

# **Benjamin Britten: art song, a synthesis of words and music – issues and approaches to text-setting**

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The clarity of verbal expression evident throughout Benjamin Britten's (1913–1976) art songs serves to highlight the central role which the setting of pre-existing written poetic texts occupies in his compositional process and in the aesthetic appreciation of his interpretation. For Britten, text acts initially as a source of musical imagination, but it also provides the composer with a framework with which to express musically his selected, literary-based ideas.

To place Britten's contribution against the backdrop of an important musicological debate, it is necessary to clarify a number of key issues. Firstly, text-setting is often loosely perceived as the composition of music of a pre-existing written text, yet in Britten this approach has been expanded to incorporate the process whereby music and text are simultaneously generated. A good example of this is Britten's close collaboration with W.H. Auden in the song cycle *Our Hunting Fathers* op.8 (1936),<sup>1</sup> in which Auden not only wrote two poems but also selected and modernised three other poems, specifically for Britten to set to music. Secondly, that text-setting is a broader concern than the activity of mere text underlay and is significant to all text-based vocal music: its study also involves syntactic and semantic considerations. Syntactic concerns make reference to the musical response of the work to the structure of the source text, at both the level of overall form, and sentence and word patterns. Semantic questions relate to the response of music to the ideas and underlying meaning contained in the text.<sup>2</sup> The practice of word-painting is primarily, yet not exclusively, concerned with syntactic issues while tone or mood painting, again not solely but primarily, engages with semantic issues.

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<sup>1</sup> Britten: *Our Hunting Fathers* op.8 (London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1936).

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan King, 'Text-setting', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. by Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 29 vols (London: Macmillan, 2001), xxv, 319–20.

## Text setting

Bearing in mind such current musicological criticism this chapter seeks to identify Britten's syntactic and semantic approaches to text-setting and to consider the relative significance of the specific elements he employs in his setting of words to music.<sup>3</sup> Firstly, this will involve an exposition of specific theoretical issues of vocal music as highlighted by Lawrence Rosenwald in his 1993 article 'Theory, Text-Setting, and performance' published in *The Journal of Musicology*.<sup>4</sup> I then propose the application, to Britten's art song repertory, of the model developed by Peter Stacey in his 1989 article: 'Towards the analysis of the relationship of music and text in contemporary composition.'<sup>5</sup> This later article is contained in a special edition of *Contemporary Music Review*, entitled 'Music and Text', which is devoted exclusively to issues of text-setting and which represents a significant single contribution to the study of texted music. This publication is, in fact, dedicated to the memory of Benjamin Britten, an indication of a general acceptance of the relative significance of these issues to his songs and other vocal compositions. Examples from my own engagement with Britten's songs will then support the application of Rosenwald's theoretical and Stacey's analytical approaches and will serve as a general model for text-setting.

This chapter attempts to identify aspects of Britten's compositional practices and approaches which are evident in his setting of selected texts. Though not my focus in this chapter I am, however, cognisant of the significant insights to be gained from the specific application to art song, of musicological and other more widely held theories of texted music, many of which have their origins in such

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<sup>3</sup> See also: David Nicholls, 'Narrative theory as an analytical tool in the study of popular music texts', *Music and Letters*, 88/2 (2007), 297–315, and Donald Ivey, *Song: Anatomy, Imagery, and Style* (New York: The Free Press, 1970), pp. 232–52.

<sup>4</sup> Lawrence Rosenwald, 'Theory, Text-Setting, and Performance', *The Journal of Musicology*, 11/1 (1993), 52–65. Hereafter referred to as Rosenwald, 'Theory, Text-Setting, and Performance'.

<sup>5</sup> Peter F. Stacey, 'Towards the analysis of the relationship of music and text in contemporary composition', *Contemporary Music Review*, 5 (1989), 9–37. Hereafter referred to as Stacey, 'Towards the analysis of the relationship of music and text in contemporary composition'.

literary studies as: narrativity,<sup>6</sup> as espoused by Jean-Jaques Nattiez (1990)<sup>7</sup> and Lawrence Kramer (1990)<sup>8</sup>; the hermeneutics<sup>9</sup> models of Carl Dahlhaus (1977)<sup>10</sup> and Joseph Kerman (1985)<sup>11</sup>; and semiotics<sup>12</sup> in the work of Nattiez (1989) and Kofi Agawu (1991).

### **Lawrence Rosenwald's specific text setting concerns**

Rosenwald has been taken as a starting point for this research as he identifies issues that apply specifically to art song as a literary based or inspired musical genre. He is concerned at the propriety of the application of a body of musical theory and analysis, to song, which has been developed 'exclusively or at any rate normatively on a model of text-less music'.<sup>13</sup> He considers that one approach undertaken by music theorists has been to develop a 'specifically musical language [...] to describe music that does not need to translate musical data into, say psychological data'.<sup>14</sup> This approach contributes to the belief that a musical work should be self-contained and that external references serve to diminish its aesthetic value. Yet, art song is by its very nature referential and its analysis cannot be approached in the same way as

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<sup>6</sup> For further discussion on narrativity see: Fred Everett Maus, 'Narratology, narrativity', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. by Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 29 vols (London: Macmillan, 2001), xvii, 641–43.

<sup>7</sup> Jean-Jaques Nattiez, 'Can one speak about narrativity in music', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 115 (1990), 240–57.

<sup>8</sup> Lawrence Kramer, *Music and Poetry: The nineteenth century and after* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion on hermeneutics see also Ian D. Bent, 'Hermeneutics', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. by Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 29 vols (London: Macmillan, 2001), xi, 418–26.

<sup>10</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Foundations of Music History*, trans. by J.B. Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, Ger. orig. 1977), pp. 71–84.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Kerman, *Musicology* (London: Fontana, 1985).

<sup>12</sup> For further discussion on semiotics see: Naomi Cumming, 'Semiotics', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. by Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, 29 vols (London: Macmillan, 2001), xxiii, 66–69.

<sup>13</sup> Rosenwald, 'Theory, Text-Setting, and Performance', p. 53.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

instrumental or absolute music. Rosenwald goes so far as to say that it is now common for texted-music to be viewed as an 'anomaly' in musical analysis. He expects of any theory of music that it should be sufficiently general to consider text as well as music in addressing the 'poetic, formal, semantic and aesthetic complexities of a song'.<sup>15</sup>

In relation to texted music, Rosenwald also suggests that a rhythmic-centred analysis of this music may prove more insightful than an exclusively harmony-centred approach as there is no 'evident way to move from terms of harmony to terms pertinent to the text, whereas the movement from terms of musical rhythm to terms of textual rhythm is relatively easy'.<sup>16</sup> This suggestion does highlight the particular difficulties in analysing vocal music, but the weakness of this argument stems from the presumption that composers will in general respond in detail to the actual source text. This is not always the case however: composers may use the text as catalyst only, as with Arnold Schoenberg who argues that the initial impact of the opening words of a poem provide sufficient inspiration for song composition.<sup>17</sup>

Rosenwald notes the criticism made by Joseph Kerman<sup>18</sup> of Heinrich Schenker's failure to examine 'the surface features of the music' in his analysis of Robert Schumann's 'Aus meinen Tränen sprießen'.<sup>19</sup> Rosenwald takes this a step further in claiming that Schenker ignores 'in particular such surface features of the music [which] lend themselves to being explained by reference to the semantic aspects of the text'.<sup>20</sup> I would go even further than Rosenwald and say that it is essential to consider in song how the composer's musical decisions are made in relation to the text's poetic form and structure. This aspect is of particular relevance in an evaluation of Britten's art

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<sup>15</sup> Rosenwald, 'Theory, Text-Setting, and Performance', p. 53.

<sup>16</sup> Rosenwald, 'Theory, Text-Setting, and Performance', p. 58.

<sup>17</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, 'The relationship to the text', *Style and Idea*, ed. by Leonard Stein (London: Faber, 1975), pp. 141–45, cited in *Contemporary Music review: Music and Text*, 5 (1989), iv.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Kerman, 'How we got into analysis and how to get out', *Critical Inquiry*, 7 (1980), 311–31, cited in Rosenwald, 'Theory, Text-Setting, and Performance', p. 55.

<sup>19</sup> Rosenwald, 'Theory, Text-Setting, and Performance', p. 55.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

song. Examples of this are evident in his adherence to the formal structures and versification, of the source poetry of his song-cycle *The Holy Sonnets of John Donne* op.35 (1945)<sup>21</sup> as highlighted by Barbara Docherty (1989),<sup>22</sup> when compared with the freer structural treatment of his later cycle, *The Songs and Proverbs of William Blake* op.74 (1965).<sup>23</sup> This relative formal treatment of structure, highlighted at the level of the work's title, may be considered as one of Britten's personal responses to poetic genre.

### **Peter Stacey's approach to text-setting**

Peter Stacey's article goes some way to addressing the deficiencies as set out by Rosenwald, in relation to the analysis of song. Stacey commences with a succinct overview of the historical development of theoretical approaches to text-setting, paying particular attention to changing attitudes to textual primacy, and the mimetic relationship of music and text. This development can be characterized by a continual relative shift from low-level word-painting to higher-level mood representation.<sup>24</sup> Britten's art song output occupies a relatively stable and conservative position, in terms of Stacey's historical development, when compared to the 'explosion of activity and innovation in the field of vocal music' in the mid-twentieth century, in which tonal experimentation is widespread and the expansion of vocal techniques are evident in works such as Berg's opera *Lulu* (1937).<sup>25</sup>

The remainder of this chapter will focus on my selective summarised exploration of Stacey's analytical method for discussing vocal music, which has a poetic or prose source and my application of

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<sup>21</sup> Britten: *The Holy Sonnets of John Donne* op.35 (London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1946).

<sup>22</sup> Barbara Docherty, 'Syllogism and symbol: Britten, Tippett and English Text', *Contemporary Music Review*, 5 (1989), 37–63 (p. 37).

<sup>23</sup> Britten: *Songs and Proverbs of William Blake* op.74 (London: Faber and Faber, 1965).

<sup>24</sup> Stacey, 'Towards the analysis of the relationship of music and text in contemporary composition', pp. 9–16.

<sup>25</sup> Stacey, 'Towards the analysis of the relationship of music and text in contemporary composition', p. 14.

this theory to Britten's approach to art song (see table 1. for a summary of Stacey's analysis headings).

**Table 1. Peter Stacey: procedures for examining music based upon poetic or prose texts<sup>26</sup>**

1. The Text
2. The Condition of the Text
3. The Vocal Style
4. The Intelligibility of the Text
5. The Techniques of Relating Music and Text
- Direct Mimesis
- Displaced Mimesis
- Non-mimetic Relationship
- Arbitrary Association
- Synthetic Relationship
- Anti-contextual Relationship
6. The relative Status of the Media

Part of the attraction of Stacey's approach to the consideration of the relationship between music and its source text, poetry and prose in the case of Britten's art songs, is his identification of the separate aspects and procedures of this analysis. Each constituent element may be assessed individually while also contributing to a more complete evidence-based appreciation of the response of song to text. It should also be noted that there is significant overlap between many of the categories; for example, the prescribed vocal style will impact upon an

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<sup>26</sup> Stacey, 'Towards the analysis of the relationship of music and text in contemporary composition', p. 20.

assessment of the intelligibility of the source text and thereby directly effect an evaluation of the relative primacy of music or text. It is necessary, for the purpose of clarity, therefore, to first explain the meaning which Stacey attributes to each procedure as summarised in table 1.

### **1. The text**

Consideration of the text involves an assessment of the following: firstly, the meaning of the text including a review of the symbolic use of ideas and imagery; secondly, the poetic form of the text which may vary from conventional forms of poetic versification to free form; and finally consideration of the sound of the text. This last element also takes into account the innate rhythmic musical character of words, their metre and word stress patterns, and also identifies and phrases with phonic attributes, such as assonance and onomatopoeia. The identification of these elements in the source text enables one to consider the relative extent of their corresponding representation in the final musical work.

### **2. Condition of the text**

This aspect assesses the composer's treatment of textual detail. For a song to be in what Stacey defines as 'prime condition', all original formal and structural detail should be intact.<sup>27</sup> A 'fragmented condition' applies where either high-level structural aspects are removed or where 'lower-level' sentences and words are altered or repeated, often for musical reasons. Partial fragmentation arises most frequently in Britten's songs; he does however tend to respect the integrity of the poetic source, but not to the extent of Hugo Wolf's reverence of the original poetic form in works such as his 53 *Mörike Lieder* (1888).<sup>28</sup> Again, this aspect of evaluation reveals the relative importance of the structure of the poem in shaping Britten's art song.

### **3. Vocal style**

The variation in styles available to a composer range from lexically- to musically-dominated vocal styles in which 'speech, music and gesture'

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<sup>27</sup> Stacey, 'Towards the analysis of the relationship of music and text in contemporary composition', p. 23.

<sup>28</sup> Hugo Wolf: *The Complete Mörike Songs*, ed. by Stanley Applebaum (New York: Dover Publications, 1982).

may be combined.<sup>29</sup> In practice this extends from recitation in melodrama, through the *Sprechgesang* of Schoenberg, Berg and others, to conventional syllabic and melismatic singing. In general Britten's art-song vocal style is to mix syllabic and melismatic singing in a declamatory manner. The identification of the selected vocal style will allow an assessment of the extent of its response in the music of the text set.

#### 4. Intelligibility of the text

This aspect of Stacey's model considers whether the work is audible and can be readily understood. Articulation may be clear, over-articulated or under-articulated. At all times Britten intends his song texts to be clearly audible and intelligible, thereby emphasizing the direct nature of the relationship of these songs to their poetic source. In each of his foreign language settings Britten provides an English language translation in the score for performers and in the concert programme notes for his audience. An example of this is the performance translation, commissioned by Britten and provided by Elizabeth Mayer and Peter Pears, for the *Sechs Hölderlin Fragmente* op.61 (1958),<sup>30</sup> which reveals the importance Britten places in providing a translation of these settings of the original German poems even though recognised translations, such as Michael Hamburger's, were readily available. The following table shows the original Hölderlin German text of 'Die Heimat', the third song from *Sechs Hölderlin Fragmente* op.61 (1958) (A), together with Hamburger's poetic translation (B) and the Mayer's and Pears' performance translation (C).

**Table 2 (A). Friedrich Hölderlin: 'Die Heimat'**<sup>31</sup>

Froh kehrt der Schiffer heim an den stillen Strom  
Von fernen Inseln, wo er geerntet hat.  
Wohl möcht auch ich zur Heimat wieder;  
Aber was hab' ich, wie Leid, geerntet?

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<sup>29</sup> Stacey, 'Towards the analysis of the relationship of music and text in contemporary composition', p. 21.

<sup>30</sup> Britten: *Sechs Hölderlin Fragmente* op.61 (London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1962).

<sup>31</sup> Hölderlin, *Hölderlin: His Poems*, ed. and trans. by Michael Hamburger (London: Harvill Press, 1952), p. 104.

Ihr holden Ufer, die ihr mich auferzogt,  
 Stillt ihr der Liebe Leiden? Ach gebt ihr mir,  
 Ihr Walder meiner Kindheit! Wann ich  
 Komme, die Ruhe noch einmal weider?

**Table 2 (B). ‘Home’: trans. by Michael Hamburger<sup>32</sup>**

To quiet waters homewards the boatman turns  
 From distant islands, where he has harvested;  
 I too would gladly now turn homewards;  
 But is now sorrow my only harvest

O blissful shores that reared me and sheltered me,  
 Do you relieve the sufferings love inflicts,  
 O forests of my childhood, will you  
 Give me back peace, when I come to seek it?

**Table 2 (C). ‘Home’: trans. by Elizabeth Mayer and Peter Pears<sup>33</sup>**

With joy the fisher steers into the quiet port  
 From distant islands, where he has harvested.  
 So too would I be turning homewards;  
 Ah, but what have I, save grief, for harvest?

Ye blessed shores, the guardians of my youth,  
 Can you not ease my longing? Then give me back,  
 You forests of my childhood, at my  
 Coming, that peace which once you gave me!

**5. Techniques of relating music and text**

This step in Stacey’s analysis identifies the types of relationships which exist between music and source text, being: (i) direct mimesis (ii) displaced mimesis (iii) non-mimetic relationship (iv) arbitrary association (v) synthetic relationship (vi) anti-contextual relationship. I

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<sup>32</sup> Holderlin, *Holderlin: His Poems*, ed. and trans. by Michael Hamburger (London: Harvill Press, 1952), p. 105.

<sup>33</sup> Britten: *Sechs Holderlin Fragmente* op.61 (London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1962), iii.

will firstly clarify the meaning assigned, by Stacey, to these terms and later identify examples which are evident in the chosen Britten setting. The first three of these aspects relate to the form and degree of the imitative gesture evident in the music.

Direct mimesis arises when music audibly imitates any subject, idea, image or tone contained in the text. If the mimesis relates to the overall tone or mood of the text it is termed 'high-level', while if it is localised and refers to a single word or phrase it is termed 'low-level'. Rosenwald also makes use of a similar distinction but cautions on the dismissal of word-painting as superficial imitation as it may serve a dual purpose, whereby it also contributes to the creation of the mood of the work.<sup>34</sup>

Displaced mimesis occurs when sound elements, which derive from the text, are used, but the linkage is no longer immediately audible.

A non-mimetic relationship may arise in a composition in which the composer does not intend any imitation of text but the listener constructs a chance connection.

Arbitrary association occurs not by an imitation of the text in the music but rather is created through the repetition of a musical feature or motif which then becomes associated with a word, phrase or idea.

In a synthetic relationship the text and music are so closely related that a synthesis arises. Stacey cites the conjunction of text and music in 'Concrete Poetry and text-sound composition' as examples of this aspect of relationship, the former providing a typographical interpretation.<sup>35</sup>

Anti-contextual relationship occurs when music is composed which deliberately contrasts with, or apparently contradicts, the source text.

## **6. The relative status of the media**

The balancing of both the textual and musical media utilized may be identified as having 'textual primacy', 'musical primacy' or oscillating

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<sup>34</sup> Rosenwald, 'Theory, Text-Setting, and Performance', p. 56.

<sup>35</sup> Stacey, 'Towards the analysis of the relationship of music and text in contemporary composition', p. 22.

between the two. Philip Rupprecht's view that it is 'Britten's tendency to place the burden of musical expression in the voice line itself, and not in the accompaniment' provides a very clear pointer as to Britten's preferences.<sup>36</sup> The experience of listening to a song will lead to an overall general impression of the dominance of text or music but throughout the duration of the performance the relative shift of primacy is likely to be in constant dialogue. This evaluation may differ in response to the subtlety of a specific performance experience of individual interpretations, so that an assessment of relative primacy of the same song sung by Pears and Britten<sup>37</sup> differs for that of say Robert Tear and Philip Ledger<sup>38</sup> or Anthony Rolfe Johnson and Graham Johnson.<sup>39</sup>

### **An application of Stacey's method to an art song by Britten**

For the purpose of this applied analysis the sixth and final song, entitled 'Die Linien des Lebens' (The Lines of Life) has been selected from the song cycle *Sechs Hölderlin Fragmente* op.61 (1958).<sup>40</sup> The following analysis utilizes the categories as identified by Stacey in his approach to text-setting (as seen in table no. 1.):

1. The poetic text concerns a retrospective view of life which draws on images of nature, such as rivers and mountains, as symbolic representations of the progression of life's journey. Britten appropriately selects this complete poetic fragment from the poet's later period of mental illness. This poem takes a traditional form of two phrases each in two rhyming couplets ending with the assonances *verschieden*, *Grenzen*, *ergänzen*, and *Frieden*.

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<sup>36</sup> Philip Rupprecht, *Britten's Musical Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> Britten, *Winter Words* op.52, Peter Pears (T), Benjamin Britten (pf) (CD Decca 476–849, 2006 [1956]).

<sup>38</sup> Britten, *Winter Words* op.52, Robert Tear (T), Philip Ledger (pf) (CD EMI 73997, 2000 [1973]).

<sup>39</sup> Britten, *Winter Words* op.52, Anthony Rolfe Johnson (T), Graham Johnson (pf) (CD Hyperion 55067, 2001 [1985]).

<sup>40</sup> Britten: 'Die Linien des Lebens' (London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1962), pp. 20–21.

2. The poem is in 'prime condition' in this setting and there are no alterations or additional repetitions of the text (see table no.1 and example no.1).
3. The vocal style is almost exclusively slow syllabic-minim movement with the exception of the additional passing notes at the end of each second phrase highlighting the repeated sound quality of the text *Grenzen* and *Frieden* (see example 1). There is a trance-like quality in the voice and the limited tessitura of the first and third phrases contrast with the expanded ranges of the second and final phrase.
4. With regard to intelligibility of the text, the poem is markedly audible and can be understood at all times. Britten's concern for the provision of an English language translation has already been noted above.
5. In relation to the techniques of relating music and text, there is an abundance of direct mimesis in this Britten song. The categorization of high and low-level mimetic relationships is, however, problematic as much of the word-painting contained in this song also contributes to presentation of the overall poetic meaning. High-level imitation is evident in both the canonic piano and the vocal line (bar 3) in which the introductory piano motif is augmented in the vocal line, these entries are a direct musical response to the text 'Die Linien des Lebens' (The lines of Life), and also in the first incidence of four-part texture on the words 'Mit Harmonien' (with harmony). Low-level direct imitation arises in the piano line's depiction of a meandering river or path (bars 7–9) and the ascent and descent of the subsequent phrase which has its source in the text 'Berge Grenzen' (Mountain ranges) (see example no.1). In fact this song could be considered a study in direct mimesis.

One might consider that the first alteration from the opening repeated canonic phrase, at the word *verschieden* ('different'), to be an example of non-mimetic relationship whereby the initial musical line only starts to change or differ on the word 'different'. However, as this is almost certainly Britten's musical intention, this observation should be reclassified as an illustration of a direct high-level mimetic response.

Not all of the techniques as identified in Stacey's method will be present in any given musical setting and I have not identified displaced mimesis, arbitrary associations or synthetic relations in this song.

## Example 1. Britten: 'Die Linien des Lebens'

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## Die Linien des Lebens

*Lines of Life*

Slow and solemn (*langsam und feierlich*) (♩ = 66) *pp*

Voice

Piano

*ppp*

(without Ped.)  
(ohne Ped.)

Die Each

Li - men des Le - bens sind ver - schie - den,  
line of life is diff - erent from an - o - ther;

Wie We - ge sind, und wie der Her - ge  
As ri - vers are, or like the moun - tain

*always pp*  
*(immer ppp)*

slow cresc  
(langsam cresc.) 21

*pp*

Gren zen Was hier wir sind, kann  
*rnu get. Was hier wir sind, kann*

*slow cresc. (langsam cresc.)*

*with Ped (mit Ped.)*

*f*

dort em Gott er gan zen. Mit  
*there by God com ple - tol. With*

Har mo nien und ew gem Lohn und Frie  
*har - mo - ny re - ward and peace and ter*

den  
*mal*

*ff* *poco dim* *f* *mf*

An anti-contextual relationship exists in the last line of the song when we hear Britten's dissonant piano accompaniment which is in stark contrast to the textual questioning of the value of earthly toil and that 'peace eternal' which is exclusive to the next life, the musical resolution of which is delayed until the piano postlude. This contrast between musical response and text takes on even greater importance given that this is the last song of this six song cycle and represents a clear appropriation by Britten of the poetic meaning — he has made his own of this poem.

6. The text may be considered to have primary status in this song. This is in spite of the structural importance of both the piano opening statement of the canon and the dynamic climax of the piano postlude, both of which are direct musical responses to the selected text.

### **A way forward**

This chapter highlights certain of the specific concerns which are particular to vocal genres including art song and reiterates the need for and relative absence of specific models for use in the analysis of texted music. My account of the application of Peter Stacey's analysis method to Britten's song '*Die Linien des Lebens*' in this chapter provides a useful framework for the assessment of the multifarious possibilities for text setting in song. Though developed primarily as a comparative model, it does, however, offer an insightful interpretation of art song, thereby providing an entry route into the nature of the relationship of music and text in this genre. Stacey does not claim that his approach amounts to a fully developed theoretical and analytic model, but it is, in my opinion, an important step in achieving that end. A more complete understanding of the function of the extra-musical nature of text on the musical activity of text setting will enhance our appreciation of art song.

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