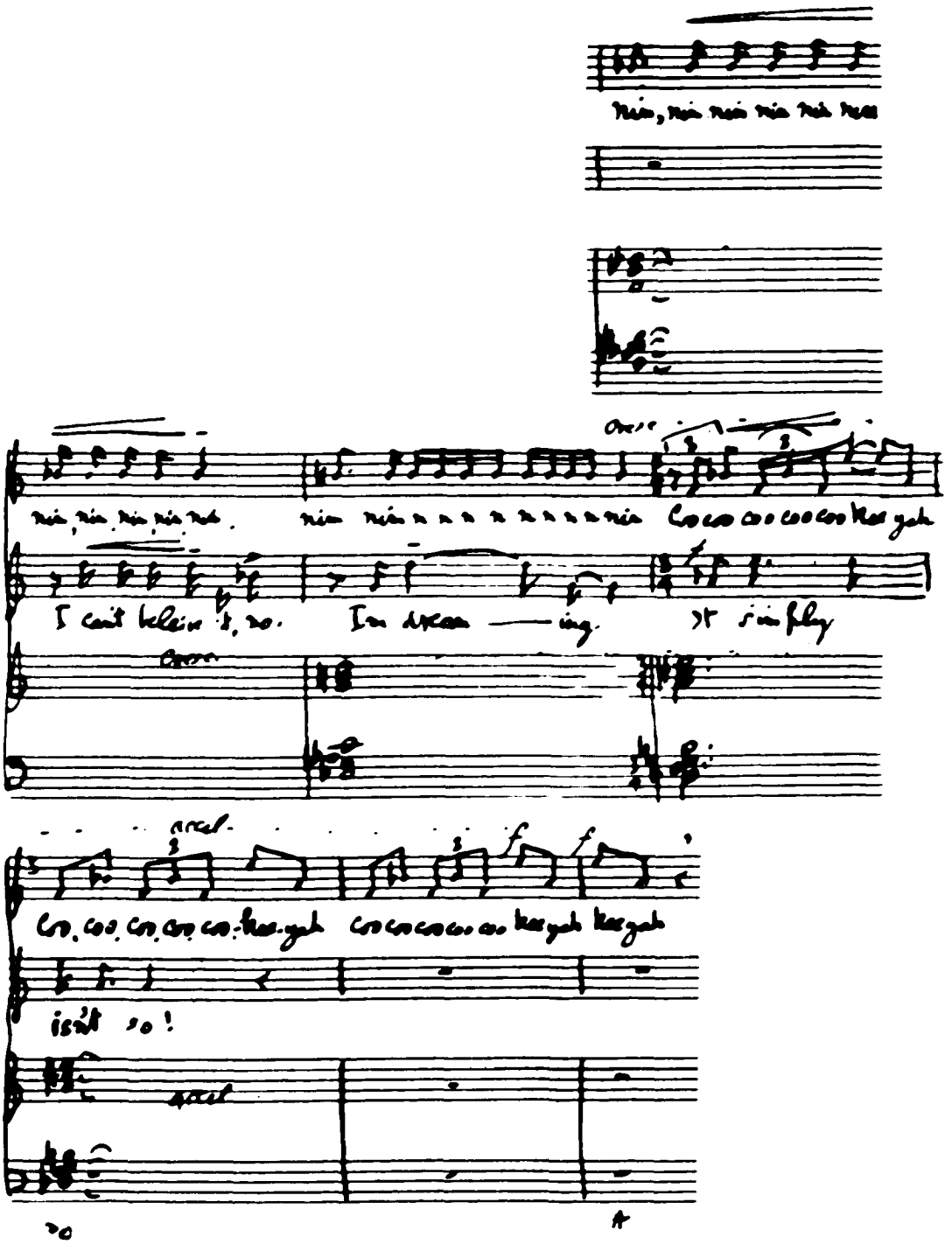
[69]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 17.

[70]Ibid.

arpeggiated pattern with no accompaniment (255 through 257). She begins at *piano* on the D flat and proceeds by half-step to repeat the pattern three times, with a variation in the rhythm on the third one, all marked *crescendo e poco accelerando.* The vocal exercise is very typical of a singer warming up the voice, starting the exercise by holding the first pitch longer on the first two arpeggios, and then as the voice has started working, going on into triplets without holding the first note. Continuing unaccompanied she goes from the pitch E flat 4 where she finished her last arpeggio up a tritone to the pitch A5. Here (measure 258) she begins a repeated pitch exercise on syllables that appear to be "mim" and "mia." Again, many singers like to warm up on nasal consonants with the forward placed "ee" sound.

The rising action of the drama plot begins as Mr. Smith realizes what he is hearing and comes in with his line (measure 258) on the same pitch A in his octave (A4). The piano plays only a major second at the *piano* level on an implied A seventh harmony with the pitches G3 and A4. In measure 259 Michael Head sets up bitonal chords, a chord in each hand of the piano, which proceed to move in contrary motion. The bass line goes from the G3, to F3, to E-flat 3, to D flat 3, and after two measures of rest comes back on the pitch C4. The top pitch in the right hand goes from D flat 5, to D5 and then to E5. The upper chords of this bitonal section (measures 259 through 262) are simple triadic harmonies while the lower are various seventh chords selected to clash with the upper triads. (See Example 18.)

Example 18. (measures 259-263)



This is Head's way of musically defining the conflict of the play, juxtaposing the modern against the traditional.

In measure 259 Miss Brown sings on B flat which is in the B flat minor triad of the right hand, while Mr. Smith comes in on the pitch D natural from the bass line B fully-diminished chord. In measure 260 both singers sing pitches from the G major chord in the right hand, while all the dissonance comes from its clash with the A-flat seventh chord. (When played in the same octave, four minor seconds are sounded.) Mr. Smith sings pitches from the A major right-hand triad in measure 261, as a G seventh chord with an added D flat is played in the bass. Here the soprano clashes with both of them by singing F4, B flat 5, F4, and E5. Her B flat is in minor seconds with Mr. Smith's A, as well as the B natural in the bass-line, and her F4 is directly against his E4. In addition, there is a tritone between her B flat and E natural, with only the F in between. By not having the soprano opera singer stay with the simple triadic harmony, Head was not strict about who was causing the dissonance. He may have only wanted the opera singer's vocalizes to sound rather penetrating and irritating. In measure 263 the accompaniment and Mr. Smith are silent as the opera singer continues on her vocalizing syllables (which began in measure 261) of, "Coo coo coo coo coo kee yah."[71] The leaps and dissonances on these pitches and syllables tend to sound humorous, rather perhaps like a dying bird. The dissonances, the accelerando, and the crescendo through this area do succeed in building the tension for the purpose of the rising action.

---

[71]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 18.

In measure 265, Head gives a temporary respite from this rise in intensity by stopping everything and starting Miss Brown's vocalizing again at *piano* and a tempo marked *Meno Mosso*, with a single note C4 played on the piano. As the singer gets more warmed up, her exercises become more extended. This time she sings the arpeggio in thirty-second notes instead of sixteenths and goes up an octave and a third before descending. Her pitch for each arpeggio again rises by half-steps (measures 265 through 262) going from C to E flat. Again Head uses bitonality in the rising action after beginning with a simple D flat seventh. He uses D major over B flat augmented seventh, then E flat major over F# major, and E flat ninth over F# major. This time Mr. Smith's protestations are made in the same key as the singer, the upper keyboard triadic harmony. These measures, too have a marking of *crescendo e accelerando*. The intensity is greater this time because of the heavier, lower voicing of the bass notes and the tremolo of the chords in measures 270 through 272, when Mr. Smith proclaims, "I've got an opera singer for a neighbour."[72] This line is delivered *forte* with a crescendo up the E flat major arpeggio with strong accents on the first syllables of the words "opera" and "singer." The top E flats are in a very strong area of the baritone voice, and the higher pitches show his rising anxiety as he comes to this realization.

Again there is a brief pause followed by a marking of *piano* and a slower tempo, this time *Lento*. Miss Brown goes back to singing her repeated notes on the "mim" and "mia" syllables on the pitch A natural for one measure, 273. This is a

---

[72]Ibid., 19.

tritone up from her last E flat. She holds the A5 with a fermata before a glissando down to C4, where the arpeggios start up again on "Ah," this time in a triplet pattern and a tempo of *Allegro vivace*. In Nancy Bush's libretto, she describes this as "a burst of singing (that) follows."[73] Once again, Head builds the intensity by using the *crescendo e accelerando* and the rising pitch each measure by half-steps (measures 274 through 281.) It is of interest to note that, with all the word-painting, Head chooses to set the words, "The purest pain"[74] in measure 276 with a very consonant sound, only a perfect fifth interval with pitches D and A over a D ninth chord. Apparently the sequence created by the rising fifths at the beginnings of each of these three phrases was more important. Bitonality is used again to create dissonant clashes, and Mr. Smith sings on pitches of the arpeggiated chords on which Miss Brown is vocalizing. Both chords appear in the treble clef at the beginning of this part and the tremolo, this time in the bass, begins a measure earlier. The right hand and left hand parts move in contrary motion throughout these measures. The high range of the piano is used for the right hand (E6) as both hands with bitonal chords (E major and B flat ninth) play at *forte* on an accented tremolo beginning on measure 279. By measure 280, the soprano is singing *fortissimo* with a flurry of sixteenth-note arpeggios up to a G#. This frantically rising intensity leads up to Mr. Smith's decision to take action, and he "knocks firmly on the wall."[75]

---

[73]Nancy Bush, 3.

[74]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 20.

[75]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 20.

There is a pause and a *mezzo-piano* tremolo on E flat 2 and F2 (which continues as the sole accompaniment for the next seven measures). The pause seems an appropriate action for a person who was singing loudly and was not sure of what she heard. It also allows the audience a moment of suspense. Following the pause, the opera singer continues with a much more elaborate vocalise at *forte* with a *crescendo*. The singer is so loud and high at this point, that Michael Head allows Mr. Smith to sing or speak the following lines:

> She hasn't heard me – so it would appear,
> Though none so deaf as those who will not hear.[76]

The singer Miss Brown sings one more *fortissimo* flourish of arpeggios up to B6 and back down in measure 287. The E flat/F tremolo continues for one more measure as Mr. Smith angrily bangs on the wall. There is total silence.

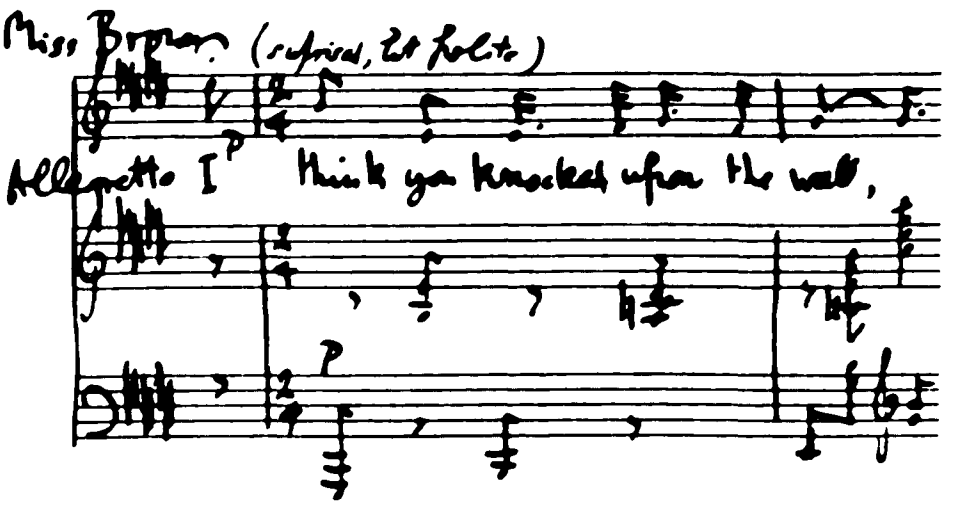
Now for the first time the audience sees Miss Brown, the opera singer as "The door opens presently and Miss Brown appears."[77] Her vocal line is Motive III, the "Optimistic Opera-singer" motive which was first presented in the overture. (See Example 19.)

---

[76]Ibid., 20-21.

[77]Ibid., 21.

Example 19. (measures 289-290) Motive III "Optimistic Opera-singer"



The bright, major tonality, along with the bouncy dotted rhythms, characterize her as a cheerful and pleasant person, especially since this first phrase is her response to the loud and rude interruption by Mr. Smith. Head chooses the key of E major at a tempo of *Allegretto* and a dynamic level of *piano* to depict Miss Brown's response, which is marked as "surprised, but polite."[78] Her vocal line and the accompaniment are in E major, with an augmented C seventh chord and a C natural seventh. The vocal line outlines the chords. When she poses the question about Mr. Smith's feeling ill, there is a rise in pitch from E4 to C5 which portrays the inflection of the speaking voice when asking a question. The word "ill" falls on the borrowed C7 chord, and the interval up to this word is a minor 6th, instead of the major of the key.

The answer of the upset Mr. Smith is more vigorous, with the tempo *Più*

---

[78]Ibid., 21.

Mosso and at *mezzo-forte* dynamic level (measure 295). These four measures of his reply have a vocal line entirely made of pitches C's and G's. There are rests in the accompaniment for measures 295 and 297, a C seventh chord in 296 and just the notes B flat 3 and C3, continuing the C seventh harmony, as Mr. Smith expresses his regret for disturbing Miss Brown. This major tonality seems appropriate for his brief apology before he launches into his argument. In measure 299, however, the C tonality is abandoned to show his agitation, with D flat seventh, C flat minor, D flat major on the words, "(artistic) impulse drove me to it."[79] The vocal line follows these chordal tones, with a tritone created from the E double-flat up to the A flat on the words, "drove me." Deryck Cooke in his book, *The Language of Music*, discusses the elements of musical expression, and notes that composers have used the interval of the augmented fourth

> to express the devilish, *for its actual sound*, which derives from the 'flaw' in the harmonic series...There is an extension of the connotation of the augmented fourth, in that composers have also used it to express alien, eerie, hostile, and disruptive forces."[80]

In this case, the augmented fourth depicts a power beyond Mr. Smith's control, somewhat like the saying, 'the devil made me do it.' He even follows in measures 300 and 301, (still with the D flat seventh harmony) with the line, "Please understand, I had to do it."[81]

---

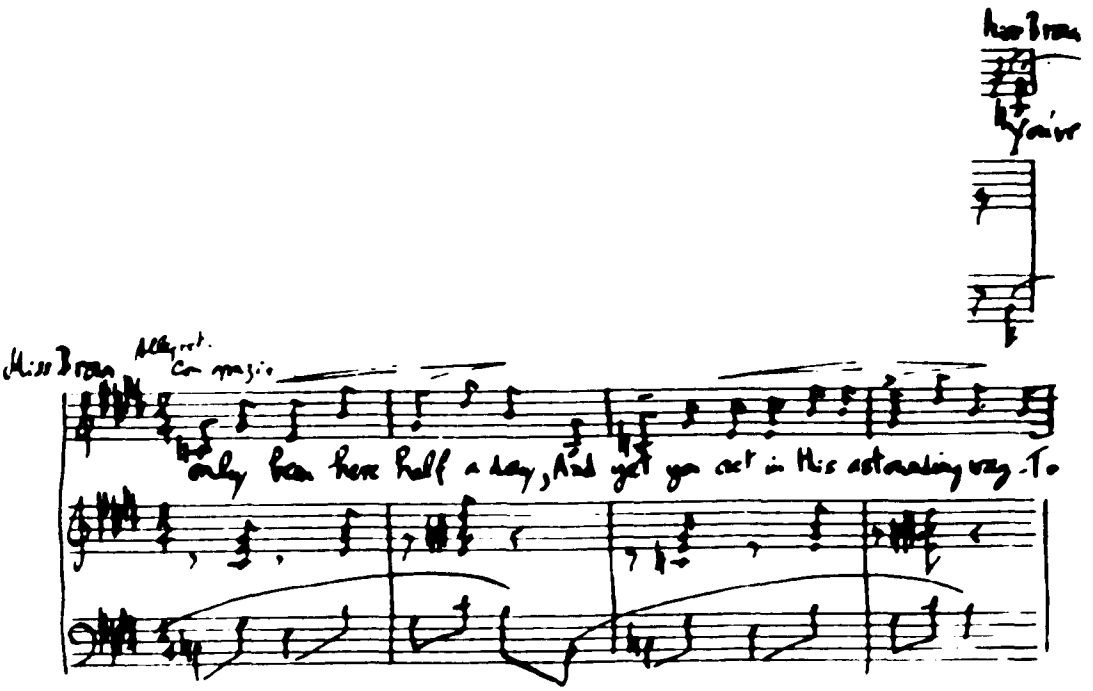
[79]Ibid., 22.

[80]Deryck Cooke, *The Language of Music* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1959; reprinted 1990) 89.

[81]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 22.

Miss Brown's reply in measures 302 through 305 is Motive IV, the "Augmented Argument" motive, which was also first presented in the Introduction to the opera. (See Example 20.)

Example 20. (measures 302-305) Motive IV "Augmented Argument"



This time it has no dotted rhythms, only straight eighth notes with sixteenths on repeated pitches, and is doubled in the bass line. The consecutive eighth notes give a sense of underlying self-control and determination. The motive is in 2/4 with a marking of *Allegretto con grazie*. The vocal line begins with an augmented fifth interval and is based on a C augmented ninth chord, which is the harmony underneath. Although this motive has only eight pitches, there are three rising fifths

in it, including the beginning augmented fifth. Deryck Cooke in his study of procedures in pitch-dimension examines

> the leap of ...a fifth or more. Naturally, this gives an added impulsiveness to the emotion concerned. The upward leap is often used to express physical passion, whether by Mozart ('Dies Bildnis', the *The Magic Flute*), Wagner (the opening phrase of *Tristan*), or Britten ('Her breast is harbour too' in *Peter Grimes*...); it can also, of course, express violent joy, aspiration, protest, triumph, or fear, depending on the tonal tensions involved.[82]

In the context of *Key Money*, Head uses these three rising fifths in the motive to express violent protest. This is his way of defining the characters' passionate commitment to their respective music professions.

In measures 306 through 309, the remainder of Miss Brown's response is delivered in dry recitative built upon the harmonies from the C ninth motive to E seventh, G augmented and finishing on E flat. Again the tertiary relationship can be observed, with tension-building rising thirds until the last chord which culminates with the word "outrage." In the vocal line for this sentence, "Surely at this stage/ It is an outrage,"[83] the rhythm is varied to use a triplet, and there is a *ritardando* marking with a crescendo to the *forte* top pitch, G5, the highest pitch that Miss Brown has sung in her conversation with Mr. Smith. The G5 pitch is only an eighth note long before the line plunges down a major 10^{th} interval to E-flat, on the word, "outrage." This would give even added emphasis to the top forte pitch in the soprano line, as the leap to this low a pitch at the *forte* dynamic would be sung in the chest voice register. The change of register to chest voice would make the statement sound more passionate. The climax of this speech ends on a major chord

---

[82]Deryck Cooke, 107.

[83]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 22.

(E flat), because the opera singer represents tradition in the conflict—modernism versus tradition. All these devices contribute to the rising action as the conflict of the plot develops.

Mr. Smith explains his position in measures 310 through 321, taking a harmonic center of the E flat last sung by his neighbor. The "Augmented Argument" motive, IV, appears, outlining a C flat augmented ninth chord. This presentation of the motive a half-step lower than Miss Brown's previous statement of the motive indicates that Mr. Smith is standing his ground in the argument, but trying to keep his emotions under control. However, his emotions continue to rise, as his second statement of a slightly altered version (the augmented fifth is second instead of first) of Motive IV is on E flat augmented seventh. Head uses rising harmonies in Mr. Smith's explanation—C flat augmented ninth, D major, E flat seventh, F flat fully-diminished, B flat half-diminished seventh, and ending on an E flat seventh chord. There is a crescendo to the *forte* top E flat to emphasize the word "music." An augmented fourth interval is used coming off the word "music," which again, accentuates Mr. Smith's modernism in the conflict. Attention is drawn to his final statement of "I am a composer,"[84] by preceding it with spoken words to address Miss Brown. This statement is also marked with an *allargando* and accents on all three syllables of the word, "composer." The triplets on the B flat leading up to the pitch E flat, rising a perfect fourth, give a kind of trumpet fanfare effect. (It will be noted that the flat accidental appears to be missing on these repeated pitches in measure 320, but it would be inconsistent with what has come before, for the

[84]Michael Head, 23.

voice part to be a minor second from the doubled B-flat in the accompaniment.) Mr. Smith's proclamation that he is a composer, even though definitive, with the B flat up to the E flat of the tonal center, still is not entirely based on traditional harmony. Head uses a B-flat half-diminished seventh resolving to the E flat seventh, instead of a typical V7 to I progression.

Miss Brown's response in measures 322 through 329 begins back in the sunny E major with a slightly altered Motive III, the "Optimistic Opera-singer" motive, as she pleasantly replies, "Really, I see no harm in that."[85] There is a great relaxation in the tension that has been building up to this point. Motive III is immediately followed by a return to Motive IV, the "Augmented Argument" motive, based again on the C augmented ninth chord in both vocal line and harmony.

The respite is short-lived after Miss Brown tells Mr. Smith that he can rest assured that his composing will not disturb her. At measure 330, the piano crashes in with a heavy accented double *sforzando* C seventh chord with the bass in a tremolo, as Mr. Smith exclaims, "Not disturb you!"[86] The vocal line leaps up the octave to set off the word, "you," and it is sustained for a full half note, the longest note in the last thirty-six measures. After this outburst, Mr. Smith asks her to let him explain the problem. Here the dynamic level lowers to *piano* and the tempo is marked *Piú mosso – agitato*. Again Head uses a rising harmonic progression which is outlined by the vocal part, beginning with the C seventh to D flat (Neapolitan), to

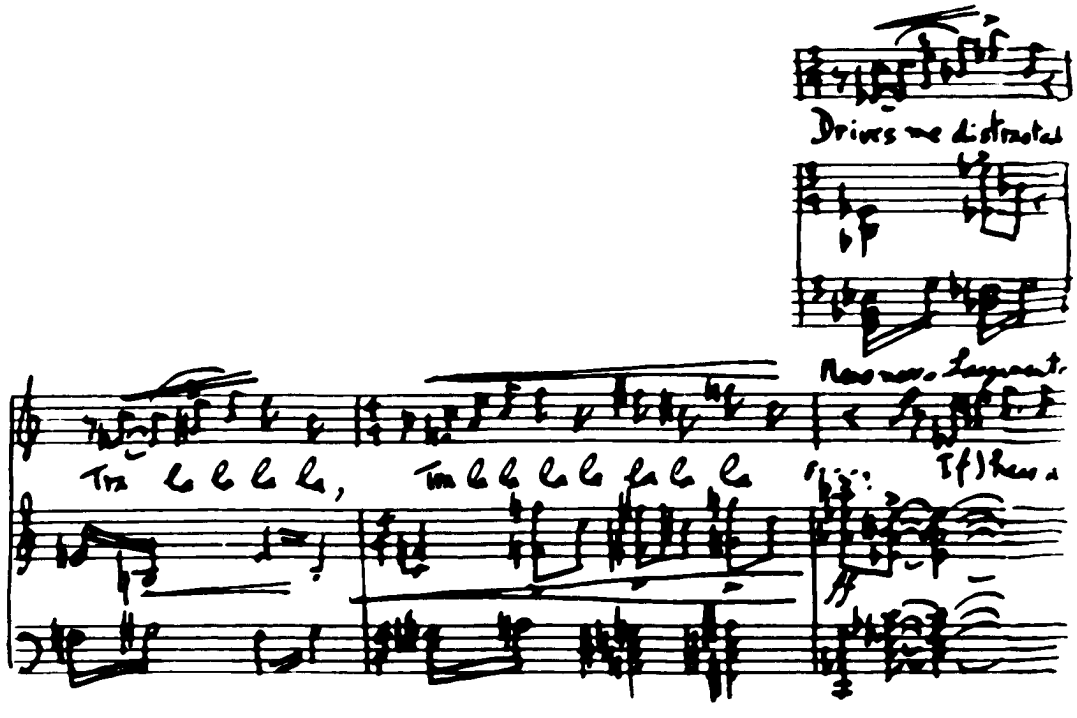
---

[85]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 23.

[86]Ibid., 24.

D seventh, to E flat seventh, then E flat ninth. Measure 340 goes harmonically berserk as Mr. Smith seems to be losing his sanity, with A half-diminished seventh with added note F, A major with added note F#, F# thirteenth, culminating on A flat with added B double-flat. These wild harmonies follow his comment about music in any form driving him to distraction. (See Example 21.)

Example 21. (measures 338-341)



Uncharacteristically, he begins to sing arpeggiations on the syllables "tra la la" etc. and his vocal line moves from major chord outlines to include one descending and two ascending augmented fourths, with a crescendo to *fortissimo*. In addition to Cooke's referring to the augmented fourth as associated with something devilish,

hostile, alien and disruptive, he notes that, "Some late romantic and modern music has in fact expressed neurotic states of mind by means of excessive pitch-fluctuation and very wide leaps (the vocal line in Richard Strauss's *Elektra*, for example.)"[87] Head seems to achieve the depiction of this kind of neurotic emotional outburst. The dramatic irony, of course, is that any kind of music, from any source drives this composer of music to such distraction that he cannot compose at all.

In measures 344 through 347, Miss Brown pleasantly tries to offer a solution. Her beginning pitch comes in a diminished fifth from Mr. Smith's last pitch, once again showing opposite forces of the conflict. The tonal center of Mr. Smith's A flat vocal line to Miss Brown's E diminished to B major are also distant, as the characters are distanced in their conflict. Her helpful solution on the words, "straight away/ You'd drown my voice,"[88] is accompanied by a succession of "pretty" color chords—B flat seventh, A ninth to B major, with parallel motion creating a kind of 'Debussylike sound.' There are happy little echoes of the major thirds of her line on the word, "voice," extending up to D#7 on a *pianissimo*.

Mr. Smith is so overcome by her remark that he cannot sing at first and must "faintly" speak the next line, "Play...on the piano..."[89] The accompaniment (measure 348) is totally silent for a full measure before coming in at the *piano* dynamic level with Motive I, the motive called "Play on the Piano?" This calm, quiet motive in 3/4, *Tempo di Valse*, begins on C flat and outlines its D-flat ninth

---

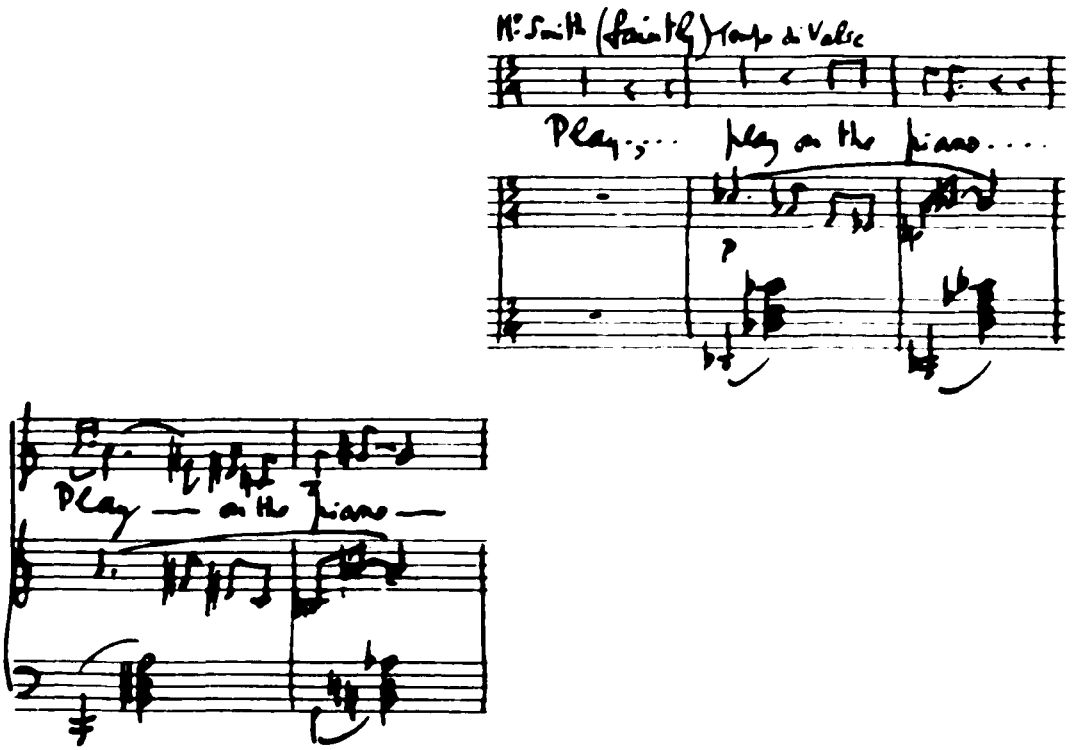
[87]Deryck Cook, 109.

[88]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 25.

[89]Ibid.

harmony. Under its B-flat ninth harmony, the motive finishes with a rising interval of a minor 6th, which is similar to the speech inflection of asking a rhetorical question. The motive is sequenced down from the C flat beginning pitch to A, and with a change in the harmony—B seventh to G ninth—as Mr. Smith recovers enough to sing the Motive I with the accompaniment this time. (See Example 22.)

Example 22. (measures 348-352) Motive I "Play on the Piano?"



It may be speculated that the reason the "Play on the Piano?" motive was the first motive to appear in the overture (or Introduction) of the opera, was the tongue-in-cheek fact that the overture was being played on the piano. The work was not

originally scored for ensemble. According to a letter from Nancy Bush, "All the operas were first performed with the piano accompaniment only."[90]

After Mr. Smith has sung Motive I in the waltz tempo, the meter changes to 4/4 at measure 353 and the tempo changes to *Allegro agitato*. There is a two-note tremolo in the bass on B3 and C#3 at the *piano* level. Mr. Smith's vocal line also begins at *piano* and in a rather low part of his range. He delivers the lines in speech-like rhythms, using only the pitches C# and G#, until a G natural on the word, "compose" in the line, "Miss Brown, surely you don't suppose/ I use the keyboard to compose?"[91] Once again the two tritones on this word imply that when Mr. Smith says compose, he only means atonal composition. The C# seventh tremolo lasts until the words, "some conscience still,"[92] which are accompanied by chords consisting of the pitches D natural, G# and C#, repeated and doubled in the right and left hands with an accent at *forte*. The accompaniment then doubles the voice part in octaves as the same three pitches are used for the line, "My works are purely cerebral,"[93] the tritone now placed on the D rising to the G#. This reinforces his view that twelve-tone music is based on an intellectual method and has no ties to tonality. The parallel 'Debussy-esque' movement of the three chords in measure 361 defies the rules of conventional part-writing, as the text speaks of writing the music directly into the full score. The word, "full" is on a C# thirteenth chord. The

---

[90]Nancy Bush, Radlett, Hertsfordshire, England, to Barbara Streets, Oklahoma City, 22 September 1986, in the possession of Barbara Streets, Bethany, Oklahoma.

[91]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 25-26.

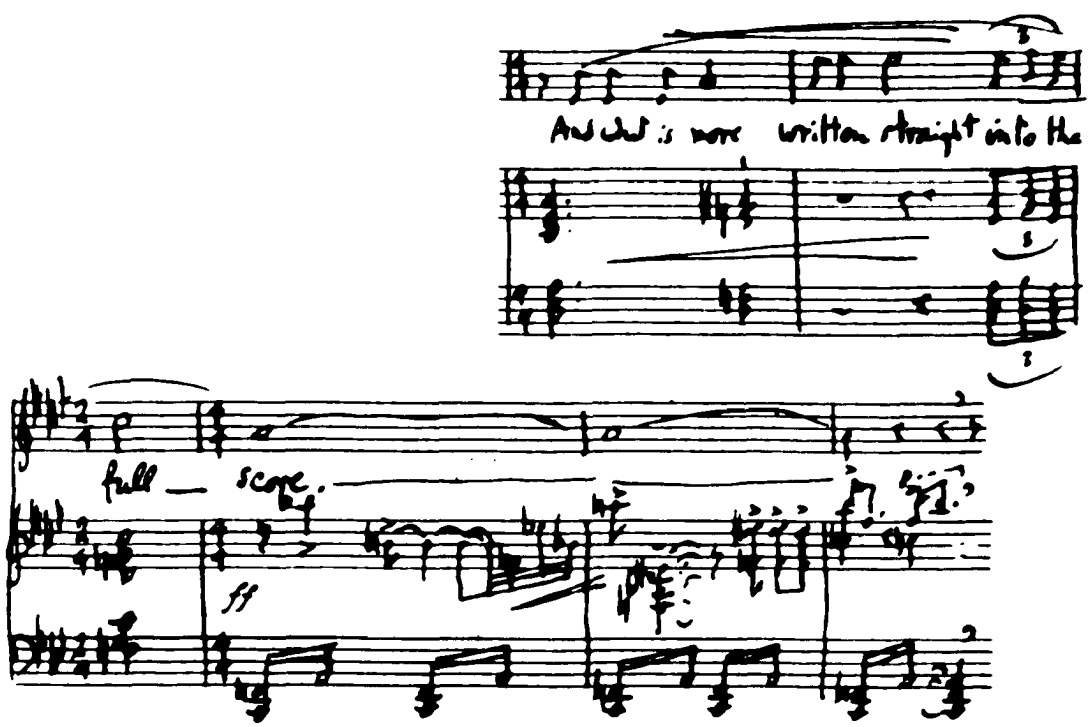
[92]Ibid., 26.

[93]Ibid., 26.

word, "score" is held for nine beats in 4/4, the longest-held note of the entire opera. It is marked *fortissimo* with a tremolo in the bass of an F augmented chord, and a flourish of atonal writing that is loaded with numerous grating dissonances (tritones, minor seconds, major sevenths). This is apparently not taken from any operation of his tone row, nor a new row (the fifth pitch is a repetition of the first, but is simply a parody of serial music. (See Example 23.)

Example 23. (measures 360-365)

(Three sharps)



Miss Brown quietly offers a final solution as the key signature changes to B major, an augmented fourth from the last three measures of Mr. Smith's line, which

had the bass of the tremolo F augmented chord. Again, this music places the protagonist and antagonist as far as possible in opposition to each other, with the greatest amount of tension between them. When she proposes that he could leave, Mr. Smith for the second time is so incredulous that he must speak the repetition of her last word, "leave." He then sings, "Leave the flat?"[94] with a rising octave on her B's and up to C natural, with a crescendo and an accent on the last word. This is followed in measure 368 by the crash of a double *sforzando* accented bitonal chord of C major over A flat seventh, extending from A flat 2 up to C6. This highly dissonant 'discord' gives a very strong exclamation point to his question, and mirrors his horror of such a thought.

Miss Brown's calm reply of, "Yes simply that,"[95] at measure 369 is quite simply delivered in her B major tonality with no accompaniment, at the *piano* level with a decrescendo. The upset Mr. Smith launches into his reply at the *forte* level, where the music is marked *Allegro agitato* and the key signature changes to E flat, (measures 370 through 380). The "Augmented Argument" motive, Motive IV is used again at the same pitch and key as the last time Mr. Smith sang it. Again his vocal line is doubled in the bass octave. This time, however, the agitation is increased by the change in the right-hand accompaniment, which plays chords in syncopation with the eighth-note bass line. This sounding of a tone on each sixteenth-note count with a crescendo is absolutely frenetic. Again, we see that Michael Head was not only quick to parody the serial composition, but he also

---

[94]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 26.

[95]Ibid., 26-27.

freely parodies stock devices for painting an emotional effect. This statement of Motive IV again typifies Frederick Corder's suggestions of compositional techniques to depict agitation:

> Even if the *tempo* be nominally a slow one the actual movement must be quick, which is easily achieved by the use of demi-semiquavers. If the piece be orchestral use "double-bowing" and tremolo freely. A minor key is more suitable than a major and the more restless and indeterminate the tonality the better. Syncopations and rugged accents greatly aid the effect, but the movement must never cease;[96]

Even though this version of the opera is not for orchestra, Michael Head follows the sixteenth-note syncopated section with six measures of tremolo in the piano bass accompaniment (measures 374 through 380). "The key money, please don't forget,"[97] is repeated up a half-step. This gives extra emphasis to the line which contains the title of the opera. Mr. Smith's mounting frenzied anxiety is shown by the pitch of his phrases, which began on a B flat in measure 374, and moved to B natural, C, and ending on a top E flat. There is a crescendo from *forte* and a *rallentando* at his cadence, which finishes on a bitonal A flat over D seventh on the words, "Why, if I leave, I lose the lot."[98] The double-dotted quarter/ sixteenth on beats two and three over the tremolo chord in the bass give added punch to his feelings of desperation.

Miss Brown's response, in measures 380 through 393, begins (after a *tenuto* on her first pitch) with a return to Mr. Smith's *Allegro agitato* tempo which preceded the *rallentando* at the previous cadence. Her answer is delivered at *forte*

---

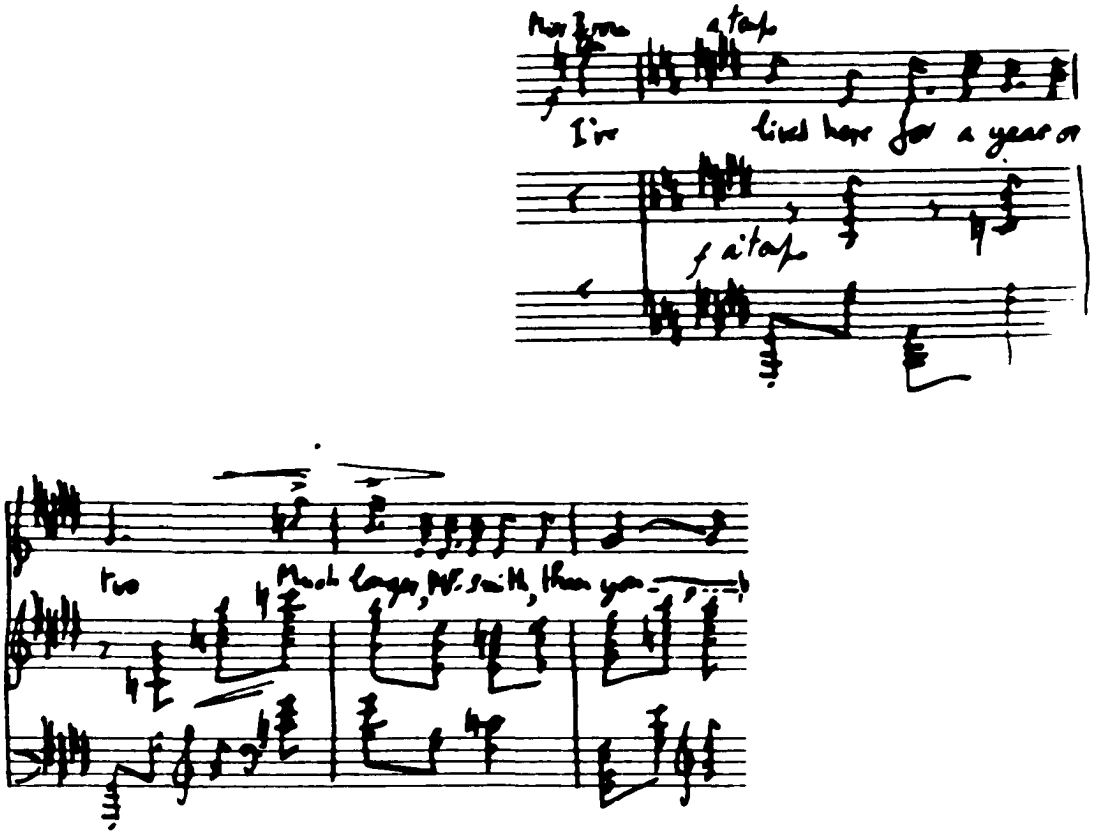
[96]Frederick Corder, 69.

[97]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 27.

[98]Ibid.

back in E major, using the Motive III music, the "Optimistic Opera-singer" motive. The accompaniment is emphatic this time, with open octaves in the lower bass (G#1, A2) and full chords on each half-beat. (See Example 24.)

Example 24. (measures 381-384) Motive III "Optimistic Opera-singer"



These devices help to define the character. They show that Miss Brown is willing to exercise her assertiveness in standing up for her position in this argument. She still maintains her dignity and self-control by coming back to the major key and not degrading herself to go down to the level of Mr. Smith's fanatically dissonant

arguments. She firmly states that she has lived in the flat much longer than he, without any complaints about her singing or anything else. Miss Brown advises him to, "bear that in mind / And act with more discretion."[99] Head uses the interval of an ascending minor tenth on the word, "discretion," on an A ninth chord, giving a passionate emphasis to her side of the argument.

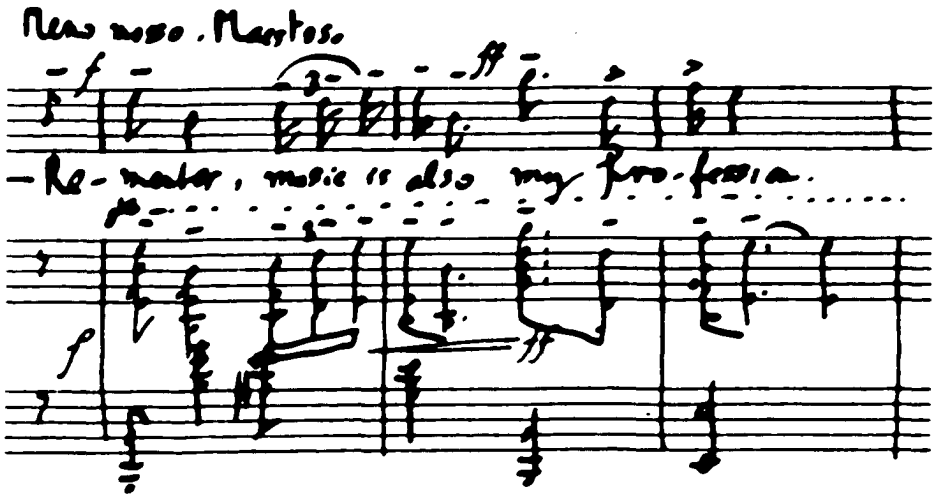
She finishes with a statement in measures 391 through 393, that begins at *forte* and crescendos to *fortissimo*, reminding Mr. Smith that, "music is also my profession."[100] This brings the listener to the last motive, Motive IX, the "Profound Profession" motive. The tempo is *Meno mosso* and marked, *Maestoso*, and the music is beautifully grand to demonstrate Miss Brown's pride in her artistic calling, with a chord progression of E ninth, F# seventh, E major, G# diminished, E ninth to E major. The treble accompaniment is placed an octave above the staff. (See Example 25.)

---

[99]Ibid., 28.

[100]Ibid., 28

Example 25. (measures 391-393) Motive IX "Profound Profession"



The vocal line concludes with the pitches of scale tones 5, 3, 7, 2 and 1. Deryck Cooke, in presenting some basic terms of musical vocabulary, discusses the expressive qualities of descending from the 5 to the 1 in the major key:

> If to fall in pitch expresses incoming emotion, to descend from the outlying dominant to the point of repose, the tonic, through the major third, will naturally convey a sense of experiencing joy passively, i.e. accepting or welcoming blessings, relief, consolation, reassurance, or fulfillment, together with a feeling of 'having come home'.[101]

In addition to expressing her joy for the blessings and fulfillment of being a singer, the music shows a kind of confidence with its crescendo to fortissimo and accented dotted eighth/sixteenths on the final three beats. Miss Brown may have thought that because she had made her case so strongly, that the dispute was ended with her final statement.

---

[101]Deryck Cooke, 130.

"She flounces out,"[102] to the *Allegro vivace, forte* statement of her motive, Motive III, the "Optimistic Opera-singer" motive in the piano (measures 394 through 401.) It is, of course, in her bright key of E major, and gaily bounces to its final cadence, with the right-hand piano part rising to E7.

Apparently trying to calm himself over his situation, "Mr. Smith sits at the piano and plays."[103] At a *mezzo-piano, Tempo di Valse*, he plays none other than Motive I, the "Play on the Piano?" motive. It is transposed up a major sixth, beginning on the pitch A-flat 6 with no sharps or flats in the key signature. The three measure motive is repeated, each time with a decrescendo to the end.

The next stage action notation (measure 408) is, "An aria is heard in the next room."[104] Certainly Michael Head had enjoyed parodying the serial music of his composer; but, he must have taken even more delight in "crafting" this aria of the old-fashioned ballad type for his opera singer. According to Slonimsky, the term "ballad" signifies

> a simple narrative song, each verse being sung to the same melody. It is similarly applied to art songs such as Loewe's *Edward*, which have a story to tell.[105]

The Harvard Dictionary refers to the nineteenth century ballad as a popular song that usually combined narrative and romantic elements, and states that "today the term 'ballad' is loosely applied to any kind of cheap modern song."[106] Michael

---

[102]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 28.

[103]Ibid., 29.

[104]Ibid., 29

[105]Nicholas Slonimsky, ed., *International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians*, 7th ed., rev. (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1956) S.v. "Ballad."

Head intentionally composes the ballad-style aria to be as trite and conventional as possible to achieve the desired musical satire. His compositional devices for this purpose will be examined as they appear in the score.

In the key of E flat major, a dominant seventh chord is sounded in the accompaniment at *pianissimo*, and is sustained. Miss Brown, the soprano begins with an opening "operatic" cadenza on the syllable "Ah," such as Gounod used on the dominant seventh for the opening cadenza of "Juliet's Waltz Song."[107] The opening turn, scale passage, turn and descending arpeggio sound traditional, but serious enough. Following the trilled notes on pitches B flat and C, however, the cadenza ends with an old-fashioned, hackneyed rising scale ending with chromaticism, before landing back on the dominant pitch B flat.

The conventionality of the following ballad must begin with a discussion of the text. In Frederick Corder's admonition about "How *not* to write a song," he refers to a typical set of verses that are "washy and indefinite as to their meaning."[108] Certainly Nancy Bush's lyrics fit this description:

MISS BROWN: The world of men I sought to leave
In leafy woods to rest,
In silence sweet,
In cool retreat
To soothe my troubled breast.

---

[106]Willi Apel, ed., *Harvard Dictionary of Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958) S.v. "Ballad."

[107]Charles Gounod, *Romeo and Juliet* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1925) 49.

[108]Frederick Corder, 24.

But he from whom I turned away
Ne'er treads this quiet grove,
My loss I'll own,
For here alone
My thoughts return to love.[109]

What exactly does it mean to own one's loss? Besides the indefinite meaning and the awkward construction, the lyrics also contain very dated expressions, such as soothing one's troubled breast, or treading the quiet grove. In addition to the inclusion of a 'poetic' contraction ("ne'er" for the word never,) the words "grove" and "love" go awry and fall out of the rhyme scheme. Ballads had long been criticized for the excessive sentimentality of their lyrics. In his essay on 31 December 1890, Bernard Shaw, music critic for the London World, wrote about his perusal of music of this sort which had been sent to him by publishers hoping for a review.

> I sang of the love of yore, and the coming years, and the whispered prayer, and the twilight shadows, and the sweet long ago, and the parting tear, and the distant bells, and the old cathedral, and the golden gates, and the moon shining o'er Seville, and the hour before the battle, and the eager eyes looking out for Jack, and a floating home on the world of foam being the home of homes for me, and goodness knows what else. ... How could any sane man of business suppose that there was the faintest chance of my recommending the public to sing:
>
> Will he come? Will he come? O, my heart!
> I am waiting and watching in vain.
> Ere twilight's soft shadows depart,
> O, come to me, come once again!
>
> WALTZ REFRAIN
> Just (tum tum)
> Once (tum) a-
> Gain (tum tum),
> (Tum) When the," etc. etc.

---

[109]Nancy Bush, 5.

> ...these reviewers' verdicts are heartily indorsed at hundreds of suburban pianos, where Sullivan is shirked as difficult, Blumenthal given up as abstruse, and Schumann repudiated as hideous and bewildering. ... People in search of trash will get no assistance from me, unless I take to composing it myself.[110]

The soprano ballad aria of *Key Money* very aptly mimics these kinds of commonplace, meaningless lyrics, and, although lacking a waltz refrain, shamelessly satirizes characteristics of the music as well.

The ballad aria begins in measure 409 in 6/8 meter, at *Allegretto, con grazia*, and at the *piano* dynamic level. The melody closely follows the ballad methods described by Frederick Corder, in that it is "a mere sequence of notes adapted to the harmony."[111] It consists essentially of an outline of the monotonous tonic and dominant harmonies underneath. It even arpeggiates the tonic E flat chord at the end of the first phrase, an awkward, unmusical ascending line on the word "rest." It is not only unmusical, but the musical line is opposite of the meaning of the word. In the following four measures (413 through 416), the melodic line is "filled in" with extra pitches to sound more flowery. The effect is aided by the continuous rolled chords in the accompaniment, as "Mr. Smith rushes to the piano and accompanies."[112] A bouncy dotted sixteenth/thirty-second pattern is inappropriately used for the word, "soothe" in measure 415 which adds to the amateurish effect. Frederick Corder did not disguise his disdain for the ballad in his book on

---

[110]Bernard Shaw, *Music in London, 1890-94: Criticisms Contributed Week by Week to the World*, Vol. I (New York: Vienna House, 1973; reprinted by arrangement with The Society of Authors, London) 111-112.

[111]Frederick Corder, 25.

[112]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 30.

composition, which was written years before Michael Head studied with him.

Referring to ballad methods, he stated,

> And it is not my purpose to waste time and space by considering this rudimentary type of music at all. As I have said, the song of plain 8-bar periods, however beautiful it may be in the hands of Schumann or Grieg, is scarcely *Composition*.
>
> That the vast majority of human beings is incapable of apprehending this last sentence is to be deplored, but it cannot be helped. I am here writing for those who have some—however little—predeliction (sic) towards Art, and Art I take to be the construction of something beautiful by the use of brain-power. The Ballad, Hymn-tune and Chant are merely embryonic music—the foundation stones from which an artistic structure may rise, but of no art-value in themselves.[113]

Of course Michael Head set Miss Brown's aria in "plain 8-bar periods," and used his brain-power to create the parody of the inartistic 'weaknesses' of this type of music.

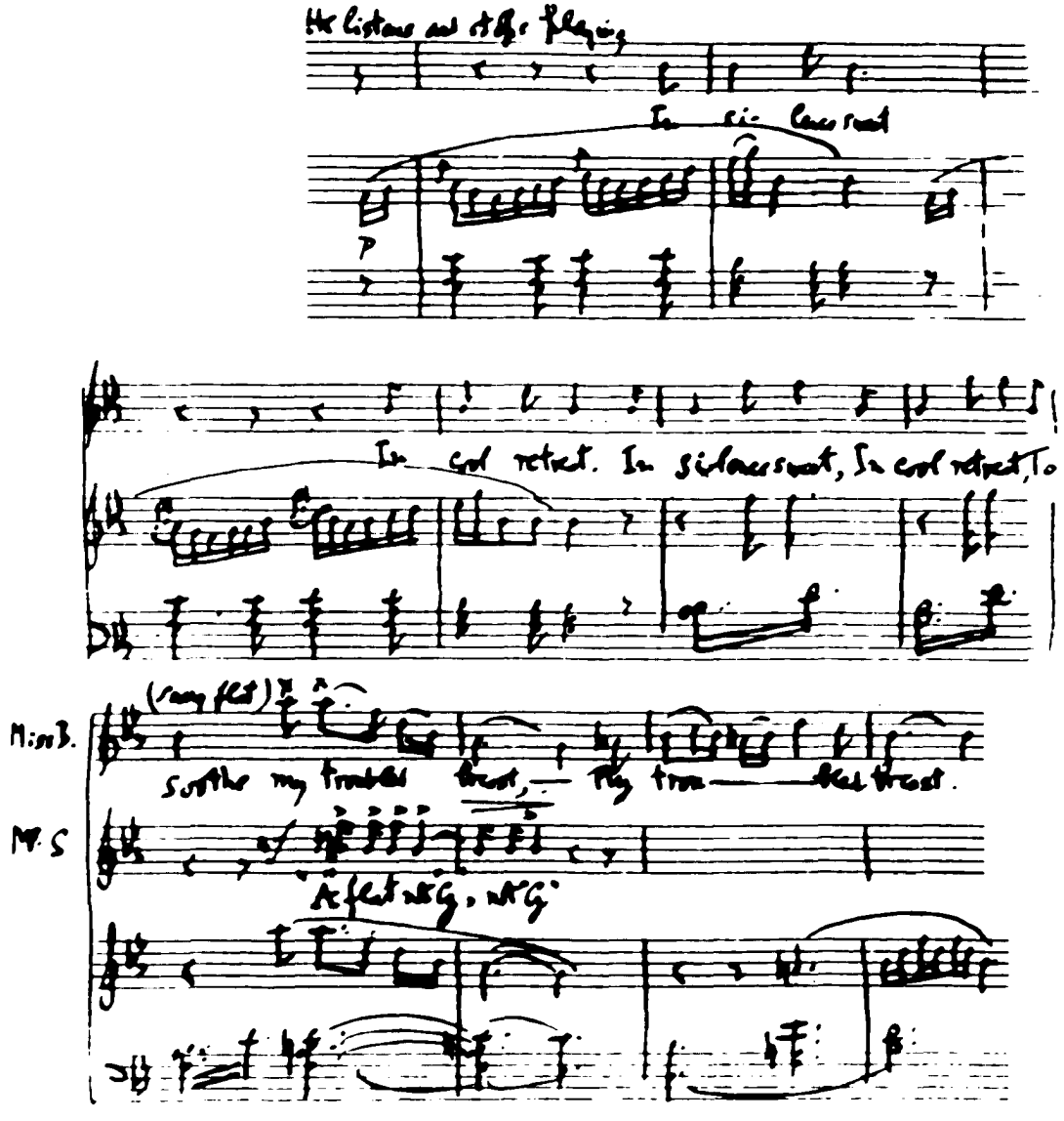
For measures 417 through 424, Motive II, the "Banal Ballad" motive is heard for the first time since the introduction to the opera, only this time in E flat major instead of E major. (See Example 26.)

---

[113]Frederick Corder, 16.

Example 26. (measures 417-426) Motive II "Banal Ballad"

(Three flats)



The first two measures of the motive are used twice in the accompaniment before the vocal line takes it over in measure 420. With the repeated E flats in the bass line

under the words, "In silence sweet, In cool retreat,"[114] Head once again uses a stock emotional technique listed in the Corder book, for peace or repose—the tonic pedal.

> A tonic pedal is therefore the instinctive resource of even the least experienced. Unfortunately this effect is so often employed without any special intention and through mere ineptitude that it is losing its power over the imagination. The composer must beware of using any but the simplest discords over his pedal, or he will destoy the feeling of serenity and substitute that of grief or pain. There is a Berceuse by Tschaikowsky for piano which is very soft and quiet, but suggests indigestious pangs rather than peaceful slumber.
>
> The tonic pedal is by no means our only resource: provided that concords are in the majority and the harmonic progressions natural and smooth...[115]

Another blatant example of a weak composition is Head's intentional use of repetitive anapestic rhythms in the word setting, used eight monotonous times in a row in measures 420 through 423. In Corder's chapter on the rudiments of how to write a song, he listed poverty of resource in rhythm as the most prevalent fault of amateur composition. "The simple anapœstic, iambic or trochaic sequence of accents once started is pursued in the same note-values instead of employing expansions or contractions."[116]

All this monotony and conventionality not only satirizes the old ballad style of writing, but it serves Michael Head's dramatic purpose as well. It is a preparation for the occurrence of a further complication in the plot—that of Miss Brown singing flat, so flat in fact that she is singing a full half-step under the obviously correct pitch in measure 423. The predictable melodic patterns,

---

[114]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 30.

[115]Frederick Corder, 79.

[116]Ibid., 6.

concordant harmonies and simple harmonic progressions set up the audience to be startled when the wrong note is sung, just as Mr. Smith is startled by it. He impulsively responds on the pitch B natural with accented sixteenths at *mezzo-forte*, " 'A' flat not 'G', not 'G.' "[117] After a measure of dominant seventh, a measure of tonic and a measure of dominant seventh, Head uses an F fully diminished chord under the 'wrong' pitch. The fully diminished chord is often referred to as the "trouble chord," because it is tension-laden with not one, but two tritones.[118] Certainly this discovery spells trouble for Mr. Smith. The four bars are repeated with the same text and only a change in the vocal melodic line to arpeggiate the first three beats of each measure. The harmonic setup is the same as before and the singer has the same disastrous intonation problem, again on the fully diminished chord. This time, Mr. Smith, having regained some composure states his line on the actual A flat that would be the correct pitch for the song. Mr. Smith's following lines are delivered in a kind of *secco* recitative style with multiple repeated pitches on sixteenth notes, outlining the simple underlying harmonies.

Head modulates from the key of E flat major to G major for the second verse of the ballad aria, which begins in measure 433. It is marked *Poco piú mosso e animando*. This increase in tempo helps to express the rising action of the plot. Head remains conventional by sticking to formulas on how to write a song, expounded in the 1909 Corder book.

---

[117]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 30.

[118]Michael Rogers, lecture notes from Performance Analysis, University of Oklahoma, Fall 1998, in possession of the author.

> The second verse, it is easy to perceive, will demand a more florid accompaniment; repeated chords form the simplest means of working up the excitement as we approach the climax; therefore we will commence with arpeggios.[119]

So in measures 433 through 436, we find trite-sounding sixteenth-note repeated chords in the bass line of the keyboard for two measures, followed by sixteenth-note arpeggios. Mr. Smith voices his increasing alarm in the *secco*-recitative style in rapid speech rhythms as Miss Brown continues singing and going flat in measures 435, 441 and 442. The melody remains totally predictable, making the audience wince at the flat pitches. The harmonies, however, begin to move away from the simple dominant to tonic, as a C-major seventh appears in measure 435, followed by an A minor ninth chord resolving to D major. The G major in 437 is followed by a C-minor half-diminished seventh, then B-flat major with an added pitch F flat, a C ninth, B flat major, F major seventh to a B flat major. On the words, "My thoughts return to love,"[120] the key returns to E flat major.

In measure 440, Miss Brown again sings a cadenza on the dominant seventh, similar to, but more elaborate than the initial cadenza, this time on the word, "love." In this cadenza she has more opportunities to sing off-key on the top pitches of A flat 6 and B flat 6. The cadenza ends with an unexpected two-octave leap off the top sixteenth note down to a B flat 4. As Mr. Smith becomes more alarmed, his intervals on the recitative become wider, progressing from fourths and thirds to octaves. In measures 441 and 442 on the words, "If she sings right it will annoy

---

[119]Frederick Corder, 18.

[120]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 32.

me./ But if she sings wrong it will destroy me,"[121] Mr. Smith culminates the phrase on a doubly accented, double *sforzando* F4, before a downward glissando of a twelfth. The harmony is once again, the "trouble chord," a fully-diminished seventh built on the same pitch as before, F. As stated previously, Deryck Cooke has noted that a leap of a fifth or more adds impulsiveness to the emotion concerned. In addition,

> Downward leaps are often used to express gushes of the more yielding types of emotion (Brangaene's consolation of Isolde in Act I of *Tristan* is full of them); though they can also express a sudden acceptance of sorrow or yielding to despair.[122]

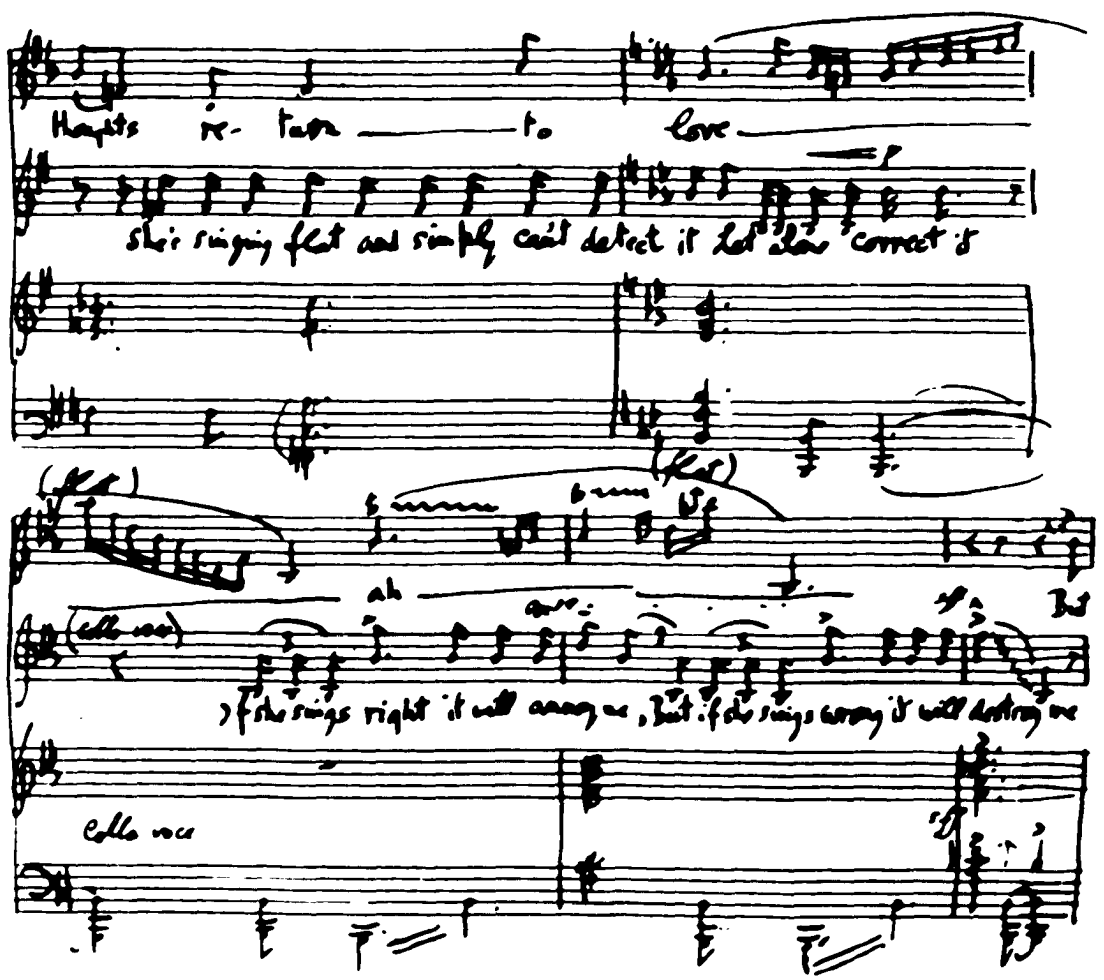
It is evident that Head's music is designed to highlight Mr. Smith's impulsive expression of anguish over his desperate situation with his neighbor. (See Example 27.)

---

[121]Ibid.

[122]Deryck Cooke, 107.

Example 27. (measures 439-443)



The singing continues in measure 444, marked *Poco accelerando* and *crescendo*, with a two-pitch tremolo in the bass line. Mr. Smith is silent for two measures, which gives the character time to think. Meanwhile Miss Brown sings flat on another high A flat on the word, "treads." Underneath her line, Mr. Smith is

asking, "Heavens, what shall I do?"[123] over an uncertain-sounding D half-diminished seventh chord, which leads not to the E flat tonic, but to a C minor. On the words, "Perhaps I'll try to help her, though,"[124] the F minor chord changes to the more optimistic major cadence of the dominant B flat seventh on the word "help," to tonic E flat major. Head marks a *rallentando* under this line of Mr. Smith's while Miss Brown is singing sustained pitches on the word "grove" in her middle range. These devices assure that the audience will be able to hear these important words which will lead to Mr. Smith's next action. At this point in the action, the libretto states in its stage directions that, "He knocks on the wall tentatively. She continues to sing."[125] This direction is not given in the manuscript score, but this response would be a logical progression of the actions of Mr. Smith.

Regarding discrepancies between the libretto and the finished manuscript, the libretto gives stage directions that Miss Brown sings wrong notes and must try phrases again to correct herself. At the very beginning of her aria, is written, "Presently she hesitates, goes wrong, tries again."[126] After Mr. Smith sang the names of the right and wrong pitches the first time, is the direction, "She tries again, falters, sings wrong note."[127] After Mr. Smith says her wrong notes would destroy

---

[123]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 33.

[124]Ibid.

[125]Nancy Bush, 6.

[126]Ibid., 5.

[127]Ibid., 6.

him is written, "She tries again, fails."[128] One might speculate that as Michael Head was characterizing the opera singer, he may have decided that it would be more comical for her not to realize that she was singing flat. This lack of realization would also make it all the more difficult for Mr. Smith to approach her on the subject. In addition, Head changed the names of the pitches Miss Brown was singing incorrectly to coordinate with key scheme of the opera, and to create the added humor of the opera singer singing flat. The libretto has Mr. Smith saying, "F sharp, not G, not G, Not G."[129] This is probably one of the minor changes that came about when Michael Head and Nancy Bush worked together during the composing of *Key Money.*

Miss Brown's aria comes to its own climax in measures 448 and 449 with a crescendo marked leading to her high B flat, which she sings under pitch. Head uses the 'beautiful' B minor thirteenth, followed by C minor, and then A flat ninth under the high B flat 6. Following her out-of-tune high note, Mr. Smith shouts in despair, "Miss Brown, Miss Brown, you're half a tone down!"[130] His ensuing violent banging on the wall (four times) brings the singing to a stop just before reaching the final note of the cadence.

At measure 452, the stage directions state, "Miss Brown enters, distraught."[131] This marks the beginning of the crux of the drama, the point in the

---

[128]Ibid.

[129]Ibid.

[130]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 33.

[131]Ibid.

action in which the opposing forces are equal. Miss Brown does not enter and speak this time in her polite *Allegretto* at the *piano* dynamic level. Head's music shows her to be on an equal plane with Mr. Smith, as she sings assertively. The music this time is marked *Allegro molto*, and after a *sforzando* chord, Miss Brown sings at *forte*, with crescendos leading to accents on each of her next statements. There is a 'passionate' leap up an octave on the word, "outrageous," followed by repeated C4 pitches, which would give added strength in the female voice delivered in the chest-voice register. The accompaniment reinforces this strength and agitation with tremolos followed by syncopated chords (reference Corder) on beats two and four.

Measures 461 through 464 employ Motive IV, the "Augmented Argument" motive, as Miss Brown proclaims, "My whole artistic life is now/ Being destroyed."[132] The motive was last built on the C natural augmented harmony in the key of E major, but this time is built around the F flat augmented chords in the key of A flat. The intensity is higher at the higher pitch level, and the soprano voice is in a very strong part of the range for these assertive statements. The accompaniment maintains the agitation with the syncopations occurring on each half beat in a pattern of rising chords. The vocal line reaches a peak (A flat 6) on the word, "disgraceful," which is sung with an accent after the crescendo line. The accompaniment has a *sforzando* chord in the right hand and an A-flat seventh tremolo in the bass line. The tremolos continue after Miss Brown has finished, "By the disgraceful methods you've employed,"[133] and the right hand of the

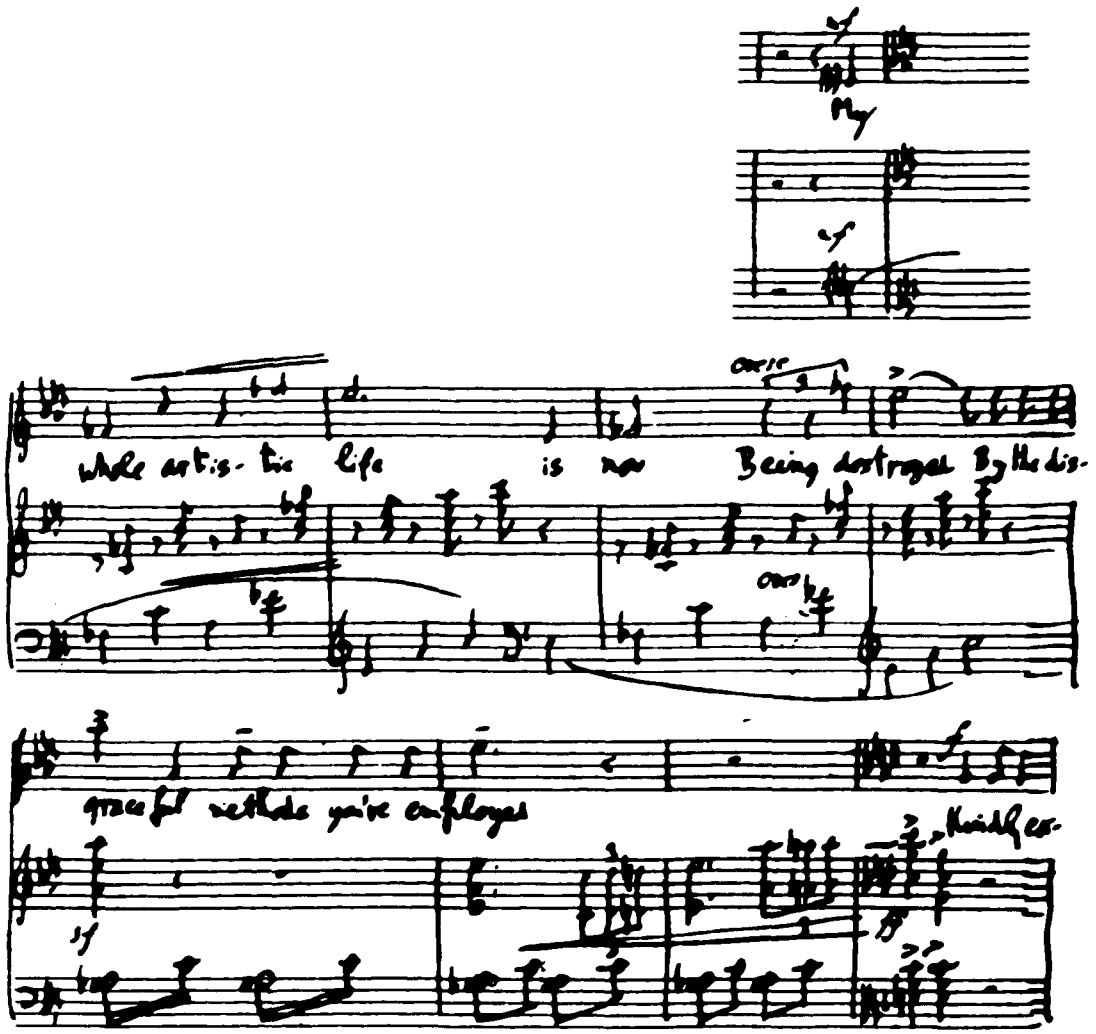
---

[132]Ibid., 34.

[133]Ibid.

accompaniment continues to ascend in octaves. The chromatic triplets on the fourth beats give a melodramatic effect as the crescendo builds to a *fortissimo* on final accented C major chords. (See Example 28.)

Example 28. (measures 461-468) Motive IV "Augmented Argument"



The key changes to C major. The accompaniment is all of a sudden silent as Miss Brown demands, "Kindly explain/Why you knocked on the wall again?"[134] The accompaniment comes in again on an accented D flat seventh chord on the last syllable.

The key changes from Miss Brown's last C major, to G flat when Mr. Smith answers at measure 472. Once again, the conflicting forces are a tritone apart harmonically. The tables are turned as Mr. Smith is on the defensive in this exchange, as he nervously replies in 12/8 time at *Allegretto.* The two characters have exchanged tempo markings, as Miss Brown has just delivered lines at the former *Allegro molto* of Mr. Smith. The accompaniment calms down by the use of a series of sustained chords at the *piano* level, as Mr. Smith says that he thought she was having trouble. Miss Brown snaps back at him (measure 475) at *Presto* and *forte*, with accented, 'impulsive' octave leaps in her recitative, "Indeed! What do you mean?"[135] The libretto shows that she says this "haughtily,"[136] although this word does not appear in the score. The octave leaps in the vocal line portray this without directions.

To show that Mr. Smith is trying to calm down her anger, Head takes the key down another half-step, from G flat major to F major (measure 476). Again his speech is marked *Allegretto* and *piano* in 12/8 over sustained chords, as he apologetically explains that he heard a slight discrepancy in her pitch.

---

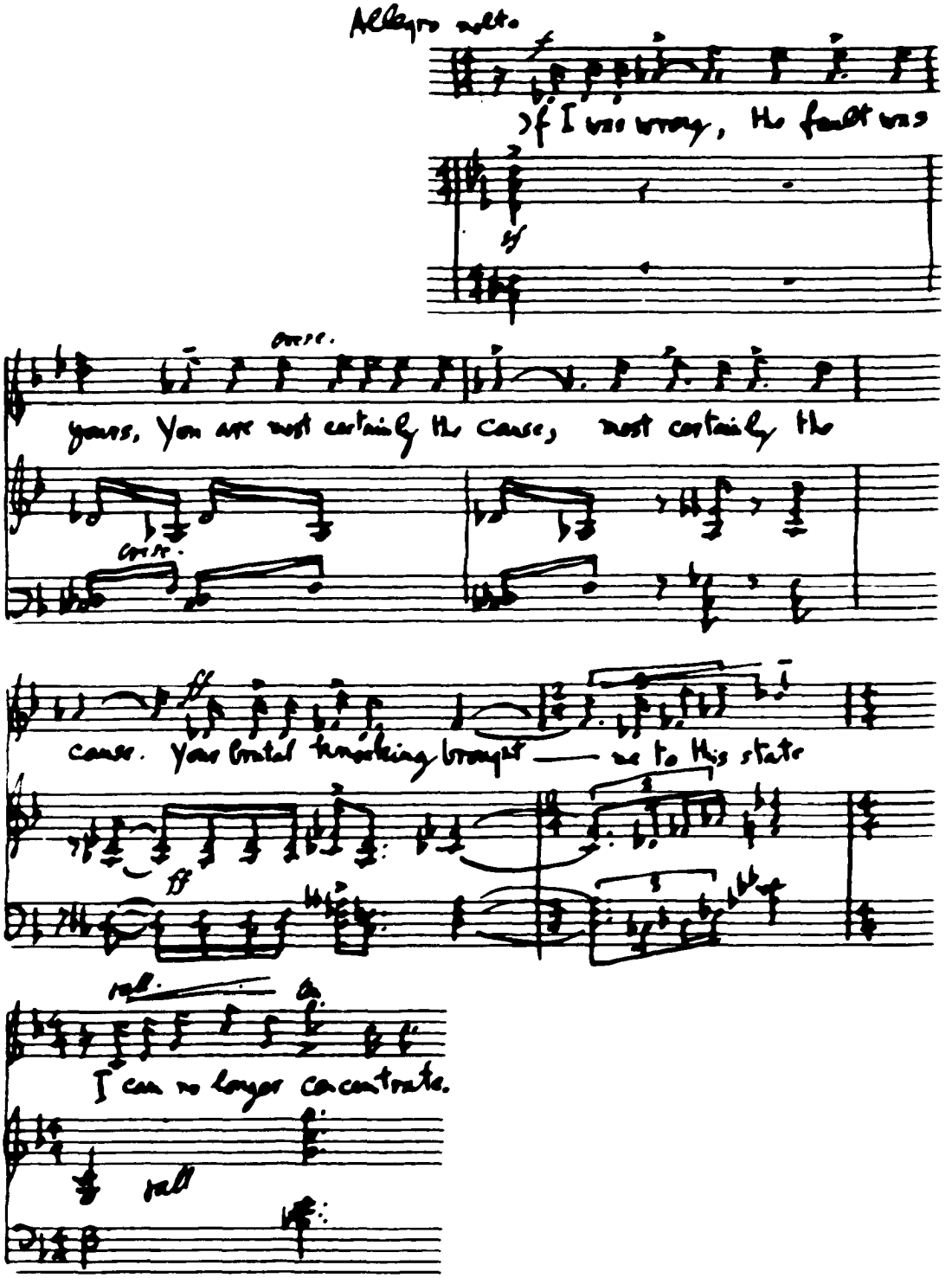
[134]Ibid., 34-35.

[135]Ibid., 35.

[136]Nancy Bush, 7.

In measure 483, we move from the crux of the drama to the climax, the most intense point of the action. It appears that the protagonist Mr. Smith may have pushed his neighbor (antagonist Miss Brown) too far, so far in fact, that she may very well have him thrown out of the flat, instead of him keeping her quiet. Her music strongly indicates that she has not been assuaged by his pleading tone and is still very angry at his insult. She is shown not only to be more assertive, but actually more aggressive. (See Example 29)

Example 29. (measures 483-488)



There is an accented *sforzando* chord on the downbeat of Miss Brown's retort. The meter turns away from the calm 12/8 to 4/4 and she sings at *forte* with the tempo again marked *Allegro molto.* Her *secco*-like recitative is on D-flat seventh for four measures as she says, "If I was wrong, the fault was yours./ You are most certainly the cause, most certainly the cause."[137] The repetition of the last words gives emphasis that she is now blaming him for her problems. The tremolos return in the accompaniment in measures 484 and 485 with a crescendo marking. In measure 486, both the vocal line and the accompaniment reach *fortissimo* with the singer in the range of her chest voice and accented sixteenth notes outlining the D flat half-diminished chord outline. The piano exactly doubles her speech-like rhythms with the D flat half-diminished chords on, "Your brutal knocking,"[138] with heavy accents on the accented syllables of the text. On the words, "Brought me to this state,"[139] there is another crescendo marking (coming from *fortissimo*) in the vocal line as the voice rises on the arpeggiated pitches of the D flat half-diminished chord, doubled in open octaves in the piano. Her irate speech culminates with yet another crescendo marking and a *rallentando* up to Miss Brown's high G, which is marked *tenuto*, on the words, "I can no longer concentrate."[140] Again there is an 'impulsive' leap of an octave up to the high pitch. After the D flat chords for five measures, one would expect that G flat would follow. Instead, Head unexpectedly goes to C

---

[137]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 36.

[138]Ibid.

[139]Ibid.

[140]Ibid.

major, finishing her line on a C seventh chord, a tritone away from what was expected.

At measure 489 Mr. Smith returns to the calm 12/8 meter and *Allegretto* tempo marking. The accompaniment is again sustained and both voice and piano are at the *piano* dynamic level. The key is E flat major, down a third from his last statement. Again this may signify continued effort on his part to defuse the situation. It also anticipates the key of the return of the aria. In measures 492 through 495, he quietly inquires, "If I could help you with the score"[141] over sustained F seventh, then B flat ninth chords, his vocal line begins to sound like the style of her ballad-aria. The melodic shape is reminiscent of her opening cadenza even though it is much more limited in length and range.

At measure 495, "He opens her score which she still has in her hand,"[142] and proceeds to sing the first (plain) eight bars of her aria on the syllable, "la." The vocal line and the accompaniment are both marked *piano*, and the piano plays the correct harmonies. Still trying to pacify Miss Brown, the accompaniment is almost exclusively in the lower range of the treble clef until two notes in the final cadence. There is a *poco accelerando* marked for the second four measures of the period, which would be typical of someone singing through a song to get more quickly to the problem spot.

There is an *Allegro* marking in 2/4 meter at measure 504, as the vocal line goes into a dry recitative with quick speech-like rhythms over a sustained G major

---

[141]Ibid., 37

[142]Ibid.

chord. Mr. Smith is quick to explain that most of the aria is fine, "Only this passage—all the rest shows off the aria at its best."[143] The accompaniment goes into the last four measures of Motive II, the "Banal Ballad" motive, back at the *Allegretto* tempo and 6/8 meter. Instead of the tremolos in the bass line when Miss Brown sang it previously, there are chords which are sustained a full-measure each, and the melody is a single line in the treble clef in the soprano's range. It is purposely simplistic. There is a crescendo leading up to the "correct" pitches on the top A flats, which are accented.

Back in 4/4 and *Allegro* at measure 511, Mr. Smith rushes on to explain his case delicately. His unease and uncertainty is portrayed musically by the underlying F fully diminished harmony, and the very quiet crescendo only up to a *piano* dynamic level. Since Miss Brown has not interrupted with an angry reaction thus far, he moves into the 6/8 meter again with quick speech-like recitative to tentatively suggest that they might sing it together. The harmonies show that he becomes bolder as he speaks, with tonal cadential harmonies of A-flat major, E-flat seventh to A flat again.

The stage direction at measure 515 says that, "She holds the score, he sings standing just behind her."[144] The libretto adds that what follows is, "Short passages of duet in classical operatic style."[145] Again we have the music of the aria, Motive II. At a *moderato* tempo, the two of them sing in unisons, thirds and sixths—the

---

[143]Ibid.

[144]Ibid., 38.

[145]Nancy Bush, 7.

most consonant harmonies possible. Fortunately in measure 518, the soprano is able to sing the top A flats on the correct pitch with Mr. Smith singing on the F below. This is a very important point in the dramatic action, in that it is the first sign that a resolution to the conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist might occur.

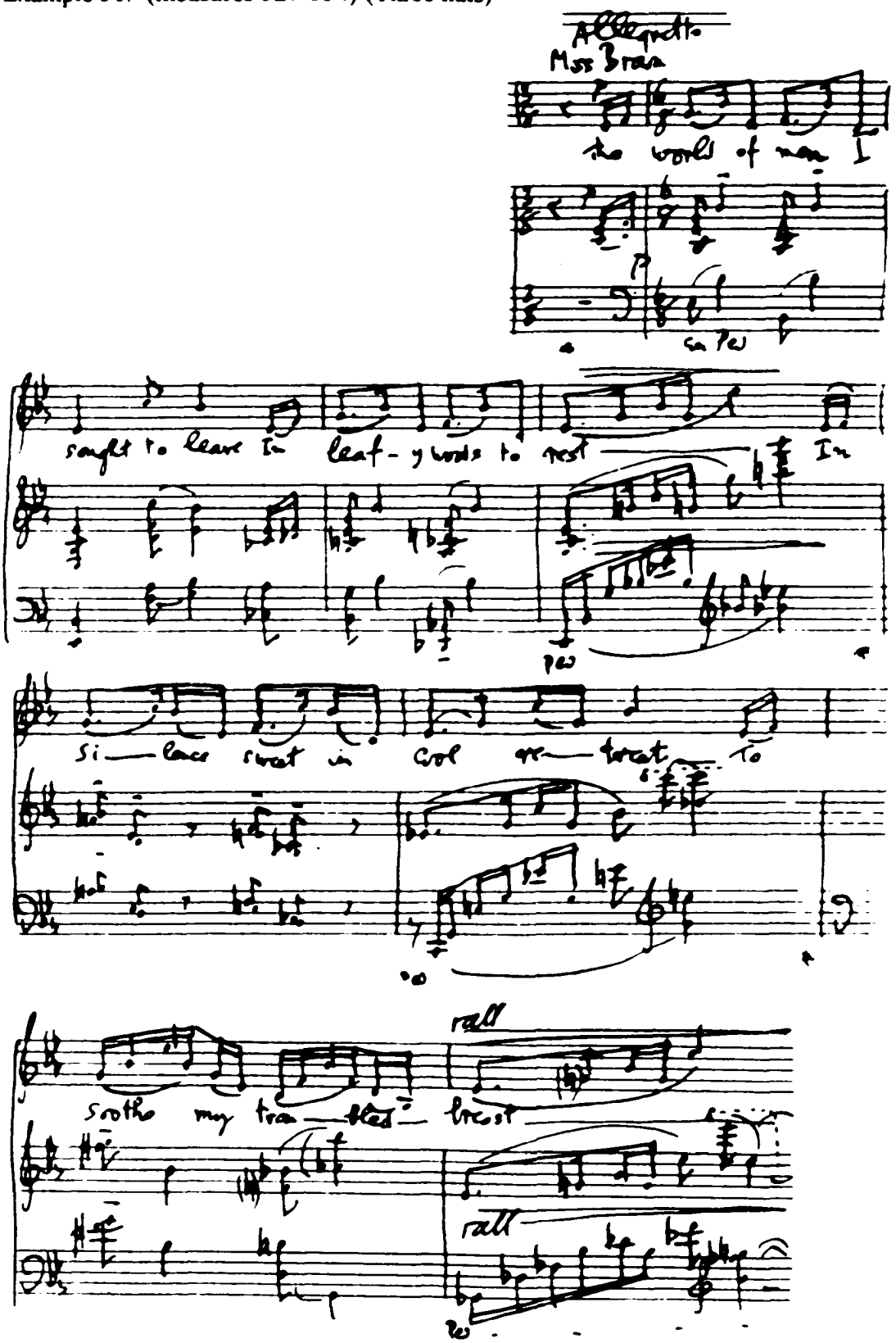
In measure 521 Mr. Smith offers to play the aria for Miss Brown from the beginning. His vocal line begins in *secco* recitative, but ends more in the 'pretty' style of her aria. Although still in E flat major, some unusual chords begin to appear as he progresses in the song—G flat major to B flat major to B flat augmented. His last pitches are 'sweetly' echoed twice in the upper octaves of the keyboard, with a *rallentando* and decrescendo to *pianissimo* with the sustaining pedal down throughout the augmented harmony.

The libretto directs, "She sings to his accompaniment, which gradually becomes more atonal and strange."[146] Miss Brown sings the first eight measures (529 through 534) of the ballad-aria exactly as it was heard previously. (See Example 30)

---

[146]Ibid.

Example 30. (measures 527-534) (Three flats)



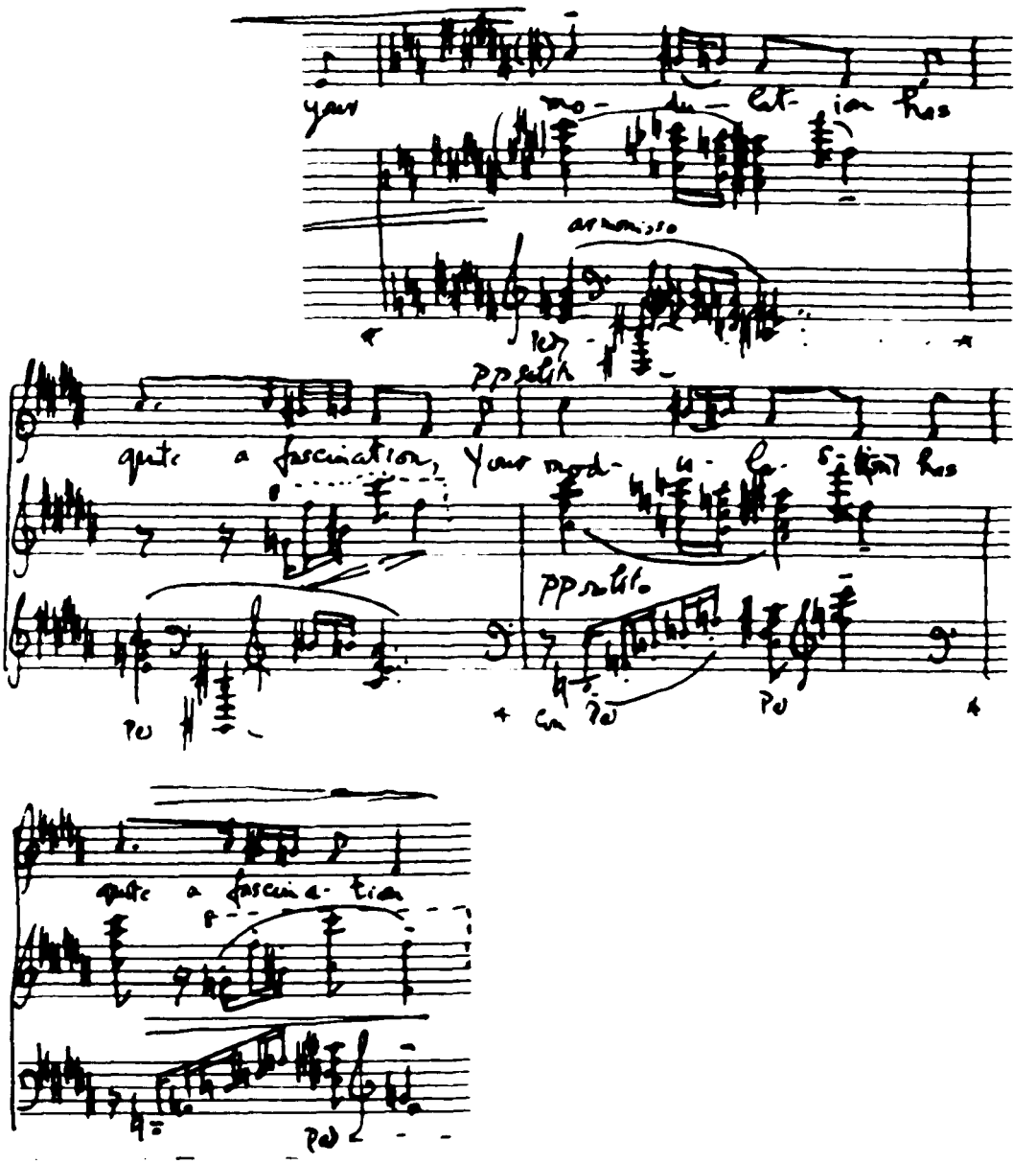
The accompaniment, now being played by Mr. Smith begins exactly as before, but by the third measure there is an addition of a C to the E flat chord, making it a C minor-seventh, followed by a D flat eleventh and finishing with an E flat augmented chord with a C over an E flat major chord. In other words, the harmony is filled with "atonal and strange" sounds, such as multiple minor seconds, minor ninths and tritones. For instance, in measure 531, the vocal part on the pitch G is sung over the piano's part, A natural played with B flat. The entire accompaniment for this measure is made up of minor seconds in both hands, an octave apart. On the singer's pitch C, is C flat played with B flat. In measure 532 the right hand doubles the vocal line outlining an E flat chord, over an arpeggiation of C major, to minor, back to major. The last chord of the C major harmony has D flat against the C, in a major seventh interval for the chiming effect in the upper range. This combination of the stark atonality underneath the absolutely innocuous, predictable ballad melody is nothing short of ludicrous.

Miss Brown stops singing to comment on the strange harmonies and the considerable change in the resulting music, in measures 535 to 538. This is delivered in a *secco*-recitative style with minimal accompaniment. On Miss Brown's following lines, "And yet your modulation has quite a fascination,"[147] the music is reminiscent of Motive V, the "Misunderstood Modernist" motive. The rhythms and intervals are altered, but the biggest difference is that it is cast in a major instead of minor tonality. This makes it lose its heavy and ponderous sound. (See Example 31.)

---

[147]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 40.

Example 31. (measures 539-542) Motive V "Misunderstood Modernist"



In measure 539 the key changes to B major, a bright sharp key. Head begins with a 'beautiful' C# thirteenth chord, followed by a parallel chord progression finishing on F# seventh, marked *armonioso* (harmoniously). The sustaining pedal is held

throughout the measure. The whole effect of this Debussy-like parallelism is similar in sound to a musical description of some exotic island waterfall. Perhaps Head is giving Mr. Smith a chance to show off his abilities as a composer to create something beautiful when he wishes to do so. The measure with the word, "fascination" (540) uses the C# fully-diminished chord going to the F# seventh chord. The two colorful measures are repeated at a *subito pianissimo*, with the vocal line and treble line of the accompaniment the same. The left hand this time arpeggiates up from the bass in soft staccatos on a D minor outline in contrary motion to the descending parallel chords, pedaled the first time and without pedal the second time.

Mr. Smith stops playing to ask, "Really, you like it?"[148] in measures 542 and 543. The tempo is *Piú mosso*, but delivered at the *piano* dynamic level with a crescendo. This shows that the character still has some uncertainty about the situation. Miss Brown's response begins with no accompaniment. The *allargando* and the accented top pitches give emphasis and certainty to her statement, "Why of course don't doubt it."[149] When she refers to the originality of his music, her vocal line, marked *rallentando*, is accompanied in a variation of the 'fascinating modulation' music just previously heard.

Mr. Smith's next reply (measure 548) is as an aside to the audience, "So

---

[148]Ibid., 41.

[149]Ibid.

much encouragement is most surprising./ I feel my spirits rising."[150] The key has changed to G major with an *Allegro a tempo*. The accompaniment has blocked chords, the first being sustained two measures. He arpeggiates up the outline of the G major chord, with consecutive intervals of a perfect fourth and perfect fifth on "my spirits rising." The brightness of the purely major key and the vocal line following the pitches of the chord, as well as the energetic rhythms, are exemplary of Frederick Corder's techniques for achieving the emotion of exhilaration or triumph:

> Exhilaration, like Joy, demands imperatively the major key, plenty of noise, an animated, well-marked tempo and melody that leaps from one note of the chord to another. ... To give a glad feeling the harmony must be simple and concordant.[151]

Mr. Smith follows with even more ascending major arpeggiations on the E-flat major chord to syllables of "fa la la," showing his exuberance. The phrase ends with a *rallentando* on *forte* with a crescendo, as he moves up chromatically to the key of F# major (measure 552).

According to the libretto (but not the score), the next statement is directed to Miss Brown. The importance of this realization is greatly emphasized by the *Lento maestoso* and *fortissimo* markings (measure 553) at Mr. Smith's words,

---

[150]Ibid.

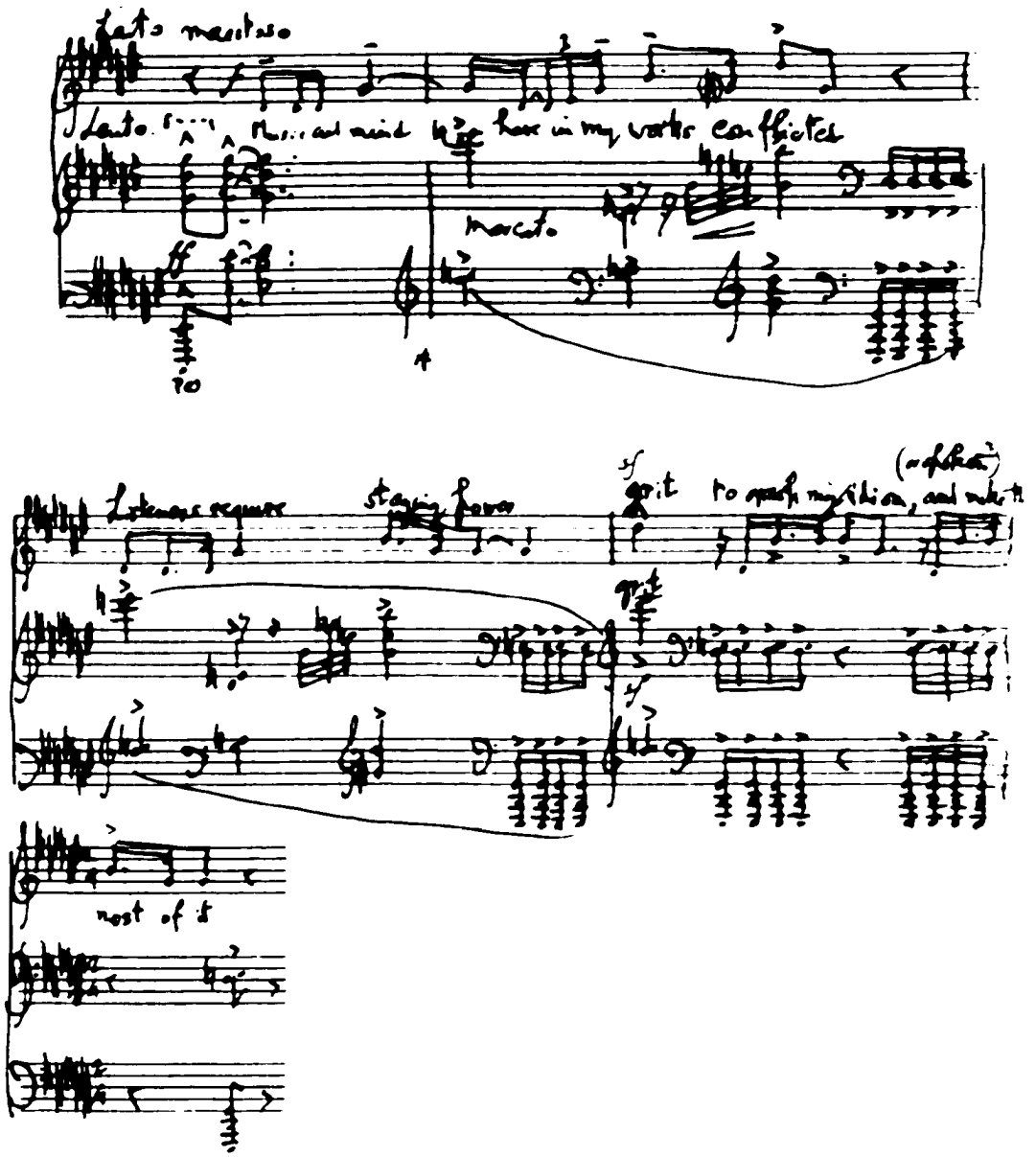
[151]Frederick Corder, 71.

MR.SMITH: Music and mind have in my works conflicted;
Listeners require staying power grit,
To grasp my idiom, make the most of it,
And so I must admit
My audience up to now has been restricted.[152]

Mr. Smith's vocal line is still in *secco*-recitative style, traversing the G# minor chord outline, the rhythms adhering closely to the speech patterns. The accompaniment, on the other hand, goes back to the exaggerated parody of atonal music. (See Example 32.)

[152] Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 41-42.

Example 32. (measures 553-557)



Right after the word, "conflicted," Head drops both hands into the bass clef with four accented sixteenth notes hammering out G#1, D#2, G#2, D#3 and E natural 3. This same hammering occurs after the words, "staying power," "grit" and "idiom."

In addition, there are minor seconds jumping about from the high to the low range of the keyboard, with *sforzando* minor seconds on D#5, E5 and D#6, E6 on the word, "grit." Beginning with the word, "listeners," Michael Head has written the text above the vocal line instead of below it. This is the only place in the score where this is done. Above the words, "and make," he has written in parentheses the words, "or spoken." It seems odd that he would not have written it at the beginning of the line to correspond with the location of the text. It is obviously an option, as each pitch is written with a full note and not an "x". It would probably be quite effective, however, to take these into a kind of *Sprechstimme* to give a kind of Schoenbergian "Pierrot Lunaire" effect to match the wildly atonal music. Head does say that the following line of recitative is sung (measure 558). Here Head gives the singer the marking of "ad. lib. Recit." over *piano* sustained chords as the composer Mr. Smith quietly admits his problem of not having an audience for his work.

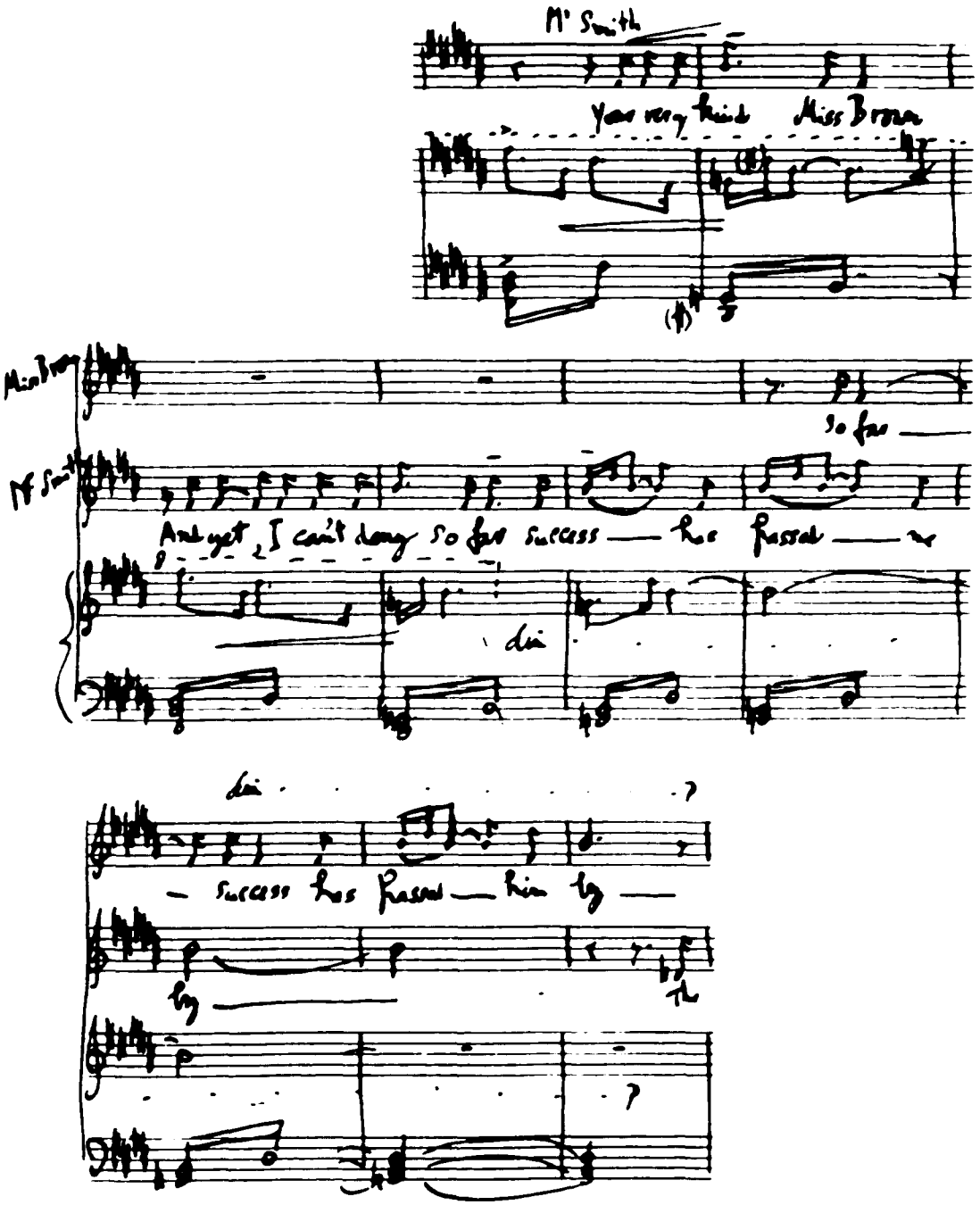
Miss Brown finally speaks again (measure 560), her entrance in the key of G major beginning with an all-treble rolled *forte* E flat augmented chord. At *Allegro vivace*, she sings the music of Motive III, the "Optimistic Opera singer" motive, in its bright, bouncy rhythms. Returning to her positive, outgoing attitude, she shows her compassion for the neglected composer. At measure 565, the "Augmented Argument" motive, Motive IV, is used as she says, "You write with so much fire and verve,/ Yet you've not had the notice you deserve."[153] There is a crescendo over the tremolo chords leading to "fire and verve."

---

[153]Ibid., 42-43.

In measure 569 at Mr. Smith's entrance on, "You're very kind Miss Brown," the key changes to B major. It is of great interest to note that the "Augmented Argument" motive, Motive IV is inverted in the accompaniment. Through this technique, Michael Head highlights the dramatic device of reversal that is being realized in the action of the opera. The antagonist Miss Brown has become the ally of the protagonist, Mr. Smith. The vocal lines follow the outline of the B major chord as Miss Brown echoes Mr. Smith's sentiments about success passing him by. There is a diminuendo over this reflection on his career. (See Example 33)

Example 33. (measures 569-577) Motive IV (inverted) "Augmented Argument"



At measure 578, the key changes to G major and 4/4 meter. It is marked "Allegro, (rhythmic)" as Mr. Smith continues to analyze his situation in *secco* recitative on G major tonic pitches. As he discusses the reaction of the public and the critics to his composition, the accompaniment plays the "Flat/Craft" motive, Motive VII three times, in a two-measure, extended three-measure and then two-measure version (measures 579-580, 582-584 and 586-587). The motive is used under the following lines, which all refer to his musical composition style:

> The public tend to give me the cold shoulder,
> While critics think I should have been much bolder.
> And though I've strictly kept the Nine Tone rules...[154]

Head uses a B flat augmented chord against the G major tonality on the words, "cold shoulder" and "much bolder." On the *forte* repetition of "much bolder," sung by both singers, he actually has the singers singing the B natural in their G major against the B flat in the accompaniment's E flat minor seventh. When he says, "Nine Tone rules," the motive (Motive VII) uses nine tones in its melodic presentation, with one repeated pitch.

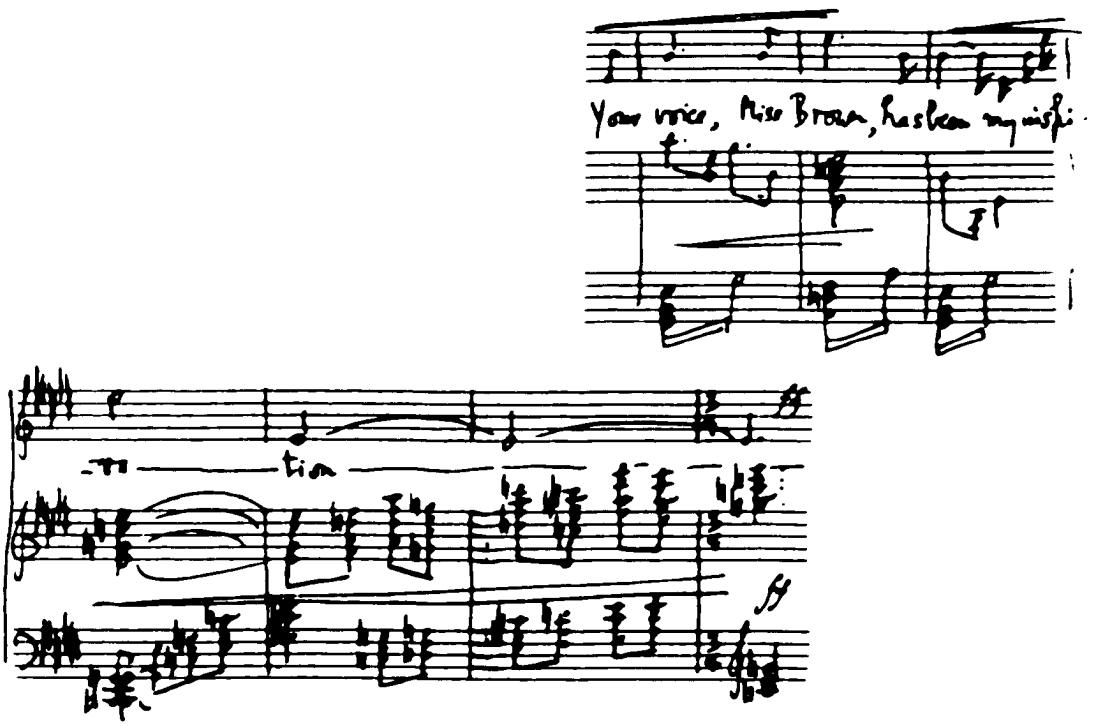
There is a crescendo marking up to *forte*, accented pitches on, "two stools," showing the importance of Mr. Smith's realization of why he has not been successful in the past. This is placed over C flat augmented going to E flat augmented chords. This is followed by a *sforzando* on the word, "But," to give emphasis to the reversal of his fate. In obvious reference to this dramatic reversal, Head once again inverts Motive IV, the "Augmented Argument" motive, in the accompaniment to the text referring to the end of Mr. Smith's humiliation as a

---

[154]Ibid., 44.

composer and the credit given to Miss Brown (measures 590 through 597). The tempo in this section is marked *Agitato*. Again Head uses the Corder techniques for expressing exhilaration and triumph—"major key, plenty of noise, an animated, well-marked tempo and melody that leaps from one note of the chord to another."[155] Mr. Smith refers to Miss Brown's voice as having been his inspiration. (See Example 34.)

Example 34. (measures 595-601)



On the last two syllables of the word, "inspiration," there is a burst of C major for a full measure and an eighth note, before a crescendo on a string of splendid,

[155]Frederick Corder, 71.

ascending D eleventh chords culminating in a fortissimo C major chord in the upper range of the keyboard (top G6). This resplendent explosion of C major is like the flooding of light pouring out of the opened door in one of the unlocked rooms in Bartok's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*. According to Deryck Cooke,

> The expressive quality of rising pitch is above all an 'outgoing' of emotion. To rise in pitch in the major is normally to express an outgoing feeling of pleasure. This may be an excited affirmation of joy (fast and loud—the climax of Beethoven's Overture *Leonora No. 3*);[156]

Michael Head pulls out all these techniques in order to throw off the overriding mood of frustration which has been experienced by the main character throughout the drama.

Mr. Smith's following lines are sung at *fortissimo* with a *fortissimo* accompaniment and a marking of *Allargando*, measures 601 through 606. Appropriately he sings the tune of the 6/8, E-major ballad aria when he says, "I'll write a melody into my score!"[157] Even though already the music is a *fortissimo*, there is a crescendo on the line, "Why did I never think of it before?"[158] culminating with a *sforzando* on the last syllable, which is sustained for two measures. Head has used this greatest dynamic level of the entire opera to highlight these measures as the end of the climax of the dramatic action.

Measures 607 through 644 are sung first by Mr. Smith and then repeated by Miss Brown at *mezzo-forte* and marked "*Allegro*, rhythmic." This is the denouement of the play, where the complications are unraveled and the conflict is

---

[156]Deryck Cooke, 105.

[157]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 45.

[158]Ibid., 45-46.

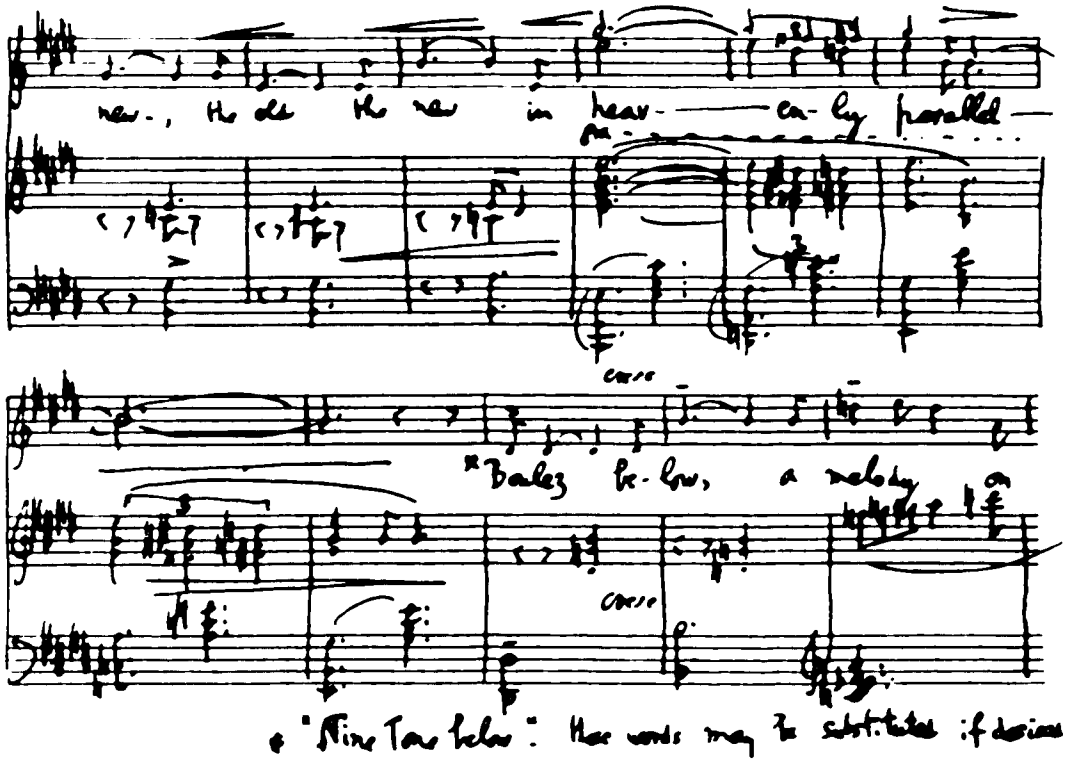
resolved.[159] As soon as Mr. Smith speaks about combining the Nine-Tone system and a tune in his music, Motive VII is heard, the "Flat/Craft" motive, which refers to his composition. When he talks about melody and the Nine-tone system existing side-by-side in "heavenly parallel," the music is appropriately played in the upper range of the voice and the keyboard, for heaven would be expressed as high. And of course, to paint the word "parallel" there are parallel descending chords, used in quarter-note triplets so as not to be missed. They are then repeated in the middle range of the piano with a decrescendo as the voice sustains the last pitch. (See Example 35.)

---

[159]Bruce Govich, "Glossary of Dramatic Terms," 2.

Example 35. (measures 616-625)

(Four sharps)



Head uses the words directly from the libretto, "Boulez below, a melody on top,"[160] at measure 623. However, he has added a note below which states, " 'Nine Tone below'—These words may be substituted if desired."[161] The music in measures 627 through 630 is borrowed directly from measures 89 through 92 earlier in the opera when Mr. Smith was talking about the landlord making him buy the key. This seems to have no motivic relationship to the words, "Once I begin, I shan't know

[160]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 46-47.

[161]Ibid., 46.

where to stop,"[162] but is simply a reuse of musical material and a reference back to the title of the opera.

The text, "The things unheard of, absolutely new,"[163] is based on a sequence of minor harmonies, G minor, E flat minor, A minor and F minor. Following this in measure 635, when Mr. Smith gives credit to Miss Brown for this revelation about his composition style, the music is *forte* and seems particularly bright and happy because of the contrasting major chords on the dominant B. The end of this section uses some rather clichéd extensions of the melody on the words, "due entirely to you."[164] These are over the harmonies b minor seventh moving to F# seventh, and are repeated several times, with the piano part playing little echoes of the melodic line in succeeding higher octaves. At the end of Miss Brown's repetition of this section of music, Mr. Smith joins her in a duet of the final words. Actually he takes over the vocal melody and Miss Brown sings an operatic-sounding obligato, beginning with a two-measure trill and turn up to a B6. She sings arpeggiations on the syllable, "ah," culminating in an outlined B major chord going up to the D#6. This is still all based on the b-minor seventh to F# seventh harmonies. (See Example 36.)

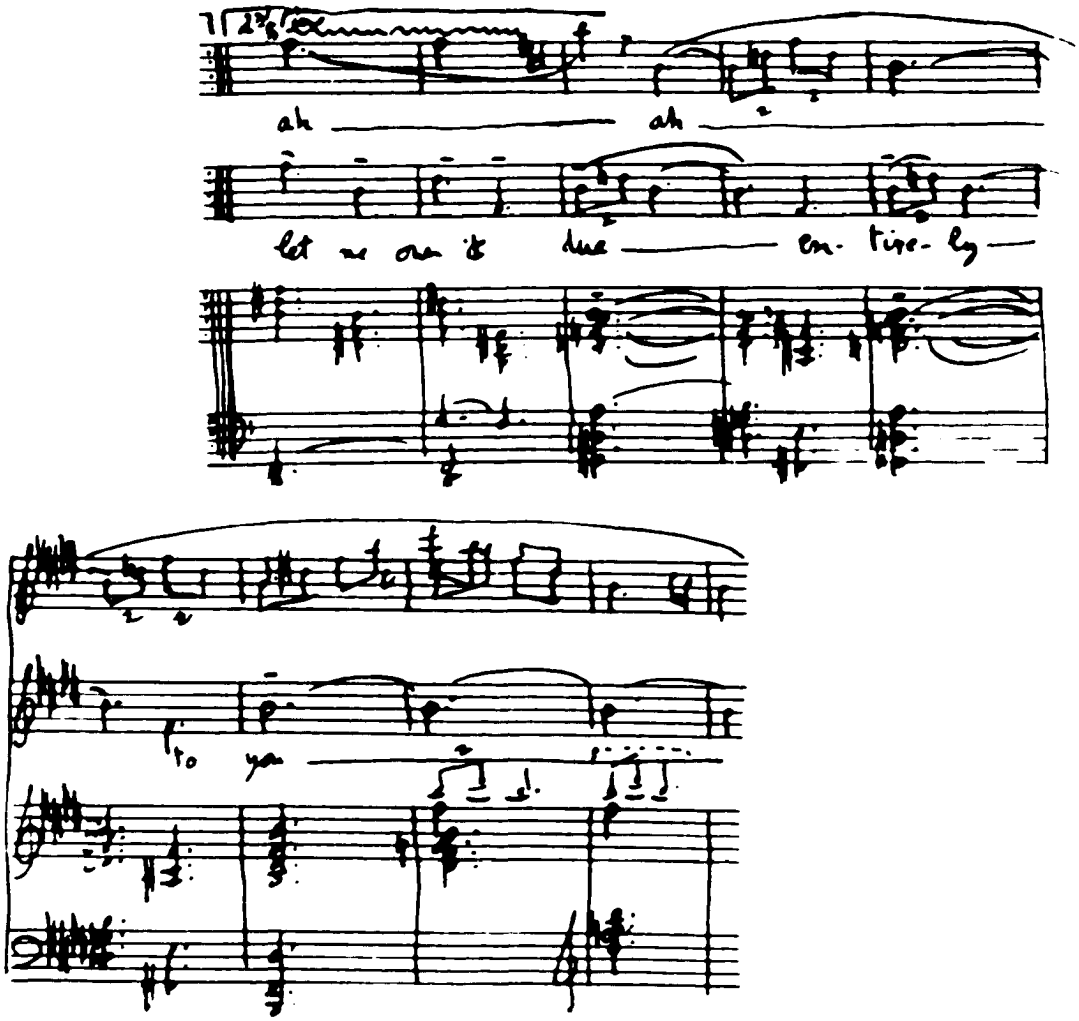
---

[162]Ibid., 47.

[163]Ibid.

[164]Ibid.

Example 36. (measures 645-654)



Frederick Corder discussed the musical techniques for achieving romance or sentiment in musical character with these words,

> It is impossible to decide whether any particular example is to be called Romantic, Sentimental, Mawkish or Sickening. This will always be a matter of individual taste, and therefore alterable as time goes on. But the essence of the romantic and sentimental feeling seems to lie in that deft sliding out and back into the key which modern harmony can effect, and our admiration

> of the skill and freshness with which we deem the trick to have been performed must be commensurate with our experience in such matters.[165]

It is evident that the mature composer Michael Head, known for his excellent craftsmanship, in this case used his considerable skill and experience to aim for the "Mawkish" or "Sickening" in this particular passage.

The next lines (measure 654 through 659) speak of Mr. Mamble, the head of the Nine Tone Group: "Let Mamble rave! / Obscurity is past!"[166] The vocal line and accompaniment together present Motive V, the "Misunderstood Modernist" motive once more. (See Example 37.)

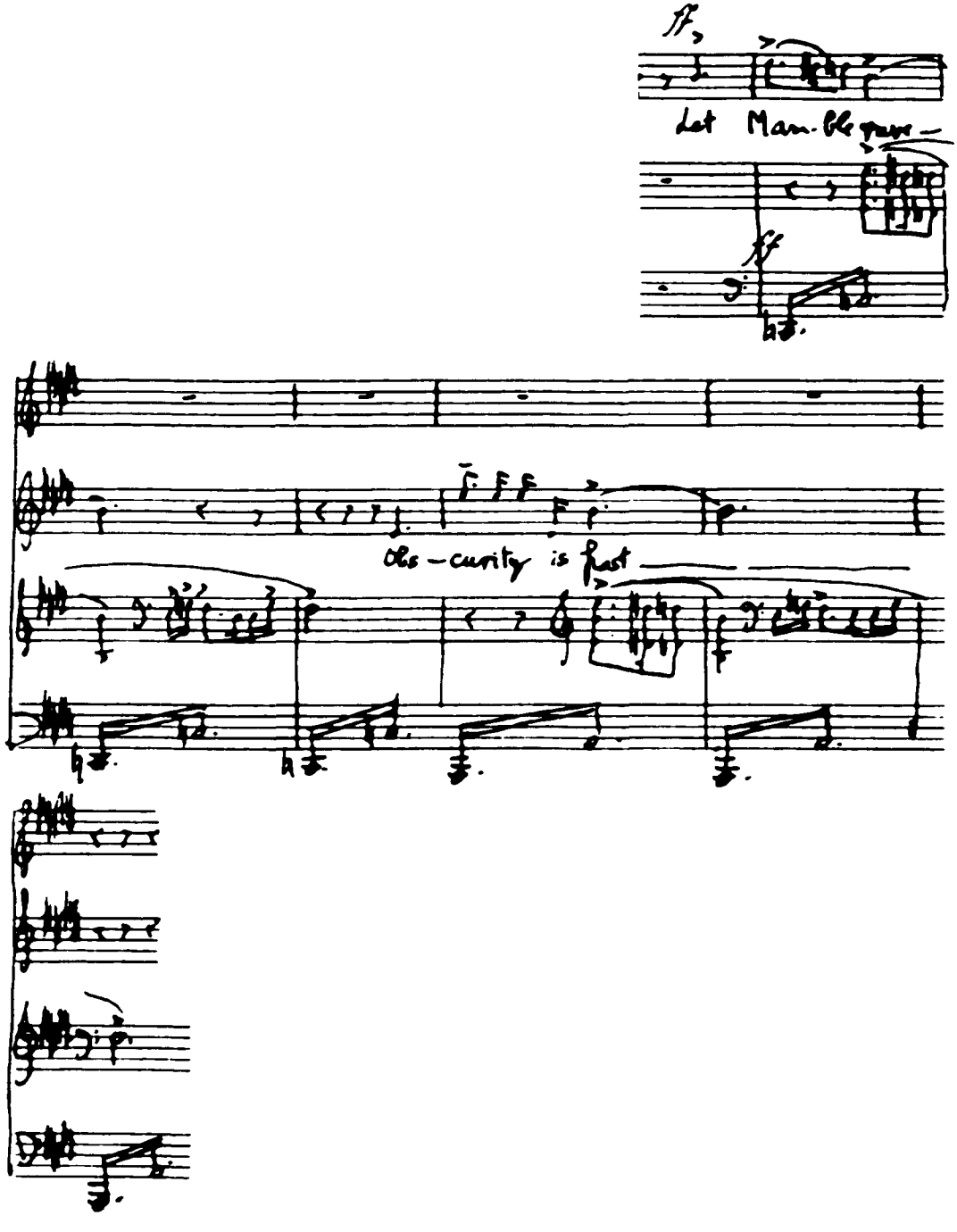
---

[165]Frederick Corder, 79.

[166]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, 48.

Example 37. (measures 654-659) Motive V "Misunderstood Modernist"

(Four sharps)

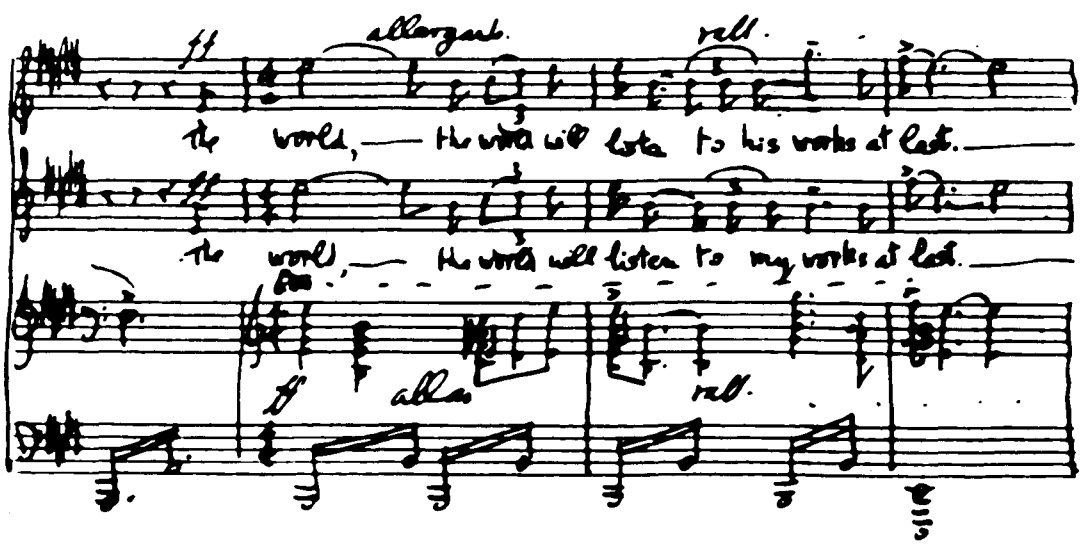


Mr. Smith shows his conviction with the *fortissimo* marking and accents on the strong syllables. This time there are only open octaves in tremolo in the bass line

instead of the dense texture of bitonal harmonies in previous occurrences of this motive in the opera. The motive is mostly major now with hints of minor. In the last three measures of this speech, Head sets up a sub-dominant pedal in the open octave tremolos in anticipation of the final duet statement of the action. Obviously this is not as strong as the use of the dominant pedal, but does give some sense of expectation to lead to the singers' last declaration.

For the final words, "The world, the world will listen to my works at last,"[167] Michael Head uses Motive IX, the "Profound Profession" motive. (See Example 38.)

Example 38. (measures 661-663) Motive IX "Profound Profession"



[167]Ibid.

It is expanded from the previous 2/4 statement of measures 391 through 393. It is again in E major, but this time is accompanied in the left hand with a tremolo dominant pedal in open octaves until the final cadence, where the open octave reaches down in the keyboard to E1. Again the right hand plays in the octave above the treble clef for a bright sound. The two singers sing in unison except for two pitches at *fortissimo* with markings of *allargando* and later *rallentando*. As in the earlier statement of the motive, the joy is expressed with the "simple and concordant" harmony in the major key with "plenty of noise."[168] The listener should also be reminded of Deryck Cooke's claim that the melody which descends in the major from the five to the one, describes "an incoming feeling of joy" and "an acceptance of comfort, relief reassurance, or fulfillment."[169] In addition he adds the following:

> This is only half the story, since out of these expressive qualities another equally important one arises—a sense of confidence—which becomes more particularly noticeable as the volume becomes louder and the phrasing more staccato or accented. This is of course a different kind of confidence from that expressed by ascending major music: it is the sweeping confidence that takes for granted that all difficulties are over as opposed to the active, assertive confidence that goes out to overcome whatever difficulties there may be.[170]

Head has thus expressed in a grand way, the emotion of exultation of the two characters as their problems have come to an end—the difficulties have been overcome.

---

[168]Ibid., 71.

[169]Deryck Cooke, 106.

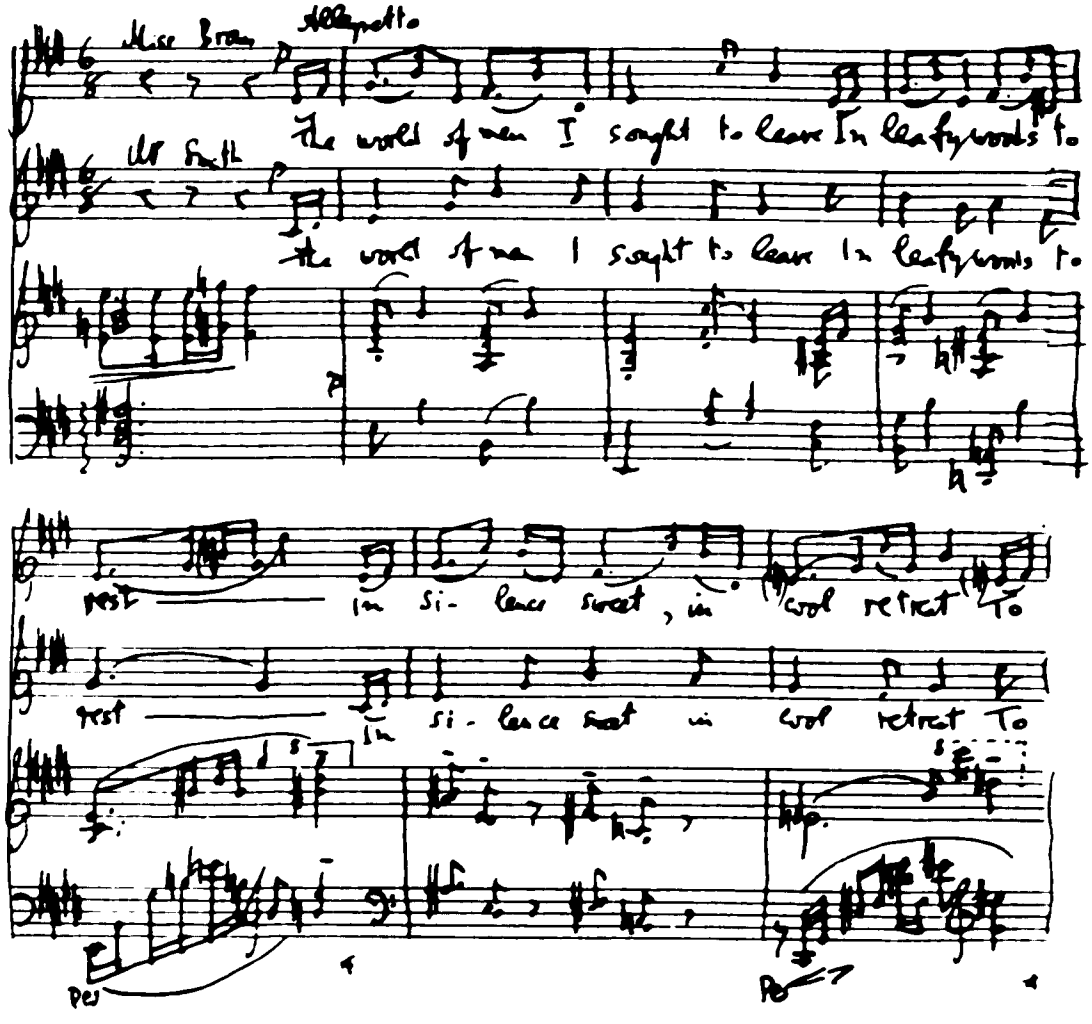
[170]Ibid., 167.

The piano launches immediately into an *Allegro vivace*, eight-measure statement of Motive III, the "Optimistic Opera singer" motive. Since both characters are so happy now, this seems to be an appropriate ending. The cheerful little 2/4 tune, after a *subito mezzo-piano* in measure 668, crescendos on an ascending scale that goes all the way up to E7, with a very final-sounding, dominant seventh to tonic.

However, in measure 671, instead of the expected repetition of the E major tonic, Head throws in a big C major chord with a *fermata*. The show is not over yet. The meter moves from 2/4 to 6/8 and the tempo is *Andantino* with *expressivo* as we hear the piano play the two-measure Motive V, the "Misunderstood Modernist" motive. By using both motives back to back, Head has presented the music of each character separately, first the singer and then the composer, before concluding the opera with the music that they produce together.

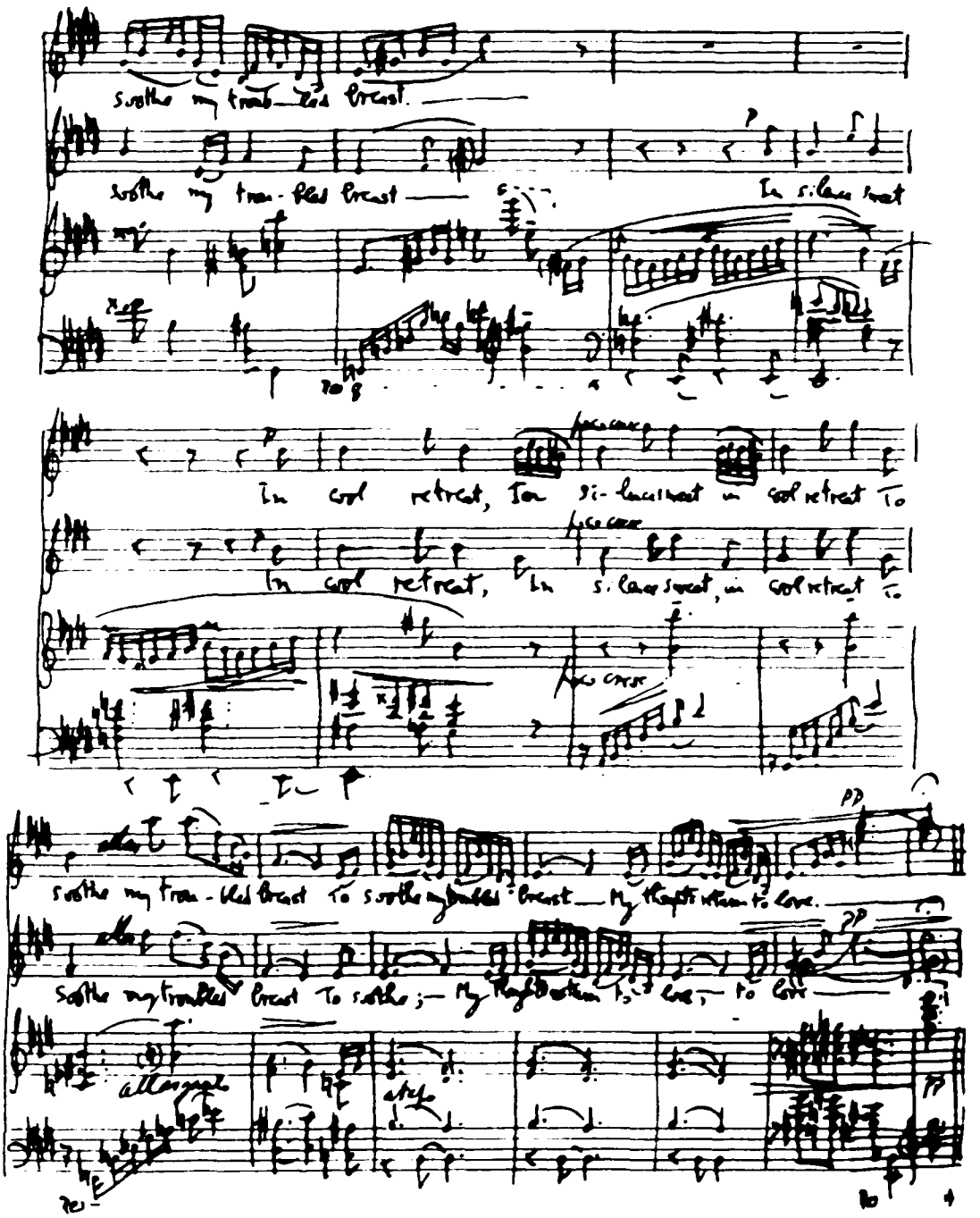
In a renewed spirit of cooperation, Mr. Smith and Miss Brown sing a traditional duet which, again, uses the 'strange and atonal' harmonies. (See Example 39.)

Example 39. (measures 673-694)



(continued on next page)

(Example 39 continued.)



The key is now in a brighter E major instead of E flat, but the harmonic scheme is the same—just as preposterous as before. The overriding mood of frustration is ended and the conflict between tradition and modernism is resolved as they are integrated. Michael Head's last cadence once again gives us descending parallel chords to remind us of the description of the old and new in "heavenly parallel."

CHAPTER IV

CRITIQUE / INTERPRETATION

The Genre

The opera *Key Money* was called a light opera by its creators. It could be described as a one-act, miniature, comic, chamber opera. It was the very type of opera that was the specialization of The Intimate Opera Company for which it was composed. It is of interest to note that this company was formed in 1930. Musicologist Nicholas Temperley in his discussion of the history of opera in England noted that the reaction of the British people to World War I had brought about a more radical musical nationalism in the years that followed. Along with this change was the rejection of pre-war opulence, which had been reinforced by rapid social and economic change. "Chamber operas, one-act operas and dramatic pieces with low budgets planned for school, amateur or studio performance have formed a growing proportion of the output of British opera."[1] Patrick J. Smith, in his historical study of the opera libretto, notes that the single-act form, which had at one time been reserved for light intermezzos, became powerful in its own right with *verismo* opera. "The twentieth century would see the broadening of the concept of the one-act form, in part because of its success in veristic opera, but also as a

[1]Stanley Sadie, ed. *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (London: Macmillan Press Limited, 1992) S.v. "Great Britain" by Nicholas Temperley.

rebellion against the ponderous five-act operas and lengthy myth-dramas of the nineteenth century."[2]

The chamber operas composed in the twentieth century were certainly not the first to use such small forces. As far back as the early eighteenth century, the Italian comic intermezzo was well-established in the repertoire of the opera world. Although this genre is often neglected by historians, the intermezzo held an important position in the theatre of its time, at first in Italy and then throughout Europe. Charles E. Troy in his historical study of the comic intermezzo emphasized some of the reasons for its popularity in a quote by composer Benedetto Marcello:

> In the "Instructions for Impresarios" of his satirical *Il teatro alla moda* Benedetto Marcello counsels trust in the intermezzi—along with the prima donna, earthquakes, thunderbolts, and the ubiquitous bear—to overcome any possible shortcomings of the scene painters, tailors, and ballet dancers; and instructs the intermezzo performers themselves to "give unending praise to the singers, the music, the libretto, the extras, the stage sets, the bear, and the earthquake, but...attribute the popularity of the theater exclusively to themselves."[3]

There are a large number of libretti preserved from the first half of the eighteenth century that contain the text of an intermezzo or indications that one was to be performed. Pergolesi's *La Serva Padrona* (Naples 1733) is one of the few of these little pieces that has maintained a position in the repertory to the present day, and that only because after its performance at Paris in 1752, it became the symbol for the supporters of Italian opera style and provoked the famous *Querelle des*

---

[2]Patrick J. Smith, *The Tenth Muse: A Historical Study of the Opera Libretto* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970) 357.

[3]Benedetto Marcello in *The Comic Intermezzo: A Study in the History of Eighteenth-Century Italian Opera* by Charles E. Troy (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1979) 2.

Bouffons.[4] Because of Pergolesi's early death and posthumous fame, as well as the lack of preservation of libretti in Naples, many works were incorrectly attributed to him. Research has shown that only two intermezzi were composed by Pergolesi, *La Serva Padrona* and *La Contadina Astuta*—a pasticcio for which Pergolesi wrote less than half the music. On the other hand, the career of the prolific composer of comic intermezzi Giuseppe Maria Orlandini (1688-1760) has been virtually ignored.[5]

These operas, which were composed by the same composers as the *opera serie* of the time, were often written to be performed along with their own serious opera. The intermezzo came about as the comic subplots were taken out of the serious opera libretti, as a result of the opera reforms of Zeno in the seventeenth century. The indiscriminate mixture of heroes, royalty and buffoons was eliminated in serious opera. The intermezzo (which means interlude, or interval in Italian) was performed between the acts of the *opera seria* and functioned as an interlude for the changing of scenery, providing the illusion of a lapse of time, articulating the drama of the *opera seria*, but most importantly, for providing humor to the audience, which had been an integral part of the libretti in seventeenth-century operas.[6] The intermezzi were later performed independently and a number were expanded into full-length *opera buffe*.

---

[4]Charles E. Troy, 1.

[5]Ibid., 43-44.

[6]Ibid., 63.

Besides providing humor for the audience, Michael Head's light opera *Key Money* has a number of features in common with this early opera form. First, it is written for only two characters, a male and female. The scenes of *commedia dell'arte*, which were the sixteenth-century forerunners of the intermezzi, used episodes of comic relief between stock characters, such as a young manservant or pageboy (pants role) and a lascivious old nurse (played by a man). Later it was more common for the characters to be an older gentleman and a beautiful young girl. Other characters were sometimes sung by these same two singers in disguises or other costumes. The intermezzo roles "became the specialty of male-female pairs of actor-singers, who frequently traveled from stage to stage."[7]

While the serious opera of the eighteenth century dealt with exalted human passions in personages from ancient history, the comic operas tended to show human nature in familiar surroundings of contemporary domestic life and used up-to-date language. In comedy the ability to act well was equally important with having a good voice.[8] *Key Money* has two professional musicians as its characters, but the setting is away from their performance venues, in an ordinary flat. The libretto, although in verse (as were the intermezzi) is not so much 'poetic,' as conversational. Strong acting ability, in addition to a sound vocal quality and technique, are required for this opera to be perceived as humorous by an audience.

---

[7]Thomas Bauman, "The Eighteenth Century: Comic Opera" in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera*, ed. Roger Parker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) 86.

[8]Ibid., 84

The Italian comic intermezzo commonly used a climactic device at the end of a scene: a concluding duet in which the two characters express a conflict of interests in a realistic exchange of insults—a musical quarrel.[9] In the intermezzo these were almost invariably of an amorous nature. In *Key Money* this musical quarrel (not of an amorous nature) takes place between the composer, Mr. Smith, and the opera singer, Miss Brown. The argument takes place in alternating lines between the two characters, and uses the rapid, disjunct motion and a wide pitch range that were features of the eighteenth-century buffo arias.[10] (*Key Money* does not use the other feature of these arias—the frequent repetition of short motives.) Almost without exception the intermezzo contained as a final number, a duet which functioned as the two-character intermezzo's "ensemble finale."

> The vast majority of duet texts in intermezzi fall into one of two categories: one portrays an argument or conflict of interest between the characters; the other expresses harmonious agreement or mutual affection. Generally a situation of the first type obtains at the end of an intermezzo's initial part; the second is present at the end of its final section.[11]

Like those of the eighteenth-century intermezzo, the final duet in *Key Money* exemplifies the "harmonious agreement" with its vocal lines filled with sixths and thirds between the two voices. Charles Troy, in his description of these final duets, notes that, "in the second part there is a more consistent combination of the voices, generally in parallel thirds and sixths."[12]

---

[9]Charles E. Troy, 16.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Ibid., 119.

[12]Charles E. Troy, 121.

The relationship of the subject of the libretto of *Key Money* can even be observed in the ideas used by Carlo Goldoni (1707-93), considered the chief literary architect of the Italian *opera buffa*. Goldoni had written intermezzi in Venice from 1734 to 1741.[13] In the development of the new Venetian comic opera he explored various possibilities for comic plots: "the critique of everyday reality through its reversal, the liberating disorder of the carnevalesque (sic), and the correction of a foolish obsession or its exploitation."[14] In the case of *Key Money*, it is the composer's obsession for absolute quiet that is dealt with in a comic fashion. Goldoni's libretti dealt with domestic situations of a lighter sort and satirized the contemporary mores,[15] as is the case with the Nancy Bush libretto of *Key Money*. Goldoni even employed a standard "woman drives man mad" soliloquy in his operas,[16] similar to the voiced sentiments of the exasperated Mr. Smith in *Key Money*. In addition, Goldoni's works were noted for being "graceful, straightforward and extremely fluent," with "nimble verse and clarity of expression," qualities similar to those described in previously cited critiques of Nancy Bush's libretti.[17] Miles Tomalin, a British song-lyricist, further described her skills, apparent in the libretto for *Key Money*.

---

[13]Thomas Bauman, 88.

[14]Ibid., 89.

[15]Ibid., 90.

[16]Patrick J. Smith, *The Tenth Muse: A Historical Study of the Opera Libretto* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1970) 115.

[17]Ibid., 112, 115.

> You have a marvelous fluency with words. They seem to bubble out with a sort of delicious light-heartedness. What you write is simple, lucid, and never tedious. I would think that this is just what is wanted for setting to music. It gives the audience a chance to understand what the singers are singing about.[18]

The recitatives of the *intermezzi*, like other types of Italian dramatic poetry of the eighteenth century, were made up of freely alternating lines of seven and eleven syllables, and were generally rhymed throughout. A succession of couplets was a common verse type, although many other rhyme schemes were used, including lengthy monorhymes. Eight syllable lines were the preference for arias in both the *intermezzo* and *opera seria*.[19] Nancy Bush's libretto for *Key Money* uses rhymed couplets almost throughout the opera, often with an additional internal rhyme scheme. The number of syllables is not set, but varies usually from six to nine syllables. The aria of Miss Brown uses eight-syllable alternating with six-syllable lines. This use of the eight syllable lines may have been one factor in the designation of the aria sung by Miss Brown as an eighteenth-century aria in Alan Bush's assessment of Michael Head's music.[20] Most of these eighteenth-century arias were in *da capo* form, just the same as the contemporary *opera seria*; Troy's research shows that only about fifteen percent were not.[21] Miss Brown's aria in *Key Money* actually appears to be a *da capo* aria that is interrupted before it gets to the

---

[18]Miles Tomalin to Nancy Bush, letter dated 7 March 1963, in the possession of Rachel O'Higgins, Histon, Cambridge.

[19]Charles E. Troy, 75.

[20]Alan Bush, "The Vocal Compositions of Michael Head" in *Michael Head: Composer, Singer, Pianist: A Memoir* by Nancy Bush (London: Kahn and Averill, 1982) 76.

[21]Charles E. Troy, 114.

return of the "A" section. The key structure would point to this, beginning the "A" section in the key of E-flat major, modulating to the key of G major for the "B" section; the end of the "B" section modulates back to prepare for a cadence in E-flat—A-flat ninth to E flat to B-flat seventh and the interruption before the final E-flat can be sung.[22] Even the use of the 6/8 meter of the opera singer's aria in *Key Money*, the imitations of the vocal line by the accompaniment, the suspensions and occasional chromaticism, as well as the subject of the text, seem to be reflective of the pathetic-type arias of this century. Charles Troy states that, in order to provide contrast in the intermezzi,

> librettists seem to have made a point of supplying composers with an occasional opportunity to vary the pace with texts of a mock-serious nature. Such texts generally take the form of laments, protestations of love, pleas for mercy, philosophical reflections and the like. Late Baroque practice...was for composers to provide for such texts a *siciliano*-like setting in 12/8 meter, generally in the minor mode, with imitation of the vocal line by accompanying instruments, suspensions, and touches of expressive chromaticism.[23]

In these early operas, word-painting was used extensively in the buffo pieces; many examples of word painting could also be seen in the analysis chapter of this study. Also noted in the analysis of the opera were numerous examples of a kind of *secco* recitative. Recitative in the comic intermezzo furnished "an indispensable vehicle for advancing the action in a musical context without sacrificing intelligibility of the text. The special requirements of comedy make the

---

[22]Michael Head, *Key Money*, 33.

[23]Charles E. Troy, 115.

secco style particularly indispensable in the intermezzo."[24] Accompanied recitatives were used to serve more dramatic functions, like portraying the supernatural or extreme moral torment, and were often parodistic to set anguished monologues.[25] This style of accompaniment is consistently used in *Key Money* by the exasperated composer, Mr. Smith when portraying his "anguished monologues."

Michael Head first composed his operas for piano alone, which would have easily accommodated the many changes of tempo in the score, and would have assured an understanding of the text. It is of interest to note, that the comic intermezzo used the orchestral ensemble less frequently than did the serious opera, and that continuo arias and duets accounted for a majority of set pieces, especially in the early decades of the eighteenth century.[26]

> Three reasons may be advanced for the persistence of numbers accompanied by continuo only in scores of intermezzi. In the first place, such pieces are customarily reserved in late seventeenth- and eighteenth- century operas for the less important roles; composers may have automatically considered characters of the intermezzo to be second-class citizens of the opera because of their descent from the latter's comic servants. Secondly, it goes almost without saying that textual intelligibility, a prime requirement in any type of musical comedy, may have constrained composers to score their numbers as lightly as possible to avoid obscuring the words. Finally, the extreme flexibility of tempo that apparently characterized the performance of set pieces in intermezzi may have militated against elaborate instrumental accompaniments.[27]

These tempo alterations often accompanied extreme changes of musical style in order to fit the dramatic action, resulting in a significant fidelity of music to

---

[24]Ibid., 102

[25]Ibid., 109-110.

[26]Ibid., 123.

[27]Ibid., 123-124.

text, considered to be one of the most notable features of comic style in the intermezzo. (This was in contrast to the ideal of *opera seria* to establish and maintain a single effect throughout an aria.)[28] In addition to the frequent changes in tempo, the intermezzo omitted long introductions and ritornelli in order to be consistent with the desired realism. Neither did Head use these instrumental interludes in *Key Money*. The numerous tempo changes in his light opera allow him to closely articulate the characters' actions and feelings, as well as highlight the dramatic values of the libretto.

The comic intermezzi frequently employed satirical themes in their libretti, and many of these operas were entirely devoted to satirizing the institutions of *opera seria*, with its stereotyped formulas and conventions. Two of the most popular included Pietro Metastasio's only intermezzo, *L'impresario delle Canarie* (*Dorina and Nibbio*) which premiered between the acts of his first musical drama in Naples in 1724, and featured a "comparison aria." The other most popular was Girolamo Gigli's intermezzo, *Dirindina, Don Carissimo and Liscione* written for Rome in 1715.[29] The prima donnas and castrati of opera seria were the object of the satire in Gigli's work. "This racy little story offers ample opportunity for satirical allusions to the failings of opera singers, including bad intonation, poor acting, memory lapses, and limited range."[30] Since Michael Head was a professional singer

---

[28]Ibid., 102.

[29]Ibid., 83.

[30]Ibid., 85.

himself, he must have tremendously enjoyed the humor derived from a professional singer having intonation problems in Nancy Bush's opera plot of *Key Money*.

As stated previously, the Italian comic intermezzi early in the first half of the eighteenth century were introduced by itinerant troupes into foreign courts as far away as Moscow, but reached London comparatively late. Here, as later in Paris, the intermezzo had its impact on the operatic history of a country. It was apparently a factor in Handel's decision to turn away from writing Italian opera and to begin writing oratorio.

> An English "intermede" was performed between the acts of an opera at the Queen's Theater, Haymarket, as early as 1709, but no intermezzi in English, or any other language, appeared in subsequent operas performed at the Haymarket Theater until the season of 1736-37, when a pair of Italian intermezzo singers, Anna Faini and Antonio Lottini, were imported to serve as a weapon in the Opera of Nobility's war against Handel's operatic enterprise at the Covent Garden Theater.[31]

The repertory of these two singers included five of the most popular intermezzi from the Continent (including three by Orlandini), but it appears that these specific performances did not greatly increase admissions at the Haymarket Theater.

These performances of intermezzi at the Queen's Theatre, Haymarket may have had an influence on British composer Henry Carey, when he composed what he called an imitation of an Italian intermezzo, *Nancy, or the Parting Lovers*, produced in 1739.[32] The work had started as an English interlude, with much the

---

[31]Ibid., 54-55.

[32]Roger Fiske, *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973) 156.

same function as the intermezzo. Carey stated in the preface to the libretto of his work,

> ...the Author drew the following Sketch, and form'd it into an Interlude, a Kind of Entertainment formerly in great Request, but now almost a Stranger to the English Stage. The Italians still preserve it under the Name of Intermezzo, which is equal to the Word Interlude. These little Starts of Fancy, not only afford a present Diversion, and supply a Vacancy on the Stage, while other Entertainments are getting ready; but, by Encouragement and Improvement, sometimes become (sic) Entertainments themselves.[33]

The work was expanded to what was termed an afterpiece, which did become independent. The through-sung work, with words and music written by Carey, "was a break-through for operatic realism. Never before in England had a modern situation involving ordinary people been treated entirely in music."[34] *Nancy, or The Parting Lovers* remained popular throughout the 18th century as *True Blue, or The Press Gang*.[35] Composer Thomas Arne responded later in his career to the changes in public taste to move towards this lighter *opera buffa* style, notably in *Thomas and Sally*. This was considered "an unusual but successful attempt at an Italianate brand of English-language comic opera with sung recitative."[36] This all-sung afterpiece, first performed at Covent Garden in 1760, had several revivals up to 1800.[37] It was also the first work revived by the British Intimate Opera

---

[33]Henry Carey in *A History of English Opera* by Eric Walter White (London: Faber and Faber, 1983) 182.

[34]Roger Fiske, 156.

[35]Stanley Sadie, ed. *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, S.v. "Carey, Henry" by Clive Chapman.

[36]Thomas Bauman, 98.

[37]Theodore Fenner, *Opera in London: Views of the Press 1785-1830* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994) 381.

Company in 1930.

Thomas Arne, called the leading figure in mid-eighteenth-century English theatrical music, had been a partner with Carey and J. F. Lampe in a company formed in 1732 with the purpose of performing English opera. Carey, Arne and Lampe had all been active in writing burlesques of opera. Musicologist Roger Fiske quotes V. C. Clinton-Baddeley in a definition of this term compared to satire, "whereas satire is 'violent and angry...burlesque is never angry, because its criticism is directed not against faults of virtue, but against faults of style'."[38] Arne's work, *The Opera of Operas, or Tom Thumb the Great* (1733), originally an afterpiece, was a burlesque on the conventions of opera. He used many musical parodies, such as coloratura passages on absurd words.[39] Carey's burlesque, the immensely popular *Dragon of Wantley* (set to music by Lampe) parodied the absurd monster in Handel's *Giustino*, and the hero was dressed like the famous castrato, Farinelli.[40] According to musicologist Clive Chapman, this opera "dealt Handel a crushing blow by cashing in on the more absurd aspects of operatic convention while utilizing Lampe's deep understanding of the Italian style to sharpen the point of the parody."[41]

---

[38]V. C. Clinton-Baddeley, *The Burlesque Tradition in the English Theatre*, quoted in *English Theatre Music of the Eighteenth Century* by Roger Fiske, 145-146.

[39]Roger Fiske, 148.

[40]Ibid., 149-151.

[41]Stanley Sadie, ed. *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, S.v. "Carey, Henry" by Clive Chapman.

In Roger Fiske's research for his book, *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century*, he studied opera scores from this era that survive orchestrally. They are listed in an appendix with designations of full-length operas and a second category of afterpieces. (Afterpiece is defined as: "An English opera or pantomime, usually about an hour long designed for performance following a play or other theatrical work, in the 18th century; a notable example is Arne's *Thomas and Sally* (1760).")[42] The scores of the afterpieces that survive number almost as many as the full-length operas. The early development of the English afterpiece in certain ways paralleled the continental comic intermezzo: both used ideas and music considered inappropriate for the main piece; both could be vital to the larger work's success; and both were popular because of their brevity, subjects and welcome relief from a sometimes tedious main piece.[43]

Thus it can be seen that Michael Head and Nancy Bush's opera *Key Money*, as a comic chamber opera making fun of the conventions of composition and operatic singing, has historical roots in the Italian comic intermezzo and its British counterpart, the English afterpiece of the eighteenth century. It is not intended in any way, however, to imply that Head and Bush modeled their work after these early operas, but merely to show the similarities of their light opera to this historic genre.

---

[42]Stanley Sadie, ed. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, S.v. "Afterpiece."

[43]Stanley Sadie, ed. *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, S.v. "Afterpiece" by Michael Burden.

Relationship to Twentieth-Century Chamber Opera

As mentioned previously, as a part of the anti-Romantic trends in opera, there was a desire for brevity and restraint beginning in the 1920s. Short quasi-operatic pieces for small forces included Stravinsky's *Renard* (1922). His opera *Mavra* (1922) was under a half-hour in length, and used musical parody in the story by Pushkin, in which Bach, Tchaikovsky and jazz bands are collaborating on an *opera buffa*. Milhaud wrote *Les Malheurs d'Orphée* in 1925 and *Trois Opéras minutes* on Greek myths in 1928. In this genre, Manuel de Falla contributed *El Retablo de Mases Pedro* in 1923. Hindemith's *Hin und zurück*, written in 1927, is only twelve minutes in length. The centerpiece of Malipiero's *L'Orfeide* trilogy, *Sette canzoni*, features seven different operas done in a single act.[44] "Schoenberg's one-acter *Von heute auf morgen* (1930) is a social satire in a double sense, a comedy of manners aimed at people eager to be up to date, and simultaneously a dig at composers doing the same thing."[45] In light of this study, it is ironic that this four-person, light, cheerful work (Schoenberg's first twelve-tone opera) was on a subject of the dangers of abiding to values in life and art posed by fashion, which is changeable.[46] The topic certainly pertains to the composer, Mr. Smith in the opera *Key Money*, who was trying diligently to follow the trend of modern classical music, serial composition.

---

[44]Paul Griffiths, "The Twentieth Century: To 1945," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera*, ed. Roger Parker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) 309-313.

[45]Ibid., 301.

[46]Stanley Sadie, ed. *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, S.v. "Von heute auf morgen" by O. W. Neighbour.

For a more modern counterpart of the miniature, one-act chamber opera, *The Telephone* by Gian-Carlo Menotti comes the closest to Head's light opera, *Key Money*. Like *Key Money*, Menotti's little comic opera is written for a female and a male singer. It also has a modern, domestic setting, and deals with a foolish obsession—Lucy's addiction to talking on the telephone. Like his other works, Menotti wrote the libretto and the music. He scored it for an instrumental ensemble—flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, percussion, piano and strings; but an arrangement of the orchestral score for two pianos is available.[47] The likeness of *Key Money* to Menotti's *The Telephone* was observed in 1963 by the British lyricist Miles Tomalin when asked his opinion of the libretto by Nancy Bush.

> Of your two pieces, I like "Key Money" best, but thought the railway sketch is more ambitious, and the theme a novel one. "Key Money," I would have thought, could make an excellent little one-act operetta, on a level with Menotti's "Telephone"...Surely there is a future for that one. I hope Michael makes a good job of it. May I hear it when it is produced?[48]

Menotti also wrote the libretto for Samuel Barber's witty, nine-minute opera, *A Hand of Bridge*, for four soloists and a chamber orchestra composed in 1959. Michael Head's light opera on the same subject, *The Bidder's Opera*, was written in 1931, and featured the same cast requirements (two couples) and similar orchestra requirements.

---

[47]Gian-Carlo Menotti, *The Telephone, or L'Amour à Trois: Opera Buffa in One Act* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1947)

[48]Miles Tomalin to Nancy Bush, 7 March 1963, in the possession of Rachel O'Higgins, Histon, Cambridge.

Although not on a comic subject, Leonard Bernstein's one-act opera *Trouble in Tahiti* has only a male and a female character (in addition to a background trio chorus) in a modern, domestic setting. The opera, which lasts approximately 40 minutes, uses a libretto written by the composer, and is exemplary in the craftsmanship of the text setting of the English language.[49]

Also noted for his setting of English texts was Benjamin Britten, the icon of twentieth-century British opera. Britten criticized the absolutely strict subservience to logical speech rhythms, especially when they are contradicted by the demands of the emotional content.[50] Michael Head was highly accomplished at setting the English language for his songs, and he strove for natural speech rhythms in his dramatic works; but, like Britten, Head made allowances for the emotional content of the text in rhythm as well as pitch. Although a number of Britten's works are chamber operas, mostly for six singers and fifteen instrumentalists,[51] none are on such a miniature scale as Head's *Key Money*. Britten's only comic opera, *Albert Herring* is in three acts and uses thirteen characters. Britten does use instances of musical parody in *Albert Herring* as a part of the humor of the work. When the hero drinks lemonade secretly spiked with rum, the orchestra plays the potion chord from *Tristan and Isolde*, and the martial C major has multiple relations to *Die*

---

[49]Leonard Bernstein, *Trouble in Tahiti: An Opera in Seven Scenes*, opera score, (New York: Boosey & Hawkes agent for Jalni Publications, 1953)

[50]Benjamin Britten, "Introduction" Peter Grimes; quoted in *Benjamin Britten: Peter Grimes*, comp. by Philip Brett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 149.

[51]Paul Griffiths, "The Twentieth Century: 1945 to the Present Day" in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera*, ed. Roger Parker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) 327.

Meistersinger.[52] In addition, John Culshaw stated that Britten "didn't care for the florid school of Italian opera, which he wickedly lampooned in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.[53]

Other commissioned works for The Intimate Opera Company included light operas on the same diminutive scale as *Key Money*. Joseph Horovitz, who was an adapter, conductor and pianist for the company, wrote *The Dumb Wife* (1953), a comic one-act opera based on Rabelais; also produced in 1958 was his comic one-act, *Gentleman's Island*.[54] *Three's Company* (1953), which featured an office typist heroine, was written by Antony Hopkins who was the director of Intimate Opera from 1953 to 1960. He also wrote the one-act *Hands across the Sky* in 1959.[55] The sophisticated one-act opera after Molière, *If the Cap Fits* was written by Geoffrey Bush and produced by the company in 1956. Written for students of the GSM, Geoffrey Bush's one-act opera *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime* (1972) was written after Oscar Wilde's short story, and showed Bush's talent for parody.[56]

---

[52]Hans Keller, "Introduction: Operatic Music and Britten," in *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, ed. David Herbert (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979) xxix.

[53]John Culshaw, " 'Ben'—A tribute to Benjamin Britten," in *The Britten Companion*, ed. Christopher Palmer (London: Faber and Faber, 1984) 62.

[54]Stanley Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, S.v. "Horovitz, Joseph" by Ernest Bradbury.

[55]Ibid., S.v. "Hopkins, Antony" by Hugo Cole.

[56]Ibid., S.v. "Bush, Geoffrey" by Hugo Cole.

Other Operas by Michael Head

The large majority of Michael Head's output was vocal music; his songs and choral works amount to some one-hundred sixty-two pieces of music. Like his choral music, five of his six operas were written after 1950. Except for the earliest opera, *The Bidders' Opera* written in 1931, all the libretti were by Michael Head's sister, Nancy Bush. Both composer and librettist were well-established and successful in their respective careers at the time the collaborations took place. The light, humorous character of these works, contrasted with both Head's and Bush's other artistic activities, reinforce Nancy Bush's statement in the letter about the Intimate Opera's commission for *Key Money*: "But, we also wrote for pleasure!"[57]

Since the scores of most of the light operas are not available, the following descriptions of Head's other operas will primarily be taken from the Michael Head memoir, in which Alan Bush presents an overview of Head's vocal compositions.[58]

Michael Head's first one-act opera was originally orchestrated; it was written in 1931 to a libretto by Mary Dunn. *The Bidders' Opera* is about four bridge players and their disagreements playing the card game. An understanding of the game of bridge is necessary to fully understand the humor of the situations the characters face, unlike Samuel Barber's *A Hand of Bridge*, which deals more with each player's daydreams. The host in Head's *The Bidders' Opera* suffers the misfortune of drawing his wife as his partner:

---

[57]Nancy Bush to Barbara Streets, 14 October 1986.

[58]Alan Bush, "The Vocal Compositions of Michael Head" in *Michael Head: Composer, Singer, Pianist* (London: Kahn and Averill, 1982)

Ah! Sorry is my lot,
My spirit 'neath misfortune bows,
For truly have I got
A most discreet and charming spouse.
But oh, when bridge with her I play
I wish her twenty miles away.[59]

The wife proceeds to commit a catalogue of elementary mistakes; the game moves on to lively music, with a climax of disagreement, but culminates in a final quartet.

Oh, bridge is a happy social game
Where everyone may call,
Where rubber never has a slump
And honours come to all.
So here's to the King and here's to the Queen,
And here's to the whole jolly pack!
And may your hearts make up to you
For the diamonds that you lack![60]

The only opera of Michael Head's to be published was his "Musical Play for Young Children" with spoken dialogue, *The Bachelor Mouse*, which was dedicated to his nieces, Rachel and Catherine.[61] According to Alan Bush, the work dates from 1951. Dr. Rachel O'Higgins confirms this in her statement that it was "first performed by the children of St. Christopher School, Hampstead in July, 1951."[62] (Its first performance in the United States is listed by Cameron Northouse in his book on twentieth century opera as taking place at Charleston Conservatory,

---

[59]Ibid., 75.

[60]Ibid.

[61]Michael Head and Nancy Bush, *The Bachelor Mouse: A Musical Play for Young Children in Three Scenes* (London: Boosey and Hawkes Music Publishers Limited, 1954) 3.

[62]Rachel O'Higgins to Marilyn Govich, 9 September 2002.

Charleston, Pennsylvania in 1961.)[63] Diary entries of Head refer to work on the operetta in August of 1952, "...Also correcting copies of "The Batchelor (sic) Mouse.[64]" In October of 1954, Head reports, "Mr. Batchelor Mouse done out."[65] In a further entry dated 28 March 1956, Head in summarizing a week filled with adjudication and performances, says, "Next day 160 mile drive to Oxford. Heard "Batchelor Mouse." Delightful children & so intelligent."[66]

Alan Bush considered this 60 minute children's operetta to be one of Michael Head's most delightful and successful achievements. It is written for six singing roles, two speakers and chorus, and is scored for piano, with additional parts for flute, clarinet, violin and cello. It has remained a popular work; it currently remains in print and can be rented from Boosey and Hawkes Music Publishers Limited. The publisher gives the following synopsis of *The Bachelor Mouse* on their website:

> Henry Mouse has recently moved to a charming new residence in the fields. His Aunt Moppet disapproves but is happy to share his tea of toasted cheese amongst herself and her children. After she has gone a knock at the door reveals a bedraggled fairy with an injured wing. The soft-hearted Henry admits her and she moves in, though he is annoyed when she swaps his slippers for a diamond necklace when the Old-Clothes Robin comes to call. At his birthday party, however, to which all the mice in the neighbourhood are invited, the wall of his abode is broken down by an alarming weasel, intent upon eating all the partygoers. Henry appeals to the Fairy to do something to save them. Can she not remember her spells? Fortunately, she knows one, and she dances to fascinate the weasel and put him off guard so

---

[63]Cameron Northouse, *Twentieth Century Opera in England and the United States* (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co.: 1976) 91.

[64]Michael Head Diaries, 13 August 1952.

[65]Ibid., 8 October 1954.

[66]Ibid., 28 March 1956.

that the mice can bind him. After she has saved them, she flies back to Fairyland, and Henry is left to enjoy his home with his new companion, the field mouse Dinah.[67]

Jonathan Frank, in an article in *Musical Opinion* discussing the music of Michael Head, had the following reaction to the work:

> In a totally different world altogether is the enchanting children's operetta "The Bachelor Mouse". The composer's sister, Nancy Bush (wife of the composer Alan Bush), has provided a delightfully "Winnie-the-Pooh" libretto. The music includes a gay Overture, some extraordinarily catchy, though never trite, songs and two dances for the Fairy—the first more or less in the style of the Overture, the second beginning dreamily but (most unexpectedly) working up into a frenzy of excitement.[68]

Dating from about 1961 is Michael Head's next opera, *Through Train: Railway Musical in One Act*, a school opera for teenage students. Like his first opera, this one requires a chorus, and the accompaniment, though scored for small chamber ensemble, may be given with piano only. The fifteen pieces of music include train music as well as solo songs and choruses. According to Mrs. Catherine Hinson, daughter of Nancy Bush,

> *Through Train* is a mild satire on railway closures in Britain in the 1960's by Dr. Beeching, Minister of Transport. Elements of the plot are drawn from the pre-war film *Ghost Train*, starring the British comedian Will Hay.[69]

She also noted that the opera had been produced by her husband, Michael Hinson in 1966 with teenage boys, and that the work had been well-received.[70] As previously

---

[67]Michael Head, *The Bachelor Mouse* synopsis, Boosey & Hawkes, opera on the Web, 26 October 2002. Data on-line; available from http://www.boosey.com/pages/opera/moredetails.asp?musicid=4505 Internet; accessed 26 October 2002.

[68]Jonathan Frank, "A Singer-Composer." *Musical Opinion* 84 (February 1961), 287-289.

[69]Catherine Hinson, interview 10 September 2002.

[70]Ibid.

mentioned this subject may have been chosen by Nancy Bush because of her brother's "abiding hobby" of model railway trains, with an elaborate layout at his Hampstead home.[71] In his diary entry 7 May 1971, Head stated, "Today I stepped into Beatties, bought a "crossover" with points. How I love the railway. I fear a sort of fascination I can't resist."[72]

The entertaining story of *Through Train* involves a junior porter who becomes a hero when he saves the face of British Rail, when a communication cord is pulled and an engineer passes out. This opera, like *Key Money*, has among its characters, an opera singer, this one a Wagnerian soprano engaged to sing Brünhilde in Bude. Head appropriately provides her with an accompanied recitative and aria. (It would be of interest to examine this score for its musical parody of Wagner, especially in light of Head's study with Frederick Corder.)

Michael Head began work on Nancy Bush's libretto for *After the Wedding* in late 1967, soon before moving into a house (his first time not to live in a flat) in the "pretty garden suburb" of Asmun's Hill.[73] His diary entries about the opera show his excitement and zeal for the new project.

> 15 December 1967—Exciting! I start a new light opera for Nancy 'After the Wedding.' I hold my breath—Is the music any good?
>
> 18 December 1967—My head is so full of tunes! Composing all day, except for a visit to the barber. I'm sketching out Nancy's second short light opera (After the Wedding). Is my music any good? George's song? Anthea's song, "Jenny is sweet" a haunting tune? Finally I couldn't resist jumping

---

[71]Ibid.

[72]Michael Head Diaries, 7 May 1971.

[73]Michael Head Diaries, 15 December 1967.

into the Italian Record lesson—Is the music here just perfect! So safe. Gosh I'm excited! Of course it may be too commonplace!

29 December 1967—Oh what exciting days! A whole free week in the flat, and I am working, composing at "white heat"! Nancy's opera (After the Wedding). I have some good themes for the songs. The dialogue is much harder. I change, and change it...

3 January 1968—More composition on After the Wedding. I fear I am "lurching" through this. Chained to the piano, my voice, and the phonograph!

20 February 1968—After the Wedding is going well—excited about it.

21 January 1971—Then my Opera (After the Wedding) (Nancy's libretto) how I have enjoyed composing it—some lovely tunes!

27 April 1971—I also really think I have got After the Wedding complete as a whole.

7 May 1971—How I work at the Opera! I sing it over, over, again. I hope improving it. At least I've got to the end (40 mins.) Some nice bits, but how I wish my harmony was more "colorful"! I'll try some more.[74]

The story of *After the Wedding* is about a couple's relationship after their daughter's wedding. When her husband George is out of the house, the wife Anthea begins her Italian language course from a recording "in which a tenor sings seductive phrases for the student to repeat."[75] George returns, and, along with a meddling friend Muriel, overhears the dialogue from outside the door; both presume Anthea is having an affair with an Italian lover. After the wife's innocence is revealed the opera ends with a lively ensemble among the Italian "recording," the wife and husband. (The 1909 opera of Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari, *Il Segreto di Susanna*, has a similar plot of a jealous husband. When he smells tobacco in the

[74]Michael Head Diaries.

[75]Alan Bush, 77.

house, he suspects his wife of having a lover, only later to find out her secret, that she herself smokes. Also, Schoenberg's one-act opera of 1930, *Von heute auf morgen* deals with a husband's jealously and ultimately has a happy reconciliation of the couple.)[76]

Michael Head orchestrated *After the Wedding* for violin, cello oboe, clarinet and bass clarinet, glockenspiel, percussion, timpani and two pianos. The four characters are soprano, mezzo-soprano, baritone and tenor. According to Nancy Bush's letter in 1986,

> The first performance was given by students in their final year at the Royal Academy of Music, London, where Michael was a professor. You will be interested to hear that Anthea was sung by Felicity Lott, the Italian tenor on the record by David Rendall, both now so well-known, and the conductor was Simon Rattle, who has made a great name since.[77]

The diary entries of Michael Head concerning *After the Wedding* reveal his hard work on the orchestration and his own critiques.

> Those weeks before performances of "The Wedding" by R.A.M. Opera Workshop. My goodness—how I've had to work! Day in, & late at nights, ever since middle of holidays...The—147 pages of score of "The Wedding"—my heavens. How long it took me. No one to help me, except Alan saying—use as little piano as possible. Tonight I heard my scoring for the first time. Some of it good. Some of it terrible! The piano is too loud, also oboe-violin delightful. Cello good. Simon Rattle is the young conductor—musical, doing his best. I can see I ought to be able to conduct my own work. Well it will soon be all over. I hope it is not a flop! For Nancy's and my sake.[78]

Five days later the diary entry reports that his misgivings were unjustified.

---

[76]Stanley Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, S.v. "Von heute auf morgen" by O. W. Neighbour.

[77]Nancy Bush to Barbara Streets, 14 October 1986.

[78]Michael Head Diaries, 10 November 1972.

> A glorious moment! Home, after a resounding success of "After the Wedding" at R.A.M. Opera Workshop. I was so nervous for it, but the performance surpassed anything I imagined—the audience laughed, and laughed at Nancy's witty lines. The singers' diction was splendid, and they all acted so well, especially "George," Christopher Blades...My music sounded really very melodious, and my hard-won orchestration came off well, except in two small places.[79]

A further entry the following January tells of Head's recording session with the cast at his home.

> A strenuous, but happy day. Prepared lunch. Tidied the house up. Then they <u>really came</u>, (after a previous disappointment)—Felicity (Lott), Carolyn (Allen), Christopher (Blades), David (Rendel) (tenor). They enjoyed my lunch and drink. Such a charming natural lot of young people. We rehearsed and recorded all the afternoon "After the Wedding." They were in splendid voice, and we did a most musical tape recording. Nancy is <u>delighted</u>! She thinks it is my <u>best</u>, so far. We all had tea, then they listened to the recording made during the (live) performance. They all ??? (illegible), wanted a copy of <u>this</u> recording, rather than today's. I can understand why—there is all the applause and audience laughter. And we <u>must</u> get it done elsewhere.[80]

Less is known about Head's last light opera, *Day Return*, which features three characters. It, too, was composed for Intimate Opera Company, and was performed by that company along with *Key Money* at the Mercury Theatre in April 1970.[81] According to a diary entry, composition on this opera began in 1968.[82] The plot of the libretto by Nancy Bush is described by Alan Bush in this way:

> The return is from a railway terminus, where the wife, Phoebe, who has decided to leave her husband on account of his neglect of her in favour of his innumerable good works, finds her train cancelled for the day. Her husband,

---

[79]Ibid., 15 November 1972.

[80]Ibid., 11 January 1973.

[81]Stanley Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, S.v. "Head, Michael (Dewar)" by Michael Hurd.

[82]Michael Head Diaries, 29 October 1968.

> Humphrey, has followed her to the station, thanks to a luggage label which she dropped accidentally on the kitchen floor. His Committee Chairman pursues them both, but Humphrey comes down on the side of Phoebe rather than on that of the Bashki islanders, his most recent philanthropic project, whose paradise, it is feared, is in danger of being developed into a tourist haunt of vice. All ends happily for the loving pair and perhaps for the islanders also.[83]

Conclusion

The light operas of Michael Head were described by Michael Hurd as having a more advanced and aggressive harmonic style than Head's songs. "The music is a continuous web of thematic units, with conversational vocal lines that blossom into brief passages of arioso."[84] The use of motives which were identified in the analysis chapter of *Key Money* concurs with this description of Michael Head's light operas.

It is important to call attention to two of the previously quoted diary entries concerning Head's composition process for the light operas. On 3 January 1968, Michael Head wrote, "Chained to the piano, my voice, and the phonograph!" and on 7 May 1971, "I sing it over, over again." Nancy Bush, in her letter of 1986 about how the operas were written, states,

> Michael made few alterations, a word here or there only, and composed at the piano...As he progressed he would come to sing and play what he had composed so far to see if I liked it! And I always did, he was brilliant at

---

[83]Alan Bush, 77.

[84]Stanley Sadie, ed., "Head, Michael (Dewar)" by Michael Hurd.

> hitting off tunes, also he made a lot of the dialogue really amusing, a most difficult thing in music.[85]

It is evident from the diary entries and the information from his sister, that one of Head's chief concerns was the singability of his vocal parts. As an experienced professional singer himself, he sang his works to ensure that the music fit the voice, thereby achieving the desired dramatic effects, with greatest ease for the singer and utmost intelligibility for the audience.

Tom Sutcliffe in his book, *Believing in Opera*, talks about the future of opera in the twenty-first century: "But if there is to be a future for opera, the tradition of music for singing has to be respected by composers and served."[86] He further states,

> Song remains what draws the public to an interest in operatic material. Song is the means whereby the themes and ideas of past operas are brought to life. Song is the essence of the drama that producers and designers are reacting to as they prepare to mobilize the work on stage.[87]

In Michael Head's opera, *Key Money*, he solidly demonstrates his respect for music for singing, and for song that is the essence of the drama. Indeed, the ability to write for singers and to "hit off a tune" were two of his greatest strengths. A reviewer in 1968 said of the composer, "Michael Head is a name beloved of singers, who appreciate his great melodic gifts and his ability to write a musical line that enhances the voice."[88] These are especially important reasons that the light opera

---

[85]Nancy Bush to Barbara Streets, 14 October 1986.

[86]Tom Sutcliffe, *Believing in Opera* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996) 419.

[87]Ibid., 425.

[88]B. D. H., "Michael Head—Composer Singers Like," *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 21 October 1968.

Key Money is viable to today's audience, and worthy of both performance and publication.

In Jonathan Frank's article in *Musical Opinion* in 1961, he referred to Michael Head as fundamentally "an unrepentant late romantic."[89] Some may not consider Head's music important for our time, that is, that it exerted an essential influence on current musical thought.

> But the real and most satisfactory meaning of the phrase "important for Our Time" is music which succeeds in what it sets out to do, which is obviously sincere and which makes a definite impact on its audience, whether by stirring them, exciting them, making them laugh or bringing the tears to their eyes. If you regard the phrase from *that* angle, then Michael Head's music will be found to be not only important for *our* time for all time.[90]

The accounts of the performances of his operas by the Intimate Opera Company and the Opera Workshop of the Royal Academy of Music show that Head did make an impact on his audiences. He did not attempt to be modern for the sake of being modern, or in order to please his critics. However, Michael Head was never against modernistic coloring and experimental idioms when the occasion warranted them in his music. For Head, there really was no "modern versus tradition," the theme of *Key Money*. Instead, "modern" and "old-fashioned" were really meaningless catch-phrases. What really mattered to him was invention, along with the appropriate style and atmosphere that the words and subject matter dictated.[91] To these things he was true.

---

[89]Jonathan Frank, "A Singer-Composer" in *Musical Opinion* (February 1961, 84) 287.

[90]Ibid., 289.

[91]Ibid., 287.

A few months before Michael Head's death, on 15 May 1976, he wrote the last entry about music in his diary, expressing that he had accomplished in his music what he had set out to do:

> A special day. I traveled all the way to Cheltenham to hear Male Voice choir sing my I will lift up mine eyes. I was rewarded indeed. The choir from Sheffield gave a thrilling performance, slow, with breadth, feeling, and rich tone. I was thrilled. I know I have written a very simple beautiful piece! Cheers.[92]

Recommendations for Further Research

In the course of the research for this study, several topics of interest arose that were beyond the scope of the present document. Further study on the following topics is recommended:

1. The impact of the two main composition professors of composers of the English musical renaissance, Frederick Corder of the Royal Academy of Music, and Charles Stanford of the Royal College of Music.

2. The effect of singing experience on compositional style of composers who were also professional singers.

3. How political views, beliefs and affiliations affected the styles and careers of British composers in the twentieth century.

4. The historical use of musical parody as a comic device in opera.

5. The relationship of the theme of *Key Money*, "modern versus tradition" in relationship to the developments in twentieth-century opera.

---

[92]Michael Head Diaries, 15 May 1976.

6. Use of the present study as a guide for determining the dramatic values of other opera libretti, with musical analysis to show how the drama is articulated by the opera composer.

7. A study of the musical and theatrical families in British opera—Arnes (Thomas Arne's brother, sister, wife and sister-in-law and son), Dibdons (Charles and sons, Charles Isaac Mungo and Thomas John), Youngs (Caecilia, Isabella and Esther), Linleys (Elizabeth Ann, Mary, Thomas and William), Storaces (Stephen and Ann, known as Nancy), etc. with an emphasis on teaching within the family circle.

8. A study of the music of the accomplished British composer, Alan Bush, from among his many works which spanned the twentieth century, using the excellent resources of the Alan Bush Trust.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

REFERENCES

Apel, Willi, ed. *Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 2d ed., Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969. S.v. "Comic Opera," by Donald J. Grout.

_____. *Harvard Dictionary of Music*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958. S.v. "Ballad."

_____. S.v. "Opera," by Donald J. Grout.

Balchin, Robert, ed. *The Catalogue of Printed Music in the British Library to 1980.* Vol 27. London: D. G. Saur, 1984. S.v. "Head, Michael."

Blom, Eric, ed. *Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1954. S.v. "Head, Michael (Dewar)," by Kenneth Avery.

Blume, Friedrich, ed. *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Allgemeine Enzyklopadie de Musik*. Vol 6. Kassel: Barenreiter-Verlag, 1957. S.v. "Head, Michael (Dewar)," by Hand S. Redlich.

Sadie, Stanley, ed. *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1980. S.v. "Afterpiece."

_____. S.v. "Boulez, Pierre," by G. W. Hopkins.

_____. S.v. "Head, Michael (Dewar)," by Michael Hurd.

_____. S.v. "Opera: 20th Century Developments," by Paul Griffiths.

_____. S.v. "Henschel, Sir (Isidor) George," by J. A. Fuller Maitland

_____. S.v. "Stein, Erwin," by Mosco Carner.

_____. *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1992. S.v. "Afterpiece," by Michael Burden.

_____. S.v. "Burletta," by Nicholas Temperley.

_____. S.v. "Bush, Geoffrey," by Hugo Cole.

_____. S.v. "Carey, Henry," by Clive Chapman.

_____. S.v. "Corder, Frederick," by John Warrack.

_____. S.v. "Great Britain," by Nicholas Temperley.

_____. S.v. "Head, Michael (Dewar)," by Michael Hurd.

_____. S.v. "Hopkins, Antony," by Hugo Cole.

_____. S.v. "Horovitz, Joseph," by Ernest Bradbury.

_____. S.v. "Intimate Opera Company," by Harold Rosenthal.

_____. S.v. "The Sorcerer," by David Russell Hulme.

_____. S.v. "*Von heute auf morgen*," by O. W. Neighbour.

Slonimsky, Nicholas, ed. *International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians*, 7th ed., rev. New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1956. S.v. "Ballad."

BOOKS

Banfield, Stephen and Ian Spink. *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain: The Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995.

Banfield, Stephen. *Sensibility and English Song: Critical Studies of the Early 20th Century*, Vol.1. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Bauman, Thomas. "The Eighteenth Century: Comic Opera." In *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera*, ed. Roger Parker. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Bell, W. H. "W. H. Bell's Reminiscences" from unpublished memoirs in *From Parry to Britten: British Music in Letters 1900-1945*, ed. Lewis Foreman. Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1987.

Bernstein, Leonard. *The Infinite Variety of Music*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966.

Boelza, Igor. *Handbook of Soviet Musicians*, ed. Alan Bush. London: Pilot Press Ltd., 1943.

Brett, Philip, comp. *Benjamin Britten: Peter Grimes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Britten, Benjamin. "Introduction: Peter Grimes." In *Benjamin Britten: Peter Grimes*, comp. Philip Brett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Brockett, Oscar G. *History of the Theatre*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1968.

Burgan, Mary. "Heroines at the Piano: Women & Music in Nineteenth Century Fiction." In *The Lost Chord: Essays on Victorian Music*, ed. Nicholas Temperley, 42-67.Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989.

Bush, Alan. *In my Eighth Decade and Other Essays*. London: Kahn and Averill, 1980.

_____. "The Vocal Compositions of Michael Head." In *Michael Head: Composer, Singer, Pianist—A Memoir* by Nancy Bush. London: Kahn and Averill, 1982.

Bush, Nancy. *Alan Bush: Music, Politics and Life*. London: Thames, 2000.

_____. *Michael Head: Composer, Singer, Pianist—A Memoir*. London: Kahn and Averill, 1982.

_____. "Writing for Music." In *Time Remembered: Alan Bush, an 80th Birthday Symposium*, ed. Ronald Stevenson. Kidderminster, UK: Bravura Publications, 1981.

Clinton-Baddeley, V.C. *The Burlesque Tradition in the English Theatre*, quoted in *English Theatre Music of the Eighteenth Century* by Roger Fiske. London: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Cooke, Deryck. *The Language of Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959.

Corder, Frederick. *Modern Musical Composition* (Curwen Edition 8282). London: J. Curwen and Sons, n.d.

Culshaw, John. " 'Ben'—A Tribute to Benjamin Britten." In *The Britten Companion*, ed. Christopher Palmer, 62-67. London: Faber and Faber, 1984.

Deathridge, John. "England: Music and Society." *In Music in the Modern Age*, Vol. V, ed. F. W. Sternfeld. New York: Praeger, 1973.

Del Mar, Norman. *Richard Strauss: A Critical Commentary on His Life and Works*, Vol. 1. Philadelphia: Chilton, 1969.

Dent, Edward J. *Foundations of English Opera: A Study of Musical Drama in England During the Seventeenth Century*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1965.

_____. *Opera*, rev. ed., Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1949.

Doctor, Jennifer. *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922-1936: Shaping a Nation's Tastes.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Eaton, Quaintance. *Opera Production: A Handbook.* Minneapolis: University Minnesota Press, 1961.

Evans, Peter. "The 20th Century: Britain." In *History of Opera*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 302-10. London: Macmillan Press, 1989.

Fenner, Theodore. *Opera in London: Views of the Press 1785-1830.* Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994.

Fiske, Roger. *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century.* London: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Foreman, Lewis. *From Parry to Britten: British Music in Letters 1900-1945.* Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1987.

_____, ed. *Music in England 1885-1920 as Recounted in Hazell's Annual.* London: Thames Publishing, 1994.

_____. "Spanning the Century—The Music of Alan Bush." In *Alan Bush: Music, Politics and Life* by Nancy Bush. London: Thames, 2000.

Graf, Herbert. *Opera for the People.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1951.

Griffiths, Paul. "Music." *In Cambridge Guide to the Arts in Britain—Vol. 9: Since the Second World War*, ed. Boris Ford, 48-78. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

_____. "The Twentieth Century: 1945 to the Present Day." In *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera*, ed. Roger Parker, 317-49. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

_____. "The Twentieth Century: To 1945." In *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera*, ed. Roger Parker, 279-316. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Grout, Donald Jay and Hermine Weigel Williams. *A Short History of Opera*, 3d ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

Hall, Duncan. *A Pleasant Change from Politics: Music and the British Labour Movement Between the Wars.* Cheltenham: New Clarion Press, 2001.

Hamm, Charles. *Opera.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1966.

Harries, Meirion and Susie Harries. *Opera Today.* London: Michael Joseph, 1986.

Head, Michael. "Alan Bush as a Fellow Student." In *Alan Bush: An 80th Birthday Symposium*, ed. Ronald Stevenson, 69. Kidderminster, UK: Bravura Publications, 1981.

Herbert, David, ed. *The Operas of Benjamin Britten.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.

Hindemith, Paul. *A Composer's World.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952.

Howard, Patricia. *The Operas of Benjamin Britten.* New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969.

Howard, Patricia, ed. *Benjamin Britten: The Turn of the Screw.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Howes, Frank. *The English Musical Renaissance.* New York: Stein and Day, 1966.

Hughes, Meirion and Robert Stradling. *The English Musical Renaissance 1840-1940:* Constructing a National Music, 2d ed. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001.

Irvine, Demar. *Irvine's Writing about Music*, 3d ed., rev. and enlarged by Mark A Radice. Portland: Amadeus Press, 1999.

Jacobs, Arthur. "The British Isles." In *A History of Song*, ed. Denis Stevens. New York: W. W. Norton, 1960.

Jones, Richard Elfyn. *The Early Operas of Michael Tippett: A Study of The Midsummer Marriage, King Priam and The Knot Garden.* Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1996.

Karolyi, Otto. *Modern British Music: The Second British Musical Renaissance—From Elgar to P. Maxwell Davies.* London: Associated University Press, 1994.

Keller, Hans. "Introduction: Operatic Music and Britten." In *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, ed. David Herbert, xiii-xxxi. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.

_____. " 'Peter Grimes': The Story, The Music Not Excluded." In *Benjamin Britten: Peter Grimes*. comp. Philip Brett, 105-120. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Kerman, Joseph. *Opera as Drama*. New York: Random House, 1956.

Kerner, Leighton, Malena Duss and Therese Radic. "New Worlds." In *History of Opera*. ed. Stanley Sadie, 319-25. London: Macmillan Press, 1989.

Kostka, Stefan and Dorothy Payne. *Tonal Harmony with an Introduction to Twentieth-Century Music*. 3d. ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995.

Lambert, Constant. *Music Ho! A Study of Music in Decline*. rev. ed. London: Faber and Faber, 1937.

LaRue, Jan. *Guidelines for Style Analysis*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1970.

Lebrecht, Norman. *Covent Garden, the Untold Story: Dispatches from the English Culture War, 1945-2000*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2001.

Lindenberger, Herbert. *Opera in History: From Monteverdi to Cage*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998.

_____.*Opera: The Extravagant Art*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984.

Mackerness, E. D. *A Social history of English Music*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964.

Martin, George. *The Opera Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1979.

Matthews, David. "Act II scene i: An Examination of the Music." In *Benjamin Britten: Peter Grimes*, comp. Philip Brett, 121-47. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Mellers, Wilfrid and Rupert Hilyard. "The Cultural and Social Setting." In *Cambridge Guide to the arts in Britain—Vol. 8: The Edwardian Age and the Inter-War Years*, ed. Boris Ford. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Mitchell, Donald. *The Language of Modern Music*, 2d ed., rev. London: Faber and Faber, 1966.

_____. "What Do We Know About Britten Now?" In *The Britten Companion*, ed. Christopher Palmer, 21-45. London: Faber and Faber, 1984.

Northouse, Cameron. *Twentieth Century Opera in England and the United States*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1976.

O'Higgins, Maeve. "Introduction." In *Alan Bush: Music, Politics and Life* by Nancy Bush. London: Thames Publishing, 2000.

Palmer, Christopher, ed. *The Britten Companion*. London: Faber and Faber, 1984.

Petty, Frederick C. *Italian Opera in London 1760-1800*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1972.

Pirie, Peter J. *The English Musical Renaissance*. London: Victor Gollancz, 1979.

Poulton, Alan. "Bibliographica and Appendices." In *Alan Bush: An 80th Birthday Symposium*. Kidderminster, UK: Bravura Publications, 1981.

Prendergast, Arthur H. D. "Masques and Early Operas." In *English Music (1604-1904) Being the Lectures Given at the Music Loan Exhibition of the Worshipful Company of Musicians, held at Fishmonger's Hall, June-July 1904*, 2d ed., 233-64. London: Walter Scott, 1911.

Robinson, Paul. "A Deconstructive Postscript: Reading Libretti and Misreading Opera." In *Reading Opera*, ed. Arthur Groos and Roger Parker, 328-46. Princeton University Press, 1988.

Sawyer, F. J. "English Opera after Purcell." In *English Music (1604-1904) Being the Lectures Given at the Music Loan Exhibition of the Worshipful Company of Musicians, held at Fishmonger's Hall, June-July, 1904*, 2d ed., 265-92. London: Walter Scott, 1911.

Self, Geoffrey. *Light Music in Britain since 1870*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2001.

Shaw, Bernard. *Music in London, 1890-94: Criticisms Contributed Week by Week to the World*, Vol. 1. New York: Vienna House, 1973.

Simms, Bryan R. *Music of the Twentieth Century: Style and Structure*, 2d ed. New York: Schirmer Books, 1996.

Smith, Patrick J. *The Tenth Muse: A Historical Study of the Opera Libretto*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970.

Stein, Erwin. "Albert Herring." In *The Britten Companion*, ed. Christopher Palmer, 127-32. London: Faber and Faber, 1984.

Stevenson, Ronald, ed. *Alan Bush: An 80th Birthday Symposium*. Kidderminster, UK: Bravura Publications, 1981.

Strode, Rosamund. "Working for Benjamin Britten (II)." In *The Britten Companion*, ed. Christopher Pamer, 51-61. London: Faber and Faber, 1984.

Sutcliffe, Tom. *Believing in Opera*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Teasdale, May Silva. *20th Century Opera at Home and Abroad*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1938; reprint New York: Da Capo Press, 1976.

Temperley, Nicholas. "Musical Nationalism in English Romantic Opera." In *The Lost Chord: Essays on Victorian Music*, ed. Nicholas Temperley 143-57. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989.

Trend, Michael. *The Music Makers: The English Musical Renaissance from Elgar to Britten*. New York: Schirmer, 1985.

Troy, Charles E. *The Comic Intermezzo: A Study in the History of Eighteenth-Century Italian Opera*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1979.

Weisstein, Ulrich, ed. *The Essence of Opera*. London: Collier-Macmillan, 1964.

White, Eric Walter. *Benjamin Britten: His Life and Operas*, 2d ed., ed. John Evans. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.

_____. *A History of English Opera*. London: Faber and Faber, 1983.

_____. *The Rise of English Opera*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1951.

Whittal, Arnold. *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

_____. *Music Since the First World War*. London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1977; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Wingell, Richard J. *Writing about Music: An Introductory Guide*, 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997.

ARTICLES

Armstrong, Thomas. "Alan Bush's Wat Tyler." *Royal Academy of Music Magazine* 207 (Spring 1975): 8-9.

_____. "Obituary: Michael Head 1900-76." (Reproduced from *The Times* by permission.) *Royal Academy of Music Magazine* 212 (Autumn 1976): 12.

Banfield, Stephen. "British Opera in Retrospect." *Musical Times* cxxvii, no. 1718 (April 1986) 205-7.

Baker, George. "The Musical Scene." *Music Teacher and Piano Student* 44 (April 1965): 169.

_____. "What are They Like at Home?" *Music Teacher and Piano Student* 46 (March 1967): 22.

Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Limited. "Michael Head." Press release materials. London: Westerham Press, 2.5M8.66, n.d.

Bostein, Leon. "Analysis and Criticism." *The Musical Quarterly* 85, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 225-31.

Bradbury, Ernest. "Daphne and Apollo (Michael Head), Yorkshire." *Musical Times* 109 (December 1968): 1140.

"Bright Hereford Show—Despite Lights Failure!" (British Intimate Opera Company) *Worcester Evening News* (January 1968.)

Bush, Alan. "The Composer Speaks." *Royal Academy of Music Magazine* 201 (Winter 1971): 13-17.

_____. "An Opera Premiere in Leipzig." *Royal Academy of Music Magazine* 192 (Midsummer 1967): 17-19.

_____. "The Problem of Style in Composition." *Royal Academy of Music Magazine* 117 (July 1940): 30-4.

Carpenter, Roger. "Editorial." *British Music: Journal of the British Music Society* 22 (2000): 3.

Case, John Carol. "Michael Head Remembered." *British Music: Journal of the British Music Society* 22 (2000): 25-6.

Dent, Edward J. "The Translation of Operas." *Proceedings of the (Royal) Musical Association, 61st Session (1934-5)* 81, quoted by Michael M. Winesanker in "Introduction" to Edward J. Dent, *Foundations of English Opera*: xii.

_____. "Wat Tyler." *Musical Opinion*, January 1952: 231.

"Evelyn Rothwell and Michael Head: Recital at Wigmore Hall." *Musical Opinion* 76 (March 1953): 329.

Frank, Jonathan. "A Singer-Composer." *Musical Opinion* 84 (February 1961): 287-89.

Green, Lucas. "Here a New Dream is Brought to Life: Composer Comes to Rehearse his Choral Work." *Hertfordshire Express* and *Stevenage Gazette*, 22 October 1965.

Head, Michael. "Contemporary English Song." *National Association of Teachers of Singing* Bulletin 15, no. 4 (May 15, 1959): 22-3.

Jacobs, Arthur. "Edward J. Dent: The Noted English Scholar Celebrates his 75th Birthday." *Musical America* LXXI/9 (July 1951); quoted by Michael M. Winesanker in "Introduction" to Edward J. Dent, *Foundations of English Opera*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928; reprint edition, New York: Da Capo Press, 1965, xi.

MacDonald, Calum. "Wat Tyler." *Tempo—A Quarterly Review of Modern Music* 110. (September 1974): 44-5.

Meares, Stan. "An Investigation into the Reputation of Arthur Seymour Sullivan (1842- 1900): Man of Contrast, Man of the Theatre." *British Music* 22 (2000): 52-66.

"Michael Head—Composer Singers Like." B. D. H. *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 21 October 1968.

Rorem, Ned. "Britten's Venice." *The New Republic* (Washington, D. C.) 172/6 (February 8, 1975): 31-2.

" 'Silence Best Form of Arts Criticism'—English Composer." *Wellington Herald*, New Zealand (1973.)

"Michael Head." *Musical Opinion*. 74 (March 1951): 261.

"Michael Head Song Album, Boosey." *Music Teacher* 30 (August 1951): 357.

Ottaway, Hugh. "Alan Bush's Wat Tyler." *Musical Times* 97 (6 December 1956): 633-6.

"People Expect Me to Be Middle-Aged." *New Zealand Radio Record* (September 11, 1936): 12.

Senici, Emanuele. "Verdi's Falstaff at Italy's Fin de Siecle." *The Musical Quarterly* 85, no. 2 (Summer 200a): 274-310.

Streets, Barbara. "The Solo Songs of Michael Head: A Critical Re-evaluation in his Centenary Year." *British Music* 22 (2000): 5-25.

UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

Bush, Nancy. "After the Wedding: Light Opera in One Act." Libretto, Michael Head Collection in possession of Barbara Streets (to be placed in the archives of The Royal Academy of Music, London.)

_____. "Key Money: Light Opera in One Act." Libretto, Michael Head Collection in possession of Barbara Streets (to be placed in the archives of The Royal Academy of Music, London.)

_____. Letter, Radlett, Hertsfordshire, England to Barbara Streets, Oklahoma City, 22 September 1986, in possession of Barbara Streets, Bethany, Oklahoma.

_____. Letter, Radlett, Hertsfordshire, England to Barbara Streets, Oklahoma City, 14 October 1986, in possession of Barbara Streets, Bethany, Oklahoma.

_____. Letter, Radlett, Hertsfordshire, England to Sir Keith Falkner, 4 May 1982, in possession of author.

_____. Letters in the possession of Rachel O'Higgins, Histon, Cambridge.

Casmus, Mary Irene. "Gian-Carlo Menotti: His Dramatic Techniques: A Study Based on Works Written 1937-1954." Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1962.

Durham, Linda Eileen. "Stephen Storace and Prince Hoare's 'No Song, No Supper':Influences and Reception." Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1998.

Fleischer, Tsippi. "Luigi Cherubini's Medee (1797): A Study of its Musical and Dramatic Style." Ph.D. diss., Bar-ilan University (Israel), 1995.

Frey, Loryn Elizabeth. "The Songs of Michael Head: The Georgian Settings (and Song Catalogue.)" D.M.A. diss., Louisiana State University, 1990; Ann Arbor, Michigan, University Microfilms, 1991.

Govich, Bruce M. "Determination of Dramatic Values," guide for Opera Styles and Production, Music Techniques 315, University of Oklahoma, September 1972, in the possession of author.

Govich, Bruce M. "Glossary of Dramatic Terms," for Opera Styles and Production, Music Techniques 315, University of Oklahoma, September 1972, in the possession of author.

Head, Michael. *Make Your Own Music*. BBC Radio Performance, London. May 23, 1944.

_____. *Make Your Own Music*. BBC Radio Performance, London. May 30, 1944.

_____. *Make Your Own Music*. BBC Radio Performance, London. June 6, 1944.

_____. *Music Lovers' Diary*. BBC Radio Performance, London. May 12, 1946.

Head, Michael Dewar. Diaries. Michael Head Collection in the possession of Dr. Rachel O'Higgins, Cambridge, England.

_____. Letters. Michael Head Collection in the possession of Catherine and Michael Hinson, Birmingham, England.

_____. Programs. Michael Head Collection in the possession of Catherine and Michael Hinson, Birmingham, England.

Head, Michael and Nancy Bush. *After the Wedding*. Opera piano-vocal score, Michael Head Collection in possession of Barbara Streets (to be placed in the archives of the Royal Academy of Music, London.)

_____. *Key Money*. Opera piano-vocal score, Michael Head Collection in possession of Barbara Streets (to be placed in the archives of The Royal Academy of Music, London.)

Higgins, William Ladd. "The Ghosts of Versailles: A Character Study of the Opera by John Corigliano and William M. Hoffman." D.M.A. diss., University of Oklahoma, 1995.

Hinson, Catherine. Interview by author, written, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, England, 10 September 2002.

_____. Letter, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, England to author, 10 September 2002.

Hoover, Jean Marie. "Constructions of National Identities: Opera and Nationalism in the British Isles." Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1999; Ann Arbor Michigan, University Microfilms, 1999.

Kyle, Maryann. "Good Friday: A Guide to the Chamber Opera of Luigi Zaninelli." D.M.A. diss., Louisiana State University, 2001.

O'Higgins, Rachel. Interview by author, written, Histon, Cambridge, England, 9 September 2002.

_____. Letter to author, Histon, Cambridge, England, 9 September 2002.

Rogers, Michael. Performance Analysis. Fall 1998, University of Oklahoma; lecture notes in possession of the author.

Streets, Barbara Sue. "Michael Head: His Contributions as Composer, Performer, Educator with an Analysis of Selected Solo Songs." Ph.D. diss. University of Oklahoma, 2002.

ELECTRONIC SOURCES

"Biography of Felicity Lott." Data on-line; available from http://www.felicitylott.de/bio_main_frame.htm; Internet; accessed 25 June 2002.

"Biography: Sir Simon Rattle." Data on-line; available from http://www.emiclassics.com/artists/biogs/srab.html; Internet; accessed 25 June 2002.

Boosey & Hawkes, Michael Head, *The Bachelor Mouse* synopsis, opera on the Web. Data on-line; available from http://www.boosey.com/pages/opera/moredetails.asp?musicid=4505; Internet; accessed 26 October 2002.

British Music Page of the British Music Society; data on-line; available from http://www.musicweb.uk.net/BMS/intro.html; Internet; accessed 4 June 2002.

Head, Michael. "Publications." Database, British Music Information Centre, 1999; data on-line; available from http://www.bmic.co.uk/search.asp; Internet; accessed 4 June 2002.

"Interview with Sir Simon Rattle." *Sequenza 21: The Contemporary Classical Music Weekly*; available from http://sequenza21.com/Rattle.html; Internet; accessed 25 June 2002.

Kozinn, Allan. "Glimmerglass Distills Power of Acceptance and Faith." *New York Times* on the Web, 30 July 2002. Data on-line; available from http://www.nytimes.com/2002/07/30/arts/music/30GLIM.html Internet; accessed 30 July 2002.

O'Higgins, Rachel. "Men of Blackmoor." Alan Bush Trust Website, data-on-line; available from http://www.alanbushtrust.org.uk/music/operas/blackmoor.asp?room=Music; Internet; accessed 15 May 2002.

_____. "The Sugar Reapers." Alan Bush Trust Website, data-on-line; available from http://www.alanbushtrust.org.uk/music/operas/reapers.asp?room=Music, Internet; accessed 15 May 2002.

_____. "Wat Tyler." Alan Bush Trust Website, data-on-line; available from http://www.alanbushtrust.org.uk/music/operas/wat_tyler.asp?room=Music; Internet; accessed 15 May 2002.

Opera Companies—by Place. "Opera Company Pages on the World Wide Web." Data on-line; available from http://opera.stanford.edu/opera/geographic.html; Internet;Accessed 6 July 2002.

Téte-a-Téte Opera. Data on-line. Available from http://www.tete-a-tete.co.uk/baims2.html; Internet; accessed 7 July 2002.

Snowcroft, Philip L. *Garlands of English Light Music*. Composer Magazine section of British Music Society; Composer Archives. Data on-line; available from http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/~snc/BMStuff/articles.htm; Internet; accessed 29 April 2000.

Tommasini, Anthony. "New Operas Are Booming, but the Bold Aren't Heard," *New York Times*, 23 June 2002; available from http://www.nytimes.com/2002/06/23/arts/music/23TOMM.html; Internet; accessed 25 June 2002.

SCORES

Bernstein, Leonard. *Trouble in Tahiti: An Opera in Seven Scenes*. Vocal score. New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1953; corrected edition 1988.

Gounod, Charles. *Romeo and Juliet*. Vocal score. New York: G. Schirmer, 1925.

Head, Michael. *The Bachelor Mouse: A Musical Play for Young Children in Three Scenes*.. Libretto by Nancy Bush. Vocal score. London:Boosey & Co. Ltd., 1954.

Menotti, Gian-Carlo. *The Telephone, or L'Amour a Trois*. Vocal score. New York: G. Schirmer, 1947.

Pergolesi, Giovanni Battista. *La Serva Padrona (The Maid as Mistress.)* Vocal score arranged by Albert Stoessel. New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1934.

SOUND RECORDINGS

Bush, Alan. *To All a Future World May Hold: Song Cycles*. The Artsong Collective—Moira Harris, Phillida Bannister, Wills Morgan, Paul Wilson, Richard Black. Musaeus MZCD102, 2000. Compact disc.

Bush, Alan and Nancy Bush. *Guyana Johnny (The Sugar Reapers)*. BBC Rebroadcast of the German Broadcast, 1968. University of Central Oklahoma Library (M 1500.B8 G8x 1968 CS). Cassette tape.

Head, Michael. *Michael Head Sings and Plays His Own Songs*. Pilgrim Recordings JLP141, 1966. LP vinyl.

Head, Michael and Robert Ivan Foster. *Michael Head—20 Songs*. Onslo Record ART- 52-1, 1965. LP vinyl.

Lott, Felicity. *Felicity Lott Sings Favourite English Songs, with Graham Johnson, piano*. Chandos Records Ltd, Colchester, England; CHAN 8722, 1990. Compact disc.

APPENDIX A

Libretto of *Key Money*

K E Y M O N E Y

Light Opera in One Act

K E Y M O N E Y

Light Opera in One Act

Music by Michael Head Words by Nancy Bush

Henry Smith is alone for the first time in his new flat. A table is spread with musical manuscript paper. He sings with joy:

MR SMITH: Solitude!
Who would think I could possibly have found it?
Here
In a square
Tucked away
From the fray,
From the chatter and the clatter
Of the city all around it.
Rather slummy, it is true,
Down-at-heel, perhaps, to you.
But a flat - think of that! -
Which is absolutely quiet!
Of course it wasn't cheap.
The landlord was a vandal;
What he charged me was a scandal.
He made me buy the key -
Do you see? Yes, the key!
But there you are, I had to take it;
What a choice! I had to make it.

Now, what about the neighbours?
Aha, I'm not so green
As others might have been.
Naturally I made enquiries.
On my left is Mr White,
An Income Tax Collector,
Or Inspector,
Whichever term is right,
Works all day and then at night
Home he comes, tired out,
Goes to bed and goes to sleep;
Very early hours they keep.

MR SMITH: /Cont'd

Overhead they're both away
At business all day.
Down below a man and wife
Lead a most unusual life
Making puppets of some kind.
Very strange that they should find
Time to do it.
But at least there's nothing noisy to it.
On my right a single lady -
No, nothing in the least shady -
She's away, abroad, on tour,
At any rate, not there.

And here am I - what bliss! - in solitude!
Here
In a square
Tucked away
From the fray
In a flat, think of that,
On the second floor, what's more,
And absolutely quiet.

He settles down to compose. Orchestral interlude in modern style. The postman pushes a letter under the door.

The Group are very quick about
Sending their concert programme out.
In any case, let's see
If they've done anything for me.

He opens letter

Well, I'm not easy to offend
But here's my Quartet at the end,
The very worst place it could be.
Of course, I know it's jealousy;
Mamble has put his Trio in
And daren't have it next to mine,
Where certainly it wouldn't shine.
Mamble's the Chairman of the Nine Tone Group -
And to think that he should stoop

MR SMITH: /Cont'd
To such premeditated spite -
An insult, yes, an open slight.
So I'm to have a hearing
Just as the audience is disappearing!
I will not bear it. No, instead
I'll write: "Dear Mamble"
Then I'll begin without preamble:
"Kindly withdraw my work" - and yet -
Perhaps I shouldn't be precipitate -
What other audience do I ever get?
Concert promoters always make it hard
Because I'm avant garde.
This time I'd better swallow down my pride
And let things slide.

Sighing, he settles down again to work. Background music. A taxi draws up outside. There is the sound of high heels clicking up the stairs. A door slams. Brief silence. Suddenly vocal exercises are heard through the wall

MR SMITH: (listening aghast)
It isn't possible. I can't believe it, no.
I'm dreaming and it simply isn't so.
All my flat-hunting - all - is wasted labour.
I've got an opera singer for a neighbour.

(A burst of singing follows)

There, there, again!
Leaps and arpeggios - the purest pain.
She must be stopped, and quickly too.
There's only one thing left to do.

(He knocks firmly on the wall. Pause. She continues)

She hasn't heard me - so it would appear,
Though none so deaf as those who will not hear.

(He bangs angrily. Silence. The door presently opens and Miss Brown appears)

MISS BROWN: (surprised but polite)
I think you knocked upon the wall,
And more than once, if I recall.
May I ask, are you feeling ill?

MR SMITH: No, not at all.
I knocked, certainly. I regret
If I disturbed you, yet
Artistic impulse drove me to it.
Please understand, I had to do it.

MISS BROWN: You've only been here half a day,
And yet you act in this astounding way.
To knock - I might almost say bang -
Upon the wall, and for so long!
Surely at this stage
It is an outrage.

MR SMITH: I was assured when I came here
Between the hours of ten and four
This flat was absolutely quiet.
In case you have not understood,
Music is my livelihood:
Miss Brown, I am a composer.

MISS BROWN: Really, I see no harm in that.
Although I live so near you
I don't think I shall hear you.
You won't disturb me, I assure you.

MR SMITH: Not disturb you! .....
Kindly allow me to explain:
The sound of music gives me pain.
A vocal run, a scale, a trill,
Wireless, T.V. or what you will
Drives me distracted. If I hear
A single note, why, there you are,
I can't compose another bar.

MISS BROWN: But surely you need only play
Loudly enough, and straight away
You'd drown my voice.

MR SMITH: (faintly) Play ... on the piano ...
Miss Brown, surely you don't suppose
I use the keyboard to compose?
I hope I have some conscience still;
My works are purely cerebral,
And what is more,
Written straight into the full score.

MISS BROWN: There's one solution: you could leave.

MR SMITH: Leave? Leave the flat?

MISS BROWN: Yes, simply that.

MR SMITH: You can't consider what you say.
Think of the cash I've had to pay,
The key money - please don't forget.
Why, if I leave, I lose the lot.

MISS BROWN: I've lived here for a year or two -
Much longer, Mr Smith, than you -
With no complaints of any kind.
I think you should bear that in mind
And act with more discretion.
Remember, music is also my profession.

She flounces out. Very shortly an aria is heard. He laughs hysterically, rushes to the piano and accompanies it. Presently she hesitates, goes wrong, tries again.

ARIA: The world of men I sought to leave
In leafy woods to rest,
In silence sweet,
In cool retreat
To soothe my troubled breast

But he from whom I turned away
Ne'er treads this quiet grove.
My loss I'll own,
For here alone
My thoughts return to love.

MR SMITH: F sharp, not G, not G. Not G

(She tries again, falters, sings wrong note)

F Sharp not G.
Now I begin to see
Quite evidently
That aria is far beyond her grasp.
Her ear is faulty, she's tone deaf or worse.
Alone, how can she possibly rehearse?
She's singing flat and simply can't detect it,
Let alone correct it.
If she sings right, it will annoy me,
But if she's wrong, it will destroy me.

(She tries again, fails)

Heavens, what shall I do?
Perhaps I'll try and help her though.

(He knocks on the wall tentatively. She continues to sing)

(in despair)
Miss Brown, Miss Brown,
You're half a tone down!

(He bangs on the wall violently. Miss Brown enters, distraught)

MISS BROWN: This is too much. Your conduct is outrageous!
It is, as far as I can see,
A case of mental cruelty.
My whole artistic life is now
Being destroyed
By the disgraceful methods you've employed.
Kindly explain
Why you knocked on the wall again?

MR SMITH: Only because it seemed to me
You were in difficulty.

MISS BROWN: (haughtily) Indeed! What do you mean?

MR SMITH: Miss Brown, I beg you, please don't be offended.
No insult was intended.
I heard a faint discrepancy between
F sharp and G. Oh, very slight!
Perhaps I was mistaken quite.

MISS BROWN: If I was wrong, the fault is yours;
You are most certainly the cause.
Your brutal knocking brought me to this state.
I can no longer concentrate.

MR SMITH: I knocked to ask you - nothing more -
If I could help you with the score.

He opens her score, which she still has in her hand

Only this passage - all the rest
Showed off the aria at its best.
Allow me, please.
This A flat, now, you took with ease.
But here's the tenor entry. I wonder whether
We should just sing it through together.

She holds the score, he sings standing just behind her.
Short passages of duet in classical operatic style

If you would care
To start again from there,
I'll play for you.

She sings to his accompaniment, which gradually becomes more atonal and strange

MISS BROWN: Why, Mr Smith, those harmonies are very strange.
You're making a considerable change,
And yet your modulation
Has quite a fascination.

MR SMITH: Really? You like it?

MISS BROWN: Why, of course, don't doubt it.
There's something so original about it.

MR SMITH: (aside) So much encouragement is most surprising.
I feel my spirits rising.

(to her) Music and mind have in my works conflicted;
Listeners require staying power, grit,
To grasp my idiom, make the most of it,
And so I must admit
My audience up to now has been restricted.

MISS BROWN: Why then, it's just as I suspected;
Your works have been neglected.
You write with so much fire and verve,
Yet you've not had the notice you deserve.

MR SMITH: You're very kind. And yet, I can't deny
So far success has passed me by.
The public tend to give me the cold shoulder,
While critics think I should have been much bolder,
And though I've strictly kept the Nine Tone rules,
I fall between two stools.

But now - an end to my humiliation!
Your voice, Miss Brown, has been my inspiration.
I'll write a melody into my score!
Why did I never think of it before?
The Nine Tone system and a tune as well:
The old, the new, in heavenly parallel.
Boulez below, a melody on top -
Once I begin, I shan't know where to stop.
The things unheard of, absolutely new,
And let me own it, due
Entirely to you.
Let Hamble rave! Obscurity is past!
The world will listen to my works at last.

Duet: the aria but with new accompaniment

CURTAIN

APPENDIX B

Dramatic Works of Michael Head

The Bidder's Opera
Light Opera, one-act
4 singing characters (bridge players)
Orchestra

Composed 1931
Libretto: Mary Dunn

The Bachelor Mouse
Children's operetta in 3 scenes
6 singing characters/Chorus, S.A.ad lib.
Piano
Additional parts for violin, cello, flute, clarinet
Duration: 60 minutes

Published 1954
Boosey &Hawkes
Libretto: Nancy Bush

Through Train, Railway Musical
School opera for teenage students, one-act
10 characters, baritones and sopranos
S.A.T.B. (or S.S.A.)chorus
Piano
Duration: 45 minutes

Composed circa 1961
Libretto: Nancy Bush

Key Money
Light opera, one-act
Soprano and Tenor or High baritone
Piano
Later orchestrated for chamber ensemble
Duration: 28 minutes

Composed 1964/Perf. 1967
Libretto: Nancy Bush
For Intimate Opera Company

Day Return
Light opera, one-act
3 singing characters
Piano

Composed 1968/Perf. 1970
Libretto: Nancy Bush
For Intimate Opera Company

After the Wedding — Composed 1967/Perf. 1972
Light opera, one-act — Libretto: Nancy Bush
Soprano, Mezzo, Baritone, Tenor — For Opera Workshop,
Piano — Royal Academy of Music
Violin, cello, oboe clarinet (& bass clarinet),
glockenspiel, percussion, timpani, 2 pianos

A la Recherche du temps perdu by Proust (incidental music) — 1952
British Broadcasting Corporation, Third Programme
Novel reconstruction, radio script
Episodes: Swann in Love
Madame de Charlus
Albertine Regained
St. Loup
A window at Montjouvain

APPENDIX C

Other Works by Nancy Bush

Opera Libretti for composer Alan Bush

	Composed	Published
Wat Tyler Prologue and two acts Premiere—Leipzig, Stadtisches, 6 Sep 1953. Winner, Arts Council Festival of Britain, 1951. First British Production, 19 Jun 1974, Sadler's Wells First broadcast, East Berlin Radio, 3 April 1952 Duration: 2 hours, 40 minutes	1948-50	Novello, 1959 & Henschelverlag, Berlin
Men of Blackmoor Three acts Premiere—Weimar, National 18 Nov 1956 Jena Opera House, 1957 Leipzig Opera House, 1959 Zwickau Opera House, 1960 Oxford University Opera Club, 1960 Bristol University Operatic Society 1974 BBC Third Programme broadcast, 1969 Duration: 2 hours, 10 minutes	1954-55	Williams, 1959; Henschelverlag, Berlin
The Sugar Reapers (Guyana Johnny) Two acts Premiere—Leipzig Opernhaus, 11 Dec 1966 Tartu Opera House, Estonia, USSR, 1969 Odessa Opera House, USSR, 1973 Broadcast (Leipzig prod.) East German Radio, 1968 Broadcast (Leipzia prod.) BBC Third Programme, 1976 Duration: 2 hours, 25 minutes	1961-64	Henschelverlag, Berlin, 1965

NOTE: These three major operas plus Alan Bush's **Joe Hill** (Deutsche Staatsoper, Berlin, 1970) between 1953 and 1975, had twelve professional productions in ten different East European opera houses, totaling about 160 performances.

The Press Gang (or The Escaped Apprentice) Operetta for children, 3 scenes 1st Performance: St. Christopher School, Letchworth, Herts. 7 March 1947 Duration: 60 minutes	1946	WMA, 1947 & Mitteldeutscher, 1953

The Spell Unbound 1953 Novello, 1954
Operetta for girls in an Elizabethan setting
5 voices, 2-part chorus, piano
First Performance, Bournemouth School for Girls,
6 March 1955
Duration: 70 minutes

The Ferryman's Daughter 1961 Novello 1963
Opera of the Thames Waterside for Schools
Two scenes, 18th century setting
First performance: St. Christopher School,
Letchworth, Herts. 6 March 1964
Five voices, SAB chorus, piano
Duration: 60 minutes

Libretto for composer C. Armstrong Gibbs

The Great Bell of Burley Novello, 1932
A children's opera

Libretto for composer John Miller

Sir Thomas Moore Unpublished
Opera scene London, 1961

Texts for Michael Head, Vocal Solos & Choral

SOLO SONGS:

October Valley	Boosey&Hawkes, 1951
Ave Maria (piano & string quartet) English text	B & H, 1954
Three Sacred Songs (English text)	B & H, 1958
1. Ave Maria	
2. O gloriosa domina (O Blessed Virgin)	
3. Sancta et Immaculata Virginitas (Holy & Most Blessed Virgin)	
Child on the Shore (with violin)	Roberton, 1976
Three Songs of Venice	B & H, 1977
1. The Gondolier	
2. St. Mark's Square	
3. Rain Storm	

CHORAL:

Ave Maria	SSA	B & H, 1954
Daphne and Apollo	Cantata, S & B soli, SATB, orchestra	B & H, 1964
New Town	Male choir & piano	comp. 1965

Texts for Alan Bush, Vocal Solos & Choral

SOLO SONGS:

Life's Span (Op. 79)	Song-cycle, Mezzo & piano	comp. 1974
1. A Child Asleep (1958)		
3. The Long Noonday (1974)		
Woman's Life (Op. 87)	Song-cycle, Soprano & piano	comp. 1977
1. Prologue		
2. Weaving Song		
3. Factory Day		
4. Epilogue		

NOTE: Both cycles are on the Alan Bush CD: **To All A Future World May Hold—Song Cycles** (2000) Musaeus

CHORAL:

Toulon	Mezzo, mixed chorus, piano	WMA, 1942
Lidice	Unaccompanied mixed choir	WMA, 1947
Our Song	Mixed chorus, piano	1948
Song of Friendship(Cantata)	Brass solo, mixed choir, orchestra	WMA, 1949
Like Rivers Flowing	SSATB chorus	Joseph Williams,1957
The World is His Song (dedicated: Paul Robeson)	Mez or bar solo, SATB, instr. ens.	1958
Ballade vom Marsch auf Aldermaston	Speaker, SATB, instr. ens.	1958
The Alps & Andes of the Living World (Cantata)	Speaker, ten solo, SATB, orchestra	1968
Men of Felling	Male voice choir, piano	1971
The Earth Awakening	Female choir, organ	1972
Song for Angela Davis	Mixed chorus, unaccompanied or piano	WMA, 1972
Africa is My Name	Mezzo solo, mixed chorus, pn or orch	1976
The Earth in Shadow	Mixed chorus, symphony orchestra	1986

Texts for other composers

"The Cat and the Wolf" by Robert Gill — WMA n.d.
Cantata for children in unison and 2-parts with 2 solos
Accompaniment 4 hands/ 1 piano
Adaptation and English text from a fable by Krylov

"Thames Journey" by Geoffrey Winters
Song cycle for young voices, unison and instruments — Oxford, 1967

Two songs for Human Rights Year (1968) Unpublished
"The Heritage." by Geoffrey Winters
First performed at Parkside Secondary School, 5 November 1968.
"Stay as a Friend." by Geoffrey Winters
Soprano or Tenor Voice.

Three 2-Part Songs for Children by Alfred Rawlston. B. Feldman Publ., 1970
"Motorway"
"Regent's Canal"
"Man in a Crane"

Tribute for an Anniversary. Three Songs. Labor Monthly, May 1971
"The New Age" Music by Irene Armitage.
"Music" Music by John Miller
"The Choice" Music by Aubrey Bowman.

These poems were published in the Labour Monthly, May 1971 with the following note: "On the occasion of the reception to celebrate the seventieth birthday of Alan Bush, at which messages were received from musicians all over the world, including Sir Michael Tippett and Shostakovich and Kabelevsky of the Soviet Union, three songs in his honour, written by Nancy Bush and set to music by three of his pupils, were sung by Richard Wood. This special tribute was ingeniously kept a secret from him until the moment of the reception."

"A Silent Day." Published privately
Music by Tom Clarke. Dated 21 May 1989.

Nancy Bush writes: "This following song was written whilst I was in The Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases, suffering from a touch or arthritis. There is no copyright on the song, but I am appealing to you for some money. The Hospital has now started a research institute, which fights rheumatic diseases. I Would appreciate it, if you would kindly send a donation to the Institute, when you sing or record this song."

Translations of Vocal Texts

Béla Bartók

Finding a Husband. Copyright 1932 Universal; assigned B & H, 1939.	B & H, 1956
Five Songs, op. 16 (1916), voice and piano	B & H, 1939
Enchanting Song: old Hungarian poem	B & H, 1953
Mocking of youth: old Hungarian poem	B & H, 1953
Spring: old Hungarian poem	B & H, 1953
The wooing of a girl: old Hungarian poem	B & H, 1953
Eight Hungarian folksongs (1907-17)	B & H, 1955
Five Slovak Folk Songs, 4-part male chorus	B & H, 1955

Love Song B & H. 1956
Love song (S.A.T.B.) B & H. 1956
Ot Magyar nepdal: enekhangra zongorakiserettel Budapest, Ed. Musica, 1970
Hungarian Folksongs for voice and piano Budapest, Ed. Musica, 1970
- Far behind I left my country
- Crossing the river
- The horse-thief
- In the summer fields
- I was in a garden green
- Deceived in love
- Love's a burden
- Walking through the town
- The horseman
- My love has gone a-ploughing

Beethoven
The Performing Monkey

Alban Berg
Seven Early Songs
- Night
- The Room
- Love Song
- Summer Days
- The Nightingale

Hans von Bulow
Lied der Arbeit (The Call to Freedom) London Labour Choral Union, 1929

Xuan Hong
The Jacket-makers' Song from North Vietnam WMA, 1967

Hans Eisler WMA, 1964
In Spring (Words by Johannes Becher)
Song of Learning (Words by Johannes Becher)
Far-away Song (Words by Johannes Becher)
Song of Peace (Words by Bertholt Brecht, after Pablo Neruda)

Dmitry Borisovich Kabalevsky
Seven merry songs: (based on nursery rhymes), op. 41 Leeds, 1948

Zoltán Kodály
Hymn to King Stephen B & H. 1939
Cease Your Bitter Weeping B & co. 1951
The Bachelor 1951

Norwegian Girls: S.A.T.B.	B & H, 1951
Norwegian Girls (solo)	B & H, 1951
The Peacocks	B & H, 1951
Soldier's Song, with trumpet & snare drum	B & H, 1951
Song from Karad	B & H, 1951
Kallo folk dances	B & H, 1954
Kallo Folk Dances = Volkstanze aus Kallo	B & H, 1966
Hungarian Folk Songs for Voice and Piano	Budapest, Ed. Musica, 1970

Queen of flowers
Green rue
As a soldier I must leave you
At the tavern Janek's Hiding
Here's my horse
Scarlet roses growing
Poplas leaves are falling
Now the fields are being ploughed
The prisoner
Drinking song

Gustav Mahler

(1941, requested by Erwin Stein of Boosey and Hawkes)
Far over the hill.
Life on Earth
Rhine Legend
Solace in Sorrow
Where the Shining Trumpets Blow
Primeval Light
Sentinel's Night Song
St. Anthony and the Fishes
(No date)
Joyfully I walked through a Green Wood
To Make Naughty Children Behave
The Drummer Boy
Look not on my Songs

Bohuslav Martinu

Five Czech madrigals	B & H, 1949
Husicky na vode. Geese on the Water	B & H, 1949
The dove's message: from Five Czech madrigals	B & H, 1949
Three Sacred Songs: On Czech popular rhymes (S.S.A.)	B & H, 1953

The Birth of Our Lord
The Way to Paradise
The Ascension

Three Part-Songs on Czech Popular Rhymes — B & H. 1953
The Aching Heart
The Penniless Sweetheart
Shepherd's Song

Ernst Meyer
Buchenwald (from Paul Wiens's translation) 1957
Bergen-op-Zoom: A Netherlands song of the 16th century. — WMA

Mozart
Children's Song

Vano Muradeli
Lenin in Siberia — WMA, 1970

Modest Mussorgsky
Choral scenes from *Boris Godounov* — B & H. 1957

Novikov
Peace Song

Arnold Schoenberg
Peace on Earth ("Friede auf Erde")

Richard Strauss
Hans Adam war ein Edernkloss = Man's Creation — Berlin: J.Oertel, 1951
(Bass & piano)

Mikis Theodorakis
Greek Freedom Song — WMA, 1967

Poem for **Michael Tippett**
A Silent Day (No evidence that it was set to music.)

Paul Tortelier
The Children of Hanoi

V. Zakharov
Oh say who can tell me (Arranged Will Sahnow, Words by M. Isakovsky) — Soviet Weekly, 3 Jan. 1945

The Marseillaise — WMA, 1944

Translations of Vocal Texts by no known composer

Four African songs
African national Anthem
Come, Come, Dear Lover Mine
Morning Song
Song of the Cowbells (or Gathering Rice)

Beat on the Drums

Bind up the Whirlwind (1963) for a competition organized by the WMA.

Co-operative Children's Song

Four Slovak Songs
Strike up and play, fiddler
By the river, far from her home
Now the bell tolls midnight
In the valley, in the valley

Four Folksongs (country and provenance unknown)
My sad heart is yearning
The Fortune Teller
Give me this Gift, O God
Make the best of life

Folksongs (country and provenance unknown)
The Honeysuckle
The Nightingale
Oh green forest, my Mother
Song of Days gone by
The Vine

Holy and most blessed Virgin

Hungarian Lament (1930 for The Fleet Street Choir)

In the Temple

Italian folksongs (sent to Mrs. Peggy Wippel, WMA Singers, Dec. 28, 1958)
Marianina
The Blue Grotto

Jenufa's Song

The Joy of Harvesting

The Skylarks' Peace Song

Kalinka (A Russian Folk Song arranged for Male Voice Choir by Alan Bush)

Two Songs for the Lenin Celebration Concert, January 1970
(original poems by Nancy Bush)
Glory to the Seventeenth Battalion
The Young Guard

The Living Earth (April 1974; may be original text by Nancy Bush)

Two Roumanian folk songs
The Harvest
On the Collective Farm

Motet Depositum Creditum

My Country in Captivity (1969) A song from the Philippines

Nivernaise Folk Song
When I lived down with my father

Ode on the Death of Lord Byron by Dionysos Solomos
(Translated by Romilly Jenkins. English version by Nancy Bush.) This text was incorporated by Alan Bush into his Third Symphony, *The Byron Symphony*, Op. 53 (1959-60.)

Old Adam was an Earthen Clod

Song for International Women's Day (1950)

The Falcon (These four are clipped together in Bush's file, no date or provenance)
On Leave
Partisans from the Forests
Songs

Polar Day

Five Polish Songs (1951)
The Foundry
The March of Friendship
On Guard for Peace
Polish Youth Song
Winds of Freedom

Four Russian folksongs (1941)
Be Silent, Brown Nightingale
Not a breath of wind (Wedding Song)
Oh, scarlet are the berries
The Silver String

Russian translations for S.C.R., January 1967
A Lark in the Meadow
Spring Sun

Song of Helvetia (Swiss popular air)

The Trooper's Pledge (Song of a German Conscript in the army of the Holy Roman Empire by George Herwegh, 1848.

Swedish air