

Chamber-Music Performance and Nation in Second World War London

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Music.

by

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Declaration

I confirm that the work in this thesis is my own.

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Abstract

While twentieth-century British history overall is served quite well by musicology, the period during the Second World War has not been subjected to the same depth and breadth of analysis as the rest of the century. Moreover, performances of chamber music in particular often seem to be passed over in favour of larger-scale works and institutions, so that the focus is on composition and new music; orchestral performances; institutional histories; and individual biographies. This thesis thus offers a new angle by examining chamber-music concerts in London between 1939 and 1945 and situating these performances in their social, economic, cultural and political contexts. In particular, it examines chamber-music performances through the continually evolving relationships between music and ‘nation’. In this instance, ‘nation’ includes the construction and deconstruction of national identities, national representations, nationalism and national ideologies.

I trace the position of chamber-music performance in the wider musical and cultural context of the 1930s and 1940s through the activities and attitudes of the BBC, through discourses in newspapers and other publications, and through work in other performance venues and genres. Stemming from in-depth archival research complemented by historical and musicological literature, my thesis explores two prime venues for chamber music: the Wigmore Hall and the National Gallery.

The Wigmore Hall was a commercially run venue. During the period, however, chamber music was also presented there as a vehicle for charitable causes and,

significantly, was used as a platform for ‘national’ groups such as the Anglo-Austrian Music Society. National ideologies and identities were thus articulated on a musical platform and in this war context the dominance of works from the Austro-German canon raises interesting questions. The Wigmore Hall also stands out as a significant venue for the performance of newly composed chamber music during the war.

The National Gallery chamber-music performances provide a considerable contrast to this. Under the direction of one woman, Myra Hess, they were conceived and run under particular ethical guidelines that extended to repertoire choice and administrative structures. While the concerts have often been discussed in relation to their morale-boosting mission, my thesis goes beyond popular myth to argue that despite striving to remain above constructs of ‘nation’, the concerts were necessarily tangled in complex ideological problems.

Each venue illuminates the complex interrelations between music and concepts of nation. The thesis suggests that British musical identity during the period was conceived, constructed and articulated through the medium of performance itself, rather than through the more problematic area of stylistic compositional traits.

Table of Contents

Declaration	2
Abstract	3
Index of figures	8
Acknowledgements	11
Introduction	13
Chapter one. ‘Democratic at all costs’: chamber-music performance in context	39
<i>Introduction</i>	39
<i>Physical conditions</i>	42
<i>Cultural life on the home front: a short survey of change</i>	48
<i>An establishment view: chamber music at the BBC</i>	58
<i>Audiences</i>	58
<i>Policy 1: the 1930s</i>	65
<i>Policy 2: wartime</i>	69
<i>Live chamber-music performance in London and the democratic stage</i>	75
<i>Private democracy: the case of the Committee for the Promotion of New Music</i>	85
<i>Democratic at all costs?</i>	90
Chapter two. Music and nation	95
<i>Introduction</i>	95
<i>Constructions of Britishness</i>	97
<i>The 1939 music festivals</i>	103
<i>How did music and ‘nation’ intersect at the BBC?</i>	112

<i>The British art–music scene as explored in the written word</i>	120
<i>A ‘European tournament of cultural prestige’ and the cuckoo in the nest</i>	135
<i>Conclusion</i>	144
Chapter three. The Wigmore Hall	146
<i>Introduction</i>	146
<i>The fortunes of the wartime chamber-music concert</i>	149
<i>Charity performances</i>	157
<i>Repertoire, programming and new music</i>	163
<i>National representations and identities</i>	185
<i>Concerts and national representations</i>	186
<i>The Anglo-Austrian Music Society</i>	201
<i>British and foreign musicians</i>	211
Chapter four. The National Gallery concerts	219
<i>Introduction</i>	219
<i>Musical displacement and emplacement</i>	220
<i>Setting up the concerts</i>	222
<i>Maintaining the concerts</i>	226
<i>The end of the concerts</i>	231
<i>Audiences, repertoire and taste</i>	236
<i>The canon and beyond</i>	237
<i>Performers and their audiences</i>	245
<i>Ideologies, propaganda and myth</i>	256
<i>Co-operative finance</i>	263

<i>The lure of 'prestige'</i>	267
<i>The international prestige war</i>	271
<i>Conclusion</i>	277
Conclusion	279
Appendix. Primary and archival sources	289
Bibliography	298

Index of figures

<i>Fig.</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Page</i>
1	Sleep Achieved Last Night. London, 12 September 1940.' Mass Observation.	46
2	Domestic music making is shunned by an (imaginary) audience in favour of the superior quality available on the wireless. <i>Punch</i> .	55
3	Audience Research Special Reports. What Listeners Like, Part I general vote, 1939.	60
4	Another Changing Face of Britain'. <i>Punch</i> .	64
5	The Grande Chamber Orchestra in rehearsal at Wigmore Hall in 1938.	77
6	Tchaikovsky's Fifth! Jazzed!' <i>Punch</i> .	93
7	Proportion of serious British music (chamber and orchestral) to complete output of serious music.	114
8	I said, "May I see your identity card?"' <i>Punch</i> .	122
9	A concert at Wigmore Hall in the late 1930s featuring a female vocalist and accompanist.	148
10	Number of concerts per month. Wigmore Hall, June 1939 to December 1945.	152
11	Wigmore Hall monthly turnovers 1935–1945.	155
12	Wigmore Hall 1939–1945: charitable causes appearing in programmes.	159
13	Charitable causes in Wigmore Hall programmes, 1939–1945, divided by type.	161
14	Wigmore Hall, division of programming trends, September 1939 to December 1945.	166
15	Percentage of total annual performances by programme type.	167
16	Selection of canonic composers, instances of works. Wigmore Hall, September 1939 to December 1945.	172
17	Percentage of platform time by ensemble type. Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive.	173
18	A programme of Austrian music banned by the Nazis. Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive.	176
19	Wigmore Hall, division of repertoire performances September 1939 to December 1945.	180
20	Performances of music by living composers, Wigmore Hall 1939–1945.	183

<i>Fig.</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Page</i>
21	A programme from one of the most prolific nationally themed concert series that used Wigmore Hall, the French Concert series. Wigmore Hall and the Centre for Performance History.	188
22	A concert in aid of the Polish Relief Fund featuring a torn Polish flag. Wigmore Hall and the Centre for Performance History.	192
23	Great International Concert. Music of the Allies.’ Concert programme. Wigmore Hall and the Centre for Performance History.	195
24	A Workers’ Music Association concert. Wigmore Hall and the Centre for Performance History.	199
25	Anglo-Austrian Music Society. Profits and Losses on functions between 16209 February 1943 and 30 June 1945.	209
26	Average spend for audiences purchasing a top-price ticket at Wigmore Hall September 1939 to December 1945. Figures presented as shillings.	212
27	British artists and foreign artists at Wigmore Hall 1931 and 1941. 1931 figures compiled from Ibbs and Tillett: <i>The Rise and Fall of a Musical Empire</i> .	214
28	A National Gallery concert in progress.	230
29	A typical week of performances at the National Gallery.	239
30	The National Gallery Concerts 1939–1946. Works billed as ‘First Performance’.	240
31	Instances of works by living and ‘canonic’ composers.	241
32	Performances of works by living or recently deceased composers.	242
33	Average audience attendance by ensemble type – small string-based groups. National Gallery concerts, 10 October 1939 to 9 October 1945.	247
34	Average audience attendance by ensemble type – soloists. National Gallery concerts, 10 October 1939 to 9 October 1945.	248
35	Average audience attendance by ensemble type – large ensembles. National Gallery concerts, 10 October 1939 to 9 October 1945.	249
36	Ensemble type and their percentage share of schedules, 10 October 1939 to 9 October 1945.	251
37	National Gallery concerts, maximum, average and minimum audience figures for six-month periods. Commencing six-month period 10 October 1939 to 9 April 1940.	254
38	National Gallery concerts, maximum, average and minimum audience figures for six-month periods. Commencing six-month period 10 October 1943 to 9 April 1944.	255
39	Audience members leave a concert. National Gallery Archives.	260

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Introduction

Social and contextual histories of chamber-music performance seem to be rare in musicological literature. Musicologists and historians studying either British music, or music in Britain in the twentieth century, have tended to concentrate their investigations on notable individuals such as composers, conductors and performers, or on institutions and businesses. Some have taken in broad sweeps of defined historical periods that examine compositional work and trends of the time. Relatively little literature exists that enables today's historians to place chamber-music performance in historical contexts. My thesis has the simple aim of redressing this balance a little, by adding weight to work that looks at chamber-music performances as a prime focus, and not just as a discretionary aside subservient to the history of large-scale orchestral or operatic performance.

This introduction will fulfil three criteria. Firstly, I will outline and give reasons for the parameters of this thesis and the context of my research questions. Secondly, I will consider the current literature available that has informed the development of my work. Finally, I will briefly describe the content of the four chapters that make up the thesis.

Inclusions and exclusions

The methodological approach and development of my thesis have been based on the foundation of three research questions that explore the nature of the relationship between the musical performance platform and a capital city experiencing total war. How did chamber-music performances function in London at this time? How can we situate these performances within the wider context of British musical life? And in what ways did articulations of 'nation' develop in chamber-music performances during the course of the Second World War?

Let us begin by considering how the parameters of this thesis were established. The only location under consideration here is London, which, as Britain's capital city, was both an entertainment hub and the centre for the wartime administration. That the city functioned as both these things as well as fulfilling internationally symbolic

functions as the ‘capital’ of the allied forces, allows this thesis to assess a location that specifically combined intense wartime engagement with the highest-profile musical activities. Whilst maintaining a rich live performance scene, the city came under intense aerial bombardment, so that civilians, including musicians, lived on what was effectively the front-line. To be sure, other major cities, such as Coventry and Birmingham, suffered terrible air raids and it would therefore be interesting to compare them to London. However, the live performance activities in these and smaller cities were not comparable in frequency or variety to the performances in London. There is scope for a project comparing chamber-music performances in London with, for example, performances in Manchester, where there was sustained chamber-music activity throughout the war, but it would need to be longer than this thesis.

One of my particular aims was to maintain a focus on live performance activity. Live performances defined London as an actively creative city even during wartime; public performances could become a potent symbol of defiance, strength and a propagandistic articulation of the moral superiority of civilised pursuits. Audiences often engaged directly with the effects, and risks, of air raids when choosing to attend performances. Live performances therefore held particular significance – in the context of war – as opposed to recorded or broadcast music. (Listening to the gramophone or wireless could be considered to have been a more passive pursuit; it was arguably safer.) Most importantly, by focusing on live performance events I am able to provide a highly distinct approach that contrasts sharply with historical narratives which concentrate on compositional style, or which articulate the history of ‘new music’, an issue that will be addressed in detail later in this introduction.

In maintaining a focus on live performance, I have not attempted to provide large amounts of biographical detail about the individuals involved. In many cases, particularly for the main protagonists (for example Vaughan Williams, Britten and Hess) this has already been achieved elsewhere in great detail. Other details associated with individual biography have also been omitted, perhaps most notably the ideas and discussions surrounding pacifism, as this did not impinge directly on the material of my case studies.

Even while focusing primarily on live performance, it has been necessary to consider the role of the BBC to some extent. A complete omission of BBC activity would be impossible as the corporation was so firmly embedded in the machinery and

fabric of high-art musical output during this period. Indeed, it is important to know how chamber music was encountered by audiences outside of the live performance space, and in this respect research into BBC chamber-music policy is a great contextual aid. I limit my attention to the BBC, however, as I am unable within the scope of this dissertation to discuss gramophone recordings, gramophone societies or continental broadcasters. I also omit detailed discussion of domestic music-making, as the nature of archival research and the difficult and lengthy process of data collection on such a subject would necessitate the presentation of another thesis entirely. It must also be emphasised that the sections on the BBC presented here have been kept deliberately brief in order to maintain my original aim of giving a voice in the literature to live performance activity. As we shall see later in this introduction, BBC activity in both peace and war has already been more extensively documented elsewhere.

Perhaps the most important choice made in the construction of my thesis was the decision to focus on the genre of chamber music itself, which requires definition before we go any further. In the course of my research, the label of ‘chamber music’ has proved to be flexible in primary sources, often changing scope and meaning depending on when and where it is used. On rare occasions the meaning of the label can even be seen to alter within the same source document. While it is sometimes employed to refer to small string ensembles only, in the context of this thesis I prefer a broader interpretation of the term. Here, ‘chamber music’ refers to most small-scale music-making.

Two significant sources, one secondary and one primary, support my broader use of the term. Christina Bashford’s article in *Grove* compares ‘chamber music’ to ‘Hausmusik’ and cites the defining characteristics of such music to be intimate performance spaces, small audiences and a small number of players (including solo performers).¹ My second source is a report from 1949 which defined ‘chamber music’ as including the following instrumental configurations.

Solo piano

Violin and piano

Other instruments with piano

¹ Christina Bashford, ‘Chamber Music’, *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/05379>, accessed 4 September 2013.

Song recitals with piano
String quartet
String trio, string quintet, piano trio, piano quartet, piano quintet
Other larger instrumental ensembles, sextets, septets, octets
Organ recitals
Vocal ensembles
Combined instrumental and vocal ensembles
Concerts of ancient music
Lecture recitals²

This list was part of the Political and Economic Planning organisation music report, a body that commissioned reports into various aspects of British society and industry in 1949. It was put together by the music report's consulting committee, which included Michael Tippett (who needs no introduction) and Frank Howes, chief music critic of *The Times* and an author and editor who also served on the Executive Committee for the National Gallery concerts and went on to work for the newly formed Arts Council after the war.

All the instrumental configurations listed above can be observed on the concert platforms of the two leading chamber-music venues of the period, the National Gallery and Wigmore Hall. Therefore, within this thesis, 'chamber music' should be understood in its broadest sense: it refers not only to small string groups such as quartets and quintets, but also to various small ensembles, solo performances and non-orchestral (or even simply non-symphonic), or non-operatic music. Instances of 'crossover' can be traced on the platform created specifically for chamber music by Myra Hess, who performed piano concertos with an orchestra, and in vocal recitals at Wigmore Hall, which often included operatic arias and extracts. One meeting minute from the National Gallery concerts (which is more fully dissected later in the main body of the thesis) documents the case for including Mozart piano concertos in the chamber music

² Dartington Hall Trustees, *The Arts Enquiry: Music* (London: Political and Economic Planning, 1949), 86. Although I did not encounter much organ music (item 8 above) in my research, it should be noted that an organ was installed in the National Gallery for the purpose of providing organ performances on the chamber-music platform and that Wigmore Hall also had access to a portable organ, although I believe it was rarely used. However, this particular type of performance does not feature in this thesis. Item 11 is understood and referred to today as 'early music', rather than ancient music.

concerts.³ Including these concertos under the ‘heading’ of chamber music was presumably a result of the small orchestral forces used and the generic focus on a solo instrument. Following this lead and others from the period, the term ‘chamber music’ in this thesis tends to mean ‘small-scale’ forces employed for music performance and need not exclude anything ‘orchestral’. The only real exclusions are works which could be considered symphonic, or large-scale choral works and fully realised opera and ballet scores. Finally, it is worth mentioning that jazz and swing combinations, light orchestras, variety ensembles and the like are not included under the heading of ‘chamber music’, despite their small-scale forces. As well as the factor of scale, there is one of ideology: ‘chamber music’ also denotes performances perceived to belong to the highbrow music of a high-art canon. (Of the related question of social class there will be more to say in Chapter 1.)

Continuing our definition of the parameters of this thesis, one might ask why the Second World War period was chosen in relative isolation. Surely it would be more interesting to analyse the situation post-1945, in the context of the war as a turning point? After all, the Arts Council, formed in 1946, was a direct product of war, with success largely based on the travelling chamber-music groups distributed round the country by its predecessor, the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts. However, one of the main reasons for undertaking this research was to address a particular gap in research, and to respond to current scholarly interests in music and conflict. Moreover, as we shall see in the survey of literature, while many texts that look at musical (or artistic) institutions and individuals do cover the Second World War, it is a period often dealt with all too briefly in favour of post-war or inter-war activity. My research has revealed that there *was* interesting and plentiful musical activity worthy of note during the Second World War and that it often existed in complex relationships with the conflict itself, as performers and organisers negotiated new public spaces.

Performances, the primary focus of my thesis, are understood as historical ‘events’ rather than as examples of performance practice or compositional style. As David Wright and others have pointed out, written music history has up until recently tended to be overwhelmingly composer-centric, focussing on individual composers,

³ National Gallery Archives. File NG16/47/2 Concerts National Gallery, 1939–46: Film. Meeting minutes, 24 September 1942.

schools of composers, compositional style, process and reception.⁴ For example, Arnold Whittall's history of music after the First World War tackles these very issues of style and technical development.⁵ As I will demonstrate in what follows, the performance as 'event' had to be adapted to function in a wartime setting, and so too were audiences obliged to negotiate considerable difficulties in order to attend concerts. The Second World War in London provides us with an opportunity to examine a case in which civilians were directly involved in the violence of war, enduring air raids as well as living with restrictive wartime measures that impacted the whole population in both domestic and professional life. The question of how live performance could survive is plainly an interesting one, shedding new light on its status as 'event'.

Any discussion of music in Britain is likely to raise the spectre of *Das Land ohne Musik*.⁶ One of the key arguments of my thesis is that the late 1930s and wartime period provide an opportunity for us to reconsider this aspect of British musical identity in terms of its refraction through *performance* output, rather than through compositional style and productivity. As David Wright has shown in reference to the nineteenth century, performance is an effective medium through which to understand British musical identity: 'It is in this capacity for performing and responding to good music that we may most clearly discern the nature of the nineteenth-century British musical character.'⁷ I would suggest that despite the vast societal, technological and political differences between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, we can apply this idea to the 1930s and 1940s. The war heightened nationally competitive sentiments and therefore the cultivation of British musical identity was of special importance. As I will show, discussing performance rather than compositional style allows us not only to grasp

⁴ David Wright, 'Music and Performance: Histories in Disjunction?' in *The Cambridge History of Musical Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 169–206.

⁵ See Arnold Whittall, *Music Since the First World War* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1977).

⁶ Oscar Schmitz, *The Land Without Music*, trans. Hans Herzl (London: Jarrolds, 1925). It should be noted that Blake (1997) tackles the 'Land without Music' problem by suggesting that this really should have been 'the land without composers'. However, Blake still makes use of composers and 'schools' of composition to discuss the subject. My work feeds into these narratives, drawing on common themes such as printed musical discourse, the idea of a more 'democratic' mode of performance and ideas of class; however, by considering music as an event-based practice, I am able to provide a fresh approach that does not take compositional style or practice as a primary, or even secondary, focus. Andrew Blake, *The Land Without Music: Music, Culture and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), xi.

⁷ David Wright, 'Music and Musical Performance: Histories in Disjunction', 204.

specifically wartime musical interactions, but also to provide a new perspective on constructions of British musical identity.

The venues of the case studies, the Wigmore Hall and the National Gallery, were selected for their public prominence, for the high frequency with which performances took place there, for the number of performances by artists of high calibre and for their location in central London. The combination of these criteria makes them eminently suitable for in-depth study. The existence of archival material is also an obviously necessary prerequisite.

Some readers may wonder why I did not choose to focus on the Council for the Encouragement for Music and the Arts (CEMA) and the Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA), both of which functioned in wartime and promoted chamber music. CEMA could well have been included within this research, as although it was not operating to a great extent in London (CEMA's brief being to supply the musically impoverished provinces), it was engaging with other aspects of war such as performances for war workers in factories and other unconventional locations; it also boasts a substantial archive. However, the work of CEMA has, as we shall see, already been examined in the literature and discussing CEMA in detail would have run the risk of both making the thesis unwieldy and diluting the London focus.⁸ ENSA has been omitted on similar grounds, with the additional reason that ENSA was not focussed on providing and disseminating high-art performances.

Finally, it is worth clarifying ways in which looking at chamber music and 'nation' became an important aspect of my research. As archival work progressed, it became increasingly clear that concepts of a 'national' nature were being articulated on the chamber-music stage. National bodies used chamber music as a vehicle to promote national causes. National identities were constructed and negotiated, and 'nationalist' repertoire was being used in unexpected ways (or was shunned). Thus, within the broad consideration of questions related to nation, I came to pose three main questions. Firstly, what relationships and interactions can we trace between music performances and concepts of nation? Secondly, in the context of war, what relationships existed between the Austro-German musical canon and British chamber-music platforms? Finally, how

⁸ See, for example, Jörn Weingärtner, *The Arts as a Weapon of War: Britain and the Shaping of National Morale in the Second World War* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006); Nick Hayes, 'More than "Music-While-You-Eat"? Factory and Hostel Concerts, "Good Culture" and the Workers', in Nick Hayes and Jeff Hill (eds.), *Millions Like Us: British Culture in the Second World War* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 209–35.

does this perspective enhance our understanding of British (musical) identity at the time? At all stages, I have concentrated on what, why and how national constructs were articulated on the chamber-music stage and have attempted to interpret the implications of these constructs. Perhaps needless to say, emphasis falls in my account on the British relationship with Austro-German repertoires and symbols. (There would be potential for future research to pursue other avenues, in particular the musical relationships between Britain and the USSR, but that would be a further project.)

Primary sources

This study is based primarily on archival research and a full list of the institutions used is supplied in the Appendix. I drew on a wide range of material in order to develop a detailed and accurate account that considered both supply and demand. For example, information gleaned from programmes (such as repertoire, artists, prices, marginalia and printed programme notes) was tabulated from 1939 to 1945 (or 1946 in the case of the National Gallery). The large databases that were created provided a rich source for making comparisons and identifying trends or anomalies in what was ‘supplied’ by chamber-music performances. In addition, information from the Wigmore Hall accounting records and audience figures from the National Gallery were collated in order to draw conclusions about the consumer demand for performances.

This material can be found in the National Gallery concerts archive, which is well-used by biographers of Myra Hess, and split between the British Library and the National Gallery. It is comprehensive and expertly catalogued, containing meeting minutes, accounts, letters and beautifully bound programme collections complete with annotations on the daily weather and the bombing. At the time of my research the Wigmore Hall archive, including programmes and accounts books (much of it uncatalogued), was spread around London. Parts are in the Wigmore Hall itself, the Royal College of Music library, the Centre for Performance History and the Westminster City Archives.

Material relating to ‘reception’ history was drawn from a variety of sources. Personal viewpoints can be traced in meeting minutes, correspondence and letters to (or commentaries in) the newspapers. Official reviews of chamber-music performances in

newspapers and journals rarely provided substantial insights into these events. Reviews for chamber-music concerts tended to be very brief, often only a few lines in length; and they concentrated, as might be expected, on the technical quality of performance. Despite, or perhaps because of, the constant stream of chamber music coming from the National Gallery, these concerts were rarely reviewed at all. Their ubiquitous presence seems to have removed the need for the reviewer's opinion. Some examples of reviews have been included in this thesis, especially where the reviewer passes comment on the wider implications or context of concerts.

In exploring other chamber-music activities in London more broadly, I drew on sources from a variety of archives. The Royal College of Music keeps the records for the Society of Women Musicians; and the British Library maintains various useful collections for music during the Second World War ranging from *Punch* magazine to the Henschel collection of programmes. Sound and Music, the contemporary descendant of the Committee for the Promotion of New Music, still keeps material relating to the early days of the Committee, although it is not catalogued and is deteriorating in condition. Morley College archives were conspicuous by their absence, a casualty of the bombing. Had this not been the case, the early music performances of the Morley College Choir in London and the work of Tippett in leading these activities might have played greater roles in this study. In particular, I drew on material from the BBC archives such as meeting minutes, policy documents and internal memos in order to explore both personal and official 'establishment' opinion on the state of chamber-music performances. The BBC archives also provided detailed information relating to audience preferences, a source that does not exist for live-performance venues.

Literature and methodologies

There are four main types of published literature that have guided me in framing my research. The first comprises literature that provides a general Second World War context, such as overviews of the period, the physical situation, wartime measures, economic, social and political studies. The second concerns musicological literature that deals with music and culture in society, concert life and general musicological histories

of the twentieth century. The third type includes literature that takes for its subjects institutions, businesses and individuals. Finally, there is literature that deals with music in relation to nation, nationalism, national identity and other related concepts. Inevitably, these groups are not discrete and some texts inhabit more than one, or even sometimes all, of these groups at once. I introduce each one here.

The Second World War in literature

There is, of course, an overwhelming amount of literature that deals with the Second World War, and my work has only drawn on a select part of this. In sharpening my focus on the London ‘Home Front’, I have had to set certain events and themes somewhat to one side. One of the most obvious is perhaps the Holocaust and Jewish refugees, given that many of the chamber musicians that the reader will encounter in my work were intellectual and/or Jewish refugees from Europe. Another thesis could focus on this question; the complexity of the subject and richness of sources warrant a separate study.

The post-war literature on which I draw changes in style according to the period of its publication, shifting from documentary observations, military records and statistics to critical, thematic surveys. Authors such as Winston Churchill and Richard Titmuss, who lived through the events in question, record domestic wartime measures, military action, policy and tactical considerations. These texts are presented as a compendium of facts, several volumes long, that tell the reader from an official point of view what happened, and when and where.⁹ Memoirs such as those by Vera Hodgson and George Beardmore document life on the home front, providing anecdotal information of individual eye-witness accounts.¹⁰ Other ‘diary’ style accounts include

⁹ Winston Churchill, *The Second World War. Volume I: The Gathering Storm* (London: Cassell, 1948); Richard Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office and Longmans, Green and Co., 1950).

¹⁰ Vera Hodgson, *Few Eggs and No Oranges* (London: Dobson, 1976); George Beardmore, *Civilians at War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

Mollie Panter-Downes's *London War Notes* and Harold Hobson's collections of daily records published in a special edition of the new periodical, *The Saturday Book*.¹¹

For the social historian, perhaps the most notable collections of eye-witness accounts are to be found in the various Mass Observation (MO) publications, the archive of which is housed at the University of Sussex, although the wide-ranging findings of this survey have been published in several volumes. Starting in 1937, Tom Harrison and two colleagues set up and managed a project in which hundreds of both paid and voluntary observers recorded the ordinary happenings of people's lives. The diary entries of observers included anything and everything from conversations that took place in the local pub, to the timings of family meals. Harrison's *Living Through the Blitz* complements the 'top-down' official histories described above by offering a 'bottom-up' approach, providing information that might never have been recorded were it not for MO, such as how much sleep a person was likely to have in the East End, or how people articulated the complex social strata inside a communal air-raid shelter.¹²

The air raids themselves were dealt with in detail by researchers from the 1970s onwards and contributed to a combination of the two histories, official and personal, described above. Norman Longmate (who discusses the Coventry raids), Angus Calder and Philip Zeigler all look at the impact of war on the home front, especially in reference to the physical damage inflicted by air raids.¹³ In particular, Arthur Marwick's study *The Home Front* compiles a large number of photos and commentary covering almost every conceivable topic, albeit briefly.¹⁴ I would describe these texts as dealing with the physical and visible aspects of war, and such texts were particularly valuable in building up a picture of what conditions would have been like for concert-goers in London. These documentary texts have provided my work with a rich pool of factual sources constituting official 'top-down' approaches alongside more anecdotal, eye-

¹¹ Mollie Panter-Downes, *London War Notes 1939–1945*, ed. William Shawn (London: Longman, 1972); Harold Hobson, *The First Three Years of War: A Day by Day Record*, A Saturday Book Special Volume (Plymouth: Hutchinson, 1943).

¹² Tom Harrison, *Living Through the Blitz* (London: Collins, 1976).

¹³ Norman Longmate, *Air Raid* (London: Hutchinson, 1976); Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Cape, 1991); Philip Zeigler, *London at War 1939–1945* (London: Reed Consumer Books Ltd., 1995).

¹⁴ Arthur Marwick *The Home Front: The British and the Second World War* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1976).

witness evidence from a ‘bottom-up’ view. My own approach has been to try and combine both types of sources in order to provide a rounded perspective.

In contrast, there are those studies that deal with the secondary effects of total war on the British home front, and these are mainly social histories such as those written by Angus Calder, Arthur Marwick and Sonya Rose, who explore the idea of ‘the people’s war’, perceptions and manifestations of societal strata (and the differences between the two), gender, the domestic and the professional spheres in relation to the Second World War from the context of Britain and the home front and especially, the idea of morale.¹⁵ In particular, Rose gives the reader clear descriptions of how we might consider representations of national identity, national rhetoric, nationhood and ‘the nation’ in the context of the Second World War, largely in reference to gender.¹⁶

In contrast again, there are the texts which deal with what I consider the ‘invisible’ aspects of war, the developments and trajectories of which are harder to trace, and for which ‘evidence’ is harder to pinpoint. These embrace topics to do with cultural and social trends and tastes and include works by Pat Kirkham and David Thoms; Richard Weight and Nick Hayes; and Jeff Hill. Although not focussed on the war specifically, John Carey’s *The Intellectuals and the Masses* does focus on elite culture of the period and traces certain protectionist attitudes.¹⁷ The 1940s itself saw the publication of works by authors and intellectuals who engaged with, and commented on, the arts and culture in the context of society, notably Robert Graves, Virginia Woolf, J. B. Priestley and T. S. Eliot.¹⁸ These authors, who explore the socio-historical aspects

¹⁵ Angus Calder, *The People’s War: Britain 1939–1945* (London: Cape, 1969); Arthur Marwick, *Class: Image and Reality in Britain, France and the USA since 1930* (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1980); Sonya Rose, *Which People’s War? National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁶ Rose, *Which People’s War?*

¹⁷ Pat Kirkham and David Thoms, *War Culture: Social Change and Changing Experience in World War Two Britain* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1995); Richard Weight, ‘State, Intelligentsia and the Promotion of National Culture in Britain 1939–1945’, *Historical Research* 69/168 (1996), 83–101; Nick Hayes and Jeff Hill (eds.), *Millions Like Us: British Culture in the Second World War* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999); John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 2002).

¹⁸ Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, *The Long Weekend: A Social History of Great Britain 1918–1939; The Reader over Your Shoulder: A Handbook for Writers of English Prose* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2006); Virginia Woolf, *Death of The Moth* (Letchworth: The Garden City Press, 1943); John Boynton Priestley, *The Arts under Socialism . . . Being a Lecture Given to the Fabian Society, with a Postscript on What the Government Should Do for the Arts Here and Now*. (London: Turnstile Press, 1947); Thomas Stearns Eliot, *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture* (London: Faber and Faber, 1948).

of the home front, are particularly valuable in providing a context within which my own work might sit, as well as in highlighting where gaps in the research existed.

For example, research that deals with ‘culture’, leisure and pastimes in the context of society in the interwar and Second World War periods rarely addresses high-art music performances. (Carey concentrates on literature in order to explore intellectual attitudes of snobbery, although in comparison to ‘serious’ music performances, literature tends to be a fairly democratic medium.) General histories discuss visual art, film and literature repeatedly, but neglect elite forms of music, which are only addressed in musicology.

For example, Pat Kirkham and David Thoms, Nick Hayes and Jeff Hill and Robert Graves and Alan Hodge all deal with art, literature, film and broadcasting, and yet high-art musical performances such as orchestral performances, opera, ballet and of course chamber music are all neglected, or otherwise dealt with (briefly) through the prism of broadcasting.¹⁹ Boris Ford’s *Cambridge Guide to the Arts in Britain* does devote a chapter to music (written by Michael Kennedy) but again, this concentrates on the activity of the BBC and of individual composers.²⁰ The importance and prominence that musicologists have given to serious music broadcasting on the BBC during the war contrasts sharply with its appearance in the general literature. Asa Briggs’s history of the initial fifty years of the BBC devotes only a single page to the topic of ‘serious’ music broadcasting in wartime.²¹ Similarly, Thomas Hajkowski devotes his main focus to talk programmes when discussing the mediation of national identity during the same period.²² The idea that high-art music is a live performance art and was a significant part of London entertainment in the 1930s and 1940s has been generally neglected. Nevertheless, while I have not necessarily drawn directly from these texts, they have been useful in helping me to define the gap in the literature which I wish to fill.

¹⁹ Kirkham and Thoms, *War Culture*; Hayes and Hill (eds.), *Millions Like Us*; Graves and Hodge, *The Long Weekend*.

²⁰ Boris Ford (ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to the Arts in Britain. Volume 8: The Edwardian Age and the Inter-War Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

²¹ Asa Briggs, *The BBC: The First Fifty Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985). See ‘Sounds of War’, 173–237.

²² Thomas Hajkowski, *The BBC and National Identity in Britain 1922–53* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

Modern trajectories: music in society

Musicological scholarship that researches the various relationships between music, culture and society is no longer a marginal part of the discipline, although in the 1980s new ground was being broken with such approaches.²³ Today, we do not have to face accusations of blasphemy, as Susan McClary did when told that Bach was ‘divinely inspired’ and therefore not eligible for contextualisation.²⁴ Arguably, a whole new sub-discipline has emerged. William Weber helped define this field very substantially with his work on the concert ‘event’ in society; his studies of programme formation, the tensions between the amateur and professional, aspects of public and private spaces, and the market forces of music, have all been extremely important.²⁵ Market forces have also been a particular concern of Cyril Ehrlich, whose pioneering work placed music in its economic as well as historical context.²⁶

I have been most interested in how live music-making functions as part of a cultural apparatus, and have benefitted greatly from all this work in formulating my own approaches. By approaching music performances as individual historical ‘events’ rather than merely indicators of compositional practice, we are able, as Weber suggests, to ‘illuminate the lives’ of various societal groups and actors, as well as to discover the ‘organizing principles’ that govern how music is brought from the composer’s pen to a listening audience.²⁷ In consequence, the project has inevitably encountered questions of class and social stratification. My thinking benefitted, therefore, from Bourdieu’s

²³ Susan McClary, ‘The Blasphemy of Talking Politics During Bach Year’, in Richard Leppert and Susan McClary (eds.), *Music and Society. The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 13–62.

²⁴ McClary, ‘The Blasphemy of Talking Politics During Bach Year’, 14.

²⁵ William Weber, *Music and the Middle Class. The Social Structure of Concert Life in London, Paris and Vienna*. (London: Croom Helm, 1975); William Weber, *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste. Concert Programming from Haydn to Brahms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

²⁶ Cyril Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain Since the Eighteenth Century: A Social History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); Cyril Ehrlich, ‘The Marketplace’, in Stephen Banfield (ed.), *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 39–53; Simon McVeigh and Cyril Ehrlich, ‘The Modernisation of London Concert Life Around 1900’, in Michael Talbot (ed.), *The Business of Music* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), 96–120.

²⁷ Weber, *Music and the Middle Class*, 10, 116.

theoretical work, and from recent musicological literature in which questions of elitism, populism and ‘democracy’ have been discussed.²⁸

To date, when the music–sociological lens turns on Britain, it has usually focussed on three main topics or periods: eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music-making, (Bashford, Langley, McVeigh, Temperley, Burchell); the English/British musical ‘renaissance’ (Howes, Pirie, Temperley, Hughes and Stradling); and the BBC (Doctor, Briggs, Scannell & Cardiff, Baade, Garnham).²⁹ Christina Bashford is thus notable for breaking the mould with her study of the John Ella chamber-music concerts, which offers the only study I am familiar with that concentrates unapologetically on chamber-music performances and investigates these and their conduit, the Musical Union.³⁰ Bashford’s work was a particular inspiration to me. But in all these texts, we see the traces of how performances (both formal and informal), audiences, social practices, industry economics, institutional histories and composers combine to produce contextualised pictures of musical life in a country that defined itself through its apparent cultural multiplicity.

The literature that deals with the twentieth century in particular is (perhaps predictably) often concerned with technological advances which developed at a startling and revolutionary pace within and without the music industry. Consequently, the idea of live performance often seems to have been lost in the scramble to examine how the

²⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984). See for example, Christina Bashford, *The Pursuit of High Culture: John Ella and Chamber Music in Victorian London* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007); Tim Blanning, *The Triumph of Music: Composers, Musicians and their Audiences, 1700 to the Present* (London: Penguin, 2009).

²⁹ Bashford, *The Pursuit of High Culture*; Leanne Langley, ‘Sainsbury and the Rhetoric of Patriotism’, in Bashford, Christina and Langley, Leanne (eds.), *Music and British Culture: Essays in Honour of Cyril Ehrlich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 65–97; Simon McVeigh, *Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Nicholas Temperley (ed.), *The Lost Chord: Essays in Victorian Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Jenny Burchell, *Polite or Commercial Concerts? Concert Management and Orchestral Repertoire in Edinburgh, Bath, Oxford, Manchester and Newcastle, 1730–1799* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996); Frank Howes *The English Musical Renaissance* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1966); Peter Pirie, *The English Musical Renaissance* (London: Gollancz, 1979); Nicholas Temperley, ‘Xenophilia in British Musical History’, in Bennett Zon, *Nineteenth-Century British Music Studies*, (Ashgate: Hampshire 1999), 3–19; Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance 1840–1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); Jennifer Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music 1922–36: Shaping a Nation’s Tastes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Briggs, *The BBC. The First Fifty Years*; Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting, Volume 1 1922–1939: Serving the Nation* (London: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1991); Christina Baade, *Victory Through Harmony: the BBC and Popular Music in World War II*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Alison Garnham, *Hans Keller and the BBC: the Musical Conscience of British Broadcasting 1959–1979*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

³⁰ Bashford, *The Pursuit of High Culture*.

BBC and developments in the recording industry were creating new mediums for encountering musical performance. While the musical history of the Second World War (for example Weingärtner, and Weight and Beach) is usually mediated through the BBC, CEMA, or light music, I deliberately take a different angle, applying similar methods to musical performance ‘events’ to those used by Bashford, Langley and McVeigh, and aiming to ‘set music against a backdrop of related cultural, intellectual and social activity’ in this particular period.³¹

Music in the Second World War: individuals and institutions

As mentioned above, a substantial amount of musicological literature that focusses on individuals and institutions does cover the Second World War period, but the subject is often dealt with briefly. Priority is given to the more active and prosperous inter-war and post-war years, and the war years are treated as a hiatus. Information provided about the Second World War years tends to be limited to ‘what happened’ and ‘where it happened’, with the ‘why it happened’ being conspicuous by its absence. These sources have nevertheless been useful in mapping out the contours for my own more critical study.

Histories of institutions and societies include publications on the Queen’s Hall by Robert Elkin, written to raise funds for a new hall (now a primary rather than secondary source); on Morley College by Denis Richards; and a much more recent history of the ‘Proms’ by Jennifer Doctor and David Wright.³² Studies of the Wigmore Hall by Julia MacRae and of the South Place concerts by Frank Hawkins are the only two histories of note to examine chamber-music institutions that cover the 1939 to 1945 period, but neither text contains more than a few handfuls of paragraphs on the war

³¹ Bashford and Langley (eds.), *Music and British Culture*, vii. See also Weingärtner, *The Arts as a Weapon of War*; Richard Weight, “‘Building a New British Culture’: the Arts Centre Movement 1943–53”, in Richard Weight and Abigail Beach (eds.), *The Right to Belong. Citizenship and National Identity in Britain 1930–1960* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998), 157–180.

³² Robert Elkin, *Queen’s Hall 1893–1941* (London: Rider & Co., 1944); Denis Richards, *Offspring of the Vic: A History of Morley College* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958); Jennifer Doctor and David Wright (eds.), *The Proms: A New History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007).

period itself.³³ While it is understandable that the history of South Place in the Second World War would be scant (concerts ceased entirely), MacRae's cursory comments suggest that the war period was not considered with great attention within the broader history of the Hall. Both these histories, like the others mentioned above, cover a wide time frame and therefore their coverage of the Second World War period is superficial rather than deep. Jennifer Doctor's contribution is the exception: here, the war period is covered in detail in the context of the fluctuating relationship between the BBC and the Promenade concerts, which was the dominant narrative of the time.³⁴

Other literature that spans the period includes a history of the Incorporated Society of Musicians, Adrian Boult's autobiography and Dennis Brain's biography. Cyril Ehrlich has made two notable contributions to the history of musical institutions; the Performing Right Society and the Royal Philharmonic Society.³⁵ To this we can add Christopher Fifield's history of Ibbs & Tillett and Helen Wallace's work documenting the story of Boosey & Hawkes.³⁶ Finally, no exploration of early twentieth-century British music can be considered complete without reference to Lewis Foreman, who provides primary source material relevant to the Second World War within his work; he has provided countless points of reference to scholars over recent years.³⁷

To my knowledge, only one text deals with high-art music performances during the Second World War in Britain to the exclusion of all other material (Jörn Weingärtner's *The Arts as a Weapon of War*).³⁸ This is carried out with a thorough, business- and policy-minded examination of the activities of CEMA, resulting in a

³³ Julia MacRae, *Wigmore Hall: A Celebration 1901–2001* (London: The Wigmore Hall Trust, 2001); Frank Hawkins, *A Hundred Years of Chamber Music* (London: South Place Ethical Society, 1987).

³⁴ Jennifer Doctor, 'A New Dimension: The BBC takes on the Proms', in Doctor and Wright, *The Proms*, 74–129.

³⁵ Incorporated Society of Musicians, *The ISM. The First Hundred Years: A Short History of the Society*, compiled and written by Edmund Bohan (London: The Society, 1982); Adrian Boult, *My Own Trumpet* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1973); Stephen Gamble and William Lynch, *Dennis Brain: A Life in Music* (Texas: University of North Texas Press, 2011); Cyril Ehrlich, *Harmonious Alliance: A History of the Performing Right Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Cyril Ehrlich, *First Philharmonic: A History of the Royal Philharmonic Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

³⁶ Christopher Fifield, *Ibbs and Tillett: The Rise and Fall of a Musical Empire* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Helen Wallace, *Boosey and Hawkes: The Publishing Story* (London: Boosey and Hawkes Music Publishing Ltd., 2007).

³⁷ Lewis Foreman, *From Parry to Britten: British Music in Letters 1900–1945* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1987).

³⁸ Weingärtner, *The Arts as a Weapon of War*.

study that anticipates Ben Wolf's work on the Arts Council.³⁹ Weingärtner's work is not a 'social' study in the manner of work by Weber or Bashford, but rather a top-down look at policy formation within establishment networks that disseminated the CEMA music performances. While Weingärtner's work is situated within the context of the Second World War, it does not deal with the nuts and bolts of the actual performances themselves, or their socio-cultural implications. I take the opportunity to fill the gap between Weingärtner and Wolf's work by tackling the Second World War period from the perspective of commercial and charitable chamber-music-making that was taking place on London concert platforms.

There are two pieces of literature in which music-making during the Second World War emerges as a subject of interest itself, rather than as a passing element within a chronological progression, namely publications by Peter Stansky and William Abrahams and Jean Freedman.⁴⁰ However, the methods used by these scholars were not the ones I chose to pursue myself, because I find neither of the methodologies demonstrated by these texts appropriate to my own work; their results are rather general in nature. In addition, neither can be said to have high-art music performance as a central concern. For example, although Freedman's work is original, exploring the war in London from a sonic perspective, she deals largely with popular song, informal music-making and individual experiences of sounds and music, whatever these might be. Freedman's wide use of personal testimony and sources such as Mass Observation makes her work just as much a study of methodology as a study of the sounds of London at war.⁴¹

At the opposite, and perhaps more traditional, end of the methodological spectrum, Peter Stansky and William Abrahams frame three case studies of war artists Moore, Nash and Sutherland, film maker Jennings and composer Britten within the context of London in the Second World War. The study of Britten that takes *Peter Grimes* for its main subject sits somewhat uncomfortably within the book as a whole, rather at odds with the contextualisation of war artists and Jennings's films within

³⁹ Ben Wolf, 'Promoting New Music in London 1930–1980', PhD thesis, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, University of London, 2010.

⁴⁰ Peter Stansky and William Abrahams, *London's Burning: Life, Death and Art in the Second World War* (London: Constable and Company, 1994); Jean Freedman, *Whistling in the Dark: Memory and Culture in Wartime London* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999).

⁴¹ Freedman, *Whistling in the Dark*, 204.

burning London. As mentioned already, in my work I have attempted to avoid any such dislocations between music practices and the London situation by taking an ‘event’-based approach, rather than focussing on individual creative output or biography.

Music and ‘nation’

Recent musicological discussions that address the relationships between music and nation have tended to take one of two perspectives.⁴² The first focusses on music and ideas about it that were drawn into nineteenth-century nationalism. For instance, authors such as Carl Dahlhaus, Jim Samson and Richard Taruskin address the processes of nation formation in the nineteenth century including the assimilation or demarcation of political, linguistic and cultural heritage and of geographical borders, examining the construction of the German canon and the accompanying evolution of the ‘universal’ ideal in that context.⁴³ In his comprehensive study, Dahlhaus, drawing on the works of a range of commentators including Hoffman and Hegel, highlights the futility of trying to define or analyse the national or the universal in the music of nineteenth-century composers, writing that these things ‘cannot be captured in a single formula’, an idea to which he returns.⁴⁴ To this end, Dahlhaus argues that historians should be wary of constructions such as the canon or an ‘imaginary museum of great masters’ and yet acknowledges musicology’s attempts to embed coherence and continuity into its narrative.⁴⁵ Taruskin examines the construction of the ‘universal’ out of German romanticist ideals of purity, native or ethnic authenticity, and the positioning of the ‘other’, which as Taruskin points out can only be on the periphery. For example, Taruskin writes that ‘Dvořák’s Bohemianisms were at once the vehicle of his international appeal and the eventual guarantee of his secondary status vis- à-vis

⁴² From the 1970s, or thereabouts, to the present day.

⁴³ Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson, (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1989); Jim Samson, ‘Nations and Nationalism’ in Jim Samson, (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 568–600; Richard Taruskin, ‘Nationalism’, *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed 23 April, 2013, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/50846>.

⁴⁴ Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 37, 217.

⁴⁵ Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 390.

natural-born universals like Brahms. Without the native costume, a “peripheral” composer would never achieve even secondary canonical rank, but with it he could never achieve more.’⁴⁶

Samson condenses his discussion by relativising it within wider historical trends such as the formation of national identities in the wake of revolutions and unifications, the weight of a national heritage and the diminishing need to study abroad for composer legitimisation. Unlike Taruskin and Dahlhaus, Samson finds space to include Britain, positioning it as a passive nation, on the outside looking in on the ‘competitive nationalisms’ of central Europe.⁴⁷

The second, and perhaps marginally more recent perspective taken, involves ethnomusicologists and social historians who focus their investigations on twentieth- and twenty-first century subjects. Instead of the nineteenth-century canon, these scholars examine performances, audiences and musical ‘happenings’ in their social, political and cultural contexts, and by extension their national contexts. Their contributions feed into Benedict Anderson’s work, which explores the nation as an ‘imagined community’, constantly evolving and in flux (also exemplified by Biddle and Knights), defined and redefined by human activity and discourse.⁴⁸ Here, then, the focus lies not with discussing the national in relation to compositional style or the resultant canon formation, but with positioning musical action in a national (or even regional) or international framework. Philip Bohlman demonstrates the multiple and complex relationships between music and nation, moving between such diverse examples as the songs of the ‘last Jewish farmer of the Carpathians’ to the Eurovision Song Contest.⁴⁹ Covering questions of religion, ethnicity, language, diaspora and landscape, Bohlman’s work is intent on providing seemingly limitless examples, rather than on prescribing the limits of interactions between music and nation. Similarly, Pasler explores not only the creation of ‘canonisable’ works by composers, but performances, audiences, artists,

⁴⁶ Taruskin. ‘Nationalism’.

⁴⁷ Samson, ‘Nations and Nationalism’, 591.

⁴⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006); Ian Biddle and Vanessa Knights (eds.), *Music, National Identity and the Politics of Location: between the Global and the Local*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

⁴⁹ Philip Bohlman, *Music, Nationalism, and the Making of the New Europe* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011). See Chapter 1 and page 196.

performance practices, listening practices and low and highbrow practices in the context of music as ‘public utility’ in an emerging national and politically volatile context.⁵⁰

Harry White and Michael Murphy, accepting the ‘plural condition’ of music and nationalisms, present approaches including those that concentrate on style, composition, repertoire, international relationships and national myths. Only one chapter, ‘Gendering the Nations: The Ideologies of French Discourse on Music (1870–1914)’ by Annegret Fauser, deals with performances and contextual activity (and discourses), thereby using a broader range of tools than simply the history of ‘new music’.⁵¹ In a new volume, *The New Cultural History of Music*, Weber’s discussion of musical performance as cosmopolitan highlights national inferiority complexes, and as Weber notes in an eighteenth-century context, particularly in the case of Britain, ‘It is also important to see that in every country a sense of inferiority developed towards the cosmopolitan authority of Italian vocal music during the eighteenth century ... British musical life experienced the strongest conflict between cosmopolitan musical culture and the needs of its composers.’⁵²

This dual function of German music has been explored very richly, notably by Pamela Potter and Celia Applegate, who discuss the cultivation of the German musical identity and how it has become positioned *as* a national identity in which music and nation moved from mere ‘interaction’ to ‘interdependence’.⁵³ At the same time, Potter and Applegate also articulate how (Austro) German musical heritage came to be considered ‘universal’ and how ‘other’ nationalisms were developed as a departure from this concept.

It is inevitable that as Britain was, and is, perceived to have no historically continuous compositional heritage, the interactions of music and nation in the context of ‘Britain’ or ‘England’ have tended to develop with the second perspective. In other

⁵⁰ Jann Pasler, *Composing the Citizen: Music as Public Utility in Third-Republic France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

⁵¹ Harry White and Michael Murphy (eds.), *Musical Constructions of Nationalism: Essays on the History and Ideology of European Musical Culture 1800–1945* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2001). In particular, see Annegret Fauser, ‘Gendering the Nations: The Ideologies of French Discourse on Music (1870–1914)’, in White and Murphy, *Musical Constructions of Nationalism*, 72–103.

⁵² William Weber, ‘Cosmopolitan, National and Regional Identities’, in Jane Fulcher (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of The New Cultural History of Music* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 209–27.

⁵³ Pamela Potter and Celia Applegate (eds.), *Music and German National Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 32.

words, there are discussions of ‘British musical life’ as we have seen above, rather than British music in the context of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century canon. British musical life (as exemplified in London) has thus been juxtaposed with that of musical centres in continental Europe such as Paris and Vienna.⁵⁴ For example, Tim Blanning situates British musical activity within the wider European context, drawing out ideas about the ‘stratification of musical consumption’ and the developments in the ways in which concert spaces functioned.⁵⁵ Jeffrey Richards opts to position British music-making within the framework of empire. Richards’s work on relationships between music (both composition and performance) and the British Empire approaches the subject in the manner of a cultural historian rather than of a musicologist, and this approach produces a rich survey of ‘events’, as well as the activities of composers and performers.⁵⁶ However, the near total erasure of Britain from Taruskin’s *The Early Twentieth Century* would seem to reinscribe Britain’s minimal contribution, offering a (metaphorical) echo to the notion of a land without music.⁵⁷

Discussions of ‘Englishness’ in music have in general been superseded, but can be traced in work by writers such as Ralph Vaughan Williams, Bacharach and, more recently, James Day, whose work is sufficiently narrow in vision as to conclude by asking if there is life after Britten.⁵⁸ One of the recurring elements in such writing is the presence of the folk element in art music, and the way it is discussed reveals the vagueness with which ‘British’ and ‘English’ song are invoked, and the varied regional understandings of folk music in connection with nationhood.⁵⁹ The conceptual tension remains between ‘British’ and ‘English’ music, but the two are used synonymously in many texts. Indeed Simon McVeigh, whilst acknowledging the complexities of the

⁵⁴ See Weber, *Music and the Middle Class* and Weber, ‘Cosmopolitan, National and Regional Identities’.

⁵⁵ Tim Blanning, *The Triumph of Music*, 165. In particular, see Chapter 3.

⁵⁶ Jeffrey Richards, *Imperialism and Music: Britain 1876–1953* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), viii.

⁵⁷ Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music. Volume IV: The Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). Britain does, however, feature heavily in the subsequent volume V (and therefore post-*Peter Grimes*), *The Late Twentieth Century* (Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵⁸ Ralph Vaughan Williams, *National Music and Other Essays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963); Alfred Louis Bacharach (ed.), *British Music of Our Time* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1951); James Day, *Englishness in Music: From Elizabethan Times to Elgar, Tippett and Britten* (London: Thames Publishing, 1999).

⁵⁹ See also Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 38.

definition, simply highlights their interchangeability in the literature.⁶⁰ This thesis examines a period in which ‘British’ was the predominant term, just occasionally slipping to ‘English’. In places I engage directly with the discursive construction of Britishness, which, as many writers have noted, was framed by a particular group of the English establishment, in their own image. London, with the help of its (musical) elites, was inevitably a centre for the propagation of such problematic representations. As we will see, the fiction of such ‘Britishness’ was a necessary rhetorical move in the face of international competition.

As briefly mentioned above, a number of scholars writing on music in Britain position their work in relation to the idea of a British (or English) musical renaissance. Peter Pirie, Nicholas Temperley (who constructs an elaborate table to illustrate the problem) and Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling are particular examples.⁶¹ Hughes and Stradling offer what is by far the most comprehensive study to be completed in recent years. Addressing the interactions between music and nation in Britain (1840 to 1940), their work reflects a myriad of institutions and individuals while unpicking the traditional perceptions of the so-called ‘renaissance’. Hughes and Stradling also assess the implications of the dual function of the Austro-German canon within British musical life.⁶² In particular, they explore the ways in which British musical identity of any kind was by nature inextricable from German influence, and that even the appropriation of folk music ‘was thoroughly Germanic in theory and practice’.⁶³ They go on to say that, ‘in short, if often for the wrong reasons, the pro-German element in English life had a plangent point. Britain’s past, and much of its history, had conditioned English society in a multitude of ways to resemble, more closely than any other, that of Germany. For those in the world of music who perceived this reality, and even for those who did not, continued German domination was for many years preferable to the risks of chaos attendant on abandoning it.’⁶⁴ It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that a significant part of

⁶⁰ Simon McVeigh, ‘The Society of British Musicians (1834–1865) and the Campaign for Native Talent’, in Bashford and Langley, *Music and British Culture*, 145–68, 151. Also see Hughes and Stradling, who remark that ‘almost any consistent usage is impossible’, Hughes and Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance*, 286.

⁶¹ Pirie, *The English Musical Renaissance*; Temperley, ‘Xenophilia in British Musical History’, 3–19, in particular, see Table 1.1 on page 7; Hughes and Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance*.

⁶² Hughes and Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance*.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 160.

my work on national representations and national identities focusses on relationships between British self-constructions and the Austro-German musical tradition.

Jennifer Doctor (1999), Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff (1991) and Humphrey Carpenter (1996) have all addressed the relationship between music and nation as configured by wireless broadcasting in Britain, and focussing on the work of the BBC.⁶⁵ While reinforcing the idea of music as ‘public utility’ (to borrow Pasler’s terminology) the BBC’s initially Reithian outlook grew out of Victorian ideas of elevation through education. Familiarity with the high arts was understood as an integral part of self-improvement, a phenomenon described in Briggs’s history as ‘coaxing Caliban’.⁶⁶

The question of how national identity was shaped in Britain during the Second World War has been approached through many non-musical lenses that nevertheless focus on culture and the arts. For example, Hajkowski discusses the BBC’s spoken-word programmes, including talks and plays, in terms of two national assets, namely empire and monarchy.⁶⁷ Siân Nicholas cites the ‘active citizen’ as being a particular wartime BBC national cliché.⁶⁸ Toby Haggith examines propaganda films and Brian Foss looks at the work of visual artists.⁶⁹

Within my own work, therefore, I have attempted to develop my approach through the perspective of social or cultural musicological historians. This has allowed me to consult a wide variety of sources, and to take a variety of perspectives on my subject. Other approaches, such as biographical or chronological histories, ethnomusicological methods or oral histories would not have served my purpose to best advantage.

⁶⁵ Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music 1922–36*; Scannell and Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting*; Humphrey Carpenter, *The Envy of the World: Fifty Years of the Third Programme and Radio 3 1946–1996* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1996).

⁶⁶ Briggs, *The BBC: The First Fifty Years*, 213.

⁶⁷ Hajkowski, *The BBC and National Identity in Britain*, 51.

⁶⁸ Siân Nicholas, ‘From John Bull to John Citizen: Images of National Identity and Citizenship on the Wartime BBC’, in Weight and Beach, *The Right to Belong*, 36–58.

⁶⁹ Toby Haggith, ‘Citizenship, Nationhood and Empire in British Official Film Propaganda, 1939–45’, in Weight and Beach, *The Right to Belong*, 59–88; Brian Foss, *War Paint. Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939–1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

Thesis outline

In taking chamber music as a primary focus, this thesis attempts to supply a perspective that is very rarely given. It differs from existing narratives by combining a subject that is infrequently discussed (the social context of chamber music), with a period that has been one of the most extensively researched periods in the canon of general historical literature. Therefore, this thesis adds two exciting angles to the body of literature.

Firstly, it provides insights into an under-researched genre of musical performance; and secondly, in doing so, it sheds new light on, and develops a new understanding of, performance life during the Second World War.

This thesis is divided into four large chapters, the first two of which frame the main ideas and contextualise the material that will be explored in the case studies that make up chapters 3 and 4. Thus, Chapter 1 is concerned with providing an overview of economic, social and cultural contexts for the main study and asks the following questions. What were the settings for chamber music performances? How was chamber music mediated by the BBC? What were the notable chamber music activities in London in the late 1930s and early 1940s? I touch on the physical aspects of wartime measures and air raids, as well as entertainments, arts and culture, musical activities and intellectual life. Chapter 1 also contains an exploration of chamber-music policy over a ten-year period at the BBC, and of live chamber-music performances in London beyond the venues provided by my case study. Theoretically, this opening chapter is concerned with two conflicting currents of the time: music performance was to be further professionalised; but it was also expected to be further democratised.

Chapter 2 theorises one of the main thematic clusters running through my work, that encompassing nation, nationality, national identities and national representations. In the context of this particular topic, I place importance on the ways that British musical identity was constructed. I explore the following questions in particular. Can we trace expressions of Britishness, and if so what constituted these expressions? What attitudes can we trace towards British music at this time? How were these manifested in practice? How did British musical discourses interact with Austro-German aesthetics and ideas? This chapter compares and contrasts two London music festivals that took place in the spring of 1939 as well as using examples from BBC archives. In order to appraise

contemporary views, I also examine published discourses, including those found in the national and musical press and other published texts.

The reader then encounters the first case study, the Wigmore Hall, in Chapter 3. Here, I examine three main areas of activity: performances in relation to the circumstances of total war; repertoire, programming and new music; and finally, national representations and identities as exemplified on the Wigmore Hall stage. This chapter considers different wartime uses for chamber music, including charitable performances, the promotion of new music, the place of canonic repertoire, concert logistics and the appropriation of chamber-music platforms by nationally configured groups. Within this case study I ask the following questions. How did the Hall function during wartime? What repertoire was being performed at the Wigmore Hall during the war? What groups and ensembles were using the Wigmore Hall stage? What national groups or bodies can we trace using the Wigmore Hall and what sorts of ideas were these groups projecting?

The second case study and final chapter explores the National Gallery concerts and considers their role in wartime London by addressing the following questions. How did the National Gallery concerts function in a nation at war? What was the moral framework within which the concerts were conceived and how did this work in practice? What types of chamber-music ensembles drew the biggest audiences? What repertoire was performed? Why were the National Gallery concerts mythologised and used for propaganda and how was this achieved? What ideological problems can we trace in the execution of the National Gallery concerts? These questions are addressed from three perspectives. The first considers how the concerts were both at the same time displaced and emplaced in their physical and logistical functions in relation to the war. Secondly, I look at how we might understand audience attendance figures at the National Gallery and I identify trends and variations in the repertoire performed. Finally, I consider the ideologies that permeated this much-celebrated and idealised series of concerts.

Chapter one. 'Democratic at all costs':¹ chamber-music performance in context

Introduction

This chapter aims to explore contextual questions related to chamber-music performance. It follows lines suggested by Janet Wolff, examining social and economic influences such as, 'forms of patronage; dominant institutions of cultural production and distribution ... the sociology of cultural producers and the nature and constitution of consumers'.² To attempt a full contextual account of music in the landscape of the Second World War home front in London would be another thesis (or several theses) entirely, but one further purpose of this chapter is to provide some kind of overview of the chamber-music landscape of the time, in which to situate the case studies that form the main focus of the thesis.

One of the key leitmotifs that will emerge is the idea of chamber-music performances being made more 'democratic' (as the title of this chapter, a quotation from Eric Blom, indicates).³ Although many facets of wartime measures could be considered autocratic, initiatives were often geared towards, or resulted in, new inclusions and shared experience. For example, rationing, conscription and blackouts obliged all social and economic groups to recognise and live out a shared situation. The BBC could similarly be considered autocratic in 'shaping the nation's tastes', yet broadcasting was of itself an increasingly accessible medium with a great variety of output available.⁴ The idea of social co-operation also permeated musical activity, as we can see from a reference in *The Times* according to which 'at Harrow the dissolved

¹ Eric Blom, *Music in England* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1942), 199.

² Janet Wolff, 'The Ideology of Autonomous Art', in Leppert and McClary, *Music and Society*, 1–12.

³ Blom, *Music in England*, 199.

⁴ Jennifer Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music 1922–36*.

remains of local choral and orchestral societies have been pooled (like petrol and prunes)'.⁵

What follows reveals how performances of chamber-music performance, too, were gradually placed into more democratic structures, taking into account ideas of accessibility, frequency, affordability and interaction with social causes, along with varied repertoire. *The Times* noted that the qualities of 'regularity, frequency, quality and cheapness' should be extended into peacetime in order to retain audiences for live performances.⁶ The idea that performances of high-art music were the province of the 'common man' was particularly powerful propaganda.⁷ As Ehrlich suggests, 'there was a resurgence of cultural euphoria ... The prevailing images were of Myra Hess playing Mozart to uniformed audiences in the National Gallery, and common men uplifted by Beethoven's "Victory" symphony.'⁸

As this quotation indicates, an increasing accessibility and availability applied only to listeners and audiences, not to the idea of the practising musician. It was the 'potency of musical appreciation' that was important.⁹ Of particular interest in this chapter are the specific ways that listening and concert-going were extended and elevated. I will also note traces of the decline in amateur music-making. I will be suggesting below that the wartime shift from the private performance space to the public space was made possible by changed fiscal and social realities. These invigorated ideas about spaces for chamber music and, in the pursuit of a more democratic condition, resulted in new ways of approaching chamber-music performance.

Bourdieu has argued that cultural taste is a product of class, and that it is closely indexed to education and professional status: 'cultural capital', especially in relation to music, is achieved by certain sections of the population, notably the educated and the wealthy.¹⁰ Bourdieu suggests that 'nothing more clearly affirms one's "class", nothing

⁵ 'The Informal Concert: Counting Our Blessings', *The Times*, Saturday 18 November 1939, 4

⁶ 'Music's Reckoning: The Cheap Concert', *The Times*, Saturday, 28 December 1940, 6,

⁷ An idea that we will see more fully explored in Chapter 4.

⁸ Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain Since the Eighteenth Century*, 224. There are several instances when 'serious' music is referred to in this thesis, and the reader should take this to mean 'western art music'. As a term used frequently by the BBC in official documents during this period, and seen in the quotation above, I believe it is appropriate and convenient to use it here, despite the implications (that any other type of music is not serious).

⁹ Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain Since the Eighteenth Century*, 224.

¹⁰ Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*.

more infallibly classifies, than tastes in music. This is of course because, by virtue of the rarity of the conditions for acquiring the corresponding dispositions, there is no more “classifactory” practice than concert-going or playing a “noble” instrument.¹¹ His theory is a stimulating backdrop for the Second World War, when propaganda and the structures of military service promoted ideas of a classless nation. In tandem with this broad movement went attempts to broaden the appeal of ‘serious’ music. However, the 1930s was still a period which saw significant division between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’. Even though, for many people, the economic gap was becoming less vast and general living standards were improving, disposable income, good education and leisure time were still the province of those who were better off. It must be emphasised, therefore, that although in what follows I describe ways in which some performance structures allowed for a more ‘democratic’ audience (i.e. they made performances more *accessible* to audiences drawn from a *wider social spectrum*), it must be remembered that we are still talking about a rather narrow demographic in the context of British society as a whole.

By 1933 unemployment had peaked at 3 million, mainly in areas of the country whose industry depended on exports.¹² The falling living costs and tumbling food prices meant that those in long-term employment experienced a rise in their standard of living, but for the unemployed this made little difference.¹³ The effects of devastating depression cannot be traced within the scope of this project, but it is important to remember that the following descriptions of live concert performances in general remained the province of the ‘haves’. In reality, the ‘have nots’ had very little chance to participate in this form of live entertainment.

There are three questions which have shaped this chapter. Apart from the case studies (discussed in chapters 3 and 4) what other chamber-music performances (and performances of other types) were taking place during this period? What can chamber-music policy at the BBC tell us about the establishment view of chamber music’s place

¹¹Ibid., 18. According to Bourdieu (14), one can be ranked by profession and background when determining the extent of familiarity with cultural products such as musical works. Within this concept, musical works can be arranged in a hierarchy, and the popularisation of works brings an inevitable ‘devaluation’.

¹² Oksana Newman and Allan Foster, *The Value of a Pound: Prices and Incomes in Britain 1900–1993* (New York and London: Gale Research International Ltd., 1995), 75.

¹³Ibid., 75.

in the wider art-music scene? To what extent can developments in the ‘opening up’ of performance be measured up, considering Bourdieu’s stratifications?

The first section below, ‘Physical conditions’, offers a brief context in which to situate the ensuing ‘Cultural life on the home front: a short survey of change’, which provides an overview of cultural and intellectual life in London towards the end of the 1930s and during the war. The physical effects of the war in London are described in order to contextualise concert-going conditions. I briefly explore other musical activities during this period before considering the significance of arguments that music performance became increasingly professionalised during this time.

Then ‘An establishment view: chamber music at the BBC’ refines our focus by examining the position of chamber-music performance at the BBC over a ten-year period from 1934 to 1944. Audience surveys are explored and the problems associated with the broadcast of chamber music are considered. BBC policy and meeting minutes are examined in order to build a picture of how chamber-music performance was viewed and treated by the broadcaster and how this view shifted.

‘Live chamber-music performance in London and the democratic stage’ explores some of the main venues for, and occurrences of, chamber-music series in London immediately preceding and during the war, aside from the two main venues of the thesis. Of particular interest are the structures within which chamber-music performances operated, and the use of performance space in relation to the idea of improving accessibility. This section also includes a brief overview of the launch of the Committee for the Promotion of New Music.

Taken as a whole, then, this chapter provides a survey of the cultural, social and musical contexts of the Second World War and the years immediately preceding it, allowing us to see the case studies of wartime chamber-music performances in their wider historical and ideological perspective.

Physical conditions

London and Great Britain as a whole had been prepared for war for many months. The threat of air attacks on civilian targets was well-anticipated and prepared for, so much so that estimates of the numbers of casualties were in excess of the eventual reality. Under the mistaken conviction that Germany had been manufacturing poison gas for use on

civilians, gas masks had already been issued to all school children by 1938.¹⁴ At the same time as becoming aware of emergency measures, however, people were aware of the appeasement efforts that were being attempted.¹⁵ But following Chamberlain's declaration that Britain was at war with Germany on 3 September 1939, legislation and measures that had been planned quickly came into force. The *Observer* reported: 'parliament has passed its emergency legislation at a speed unprecedented in history'.¹⁶ The changes were dramatic.

Blackouts were immediately implemented nationwide and street lamps and car headlights were extinguished leading to a 'serious increase' in the number of road-related accidents and fatalities.¹⁷ Rationing came into full effect in 1940 and people were encouraged to supplement their rations with home-grown food, a feat easier for those in the suburbs or in rural areas. Nevertheless, despite rationing (which included petrol and clothes) forcing a general tightening of belts, some more affluent sections of society simply turned to (or continued) eating out, as this article in *Picture Post* suggests: 'the food problem drives a tremendous percentage of the population to the restaurants. Nobody questions the fact that, if you set out to do it, you can get four weeks' meat ration in one night.'¹⁸ Photographs of cigars and port being distributed in the best restaurants also demonstrate that one could 'beat the system' if one had the means.¹⁹ London thus retained the structures that traditionally accommodated societal elites.

It might go without saying that large numbers of the population entered the military. In 1939, 480,000 men were in uniform, but by the end of the war, with the gradual expansion of the ages conscripted, this figure had leapt to five million.²⁰ Many

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁶ 'The Home Front: Britain Ready for any Emergency. Swift and Thorough Measures', *Observer*, 3 September 1939, 13.

¹⁷ Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, 139.

¹⁸ Jenny Nicholson, 'The Night-life of London.' *Picture Post*, 1 November 1941, 8. See also Marwick, *Class*, 216.

¹⁹ Ziegler, *London At War*, 212. The upper photo in Ziegler's text depict two gentlemen diners selecting cigars from a box presented to them by the Maitre d', with an astonishingly large bottle on the table which most likely contains port. The gentlemen are then seen again in the lower photo lying down on matching campbeds in the restaurant while the Maitre d' again stands attentively by. See also Marwick, *The Home Front*, 65.

²⁰ Newman and Foster, *The Value of a Pound*, 99.

more people were mobilised into both military and non-military roles that assisted the war effort, including women: as Ziegler summarises, out of the 31,930,000 people of 'effective working age' 22 million had been mobilised by 30 June 1944.²¹

Women not in uniform moved from the domestic sphere into the world of work, replacing men in the factories, in post and milk rounds and on the farms, as well as in a vast range of other occupations. The emancipation of women from the domestic sphere is well-documented, as is the shift back to traditional roles experienced by many at the return of peace. The depression of the 1930s or the 'devil's decade' had already brought significant hardships, especially to the north, where the decline in heavy industry hit communities hard.²² But the war replaced an economic challenge with a military one. As Newman has put it, 'the economic crisis had, in large measure, receded as the military crisis grew. Within so brief a time span, the people of Britain experienced deep economic depression and widespread distress, prolonged crises and intense anxieties, fumbling leadership and moments of national humiliation.'²³ While the country lurched from one crisis to the next, the war was able to temporarily remedy some of the evils of the depression. Arthur Marwick highlights the fact that as the war progressed, incomes grew rapidly: 'Average weekly earnings rose by eighty per cent from £2.13.3d in October 1938 to £4.16.1d in July 1945 when the cost of living had risen by only thirty one per cent.'²⁴ In addition, as a result of the war, employment was as good as total.

A great many aspects of life, including employment and occupations, emergency procedures and food supplies, were taken under the wing of the state. The vulnerable were relocated out of the cities and into the countryside. Nevertheless, despite the mass evacuation of mothers and children from inner-city homes to rural areas, many evacuees quickly returned to their city homes; the nature of rural life was truly alien to many, and the lack of any physical danger materialising during the period of the phoney war meant that many 'vaccies' were back in their London homes by the time the air raids started in September 1940.

²¹ Philip Ziegler, *What Britain has Done 1939–1945: A Selection of Outstanding Facts and Figures* (London: Great Britain, Ministry of Information, Reference Division, 1944), 11.

²² Newman and Foster, *The Value of a Pound*, 75.

²³ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁴ Marwick, *Class: Image and Reality*, 216.

Following the initial year with no attacks, when they did come the air raids were heavy and incessant. Incendiary bombs were dropped in the ‘big blitz’ that commenced in September 1940 and ceased only in March 1941. Between the September and December of this period London was bombed every single night but three.²⁵ Winter was the most practical time of year to launch raids, as the long nights provided enough cover for aircraft to arrive from the continent, carry out their raid and return under cover of darkness.

The physical damage inflicted on London during air raids was something that both domestic and business environments had to adapt to and contend with. The concert and theatre business ran on the premiss that a group of people (preferably large enough to turn a profit) would be able to congregate at the venue in the evening around 7 or 8 o’clock and leave again at around 9 or 10 o’clock. Air raids made this seemingly simple procedure extremely difficult; periods of bombing coincided exactly with evening concert timings. Attendance was made more difficult by the cessation of the underground train network on the commencement of an air raid. While one would be able to shelter in the station itself, trains would not run and therefore concert-goers had little choice but to remain in their seats inside the hall.²⁶ In addition, the fact that hundreds of people used underground stations as air-raid shelters often made the conditions of tube travel highly unpleasant for concert audiences and other travellers passing through.

As well as physical destruction, the air raids had the additional purpose of exhausting city inhabitants. We can gauge the mental difficulties and the physical effects on Londoners during this period by examining one of Harrison’s many surveys in his Mass Observation work (see Figure 1).

²⁵ The term ‘big blitz’ was defined by Robin Woolven, in Ann Saunders (ed.), *London County Council Bomb Damage Maps 1939–1945*. (London: London Topographical Society and London Metropolitan Archives, 2005), 6.

²⁶ Elkin, *Queen’s Hall 1893–1941*, 128. Elkin describes an evening at the proms which continued well into the night, when the audience, upon hearing the air-raid sirens, were unable to leave the hall. A sing-along ensued, alongside musical guessing games, and if Elkin is to be believed, quite a jolly time was had by all. The reason that people would not leave, he emphasises, was not born out of fear. In fact, it was merely a practicality, as when the air-raid sirens commenced the underground trains would cease to run and therefore no one would be able to return home.

Figure 1: ‘Sleep Achieved Last Night. London, 12 September 1940.’ Mass Observation.²⁷

**Informant’s Sleep Statement
Percentage Within Category**

None: 31
Less than c. 4 hours: 32
c. 4-6 hours: 22
More than 6 hours: 15

As a sample, representative of any given night during the big blitz, over 60 per cent of Harrison’s observers (both paid and volunteer men and women from different walks of life) achieved less than four hours of sleep that night. Incendiary bombing continued intermittently, with varying levels of frequency and intensity until 1944, when V weapons came into use; the V1 was introduced first, followed by the V2 in 1945. These were dangerous in a different way to incendiary bombs. V weapons could be launched from the French coast, and therefore did not need the cover of darkness in order to be deployed. As well as being unpredictable in their timing, they were also unpredictable in their targets, meaning that although bombardment was less intense than in 1940–1, Londoners in particular were still very much on the front line.²⁸ As this report, written in 1949 states: ‘London was on duty for most of the war. Between the first and the last incident, the alert was sounded on 1,224 occasions.’²⁹ In addition, wartime conditions such as rationing and military service continued to impact on the population well beyond May 1945.³⁰ Reconstruction could not be undertaken in earnest until the end of the war, and therefore many parts of London’s infrastructure were in poor states of functionality for extended periods. As we will see in chapters 3 and 4, the physical conditions of wartime had specific impacts on the structure and success of chamber-music performances. Indeed, as we will see in the case of the National Gallery, the physical circumstances of war contributed to shaping a more ‘democratic’ concert series.

The autumn of 1939, often referred to as the ‘bore war’ or the ‘phoney war’, proved to be one of anxiety and uncertainty as the expected air raids did not materialise.

²⁷ Harrison, *Living through the Blitz*, 105.

²⁸ For detailed descriptions of London air raids see Saunders (ed.), *London County Council Bomb Damage Maps*.

²⁹ Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, 324.

³⁰ Indeed, rationing did not completely end until 1953, when sweet rationing finally ceased.

For many Londoners and other city dwellers the so-called ‘cultural blackout’ added to frustrations. All places of entertainment in which large assemblies could gather, such as cinemas, theatres and concert halls, were closed as of 3 September. This was an attempt to mitigate the risk of large, concentrated numbers of casualties who would potentially be trapped in buildings or on the streets in the event of bombing. In addition, the blackout measures made getting home in the ever-darkening evenings difficult and even hazardous. Historian Richard Titmuss tells us that ‘practically every aspect of the civil defence and emergency arrangements was criticised at one time or another. The imposition of the black-out, and the closing of the cinemas, theatres and other forms of entertainment at the beginning of the war led to a lot of grumbling.’³¹

As a result of both public and professional protest, it did not take the government long to make a U-turn on the closing of the theatres and concert halls of London: starting with cinemas, venues gradually began to re-open, some within the month.³² The first live concert was given by pianist Frederic Lamond at 3 o’clock at Wigmore Hall on 7 October, playing Bach, Liszt and Beethoven, closely followed on 10 October at 1 o’clock by Myra Hess at the National Gallery. The rapid U-turn indicates recognition that there was a very real need, not just for entertainments but specifically *live* entertainments. The BBC could provide broadly the same entertainments that were available in London (dance music, variety, light music, serious music, and even plays), but broadcasting was not fully adequate; the act of live performance had a societal function. In his wide-ranging survey, Titmuss suggests: ‘the maintenance of physical contact between the members of a social unit also helped to meet another imperative need in time of war; the need to be related to the world outside, to ideas, values and social patterns that bestow a sense of “belonging”’.³³

As well as emphasising the importance of ritual, Titmuss highlights the idea that public entertainments, which included ‘serious’ music concerts, were a necessary apparatus of society. In giving the go-ahead for the National Gallery concerts to take place in a building owned by the Treasury, the government sanctioned not only a morale-boosting exercise but stamped approval on the idea that live performances were able to function in a way that supported, not hindered, the war effort. As we will see

³¹ Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, 139.

³² For further details see Weingärtner, *Arts as a Weapon of War*, 52–5.

³³ Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, 348.

later in this thesis, the poignancy of a thriving live performance sector (as opposed to merely broadcasting) lent additional weight to press and propaganda material that sought to convey an image of an active, upbeat Britain.

Cultural life on the home front: a short survey of change

After initial shake-ups, relocations and reorganisation in response to wartime measures, London was far from bereft of cultural and intellectual opportunities. Orchestral concert life seems to have regained vigour rapidly as the war progressed. In a report for the Royal Musical Association, Shera suggests that the ‘thin trickle’ in the early years of war later became a ‘regular torrent’ of orchestral concerts.³⁴ The London Symphony Orchestra (under Sir Henry Wood) and the London Philharmonic Orchestra quickly restarted seasons, as did Sadler’s Wells Ballet and Opera. The latter opened with *Figaro* on 14 October 1939 and continued with *La Bohème* with Joan Cross as Mimi.³⁵ New projects were not discouraged by the emergency measures. *The Times* reports that on Sunday 15 October 1939, ‘a new venture in ballet will be launched at Collins’s Theatre, Islington. The Balletomanes’ Club will present three new ballets, *Cafe Boulevard*, *Big Top* and a Mozart suite, with choreography by Mr John Regan, the club’s artistic director.’³⁶

The Promenade concert seasons under Sir Henry Wood at Queen’s Hall (until the hall was destroyed in 1940, after which the Royal Albert Hall was used from 1941) continued to be a highlight of the London musical calendar, with Wagner night on Mondays and Beethoven night on Fridays sustained from the 1930s into the war itself.³⁷ Alongside the Austro-German canon, a wide range of contemporary (and notably

³⁴ F. H. Shera, ‘The Changing Audience’, *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 74th Session, (1947–8), 45–56.

³⁵ ‘Music This Week: The First Symphony Concert’, *The Times*, Monday 9 October 1939, p. 6; ‘Music This Week: First of the Courtauld-Sargent Concerts’, *The Times*, Monday 16 October 1939, p. 6.

³⁶ ‘Music This Week: The First Symphony Concert’, *The Times*, Monday 9 October 1939, p. 6.

³⁷ See Doctor and Wright, *The Proms: A New History* A full list of programmes can be viewed at the BBC Proms website where the archive of programmes is publicly accessible: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/proms/archive/search/1890s>, accessed 22 May 2013. As Doctor has highlighted, British compositions had previously been cordoned off into a Thursday slot of their own, which resulted in ‘consistently low attendances and profits’. After 1929, ‘British’ Thursdays ceased in order that the works be subsumed into the rest of the programming,(110).

British contemporary) composers' works were programmed, including heavyweights such as Elgar, Stanford, Vaughan Williams and Delius, as well as Goossens, Warlock, Britten, Howells, Rawsthorne, Walton, Bax, Sibelius, Holst, Bantock, Harrison, Bliss, and composers more often associated with 'light' music such as Coates and German. The promenade concerts provided something of a showcase for contemporary music although the Austro-German repertoire still dominated the schedules.

In the battle to continue supplying the demand for art and music, traditional cultural spaces became more flexible in the manner in which they were used. For example, concerts were not necessarily confined to concert halls. A large number of churches and other public spaces such as libraries and community halls became lunchtime concert venues. Although lunchtime concerts had become a feature of the National Gallery's activities, the Gallery also continued to present art exhibitions, albeit on a minimal scale. The Royal Academy also commenced a rather larger programme of exhibitions of both 'high art' and what might be called 'community' art throughout the war and is notable for its promotion of works by unknown artists alongside academicians.³⁸ Apart from the precarious first weeks of September 1939, London continued to be a thriving centre for culture-seekers throughout the war.

Many creative practices were newly formalised and programmed (as were many aspects of wartime life). For instance, the government established and maintained the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA), which involved chamber music to a significant degree, professional groups being 'deployed' to unusual venues such as factory canteens to perform music such as Mozart and Haydn.³⁹ (CEMA would go on to be reformed as the Arts Council in 1946.⁴⁰) The Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA) distributed lighter entertainment, including light music, sketches and comedy turns.

Despite efforts to create the illusion of a classless audience by performing Mozart in factories, ENSA and CEMA groups (both working to provide entertainment

³⁸ Unlike the National Gallery, which maintained professional 'standards' of exhibitions, the Royal Academy mounted exhibitions of a changed nature, including exhibitions of works by serving firemen (annually 1941–4), and art competitions for children (1940). The National Gallery turned down the offer of staging an exhibition of works by children for the reason that it would not be a suitable venture for the gallery.

³⁹ For fuller accounts, see both Wolf, 'Promoting New Music in London', and Weingärtner, *The Arts as a Weapon of War*.

⁴⁰ Wolf, 'Promoting New Music in London'.

to war-workers), positioned themselves at opposing ends of the musical class spectrum: CEMA performances were considered highbrow and ENSA performances were lowbrow. CEMA took care to employ professional musicians considered to be at the top of their game and believed ENSA to be frivolous and (if the report below is to be believed) not always in the best taste.⁴¹ A contributor to the *Musical Times* 'Notes and News' column demonstrates this attitude while commenting on a report that had recently been published by the ISM:

A paragraph about ENSA reveals the astounding fact that that organization pays only £7 for a concert tour of seven days, the performers providing their own living expenses. The ISM has protested to the Ministry of Labour, whose reply was that 'the fee was considered to be quite adequate payment in relation to the type of work offered'. 'We make no comment,' says the Report. 'But we do' says the *Musical Times*. If our solitary experience of an ENSA concert is any guide we say that £7 is too much for a show that ought to have been banned on grounds of public decency. We don't believe it would have been allowed in any place of public entertainment. The audience was largely civilian, mixed and adult, and many were obviously more uncomfortable than amused. The proper payment for a week of this sort of thing would be, not £7 but seven days without the option; and that such a show should be sent out under Government auspices to camps and munition factories is a disgrace.⁴²

The ENSA acronym was popularly redesignated by some as 'Every Night Something Awful'. As we will later see, concepts of prestige and 'quality' of performance were common narratives, especially in relation to 'highbrow' chamber music, and the friction this created with the spirit of musical openness and accessibility was often problematic.

The relationship between the arts and war was also formalised in other sectors. The War Artists Advisory Committee was perhaps the most prominent body commissioning artists to record and interpret scenes of importance or of military or human interest. Graham Sutherland, John Piper, Henry Moore, Paul Nash and Edward Bawden were all 'war artists'. After the outbreak of war, artists and establishment figures also found additional roles within the government war machinery. For example, aesthete and intellectual Sir Kenneth Clark was director of the National Gallery and a strong supporter of the National Gallery concerts. In the absence of the Gallery's

⁴¹ Hayes and Hill, *Millions Like Us*, 216.

⁴² 'Notes and News', *Musical Times*, July 1941, 272–6. The phrase 'without the option' alluded to a short period of imprisonment in which one would be denied the option to pay a fine instead of being held.

pictures, Clark took on work at the Ministry of Information, being tasked with producing propaganda films. In his memoirs, he recounts the difficulties of one particular film project. ‘We had, I believe, only seventeen tanks, and I was able to borrow three of them to show our great tank force grinding round Parliament Square, the number plates and drivers being changed for each circuit.’⁴³

As London played host to large numbers of allied forces, concern for visiting military personnel led Ashburnham House in Westminster to be used as a club for American graduates. They were given use of a library and were able to hear lectures and concerts. Another venue, The Churchill Club, had readings of poetry ‘from Mr Eliot downwards’, including Edith Sitwell.⁴⁴ Plentiful arts and entertainments supplied those looking for lighter alternatives, as well. In addition to the revues and variety shows mentioned above, Covent Garden was famously turned into a dance hall, and cinema was cheap enough for many to attend several times a week. Ehrlich goes so far as to suggest that, ‘a long boom in entertainment began, undeterred when the “phoney war” became a real one. The BBC launched its immensely popular Forces Programme, films played to packed audiences, and the public’s thirst for music became unquenchable.’⁴⁵ The examples detailed here so far, along with the examples to come, suggest that the live music experience was part of the ‘boom’ that Ehrlich describes.

As well as altering the supply-and-demand dynamics of entertainment and culture, war shaped the ideological framing of intellectual and cultural events by situating the ideals of ‘democracy’ in between, or in opposition to, the extremes of right and left regimes that were emerging on the continent.⁴⁶ Minihan highlights the fact that ‘art’s function in society was debated within the larger question of the Government’s social responsibilities’, while reminding us that many of the notable intellectuals in

⁴³ Kenneth Clark, *The Other Half* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1986), 17. We can also trace many well-known leading lights of the musical establishment engaged in using their creative talents for war-related purposes. Leading composers composed scores for propaganda films and writers wrote the scripts. Vaughan Williams composed music for films, including *49th Parallel* (starring Laurence Olivier, 1941), *Coastal Command* (1943) and *The People’s Land* (also 1943). William Walton composed the score for *The First of the Few* and *Went the Day Well?* (both 1942) starring Leslie Howard and Walter Goehr arranged the music for the 1940 film *For Freedom*. E. M. Forster (who attended the National Gallery concerts) wrote the commentary for *A Diary for Timothy* which used a score composed by Pamela Harrison and Noel Coward wrote the screenplay and the music and produced *In Which We Serve* (1942).

⁴⁴ Clark *The Other Half*, 56–8.

⁴⁵ Ehrlich, *Harmonious Alliance*, 89.

⁴⁶ Janet Minihan, *The Nationalization of Culture: The Development of State Subsidies to the Arts in Great Britain* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1977), 172.

Britain at this time approached the problem in sympathy with the position of the extreme left.⁴⁷ The rise of both extreme right and left political ideologies on the continent gave the intellectual preference for the left even greater political significance, which may have become even more acute with the arrival on British shores of intellectual and creative refugees from Europe. An intense fear of the political left was prevalent among society establishments and can be traced in the mass media. The BBC exemplifies the problems associated with reconciling a fear of the far left with a need to denounce the fascism of the far right. For example, in 1942 the BBC Symphony Orchestra performed first *Ode to Stalin* by Khachaturian, and, in 1944, Prokofiev's *A Toast to Stalin*, which sits oddly with the corporate decision to ban the broadcasting of works by Alan Bush.⁴⁸ While leftist thinking may have been positioned as an antidote to fascism in the case of Soviet Russia, to be a home-grown communist was perhaps still considered more problematic.

Nevertheless, prompted by the devastation wrought by the depression, many in Britain had become aware of the greater role that left-leaning ideologies could play in the resolution of the national crises, perhaps best demonstrated by the Beveridge Report of 1942. As historian Marwick observes, social (and class) cohesion was an essential message of wartime propaganda: 'the propaganda idea was being steadily developed of this as a people's war on behalf of democracy'.⁴⁹

Part of this social cohesion so necessary to war was the democratising processes that seemed to permeate many musical performances at this time. As we will see throughout this thesis, especially in relation to chamber music, performances that were 'democratised' (accessible, affordable and frequent) contributed to the idea that British people were knowledgeable about culture and therefore a nation of supremely civilised (and consequently superior) people. A great irony lies in this pursuit of nurturing a musical nation, as the condition aspired to was, of course, that of Germany - whose people were regarded by the international community as being naturally musical and accustomed to everyday encounters with 'great' music. Nevertheless, the idea of 'democracy' could be positioned in opposition to *both* communism and fascism, and the

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Boult, *My Own Trumpet*, 187–8. It seems that these were live performances rather than broadcasts, and therefore perhaps were deemed to have less impact than if they had been broadcast nationwide; Foreman, *From Parry to Britten*, 239–40.

⁴⁹ Marwick, *Class*, 221.

creation of the state-funded body CEMA signalled a shift from private to state patronage and therefore a more formalised approach to music dissemination.

But, as we will see, alongside burgeoning accessibility and availability there was also a continuing upward trajectory in the professionalisation of performances, which may well have distanced actual music-making from the non-expert. At the same time, new technology provided opportunities for *listening* to performances. Listening to music, and hearing the world's finest orchestras in one's own living room, began to carry as much cultural capital as practical music-making.

In contrast to live performance, music on the wireless was far less socially exclusive, and had enabled a repertoire of symphonic music to become familiar fare for enthusiasts, whether they lived near an urban centre or not. It could be suggested that war facilitated an increase in domestic listening, and also group listening. The example below describes the activities of a Manchester gramophone club.

Gramophone Season

Even when there is more general permission for the holding of concerts and similar gatherings there are still likely to be war-time difficulties in the way of regularly hearing good music well performed. The Marple and Mellor Music Group, which begins its new season on Sunday, has decided to make its gramophone meetings more comprehensive in consequence. It is to devote six evenings to opera, four to chamber music, and eight to orchestral recordings.⁵⁰

Listening at home was a popular pastime, and can be traced in Coward's *Brief Encounter* (1945), where we witness Laura and Fred, middle-class citizens conducting their evening relaxation to the strains of Rachmaninov emanating from their wireless.⁵¹ Such habits fed into a rise of the amateur music 'expert', enabled by the wide availability of gramophone records and wireless broadcasts. Musical appreciation and study had effectively replaced performance as the pursuit of the amateur enthusiast.⁵² By September 1939, an article in *The Manchester Guardian* was suggesting the potential of resuscitating the by-then rare playing of chamber music at home in wartime.

⁵⁰ Staff Correspondents, 'In Manchester: Home Grown Foodstuffs', *Manchester Guardian*, 15 September 1939, 8.

⁵¹ *Brief Encounter* Celia Johnson and Trevor Howard, director: David Lean, writer/producer: Noel Coward, Pinewood Films, 1945.

⁵² 'The Amateur Musician', *The Times*, Thursday 22 August 1935, 13.

An opportunity is also at hand for a revival of music-making in the home and for a return to the old times when most folk learned to play some sort of instrument or to sing for themselves. Every middle-aged person will recall a period when a piano was considered a necessary piece of furniture even in the poorer homes. The great art of chamber music arose from the need amongst men and women to provide for themselves. Something might be done to help musicians who are now thrown out of employment if the old 'patron' system were in part restored. People who are not beggared by these hard days might hold chamber concerts in their houses and pay the artists for their services. As recently as last winter a few citizens of Manchester experimented successfully with this idea, to obtain the chamber music which they could not get from the general routine of public concert-giving. One point in favour of the revival of chamber music now is that long experience has proved that the audience attracted by it is usually of a size which could be accommodated easily in any shelter of average dimensions.⁵³

Indeed, the idea that war might provide increased opportunities for domestic performance is supported by Shera's report for the Royal Musical Association, written in the late 1940s. Shera argues that the practice of 'personal performance' in the home increased during the war, although it is rather unclear on what foundation this suggestion is based.⁵⁴

However, most sources (both secondary and primary) are in agreement that music-making in the home was on the decline. According to Ehrlich the 'collapse' of domestic musical performance 'was gradual and slow in effect, an inheritance from the twenties, eroding the demand for traditional forms of low-level teaching. If the origins of technology and patronage could also be traced to the recent past, their impact was sudden and dramatic, displacing cinema orchestras and establishing the BBC as central to the distribution of music.'⁵⁵ The consequent decline of the amateur practitioner, in tandem with the rise of the knowledgeable gramophone record collector, began to leave perhaps stronger class imprints on the performance practice of music than had been seen in preceding decades. Satirical magazine *Punch* recognised and commented on this decline of the amateur. In the following cartoon from 1940, a woman's domestic music-making is usurped by the professional standards readily available on the wireless.⁵⁶

⁵³ 'Music in War-time', *Manchester Guardian*, 11 September 1939, 6.

⁵⁴ F. H. Shera, 'The Changing Audience', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 1947-8, 45-56.

⁵⁵ Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century*, 209.

⁵⁶ British Library *Punch*, 13 March 1940, 277.

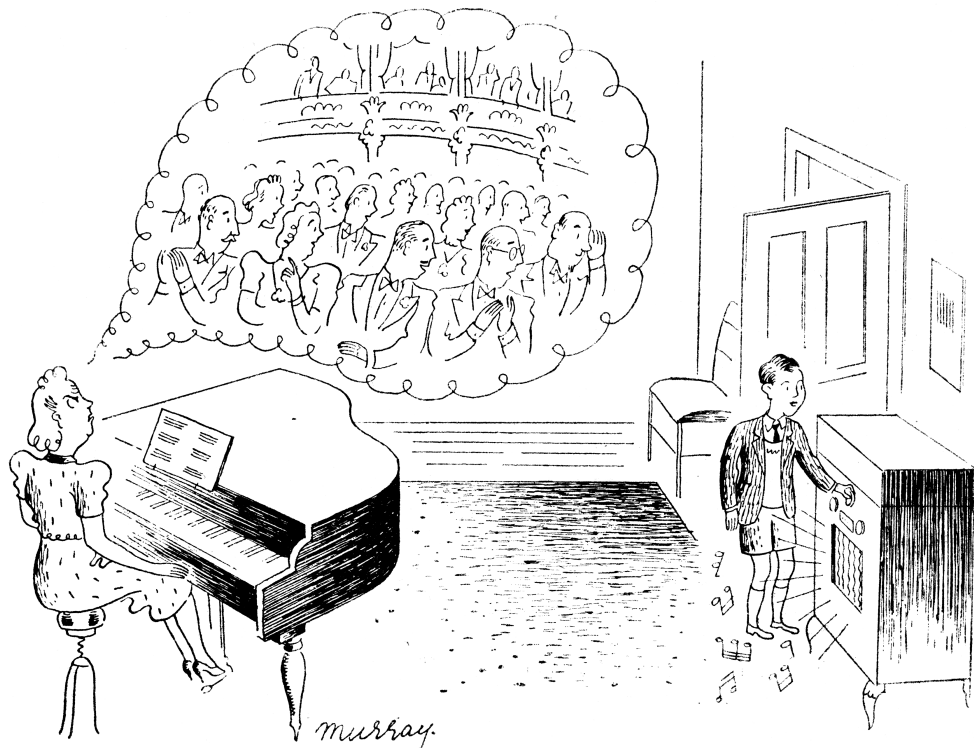
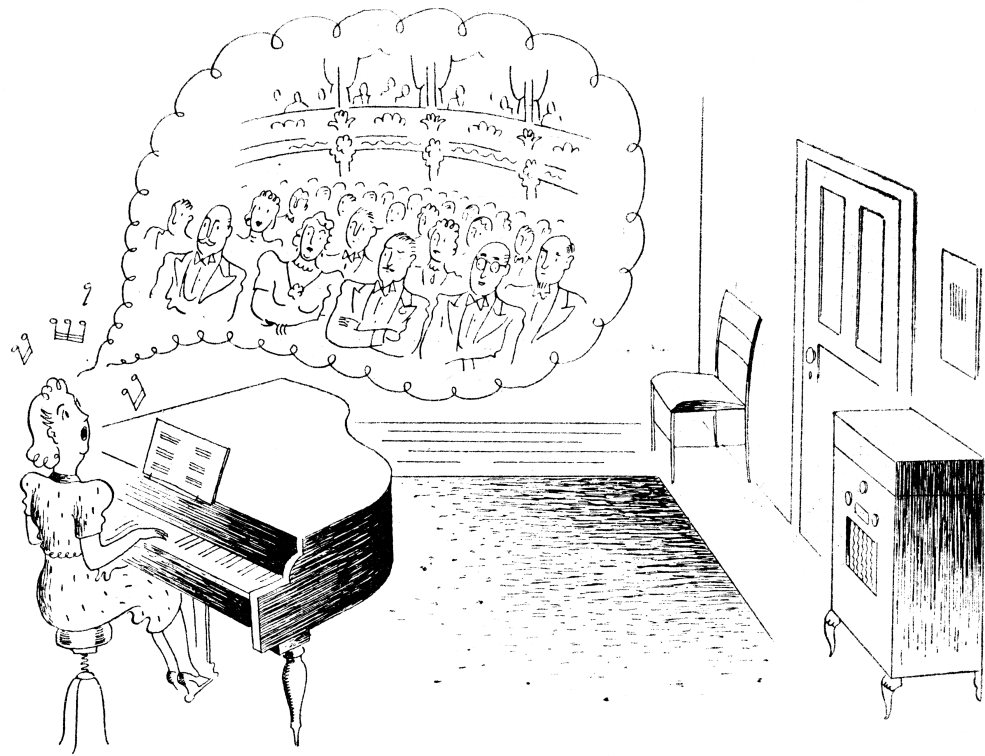


Figure 2: Domestic music-making is shunned by an (imaginary) audience in favour of the superior performance quality available on the wireless. Reproduced with permission of *Punch Limited*.

This cartoon not only expresses the idea that the wireless and the gramophone elevated people's ideas about standards of performance and consequently contributed to the sacralisation of 'serious' music, but also concurrently instilled a sense of inadequacy in the individual amateur. Part of Shera's report for the Royal Musical Association concurs with this view: 'one striking consequence [of the wireless] was the rapid cessation of amateur performance. As far as the practising of music was concerned, the radio left little time for it. Then came discouragement. If your friends could hear expert performances on any day of the week, they would no longer be interested in your humble efforts.'⁵⁷ So, if the period was subject to an increasingly 'democratic' model of performances in terms of increased availability and alternative venues, it also saw an increased distancing of music from the layman through professionalisation of music-making.

Similarly, we may note that when many professional musicians were drafted into the RAF orchestra, there was excitement that military music had taken such a 'professional' turn. According to the *Royal College of Music Magazine*,

Through the enterprise and untiring efforts of Wing Commander R. P. O'Donnell, M.V.O, who is Organising Director of all the music in the RAF, a number of well-known and experienced string players were enlisted to provide the Service with good class entertainment. Twenty string players with previous experience either as ensemble players or as members of such organisations as the London Symphony Orchestra, The Boyd Neel and Jacques String Orchestras, were formed into a small symphony orchestra, the wind section being provided by the well-known Central Band. Thus an orchestra, able to travel, complete with equipment, in a single motorcoach was available for performances at any RAF station in the United Kingdom ... Numerous tours of Bomber and Fighter stations have been carried out.⁵⁸

Unable, as ever, to escape the pursuit of good standards and taste, the provision of 'good class' music seems to be a result of professional music-making in the forces. The top names from the British concert platform were enlisted (including Dennis and Leonard Brain, Norman Del Mar, Harry Blech, Denis Matthews, Gareth Morris and notably the Griller, Hirsch, Martin and Grinke string quartets) to legitimise the RAF's musical output as truly professional.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Shera, 'The Changing Audience', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 52.

⁵⁸ 'Music in the RAF' *Royal College of Music Magazine*, Volume 38, No. 2, 48–53.

⁵⁹ Gamble and Lynch, *Dennis Brain: A Life in Music*, 16.

However, the portrayal of the RAF orchestra as a purely military orchestra may prompt an alternative reading of the situation. There was great propagandistic value in creating the *impression* that the ordinary military recruit could play a Mozart symphony to professional standard. The truth of the situation, that these men were not ‘ordinary’ military recruits at all but highly trained professional musicians, had little bearing on the powerful image that this created. The impression that the ordinary military recruit had such cultural intellect and talents reinforced the idea that British people of all ‘ranks’ had an intellectual grasp, and indeed mastery, of music, an art which Germany traditionally claimed as its own.

The professionalisation of musical performance, and the cultivation of elite listening habits and tastes, can be seen to have reaffirmed intellectual and artistic elite associations with performance, despite desire for an opening-up to new audiences. In an address to the Fabian Society in 1947, J. B. Priestley revealed his own sense of class and quality very clearly:

This increasing concern for the arts among intelligent men and women of modest means was seen perhaps most clearly in the realm of music. A decade and a half of missionary work by the B.B.C. had had its effect, and by 1939 the level of musical taste and appreciation among the general public was steadily rising.⁶⁰

However, when discussing the pre-war years, Robert Graves suggests that the BBC needed class distinctions in order to programme effectively to audience preference, writing that ‘one advantage of the air was that usually meal-time and evening hours could be allocated to the low-brow or general public, the mornings to housewives, and mid-afternoon and late-night hours to the leisured’.⁶¹ The BBC thus used class distinctions (albeit in crude delineations) in order to plan programmes and gather audience feedback, and as we shall now see, chamber music in particular seemed to be particularly susceptible as a genre to questions of eliteness and accessibility.

⁶⁰ Priestley, *The Arts under Socialism*; see also Eliot, *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture*.

⁶¹ Graves and Hodge, *The Long Weekend: A Social History of Great Britain*, 185.

An establishment view: chamber music at the BBC

I will now hone the focus to chamber-music policy and practice at the BBC, where archives yield two main types of information. One is the data gathered by the BBC itself about wireless audiences, which allows us to consider a snapshot of who was listening to what, which in turn allows us to situate chamber music in the wider context of broadcast programmes and, by extension, live performances. The second is information about the BBC music policy. This provides a very specific, but important point of view from within the musical establishment in London at the time as to how chamber music (as opposed to other genres) was handled and considered.

So, what can chamber-music policy at the BBC tell us about the establishment view of chamber music's place in the wider art music scene? As the BBC was the lynchpin of British musical life at this time, and has been understood as 'shaping the nation's taste', it is crucial to establish this context, within which we can understand performance venues such as the Wigmore Hall and the National Gallery.⁶² This brief study of the BBC also draws out some of the themes of this chapter. The BBC followed the official line of 'democracy', as might be expected, and the interest here lies in how this was negotiated in connection with chamber music, which carried such strong associations with value and intellectual eliteness.

Audiences

Apart from anecdotal evidence (usually in reference to the National Gallery), we have very little information about what types of people made up the London chamber-music audience in the Second World War. We know from photographs and written accounts that many uniformed personnel made use of London entertainments whilst on leave, and that residents and workers of London continued to make use of entertainments, so much so that Ehrlich describes a 'boom' in entertainments such as concerts, variety and theatre. A basic approximation of the tastes of audiences and popularity of musical

⁶² Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music 1922–36*. As might be predicted, there is a wealth of archival information concerning the broadcasting of chamber music during the Second World War, as well as about the formative years of BBC music policy in the 1930s. There is scope for research into the broadcasting of chamber music, in particular, at the BBC in relation to both the war and the formation of BBC policy.

genres can be made by considering the various listener surveys undertaken in the 1930s and 1940s. While it must be borne in mind that audience data presented here only refers to BBC broadcasts, and not to audiences for live performances in London commercial concert venues, in the absence of any data from commercial concert audiences these BBC figures can stand as both an approximation of audience preferences, and a listening context.

The following table is an example of one such survey. The BBC was keen to provide audiences with programmes they would like at convenient hours, while educating and informing listeners by retaining standards of what was considered good taste. From examining the questionnaire that was distributed it seems that class distinction was made by profession rather than income.⁶³ Women whose profession was 'housewife' or similar were asked to note their husband's profession. See Figure 3.

⁶³ Reports for 1939 (BBC WAC Ref. R9/9/3. Audience Research Special Reports. What Listeners Like, Part I. 1939 LR/71), http://www.britishonlinearchives.co.uk/document.php?cat=&sid=&cid=&pid=1248-R9-09&date_option=equal&page=&did=248-r9-09-03, accessed Wednesday 12 October 2011.

Figure 3: Audience Research Special Reports. What Listeners Like, Part I⁶⁴
 general vote, 1939.

Genre	% of listeners who 'liked' this type of broadcast.	Middle class	Working class
Variety	93%	88%	97%
Theatre and cinema organs	82%	74%	91%
Military bands	72%	65%	77%
Musical comedies	69%	62%	77%
Dance music	68%	59%	78%
Plays	68%	70%	69%
Light music	66%	73%	61%
Orchestral music	55%	62%	49%
Brass bands	55%	43%	63%
Talks	53%	61%	45%
Discussions	49%	53%	45%
Running commentaries on cricket	48%	49%	48%
Serial Pplays	41%	32%	52%
Light Opera and Operettes	38%	47%	30%
Recitals: singers	32%	32%	29%
Running Commentaries on Tennis	26%	34%	19%
Recitals: piano	21%	28%	14%
Grand opera	21%	27%	15%
Recitals: violin	19%	24%	12%
Serial readings	12%	12%	11%
Chamber music	8%	11%	4%

⁶⁴ Table constructed from information presented in the British Online Archives http://www.britishonlinearchives.co.uk/document.php?cat=&sid=&cid=&pid=1248-R9-09&date_option=equal&page=&did=248-r9-09-03, accessed Wednesday 12 October 2011; Reports for 1939 (BBC WAC Ref. R9/9/3. Audience Research Special Reports. What Listeners Like, Part I. 1939 LR/71), memorandum.

The table clearly demonstrates a stratification of tastes that we can identify as part of economic and social conditioning.⁶⁵ For the wireless-listening public (8,431,247 wireless licences were issued in 1937) chamber music and small-scale music-making such as recitals were rather low down on the list of listening ‘likes’, with only 8 per cent of total respondents claiming to ‘like’ chamber music broadcasts.⁶⁶ In contrast, over half of total respondents liked orchestral music (and this was distinct from ‘light music’). When divided by apparent social class, chamber music still ranked lowest for both the middle and working classes. However, the percentage of middle-class respondents who ‘liked’ chamber music, violin recitals and piano recitals was double the percentage recorded for working-class respondents. No other genre of programme listed in this table achieves a 100 per cent split difference such as this, not even Grand Opera. This suggests therefore that these small-scale performances were the only ones capable of producing such polarisation of opinion. In addition, these figures suggest that chamber music and small-scale music performances were a niche genre with a niche audience in the 1930s.

The table also clearly demonstrates that chamber music was the least popular genre to listen to among both working and middle classes in 1939. However, as we shall later discover, this low vote for chamber music (and other small music genres, such as recitals) may also have been due to the timing of chamber-music broadcasts on the BBC, as well as the frequency of broadcast. There is no doubt that small-scale music-making was broadcast less often than orchestral music. Chamber music broadcasts were often criticised for being at inconvenient times and being used to merely ‘plug holes’.⁶⁷

Listener surveys confirmed that the types of music commonly performed at the Proms were in fact the types of music that people wanted to hear on their wireless sets: concertos, symphonies and overtures for example. A referendum in 1943 indicated no great change in audience preference and taste, with orchestral repertoire retaining supremacy:

⁶⁵ See Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*.

⁶⁶ BBC WAC R12/155/8 Copyright Performing Rights Society Ltd. Agreement 1938–March 1939, File 7A, The British Broadcasting Corporation ‘Paid Licences for the year 1937, Table H’.

⁶⁷ BBC WAC R27/214 Music General, Music Department Meetings (Monthly): Minutes. 1941–5, Thursday 12 April 1945, point 8.

the plebiscite shows a great preponderance of opinion for familiar works. For instance, the first 17 overtures are as stock repertoire as Cav. and Pag. in opera circles. So are the first 14 concertos and the first 16 symphonies. It looks as though the overwhelming desire of the music panel as shown by the plebiscite is for the most familiar of all familiar works, and ones that are played frequently throughout the year and have great sales on records . . . Whether the professional musicians, or the younger musical enthusiasts would agree would make an interesting discussion.⁶⁸

This meeting minute acknowledges the likely divergence between the results of the plebiscite and the opinions of musical professionals. It reveals the rock and the hard place between which the BBC music planners were caught: a balance had to be negotiated between broadcasting music that people wanted to hear, while work was also done to educate the listener and ‘elevate’ musical taste. Policy documents suggest that the BBC still sought to increase the popularity of serious music programming, and the key to this was thought to be better educational material: ‘Under the impetus of social change, the whole question of presenting and explaining serious music to the uninitiated listener has been studied afresh and many new methods tried, some with notable success.’⁶⁹

During the war, Mass Observation pioneer Tom Harrison remarked on his perception of an increase in educational programmes that focussed on serious music and the relationship between the layman and the professional:

Very recently there has been a wave of explanatory programmes, which I first noticed on October 23, when there was “‘Play us something”, Practical Hints for Pianists in the Forces’, a discussion between soldier and expert on how to play a bit. Three days later, a new series ‘Adventures in Music Making’, produced by competent Malcolm Baker-Smith, also used the device of amateurs asking professionals. On the same day the first in another, and happily regular, Monday series (1.30 pm Home) dealt with ‘What sort of man was Chopin?’ Haydn last week; Liszt to-morrow. Equally suitable for the less informed listener was yet a third weekly series ‘The Orchestra Speaks’ . . . illustrating the part of each instrument in the orchestra. The idea is sound, and should develop.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ BBC WAC R27/245/1 File 1A Music General, Music Policy 1930–43, director of music 29 December 1943, music policy.

⁶⁹ BBC WAC R27/245/1 File 1A Music General, Music Policy 1930–43, Draft, from: A. D. M to: Director, Secretariat.

⁷⁰ Tom Harrison, ‘Radio’, *Observer* (1901–2003) London, 8 November 1942, 2.

Poet and intellectual Robert Graves, commenting on the educative bent of BBC programming, observed that programmes of this nature were eagerly received: ‘when “This Symphony Business”, a series in which a philistine grudgingly allowed himself to be enlightened by a serious musician, was broadcast in 1939, hundreds of people wrote to say that they postponed or interrupted their midday meal on Sunday to listen to it’.⁷¹

The BBC’s programmes to educate the listener were not unusual. Lecture recitals also took place on the live chamber-music stage, and took the form of talks with performed examples, usually followed by the performance of whole works.⁷² However, the BBC’s output of musically educational programmes benefitted from frequency, the identification of target audiences, and co-ordination; lecture recitals on the live performance stage (including at Wigmore Hall and the National Gallery) were sporadic and relied on the initiative of private individuals.

As peace-time listeners became wartime listeners, however, the question of how to broadcast music perceived as elite and intellectual was brought into even sharper focus. The wartime promotion of the democratic ideal in order to both position Britain in opposition to extreme politics as well as to promote the war-work ethic was difficult to reconcile with the promotion of elite culture. One particular *Punch* satirisation of 1941 suggests that the balance of BBC output in relation to the war was misguided, as the following cartoon illustrates.⁷³

⁷¹ Graves and Hodge, *The Long Weekend: A Social History of Great Britain*, 303.

⁷² Both the National Gallery and the Wigmore Hall hosted lecture recitals.

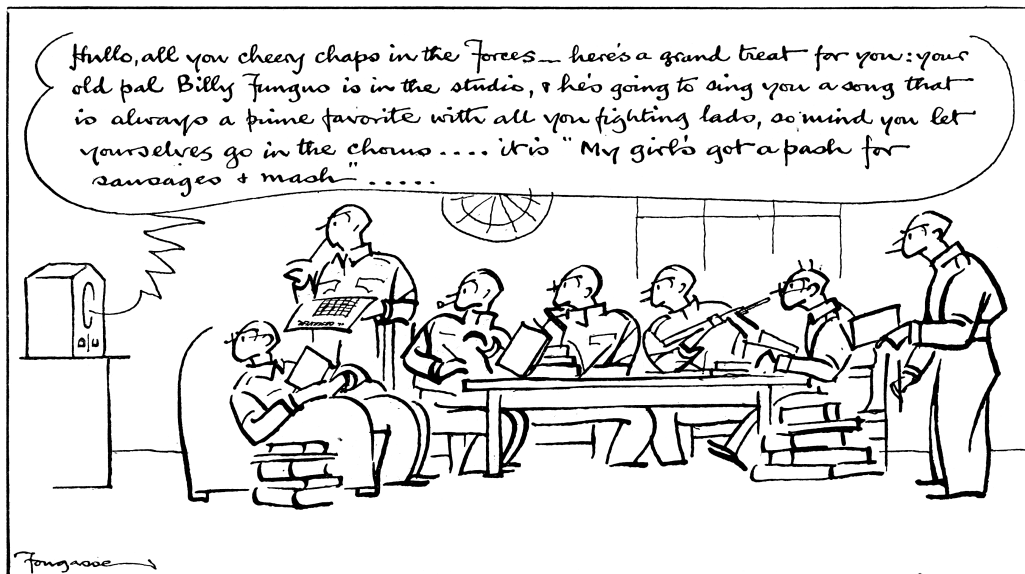
⁷³ ‘Another Changing Face of Britain: Reaction to BBC Programmes’, *Punch*, 5 February 1941, 131.

ANOTHER CHANGING FACE OF BRITAIN

REACTION TO B.B.C. PROGRAMMES



THEN



NOW

Figure 4: 'Another Changing Face of Britain'. The BBC is lampooned for two extremes of programming, one that was considered too 'highbrow' and the other too patronising. Reproduced with permission of *Punch* Limited.

The men at leisure in the 'THEN' picture are clearly cross and dissatisfied with the programme, which includes what is presumably chamber music performed by the 'Top Hat Ensemble'. The music and the performers are pointedly obscure and remote, the

work's title including code-like numbers and letters that would only be understood by those familiar with opus numbers and the tonal system. It is not a desirable accompaniment to their hours of leisure. In the 'NOW' picture, the same men are studying hard at books and charts in what is presumably serious war work and yet the broadcast of light, cheery music is also inappropriate to their new circumstances. The cartoon depicts the misjudgement of the BBC by suggesting several things. Not only does it suggest that the Forces Programme is inane and patronising, but by extension it hints at the idea that these same men have been intellectually 'elevated' by the educational programmes they were used to hearing, and that the light entertainment of the Forces programme is now inadequate.

Policy 1: the 1930s

From almost the very beginnings of the BBC, complaints were received about the incomprehensibility of chamber music. Humphrey Carpenter notes that in 1925 a member of the board of directors complained that there were 'too many uninteresting items, such as Elizabethan music, new fangled songs, weird quartettes and quintettes, groaning Chamber Music, quite unappreciated by the public, readings from unknown poets, etc.'⁷⁴ The matter frequently occurs in documentation from the 1930s and 1940s, suggesting that it continued to pose a particular problem. There was apparently no unified policy, and certainly no decision stood the test of time. Although chamber music was proclaimed by Herbert Howells to be aesthetically 'radiogenic' and a perfect genre for the broadcast medium, it was not radiogenic for programme planners who had to account for small audiences, and who regarded it as a useful filler for the less popular late-night time slots.⁷⁵ Policy-makers grappled with the problem for the entire decade (1934 to 1944) under consideration here.

One of the ways in which it was discussed was in – unfavourable – comparison with symphonic repertoire. In the appendix to music-policy revisions in 1942, for example, the following comments were made:

⁷⁴ Carpenter, *The Envy of the World*, 3–4.

⁷⁵ BBC WAC R27/409 Music General, Orchestral, Choral and Chamber Music Report by Herbert Howells, 1943, 57.

By virtue of its texture this is ideally suited to the medium of broadcasting. The BBC has pursued a consistent policy of performance both of the classics and of modern works, but it would be idle to pretend that the policy has been successful on a scale comparable with the tremendous advances in the public taste for symphonic music.⁷⁶

The BBC's ambition for its symphonic output was clear-cut, and directly linked to global ambitions, a desire to 'make its Symphony Orchestra the best in the world'.⁷⁷ But the goals and 'policies' for chamber music were much harder to establish, and advancing the 'public taste' in chamber music seemed an insurmountable challenge.

Another context in which chamber music was discussed was that of live concert programming. The BBC made a concerted effort to make concerts benefit broadcasts (and vice versa) throughout the 1930s and 1940s. In 1934 the public chamber concerts that were subsequently broadcast by the BBC seemed a sturdy scheme:

The present series of twelve concerts has, we submit, definitely placed the Public Chamber Concerts on a firm basis. Three reasons for continuing Public Chamber Concerts are:

1. They put a spot light on the BBC's notable propaganda for Chamber Music, the response to which can be seen by the increasing audience at the concerts and the evidence of a steadily growing interest among wireless listeners in Chamber Music.
2. In view of the reduction of the number of Queen's Hall Symphony Concerts, and therefore of the solo artists appearing in them, it gives the BBC a further chance of introducing the greatest artists in their proper setting, i.e. a public concert.
3. By being on fixed advance dates it is possible to obtain more 'star' artists and achieve a better balanced series.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ BBC WAC R27/245/1 File 1A Music General, Music Policy 1930–43, Appendix A, music policy, programme considerations, A.1 orchestral resources, BBC Music Policy suggested revisions, 18 March 1942, 7. Prog Cons continued, A.6, chamber music.

⁷⁷ BBC WAC R27/245/1 File 1A Music General, Music Policy 1930–43, Appendix A, music policy, programme considerations, A.1, orchestral resources, 6.

⁷⁸ BBC WAC R27/46/1 Music General, Chamber-Music Concerts 1932–36, File I, 29 March 1934, BBC internal circulating memo from: Mr Buesst to: director of entertainment, Public chamber-music concerts.

The following internal memo, moreover, reveals that the standard of live performances in London had been below par, so that the series had not only supplied a broadcasting need but filled a quality gap on the live performance stage:

In chamber music, on the other hand, until we started our series there were no absolutely top-notch public chamber concerts for students and others to attend in London, and this was the reason why the Public Chamber Concerts alone, I think, in all our series of public endeavours, had the unqualified approval of the Music Advisory Committee when it was first put before them.⁷⁹

However, subsequent sources indicate that this did not fulfill its aims either to serve the public or 'elevate' them. By June of the same year the series was unceremoniously scrapped, thanks to a lack of 'support' (presumably by audiences):

Arising out of the recommendations of the Programme Revision Committee it has been decided, with a view to having as few fixed points as possible in the programmes, to abolish the Public Chamber Concerts hitherto given in the Concert Hall.

This decision has also been influenced by the fact that these concerts have not been very well supported in the past and it is also felt that broadcasts of chamber music from studios are of greater artistic value than broadcasts of chamber music from public halls.

It was agreed that recitals, particularly those given by famous artists, should be continued, and, as many of them have publicity and box office value, it is suggested that they should on occasions be given before paying audiences in the Concert Hall. These should be arranged ad hoc and not as series.⁸⁰

Having deemed these public chamber-music concerts a failure, the BBC thus continued to allow star recitals to be recorded and broadcast in a public concert setting, but relegated other chamber music to the studio. Live performances of chamber music at which an audience could be in attendance were slipping off the agenda. Even recitals that did well at the box office seem to have been at the mercy of 'ad hoc' arrangements rather than a long running scheme.

The problems continued into 1935. Thus in the early months of that year the broadcasting and setting up of chamber concerts was discussed in internal memos and at

⁷⁹ BBC WAC R27/46/1 Music General, Chamber-Music Concerts 1932–6, File I, BBC internal circulating memo. From: Mr Buesst to: P. D. 'Public Chamber Concerts', 18 April 1934.

⁸⁰ BBC WAC R27/46/1 Music General, Chamber-Music Concerts 1932–6, File I, BBC internal circulating memo from: D. E. to: M. D. 'Chamber Music', 25 June 1934.

department meetings.⁸¹ Although it seems that the Public Chamber Concerts had been scheduled to return, the idea was scrapped in the autumn season of 1935 before they had even got started.⁸² It is likely, in light of the reasons given for cancelling the previous series, that the risk to the box office was considered too great, and that projected audience numbers did not merit holding the concerts in public. However, the BBC did not renounce its sense that chamber-music promotion was part of its job. Ten days later it formulated some semblance of an official stance on chamber music, perhaps in order to atone for the second cancellation of the public chamber-music concerts:

Some discussion has taken place with regard to the ‘popularity’ of chamber music. One has only to quote the Monday ‘Pops’ at the old St James Hall to show that chamber music can produce an equally popular audience as the ‘Proms’... It is especially the duty of the BBC to provide a first class chamber music series since none at present exists in London. We could not be accused of doing harm to any existing society, and undoubtedly, as was found to be the case with orchestral concerts, we should be bringing to-gether [sic] a chamber music audience which would pave the way for outside societies to be formed and a general stimulus to be given to the provision for chamber music concerts.⁸³

This statement, like that of 1934, continues to suggest that there is no ‘first class’ chamber-music series on London performance platforms. It seems that because it was acknowledged to be an elite genre, the standard of performance was expected to be equivalently excellent. By 1936, a lack of specific policy gave the assistant director of music cause for complaint:

I note that the draft for week 11 contains only one 65-minute Chamber Music Concert, and one 55 minute Recital. In the draft for Week 10 there was also only one Chamber Concert. I consider this indicates that in programme planning policy no serious account is being taken of Chamber Music and Recital programmes. I would be grateful, therefore if the question of their importance could be made the subject for discussion at to-day’s Panel Meeting.⁸⁴

⁸¹ BBC WAC R27/46/1 Music General, Chamber Music Concerts 1932–6, File I, BBC internal memos dated 12 March, 15 March, 18 March, and meeting minutes dated 25 March 1935.

⁸² BBC WAC R27/46/1 Music General, Chamber Music Concerts 1932–6, File I, BBC internal circulating memo from: Mr Wright to: Music Exec., 2 September 1935.

⁸³ BBC WAC R27/46/1 Music General, Chamber-Music Concerts 1932–6, File I, BBC internal circulating memo, from: Mr Herbage to: A. M. D., ‘Chamber-Music Concerts’, 12 September 1935.

⁸⁴ BBC WAC R27/46/1 Music General Chamber Music Concerts 1932–6, File I, Note to Mr Herbage, from: A. D. M., ‘Chamber Music and Recital Programmes’, 14 January 1936.

The desire to provide infrastructures for chamber-music broadcasting, in order to further expose the repertoire and ensembles to the public, seems to recur on a regular basis in the late 1930s. However, despite the regular protests at the shabby treatment of chamber music, it does not seem that a satisfactory solution was reached.

Policy 2: wartime

The BBC had pre-empted Chamberlain's speech on 3 September 1939 by two days. Wartime operations were in fact commenced at the BBC on 1 September, when broadcasting was reduced to a single programme broadcast on two wavelengths.⁸⁵ However, listeners were only limited to one programme for a few months: in February 1940 the Forces Programme began and was designed, initially, with the British Expeditionary Force in mind although the 'lighter' content was generally aimed at all those serving in a military capacity.⁸⁶ In addition, the Empire Service and Overseas Service were merged during the course of the war, and existed primarily for the purpose of broadcasting 'accurate' news reports. (Foreign language broadcasts were continued during the war, but not to the same extent as in the immediate pre-war years.)⁸⁷ The near apocalyptic shake-up of operations in September 1939, which has been well documented, earned the BBC much criticism. Its putatively banal musical output came under particular fire, intensified by the lack of an alternative programme. Adrian Boult, director of music at the BBC, described the situation with unconcealed contempt:

We gathered at the office. We hung about. We waited. No orders. All our friends were saying 'can't you at any rate play us a Beethoven Symphony between the News Bulletins?' But no! It transpired that Whitehall, some months earlier, had decided that only the lightest fare would be wanted by this frivolous nation while it was coping with evacuation and the early problems of war, so my friend Sandy Macpherson, the organist, who did a grand job, had a sixteen hour day. The Variety Department ran out of jokes, while the Symphony Orchestra went for long walks exploring the lovely country round Bristol.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Briggs *History of Broadcasting*, 85.

⁸⁶ Briggs, *The War of Words 1939–1945*, 118.

⁸⁷ Briggs, *History of Broadcasting*, 342.

⁸⁸ Boult, *My Own Trumpet*, 115.

At the end of October 1939 Boult attacked the emergency measures that had triggered the situation in a memo to the director general, expressing his anger that blame for the poor musical output had been laid at his door:

Phase IV began on Wednesday, 6th September 1939. I need not recall the homoeopathic [sic] doses of everything, except Variety, that were served out for nearly five weeks, until a general outcry caused a hasty reshuffle, ordered at such short notice that certain members of my Department had to work late into the night to effect the changes, delighted though they were to be making them. I simply wish to establish the apparent fact that this sudden change came about as a result of a mass of protests from everywhere, and not from any consideration for the views of Programme Directors who are supposed to be the Corporation's experts on these matters. I was not consulted, neither were my colleagues as far as I know, though Controller (P) courteously and promptly granted our request for a Meeting of the Programme Board soon afterwards. Many of the press attacks and practically all the private criticisms laid the blame by imputation, if not directly, either on the Music Department or on myself personally. My colleagues and I were unable to reply.

If I had had my own way I should have been conducting the Beethoven C minor Symphony on September 6th, and I think I should have been right. Actually Berlin broadcast the 7th of Beethoven and the Haffner of Mozart from a Furtwangler Concert on September 17th: before I had conducted a classical symphony.⁸⁹

This immediately highlights the new competitive dimension of music broadcasting in light of the international situation, because Boult places particular emphasis on the fact that Berlin had already made broadcasts of symphonic repertoire, while he had been allowed to do nothing. In saying that he thought he 'should have been right' to broadcast Beethoven on 6 September, Boult suggests that there were moral or aesthetic objections to such a scheme rather than logistical problems. However, with the evacuation of the main BBC departments and the changing use of the London buildings (which happened overnight), logistical considerations became of great importance to music broadcasts. A clerk of the engineering division at the BBC still stationed in London describes the chaos and disorganisation at Broadcasting House on 19 September 1940, just after the start of the big blitz:

The Concert Hall was a scene from Hogarth. A broadcast by two pretty accordionists and full band was in progress in the middle, in one corner the Cash

⁸⁹ BBC WAC R27/219 Music General. Music and Music Department 1931–43, BBC internal circulating memo, from: director of music to: director general, 'Decentralisation', 25 October 1939.

Department had established itself and next to it was a girl on a mattress, fast asleep. Part of the Features and Drama has appropriated another corner – they are going to Bangor, North Wales, I am told. Mountains of mattresses. All the tiers that had formerly held seats were flooded with girls in overcoats waiting to be evacuated. Messengers were eating apples, the Despatch Manager was looking gloomy as, with arms folded, he leaned against the east wall surveying it all, and in all that howling chaos two earnest women were beseeching silence for the broadcast. It looked like a ship-wreck.⁹⁰

In addition to the logistical problems of broadcasting and recording good quality performances, chamber music and recitalists with accompanists faced other practical challenges. Under the BBC's strict auditioning and monitoring policy (known as 'Special Listening'), if a single member of a chamber group altered then the entire group had to re-audition, unless the replacement artist in question was extremely well known.⁹¹ This proved to be a particular barrier in wartime, as the BBC suspended all auditioning for extended periods. In what seems to have been an attempt at sharing employment opportunities around, the broadcaster would not allow chamber performances from their own orchestral players:

[1] that there need not be any restriction in the frequent use of the front rank Chamber Music Ensembles.

[2] in view of the restricted opportunity for Chamber Music Ensembles, we should not contemplate engaging any ensembles whose membership consists of players recruited for the permanent B.B.C. Orchestras, neither can we contemplate re-opening our audition lists.⁹²

The only chamber-music groups that could broadcast, then, had to be considered 'front-rank' ensembles whose members were *not* already employed by the BBC; with the cessation of auditioning, they also had to be previously tried and tested by the broadcaster. Thus only a small selection of established groups and recitalists could be used for live broadcast. The use of the words 'front rank' highlights again the desire that chamber music should be performed professionally to the highest standards possible. While the live performance and recording of large-scale music-making, both 'light' and

⁹⁰ Beardmore, *Civilians at War*, 90.

⁹¹ BBC WAC R27/221/3 Music General, Music Department Meetings (Weekly): Minutes 1939–41, music department, 'Special Meeting, Confidential'.

⁹² *Ibid.*

‘serious’ were in plentiful supply by the BBC ensembles, chamber-music combinations had to come from a very limited pool of players.⁹³

Nevertheless, the mismanagement of music policy on the outbreak of war did prompt a rethink about the effect of war conditions on music policy, and provided the opportunity to revisit the question of small-scale music-making. The following points were outlined in relation to chamber music and recitals (note the need for broad democratic appeal):

The absence of an alternative programme has made it necessary for every concert to appeal to an infinitely wider audience.

1. Two periods per week will be devoted to the main chamber music (i.e. for ensembles of 3 or more) repertoire. As a rule, the concerts will consist of a single main work, and requests for periods appreciably exceeding half an hour will be made in the schedule, in order that a comprehensive repertoire can be presented.
2. One to two periods a week will be sonata recitals.
3. One to two periods a week will be recitals by ‘star’ artists, instrumental and vocal, the programmes on the whole being of a fairly miscellaneous nature.⁹⁴

The two periods a week designated to ‘a single main work’ seem to have taken the form of a traditional Monday ‘Pops’ concert, as was regularly seen on the live London performance platforms such as Wigmore Hall. Specific provision was also made for recitals, and the introduction of quotas would seem to convey a wish that small-scale music-making should not be forced out by symphonic repertoire.

However, these quotas seem to have taken little account of where scheduling should occur, and this was another area of struggle:

6. Recital Periods.

Mr. Isaacs raised the question of placing Recitals at a better listening time than from 10pm onwards. He pleaded for at least one period a week during the peak listening time. M.O. explained the difficulties that had been emphasised by Programme Planning, but indicated the sort of further approach that would and could be made. A lively discussion on Music allocations of programme space ensued.⁹⁵

⁹³ It must also be remembered that the BBC often broadcast commercially available gramophone recordings as well as live performances and ‘in-house’ recordings.

⁹⁴ BBC WAC R27/245/1 File 1A Music General, Music Policy 1930–43, music policy, ‘Private and Confidential’, 14 November 1939.

⁹⁵ BBC WAC R27/221/3 Music General, Music Department Meetings (Weekly): Minutes 1939–41, minutes, 13 February 1940.

Even the official report from the independent research organisation, Political and Economic Planning (PEP), acknowledged that while the finest music was available, it was not broadcast in slots that would attract optimum audiences:

Broadcasting brought recital and chamber music within the reach of every home . . . By the outbreak of war in 1939 some of the finest chamber music in the country was being broadcast. Such concerts were rarely given in the Home Service at the best listening times, mainly because they proved to be unpopular.⁹⁶

It seems that a vicious circle trapped the genre. Were chamber-music broadcasts unpopular because they were on the margins of the schedules, or were chamber-music broadcasts on the margins of the schedules because they were unpopular? The proposals outlined below suggest that the trap was recognised and addressed to some extent. The following were agreed as ‘fixed points’ in the programme planning in March 1944.

1. A monthly Sunday afternoon concert from 2.0/3.0pm . . .
2. A monthly Friday evening concert from 9.35/10.45pm . . .
3. A weekly Friday afternoon concert from 3.30/4.10pm . . .

Could the above please be planned on a series basis. The Friday evening concerts in particular should be as popularly attractive as possible as 70 minutes is a long period to allot to an evening Chamber Music recital and can only be justified provided the programmes are of the maximum attraction.⁹⁷

It had taken until 1944 to arrive at this agreement. In 1934, when our investigations began, the Public Chamber Concerts had been abandoned in order to minimise ‘fixed points’. Therefore, it had taken a decade to re-establish the performance of chamber music in regular BBC scheduling. The following sources demonstrate that the city’s live performance scene did not penetrate the BBC in any practical way. One postscript, received by the BBC on a letter in 1946 from Sir Bruce Richmond, suggests that the position of chamber music had not just remained static but had in fact deteriorated.

Two or three of the newspapers that I’ve seen and several persona also have said that, owing to the National Gallery concerts, an entirely new public for Chamber Music has arisen.

Does the BBC realise this?

⁹⁶ Dartington Hall Trustees *The Arts Enquiry: Music*, 88.

⁹⁷ BBC WAC R27/46/2 Music General, Chamber-Music Concerts 1937–47, File II, assistant director of music (progs), M. H. S., ‘Music Schedule: Chamber Music Concerts’, 22 March 1944.

For the last few years the weekly number of string quartets and such like had steadily decreased - and the recent slight increase takes place mainly between 11.25 and midnight, when I am not at my most receptive – nor is anyone who does a day’s work – and the great new public at the N.G. consists largely of workers.⁹⁸

In response, Adrian Boult informed Arthur Bliss (the new director of music) that he was doubtful that anything could be done, despite agreeing with the notion that the National Gallery had indeed provided a stimulus for the genre:

There is no doubt that both String Quartet and other forms of Chamber Music have been enormously stimulated by the National Gallery, but I suppose it will be a bit of a job to convince the Planners.⁹⁹

It is worth noting that it was not just individuals who pressed the cause. Pleas to recognise the renewed vigour of the genre were also addressed to the BBC from the National Federation of Music Societies, as this example reveals:

Dear Sir Adrian,

Chamber Music Clubs.

When I meet you on Monday next, I want to discuss the following problem. The Federation administers a scheme of financial guarantees sponsored by CEMA. The guarantee covers the whole period of a club’s Annual Accounts up to a maximum payment of £50.

The scheme was suggested to CEMA by my Executive in the year 1940, as we felt it was far better for CEMA to assist to keep Chamber Music Clubs functioning during the war than to give Chamber Music concerts in churches, and in that way undermine the fee position of our best artists and undersell the concerts to the public.

This scheme was agreed and the conditions we suggested were approved. The statistics show that whereas in the season 1940/41 only 10 clubs were in the scheme, there has been a remarkable new interest taken in chamber music. Our statistics for the season 1943/44 show that nearly 40 clubs applied for the guarantee, the financial estimates disclosing an expenditure of over £5,000 and an estimated deficit of £840, which is covered by the guarantees.

⁹⁸ BBC WAC R27/46/2 Music General, Chamber-Music Concerts 1937–47, File II, post script to letter from Sir Bruce Richmond, BBC internal memo – Plymouth, ‘Chamber Music’, 12 April 1946.

⁹⁹ BBC WAC R27/46/2 Music General, Chamber-Music Concerts 1937–47, File II, BBC internal memo – Plymouth, ‘Chamber Music’, from: Sir Adrian Boult to: D. M., 12 April 1946.

Now, our problem is what can be done to nourish this movement by those that have the power to help? In normal years we should convene an Annual Conference in London.¹⁰⁰

The federation suggested that the revival in chamber-music performance was not just limited to the audiences at the National Gallery, but that the effects of the revival had rippled out into the wider community. It was suggested that live performances of the genre were thriving in the provinces as well as in London. The letter also claimed that a quadrupling of applications for guarantees had occurred within the war years and hints that the BBC should be quick to catch on to this enthusiasm. However, while policy at the BBC followed some of the patterns that could be seen developing on the live performance stage, such as the pursuit of democratic ideals and a desire to further professionalise musical performance, it seems to have struggled to fit chamber-music broadcasts satisfactorily into both schedules and policy.

Live chamber-music performance in London and the democratic stage

The idea that chamber music is a genre exclusively for a social elite can nevertheless be traced at least as far back as the nineteenth century. Private subscription concerts that ran as exclusive members' clubs were common. As Bashford describes in reference to the Musical Union there was certainly no 'access for *hoi polloi*: the Musical Union's system of recruitment guaranteed an essentially private circle, as a grand announcement of the society in the *Morning Post* in January 1845 made evident'.¹⁰¹ For many years, then, chamber-music performances incorporated structures similar to a private members' club, or the domestic 'salon', the traditional preserve of the titled and wealthy. While private subscription concerts were certainly not the norm by the Second World War period, as we have already seen above, chamber-music performances still seemed to possess qualities of exclusivity for the uninitiated.

¹⁰⁰ BBC WAC R27/46/2 Music General, Chamber-Music Concerts 1937–47, File II, letter from the National Federation of Music Societies, 4 May 1944.

¹⁰¹ Bashford, *The Pursuit of High Culture*, 117.

Chamber-music performances were often advertised with images pertaining to luxury and glamour. Musicians often had their portrait photo depicted in lavish settings, with copious drapes of furs and pearls for the women and dinner jackets for the men. The interiors of most London concert venues were designed and decorated to resemble the furnishings of stately homes. The use of classical columns, velvet furnishings, intricate stucco work, gold-painted edgings and chandeliers indicated sumptuousness and excess. For example, these qualities can be observed in the cupola at Wigmore Hall.¹⁰² The following picture serves to illustrate the luxurious elite event that chamber-music performance embodied.¹⁰³

¹⁰² The architects Collcutt and Hamp of Great Missenden are descended from Wigmore Hall's architect, T. E. Collcutt, and an archive is still in existence. While it is beyond the scope of this present thesis, there is undoubtedly much to learn about the design of the building and Collcutt's vision for its musical function.

¹⁰³ I do not wish to suggest that the 'democratising' processes that are about to be explored here were indicative of a permanent change of status for live chamber-music performance. While it is not within the parameters of this thesis to discuss the post-war situation, I suspect that post-war chamber-music performances retained (or regained) their aura of intellectual density and social eliteness. For example, in 1949, the Dartington Hall report noted that 'programmes labelled as "chamber music" are still widely regarded as "highbrow" and forbidding'. Dartington Hall Trustees *The Arts Enquiry, Music*, 91. See also Hayes, 'More than "Music-While-You-Eat"?', 233.



Figure 5: The Grande Chamber Orchestra in rehearsal at Wigmore Hall in 1938. The interior is intimate, but lavish. Reproduced with permission of the Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive.

Ehrlich points out that the orchestral concert embodied more ‘accessible’ qualities than small-scale performances (describing them as ‘democratic’), and remained cheaper to attend than the opera, which he describes as ‘socially exclusive through dress and ticket prices’.¹⁰⁴ Despite perceptions of exclusivity, there was a wartime move towards the opening-up of chamber-music performances to a larger section of the public. New facilitating structures included the underwriting of free or cheap concerts by charitable or government subsidy.

However, this is not to suggest that until the outbreak of war, concerts were always prohibitively expensive or inaccessible. Most high-art music performances of orchestral or chamber music in London had some tickets that could be purchased less expensively as a standard feature of concert pricing. These included the Henry Wood Promenade concerts (cheapest seat 3 shillings, promenade for 2 shillings), Wigmore

¹⁰⁴ Ehrlich, ‘The Market Place’, 41.

Hall concerts (cheapest price 2 shillings, 6d), Queen's Hall orchestral concerts (cheapest prices between 2 and 3 shillings), music festivals (cheapest prices between 3 and 5 shillings) and the South Place concerts (cheapest prices varied between free admission and 1 shilling) amongst others. Therefore, access to high-art music performances was not necessarily prohibitively expensive, although the less expensive tickets were limited in number.¹⁰⁵

Concerts were also put on outside established channels (and in unusual spaces). New functions of such chamber-music concerts included charitable, morale-boosting and propaganda purposes. The time of war provided opportunities to develop democratic and socially directed structures in line with other aspects of wartime life such as rationing, conscription, and working to a common goal. Chamber-music performances could therefore benefit from the constraints of wartime, whereas they had suffered from the purely commercial, market-place driven goals of peacetime.

A number of pre-war examples of chamber performances can illustrate the patterns that existed before the war. The South Place concerts perhaps exemplified the structures necessary in order that a coherent series of chamber music concerts could have a stable presence. Those wishing to pursue a project of staging a series of chamber-music concerts, as opposed to 'one-offs' often seen at Wigmore Hall, for example, had to form clubs or societies that would take subscriptions in order to finance the series in advance. This system made each subscriber into a fairly significant 'patron', rather than the average concert-goer who simply purchases a single ticket. Despite the 'club'-style financing, the South Place concerts did try to remain a public affair, as their inclusion of the word 'popular' into the title suggests. As the historian of the South Place Concerts put it: 'the concerts were called the South Place Sunday Popular Concerts, but why the word "Popular" was introduced into the title must have been a cause of bewilderment to many'.¹⁰⁶

The inclusion of the word in the title of this concert series is in line with the 'democratic' rhetoric of the time, which the South Place concerts had been promoting

¹⁰⁵ For more information on average wages and cost of living at this time, see Peter Howlett (text only) *Fighting with Figures: A Statistical Digest of the Second World War*. (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office), 1995. Especially see Chapter 12, 'Wages and Prices' 233–9. For example, in July 1940 a (male) worker in the manufacturing sector could expect to earn between 70 and 100 shillings a week. A female worker in equivalent industries could expect a wage of between 35 and about 43 shillings a week (237). Table 12.5.

¹⁰⁶ Hawkins, *Hundred Years of Chamber Music*, 14.

since the late nineteenth century. We see the word used in a similar manner at Wigmore Hall when referring to a short concert of standard repertoire (Monday Pops for instance). We also see it when referring to cheaper than average concert prices ('Popular prices'). In this case, it seems to refer to the free admission and the voluntary subscription system, as opposed to the usual system of subscriptions which amounted to up-front payment for all the concerts.

The concerts at South Place are particularly notable for their longevity. The first took place in 1887 at South Place Institute but events later moved to Conway Hall. These particular concerts were unusual in their administrative set-up in that they were initially free to attend, with a silver collection taken at the performance providing funds.¹⁰⁷ By the mid-1930s it had nevertheless become necessary for a subscription system to be implemented if the concerts were to survive.¹⁰⁸ However, the subscription system was not *exclusive*: it acted as an extra financial support mechanism, not as a system to encourage exclusivity, and one could attend even if one did not subscribe.

The South Place concerts did not continue during the Second World War, (although they did in the Great War). An attempt was made to get a season going in the spring of 1940, but this seems to have been a failure as no more were attempted until 1945.¹⁰⁹ The concerts often hosted the most prestigious artists of the day, including the Griller String Quartet, Myra Hess, Dennis Brain and Harry Blech, among others. The concerts would have been well known to regular London concert audiences and performers of the 1930s and their cessation on the outbreak of war would have left a significant gap in London chamber-music activity, made all the more significant because of their hitherto unbroken presence for over half a century. (Post-war the concerts were financially supported by the Arts Council and still continue today, marketed as 'affordable classical music for all'.)¹¹⁰

While the intimate atmosphere of chamber-music clubs can be seen to be suited to the intimacy of small-scale music-making, the limited accessibility and 'club' atmosphere did not further the genre's commercial reach. A second pre-war example, the Society for Women Musicians (SWM) is a good illustration of a group that made

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 32.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 32.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 37.

¹¹⁰ <http://www.conwayhall.org.uk/sunday-concerts-2>, accessed 1 April 2013.

attempts to promote the performance of chamber music, although most of their activities remained within private spaces before the war. The Society, which ran by subscription, maintained a special chamber-music coaching division for members and also collected and maintained a chamber-music library that they were keen should be freely accessible to the public. This library of scores was impressively up to date. In the 1939 to 1940 season, it made purchases of new works by Ireland, Maconchy, Vaughan Williams, Walton, Bax, Bliss and Wood.¹¹¹

Most significantly for this study, it was during the war that the SWM began a programme of chamber-music concert performances. In the 1940 to 1941 season, it launched subscription concerts in which members performed and the audience was made up of members and guests exclusively. These were described in the annual report as ‘tolerably well supported’ when held at the society’s headquarters in Grosvenor Street.¹¹² In line with broader trends discussed above, while the performance activities increased, the private coaching activities for chamber music in the SWM closed down for the duration of the war.

Yet more significantly, in addition to the private concerts in Grosvenor Street, there were remarkable new opportunities for SWM performances, openings that had evidently not been available in peace-time.

We think the Society may fairly congratulate itself on the fact that in the second year of war and in spite of many difficulties, it has actually increased its activities, and has also attracted many new members. In addition to the usual fixtures, several series of concerts for men of H.M. Forces have been arranged at Croydon, Wimbledon and Kingston, and members have also taken part in concerts in the Eastern Command – fees being paid by the Society.¹¹³

Such performances for troops contributed to an increase in public-performance activities enjoyed by the SWM. Programmes were usually constructed with sonatas, string ensembles, piano solos and song recitals. Success continued well into the war as the report for 1943 testifies:

¹¹¹ Royal College of Music, Society of Women Musicians, Box 1. Twenty-Eighth Annual Report. Works purchased. Ireland – *Sonata for Cello and Piano*, Maconchy – *Third String Quartet* Op. 15, Vaughan Williams –, *On Wenlock Edge*; Walton *Piano Quartet*, Bax – *String Quartet in G Major*, Bliss – *Quintet for Oboe and Strings*, Wood – *String Quartet in D Major*.

¹¹² Royal College of Music, Society of Women Musicians, Box 1. Twenty-Ninth Annual Report 1940–1, 2.

¹¹³ Royal College of Music, Society of Women Musicians, Box 1. Thirtieth Annual Report 1940–1, 2.

Mention must be made of the important work done by the Society in providing good music for men and women of H.M. Forces, ARP workers and others, which has been carried on since February, 1941. In the period from September, 1941, to July of the present year, no fewer than seventy-five concerts have been arranged at Croydon, Westcliff and other centres, at which 150 of our members took part.¹¹⁴

In total 106 concerts for troops had taken place by this point, providing 256 engagements for members of the Society.¹¹⁵

Thus the Society for Women Musicians seems to present a startling phenomenon. The war, while closing down some activities, such as the private coaching for members, opened up new opportunities for the performance of chamber music. Neither was it the case that these women musicians were simply filling gaps in performance life vacated by men on military service, as the SWM activities (their own subscription series and concerts for the troops) were entirely new wartime ventures. The success suggests that the war actually provided better opportunities for small-scale music-making than commercial platforms had hitherto. In fact, traditional conduits for chamber music, such as local chamber-music clubs, also benefitted from wartime support, and clubs nationwide saw an increase in the fees they paid to artists which ‘rose from £800 in 1941 to £7,500 in 1944’.¹¹⁶ This huge increase in fee payments between 1941 and 1944 is indicative of a high demand. The war provided ready-made audiences in the form of war-workers or military personnel who were in need of entertainment in small spaces.

The fact that new performance spaces also meant new audiences might be seen as an agreeable by-product of the circumstances. *The Royal College of Music Magazine* made the following observation: ‘A new public is definitely being created for this branch of music among people who had previously regarded Chamber Music merely as a name or something which should be left severely alone.’¹¹⁷ This comment demonstrates the wartime perception that chamber-music performances had been until

¹¹⁴ Royal College of Music, Society of Women Musicians, Box 1. Thirty-First Annual Report 1940–1, 2.

¹¹⁵ Royal College of Music, Society of Women Musicians, Box 1. Thirty First Annual Report 1940–1, 2.

¹¹⁶ Rollo Myers, *Music Since 1939* (London: Longmans, Green and Co. and the British Council, 1947), 11.

¹¹⁷ ‘Music in the RAF’, *Royal College of Music Magazine*, volumes 37–38 (1941–2), Volume 38, No. 2, 48–53.

then an obscure phenomenon. The ‘new public’ was plainly a product of new opportunities and new access.

The Royal Exchange City Lunch-Time concerts further indicate the success of performance spaces other than the traditional concert hall:

Under less suitable conditions [than the National Gallery], but also serving to bring in new audiences for music, a similar series of lunch-time concerts was given at the Royal Exchange (1942–3) in the City of London. In all about 200 concerts were given.¹¹⁸

This chamber-music concert series appeared (and disappeared) during the war years, but though short lived, the concerts were plentiful while they lasted. Many popular and well-known artists were engaged to perform, including Myra Hess, The Blech String Quartet, Julius Isserlis and Howard Ferguson.¹¹⁹ Hilda Bor, an active pianist in London at this time, was credited with the role of Hon. Organiser, and the concerts seem to have run under a similar model to those at the National Gallery. They made provision for city workers (rather than Central, West End and Whitehall workers, who were served by the National Gallery) to enjoy similar concerts at lunch-time, and were run for charity, namely the Duke of Gloucester’s Red Cross and St John Fund.¹²⁰

As well as receiving donations from the proceeds of chamber-music performances, charitable bodies were also to be found actively providing funds for performances to take place:

A grant from the London Parochial Charities Trustees and the enthusiastic co-operation of certain London musicians have enabled Toynbee Hall to arrange experimentally a series of attractive concerts in the London boroughs. The concerts, which will be of the chamber music type, are intended to measure the demand for music of the highest quality in the populous parts of London. The charge for admission will in no case be more than 6d. A series of five has been arranged in a number of settlements, community centres, and libraries.¹²¹

We may confidently claim, then, that the challenge to traditional concert hall spaces for chamber music allowed performances to become more accessible.

¹¹⁸ Dartington Hall Trustees *The Arts Enquiry: Music*, 89.

¹¹⁹ British Library. Henschel. Box 27, 1940–5 Royal Exchange City Lunch-Time Concerts.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ ‘Chamber Music for London Boroughs’, *Observer*, 25 February 1940, 7.

Other groups focussed on performances that made charitable provision for performers, rather than audiences. The Christian Council for Refugees from Germany and Central Europe, based in Bloomsbury, organised 'Tea Time Concerts' at Queen Mary Hall, YWCA, with Vaughan Williams listed among the patrons. Programme pamphlets printed for the concerts included the following statement of aims and objectives.

The object of these concerts is (1) to give the public the opportunity of hearing some of the eminent musicians, whom we are fortunate enough to have as guests in this country; and (2) to benefit the Christian Council for Refugees and the Musicians' Benevolent Fund, thus enabling the artists who are giving their services to help those who are exiles from their own countries, and to make some contribution towards the relief of their fellow musicians in England.¹²²

Tea and refreshments were provided at these concerts, which lasted from 5.15 pm to approximately 6.15 pm, presumably in an attempt to draw in workers at the end of the day. The concerts took place once a week, and tickets were bookable in advance.¹²³

Many artists closely associated with the Anglo-Austrian Music Society performed at the Bloomsbury concerts, including Engel Lund, Ferdinand Rauter, Arnold Rosé, Max Rostal and Sela Trau. The repertoire performed was primarily that of the Austro-German canon including Schubert, Beethoven and Haydn apart from folk-song programmes.¹²⁴ Unlike chamber-music concerts that were set up to provide music for audiences, these concerts were intended to provide funds and performances for musicians themselves, in particular refugee musicians, as well as to raise funds for musicians' and refugee charities.

Despite being advertised in the press, the Royal College Emergency Concerts that took place in the Parry Theatre at the Royal College seem to have been private affairs, rather than public ones.¹²⁵ Indeed, they were described in advertising literature as being 'private' concerts; single tickets could not be bought and admission was by full subscription only, which was expensive at one guinea. One of the aims of the concerts

¹²² Red House, the Britten-Pears Foundation, Aldeburgh. HO/2/6 Imogen Holst Scrapbook, Volume IX.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ This particular folk-song programme, 'Folk Song from Many Lands', was performed not only in Bloomsbury, but also at the Wigmore Hall and the National Gallery.

¹²⁵ 'The Royal College of Music Emergency Concerts', *The Times*, Wednesday 11 October 1939, 6.

was cited as ‘keeping the leading British chamber music formations in being during the war emergency period’.¹²⁶ The emphasis seems then to have been the patronisation of selected ensembles rather than the provision of music to a general public.¹²⁷ The use of the Royal College of Music as a venue further emphasised the wish to preserve the established leading ensembles, in an established high-art venue.

The Parry Theatre proved an ideal place for them, and the intimate charm of chamber music heard under such conditions was like a giving-back of something gracious which has been lost from public concert halls.¹²⁸

However, the ‘giving back’ was not really very public at all, as one had to be a subscription member, and the concerts took place within the college; this was not a public space in the conventional and commercial sense, and certainly not by the standards of the new chamber-music series which I have described here as starting up around London in unusual places. The experiment was not repeated and after this initial run of six concerts no more took place.

My final example is Morley College, an Adult Education College which continued to be active to some degree despite suffering direct bombing which rendered their building unusable. Musical activities at Morley College at this time were notable for the ‘niche’ performances of early music. The college ran multiple small chamber ensembles and the Morley College Choir regularly performed during the war.¹²⁹ The college was used to an active and highly regarded music department which had previously run under Holst, and during the war was headed by Michael Tippett. It had managed to keep functioning during the first relatively peaceful year of war, but with the onset of the blitz in September 1940 it closed down all evening sessions. This was particularly devastating considering that the timetable revolved around the provision of

¹²⁶ ‘Royal College of Music Emergency Concerts Society. Assisted by the Patron’s Fund’, Royal College of Music Magazine, volumes 35–6 (1939–,40), Volume 36, No. 1, 26. However, this purpose was soon to be redundant, as two of the quartets used in the six concerts, the Griller and Grinke ensembles were absorbed by the RAF orchestra and were used extensively for both chamber music and orchestral playing throughout the war.

¹²⁷ ‘Royal College of Music Emergency Concerts Society. Assisted by the Patron’s Fund’, Royal College of Music Magazine, volumes 35–6 (1939–,40), Volume 36, No. 1, 26.

¹²⁸ ‘Royal College of Music Emergency Concerts Society. Assisted by the Patron’s Fund’, Royal College of Music Magazine, volumes 35–,6 (1939–,40), Volume 36, No. 1, 26.

¹²⁹ The choir’s particular focus on early music leads me to count it under the heading of chamber music as outlined in the Dartington Hall report of the introduction. (See page 86.)

evening classes.¹³⁰ In October 1940 the college suffered a direct hit, which killed fifty-seven people, and wiped out not only much-needed facilities but also all records and archives to date.¹³¹ Tippett nevertheless focussed on producing performances of early music, including Monteverdi, Dowland, Purcell, Telemann and Gibbons with recorders and notably a counter-tenor voice, seemingly more so than anywhere else.¹³² It seems that Tippett managed to keep Morley College on the performing map of London, but only just: concerts were infrequent. In the later years of war, the Morley College choir toured the London venues widely and regularly, including Wigmore Hall and the National Gallery, often with chamber music instrumentalists playing early music.

It must be noted that these concerts described above were not only unusual within the sphere of Morley College but within the entire London music scene. While Morley College did not provide music consistently or regularly through the war, it can be noted for the performance of early music with chamber ensembles, and for bringing a choir to the chamber-music environments of both Wigmore Hall and the National Gallery.¹³³

Private democracy: the case of the Committee for the Promotion of New Music

Alongside the expansion of the London chamber-music scene, there were some significant new chamber-music performances taking place on private platforms. The Committee for the Promotion of New Music (henceforth CPNM) is one example. Inaugurated in 1943 following the heavy blitz period of the first years of war, it operated private concerts devoted to the performance and constructive criticism of new music composed in Britain. These concerts were for invited audiences only. One did not

¹³⁰ Richards, *Offspring of the Vic*, 252.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 252.

¹³² It was unusual for the counter-tenor voice to be used in period performances (or any secular performances) at this time. *Ibid.*, 258–9.

¹³³ The only other choir to perform frequently on chamber-music platforms during the war was the Fleet Street Choir.

have to be British to submit works to the reading committee, but one had to live and work in Great Britain.¹³⁴

The adaptability of chamber-music ensembles, the limitless configurations and, no doubt, the cheapness of employing only a few players as opposed to rehearsing with a full symphony orchestra meant that the vast majority of works heard by CPNM during the war were chamber works. The committee itself comprised many active musical personages of the time, including, but not limited to, William Alwyn, Benjamin Britten, Lennox Berkeley, Howard Ferguson, John Ireland, Sidney Harrison, Walter Goehr, Constant Lambert, Mátyás Seiber, Michael Tippett and William Walton.¹³⁵ Therefore, the creation and functioning of the CPNM was internal to the musical establishment and run *for* the musical establishment. Despite being one of only two new music series for chamber music existing in London at this time, CPNM did not attempt to produce public concerts.¹³⁶ The private nature of the performances allowed for managed performance experiments in which new chamber music would receive a hearing by an audience of ‘insiders’. While the chamber-music performances described hitherto all benefitted from a more democratic performance structure, the CPNM concerts utilised privacy and musical elitism in order to impose a managed performance environment for new works.

Upon inauguration, the Committee put into action a series of Studio Recitals in early 1943. Between two and four works were performed at each event, which usually took place in the early evening, around 6 pm. Studio recitals ran every two weeks of the London season, but CPNM had no fixed venue and therefore recitals moved between the Trinity and Guildhall schools of music, as well as the M. M. Club and Fyvie Hall both in the W1 area of London.¹³⁷

While many of the works and their composers that CPNM took on have been lost to the repertoire today, notable examples have not. During the war years, William

¹³⁴ Sound and Music, Somerset House. CPNM, Box 170, 2 of 2, File: Orchestral Rehearsal 1943–4 Season. General Committee papers. The CPNM was founded by Francis Chagrin and Mátyás Seiber, both of whom were emigrés, which perhaps accounts for the lack of restriction on nationality.

¹³⁵ Sound and Music, Somerset House. CPNM, Box 170, 2 of 2 File: Studio Recital 1942–,3. General Committee papers.

¹³⁶ The only other *regular* series was the Boosey and Hawkes series, which took place at Wigmore Hall and is explored in detail in Chapter 3.

¹³⁷ Sound and Music, Somerset House. CPNM, Box 170, 2 of 2, File: Studio Recital 1942–,3. General Committee papers.

Alwyn, Malcolm Arnold, Mátyás Seiber, Elizabeth Maconchy, Alan Bush, Alan Rawsthorne, Arnold van Wyk, Peter Gellhorn, Hans Gál, Egon Wellesz, Priaulx Rainier and Elisabeth Lutyens all had works performed at CPNM evenings.¹³⁸ Works were sent to a reading committee before being approved or rejected for use in a ‘Studio Recital’. The committee then published lists of recommended works based on the feedback outcomes of these recitals, and these lists were made available in music shops and to publishers. By 3 July 1945 (the final recital of the 1944-45 season), CPNM had staged and received feedback from 52 ‘Studio Recitals’.¹³⁹

Because attendance at these events was by invitation only, the audience was made up of music-industry professionals including critics, agents, publishers, performers, BBC employees, conductors and composers. Each would be provided with a feedback form listing the new works to be performed that evening and asking questions of the listener regarding each work. The recitals were always followed by constructive criticism and discussion chaired by either a member of the committee or a distinguished invited guest.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, CPNM Studio Recitals were raising the profile of new music activity in London *within the industry* and providing a platform for niche new music by removing the risk of the box office and facilitating a support network for young composers. However, by holding these activities in private, it is likely that CPNM Studio Recitals had very little impact on the general or musical public at the time, apart from on those working in the industry itself.

¹³⁸Ibid. The following examples for each composer are not exhaustive. There is no complete programme collection for the studio recitals that this author can discover, most likely because these were invitation-only affairs. William Alwyn, *Sonata for Flute Solo* 30 April 1943, Studio Recital 1942–3; Malcolm Arnold, *Quintet for Wind Instruments* 7 June 1943, Studio Recital 1942–3; Mátyás Seiber *Phantasy* (1941), 5 July 1943, Studio Recital 1943–4; Elizabeth Maconchy, *Serenade for Cello and Piano*, 16 August 1943, *The Ribbon in her Hair*, 6 December 1943, Studio Recital 1943–4; Alan Bush, *Toulon. Britain’s Part*, 6 December 1943, Studio Recital 1943–4; Alan Rawsthorne, *Four Bagatelles* 18 January 1944; Studio Recital 1943–4; Hans Gál, *Trio for Oboe, Violin and Viola in Four Movements*, 20 June 1944; Studio Recital 1944–5; Egon Wellesz, *Suite for Cello Solo*, 22 May 1945, Studio Recital 1944–5; Priaulx Rainier, *Song Cycle for Soprano*, 18 July 1944, Studio Recital 1944–5; Elisabeth Lutyens, *Sonata for Solo Viola*, 13 February 1945.

¹³⁹ Sound and Music, Somerset House. CPNM, Box 170, 2 of 2 File: Studio Recital 1944–5 season. Final Recital.

¹⁴⁰ Sound and Music, Somerset House. CPNM, Box 170, 2 of 2 File: Studio Recital 1944–5. Studio recital programmes.

CPNM was, however, at pains to point out that ‘The Committee is **not** a concert giving organization and is in no way in competition with organizers of contemporary music concerts.’¹⁴¹ The main aims were as follows:

- (a) To get in touch with all composers, not yet recognized or unjustly neglected, who are living at present in this country; try their work out before a private audience and attempt to bring the best works before a wider audience.
- (b) To get in touch with all concert giving organizations, conductors and performers, and attempt to influence through them the content of all concert programmes, with a view to achieving the inclusion of one contemporary work in all programmes.¹⁴²

Other aims focussed on making new music available at a local level in schools and libraries, although the extent and success of these aims are unknown.

Despite a lack of public interaction with performances, CPNM concerts did raise the profile of the substantial quantities of new music. It also drew attention to the fact that despite the war, a significant amount of music was being composed within British shores, and that much of this music was considered good enough to be brought before an audience. It is significant that the idea that new music required this level of mediation should occur in wartime. The CPNM was perhaps symptomatic of a more general wartime drive for regeneration. That new works should first go before an assembled panel before being recommended for public consumption seems to suggest that the industry felt a need to mediate public taste and mould ‘standards’; in effect the live concert-giving industry had implemented a structure similar to the rigorous procedures of the BBC music department. However, the activities of CPNM removed financial and aesthetic barriers to the performance of new works that might otherwise not have been heard. Private concerts also enabled a regularity and frequency that would not have been forthcoming on a commercial, public platform.

The Committee did also promote large-scale works, but not on such a regular basis as it did Studio Recitals. Orchestral music was considered in a similar way to small-scale music, with feedback forms and an invited audience, followed by a plebiscite to determine which work should be repeated in full. A grant from CEMA allowed CPNM to have established orchestras such as the Jacques String Orchestra or

¹⁴¹ Sound and Music, Somerset House. CPNM, Box 170, 2 of 2 File: Orchestral Rehearsal 1943–4 Season. Invitation to an Experimental Rehearsal.

¹⁴² Ibid.

the LPO perform new works at the Royal Albert Hall, six times a season commencing in their inaugural year of 1943.¹⁴³ The activities of the committee thrived after the war, turning first into the Society for the Promotion of New Music and more recently Sound and Music, although this current body funded by the Arts Council bears only minimal resemblance to the original aims and objectives of CPNM.

It should be noted that fifty-two studio recitals between 1943 and the end of the spring 1945 season is a significant number. In comparison, only thirty-five Boosey and Hawkes public concerts took place from 1941 to the end of the same period, a new music concert series that is explored in Chapter 3. Presumably, CPNM's non-commercial operation created the conditions in which large numbers of concerts could take place without having to worry about the box office. Writing in the *Musical Times* in 1945, Carner applauded CPNM's activities:

What had by many been considered a rather doubtful and short-lived experiment has now, after more than two years of uninterrupted activity, proved a resounding success. Take a few figures. During that period the CPNM has performed two hundred and twenty out of about four hundred and fifty works submitted. It has given sixty concerts, six of them orchestral, at which nearly a hundred different composers have been represented. No fewer than a hundred and forty performers have given their services and four well known orchestras have played only for a nominal fee. This record more than proves the case for such an enterprise.

Its success may be partly accounted for by the fact that the CPNM occupies a wide and very noticeable gap; on the one hand a number of gifted young composers; on the other hand, the established concert-giving organizations which have to keep to the safe and well-trodden path of the classical repertory and, as a rule, include in their programmes only contemporary works by composers of more or less firmly-established reputation.¹⁴⁴

CPNM, like the National Gallery concerts and others, had identified one of many gaps in the chamber music life of the capital, and successfully filled it. While the idea of

¹⁴³ Sound and Music, Somerset House. CPNM, Box 170, 2 of 2 File: Orchestral Rehearsal 1943–4 Season. 1st Experimental Rehearsal, 1 October 1943. Invitation to Experimental Rehearsal. In order to limit costs, the rehearsal and the concert happened at the same event and both in front of the audience. A piece would be rehearsed for a short time and then 'performed'. A second and third piece would follow the same pattern, with the critical discussion happening at the end in a separate, smaller room at the Hall, which included a plebiscite to choose a work from the evening to be performed in full once more.

¹⁴⁴ Mosco Carner, 'The Committee for the Promotion of New Music', *Musical Times*, October 1945, 297–9.

private concerts for invited audiences may seem to go against the wartime grain of democratic performances, other democratic structures (the use of plebiscite, the opportunity for any composer to submit works and the non-commercial demands of performances) meant that the CPNM Studio Recitals provided a ‘safe space’ for new music to be aired. The creation of CPNM in wartime is also significant, demonstrating the wish for the musical establishment to promote and encourage new music, to provide opportunities for composers who might be struggling, and perhaps in order to signal that the industry was not ‘on hold’.

*‘Democratic at all costs’?*¹⁴⁵

In light of the examples given here, it might easily be concluded that chamber-music performances did indeed become more ‘democratic’ during the course of the war, if democratic is understood to mean accessible, affordable, frequent and involving interaction with social concerns. The BBC tried (partly out of necessity) to target a broader audience, brand new channels for music-making were opened up and performances were given at low cost and for charitable causes. However, this chapter cannot be concluded without some acknowledgement of the tension that arose from some of these developments. While the evidence suggests that war helped to develop changes in chamber-music performances that made them more available, there were also some substantial tensions and contradictions involved in dissemination.

On the one hand, attempts at widening accessibility provided fuel to those who saw such efforts as merely pompous and divorced from reality. As Ivor Brown put it, writing in the *Manchester Guardian*:

At the present time art, in one form or another, is being much employed as the solace of distress and fatigue. We send music to the factory canteen, serious concerts as well as concert parties, and of these things the Government takes a kindly view and even to a small extent supports in practice its opinion that the Muses and munitions can be good companions. Do the toilers faint? Let Mozart be their stay. Do they grow pale with drudgery? Let drama redden their blood. Are not the arts the adorners and consolers, the social counterpart of woman, lovely woman whose task, as some have thought, is to be a ministering angel to her anguished and exhausted man?

¹⁴⁵ Eric Blom, *Music in England*, 199.

The idea that you can somehow atone for the ugliness and weariness of most factory labour by giving its victims nice armchairs in the evening and a good wireless set for the reception of a symphony or by enticing them out to lectures on poetry or a seat at an uplifting play has prevailed with British progressive opinion for some time. In other words you clamp art on to the surface of society, as the Victorian builders and decorators used to clamp those dreadful rows of fussy moulding round the edge of a good plain ceiling or attach all sorts of knobbly nonsense to a simple mantelpiece. By so doing you are supposed to wipe out the shoddy sins of a social system by turning leisure into an opportunity for shining virtues.¹⁴⁶

Brown attacks the idea that the provision of high-art music performances fulfilled a social duty in educating and providing high art for those unfortunate enough not to have it, or want it. He argues that by providing the arts, or in his words ‘knobbly nonsense’, to a weary worker, the establishment demonstrates an acute arrogance and lack of awareness as to the physical and mental wants of the ordinary worker. For Brown, far from being made more ‘democratic’, art was only further implicating itself as a social engineering instrument of the ruling elites. The act of democratising music for the apparent good of others was in itself an elitist idea.

On the other hand, although there was a general consensus that the provision of, and access to, high-art music had been improved, this more ‘democratic’ environment had, for some, come at the expense of quality and (what had been an attractive) exclusivity. The wartime trend for the wider dissemination of high-art music might have been perceived to have lessened music’s prestige. As we saw earlier, the intimate, intellectual exclusivity of some chamber-music performances certainly contributed to their attraction. Some examples from the BBC may help reinforce the case. The corporation came in for criticism in its efforts to attract audiences from a broad social spectrum by making its output more democratic. Blom’s text of 1942, *Music in England*, laments the deterioration of the quantity and variety of high-art works broadcast by the BBC:

Radio Music, on the other hand, which used to show generosity in its distribution of great works and was often healthily experimental in broadcasting novelties, has much deteriorated in these aspects of late – one hopes only because of war conditions, though it is difficult to see why they should make any

¹⁴⁶ Ivor Brown, ‘Art, Craft, and Common Sense’, *Manchester Guardian* (1901–59), 15 February 1941, 6.

difference. The chief fault of the B.B.C. seems to be that it strives to be democratic at all costs.¹⁴⁷

Blom was probably exaggerating the case with ‘at all costs’, but the BBC was certainly attempting to cater to all, and had separate departments (and separate ensembles) for light music, variety and ‘serious’ music. Blom was not the only critic. For instance, ‘desecration’ in pursuit of the largest possible audience appeal was deplored by the BBC’s own overseas music director, K. A. Wright, in a letter to the director of music.

I wonder whether we really should allow the kind of desecration of the classics committed by these artists on the above date. I am afraid I may seem a spoil sport, but surely it is not complimentary to our Norwegian Allies, even if we get fun out of it at a party. The item was called, I think, “Isn’t Mrs. Peer Gynt Sweet” and their usual nonsense words were set to bits of the Peer Gynt Movements.¹⁴⁸

In this letter Wright hints at the fine line which exists between broadcasting something that would appeal to the widest possible audience and denigrating high art in the process. A particularly disliked phenomenon, the ‘jazzing’ of the classics, was also viewed as unacceptable:

The jazzing by dance bands of classical tunes or the borrowing and adaptation of them. This is normally quite unacceptable. On the most favourable estimate, music so transcribed can only be considered to have ‘entertainment’ value and many of the transcriptions are definitely offensive and musically harmful. Each example must be reviewed and arbitrary decisions taken regarding inclusion or exclusion, recognizing that there are degrees of adaptation ranging from the innocuous to the obscene.¹⁴⁹

Strong language is used in all three of these examples. Words such as ‘desecration’, ‘vulgar’ and ‘obscene’ express the very real fear that in the pursuit of democratic output, ‘serious’ music might be exploited for mere entertainment purposes rather than as an indicator of good taste. It would simply cease to exist as ‘serious’ and the elites

¹⁴⁷ Blom, *Music in England*, 199. In the 1947 edition of the same text this quotation still stands, despite a slight alteration of wording. However, the 1947 edition goes on to praise the new Third Programme, saying that it ‘cleared the BBC of the reproach of wishing to please the majority; a mistake because in questions of art it is the intelligent minority which should be given every consideration’ (1947 edition), 260.

¹⁴⁸ BBC WAC R27/245/1 File 1A Music General, Music Policy 1930–43, from: overseas music director, to: D. M. Flotsam and Jetsam, 14 December (Monday Night at Eight), 16 December 1942.

¹⁴⁹ Quoted in Lewis Foreman, *From Parry to Britten: British Music in Letters, 1900–45*, B.T. Batsford Ltd. London, 1987, BBC Music Policy 1942–6.

themselves would cease to exist as elites. *Punch* satirises the concept of ‘jazzing’ the classics (and the distress caused) in the following cartoon of 1941.¹⁵⁰



“Tchaikovsky’s Fifth! Jazzed!”

Figure 6: ‘Tchaikovsky’s Fifth! Jazzed!’ A man rushes out into a blazing air raid, preferring this fate to that of having to endure the novelty sextet. Reproduced with permission of *Punch* Limited.

¹⁵⁰ British Library, *Punch* P.P.5270, 29 January 1941, 108. Bourdieu also discusses the concept of ‘devaluation’ by popularisation (something the BBC were most anxious to guard against, aiming to promote the expansion of taste and knowledge). Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, 14.

* * *

This chapter has moved from considering the brutal physical realities of war to a reflection on difficult questions of accessibility, elitism and aesthetics. While new audiences and new spaces were opened up to chamber music in what appears to be a democratising process, the professionalisation of performance contributed to a sharpened hierarchy between performer and listener. Additionally, because chamber-music performances functioned under new democratic structures that improved accessibility, certain tensions were heightened. Those between the physical needs of workers and patronising attitudes of establishment aesthetes were strong, for instance. The need to reach out to popular and commercial tastes to be effective, and the desire to ‘protect’ great art from commerce and frivolity were similarly incompatible. As we will see in the next chapter, such concerns would develop new significance once placed in the context of international relations.

Chapter two. Music and nation

Introduction

In his latest talk on the wireless Mr Newton referred to one of Dame Clara Butt's war-time concerts. He said that, seeing that commanding figure arrayed in flowing draperies and singing 'Land of Hope and Glory', he felt that Britannia herself had come to life.¹

Printed in the high-society column 'London Day by Day' in the *Daily Telegraph* in 1940, this commentary neatly demonstrates one of the relationships articulated between nation, nationality and the performance of music. In this instance, the romanticism of the image conveyed by Dame Clara sparks a comparison with, even an embodiment of, the nation itself. Here, Britannia is strong, female, patriotic and, in all likelihood, loud. During my archival research, national causes, issues, ideologies and articulations of identity appeared again and again in the sources on chamber-music performance, prompting the decision to investigate their relationships. This chapter will introduce the theme.

The First World War had provoked bitter resentment of anything embodying Germanic culture or German elements. Bechstein pianos, like all explicitly German products, were tainted by association during the First World War. As MacRae points out, *The Pianomaker* trade paper went so far as to call for all Bechstein pianos to be interned and then deported.² Although MacRae suggests that 'no remnant of German control remained' at the hall, it was refused a new license and was sold at auction in 1916.³ Subsequently, the hall's name was changed from Bechstein Hall to Wigmore Hall.

This extreme attitude did not occur in the Second World War to quite the same extent. However, the repercussions of bearing a German-sounding name did range from social discomfort to imprisonment. The internment camps on the Isle of Man were a consequence of establishment mistrust of Germanic elements in society and a fear of fifth columnists. This was particularly problematic in the music industry, where Austro-

¹ 'Concert Hall Britannia', in 'London Day by Day', *Daily Telegraph*, Friday 4 October 1940, 4.

² MacRae, *Wigmore Hall: A Celebration*, 47. As 'Bechstein Hall', the building in Wigmore Street which was to become Wigmore Hall had served as part of the Bechstein piano showroom and was designed to allow pianos to be tested in a suitably fine acoustic.

³ *Ibid.* 46–7.

German composition, musicians and teachers were perceived by the British to be the gold standard of western musical achievement. The pianist George von Harten who organised the annual Everyman Concerts Series throughout the war changed his name from 1941 by dropping the German ‘von’.⁴ But Harten seems to be an unusual case. Others, including pianist Joseph Weingarten, mezzo Sarah Fischer, violinist Harry Blech and mezzo Dorothy Helmrich did not alter their surnames, despite the Germanic sounds or spellings.⁵ Despite the war, Austro-German elements were still very much engrained in British high-musical culture as bestowing a mark of distinction and validity.

What attitudes can we trace towards British music at this time? How were these manifested in practice? Was chamber music used to project Britishness? What constituted such projections? Beginning below with a general discussion of Britishness in music, I move on to offer three platforms on which music and nation can be seen to intersect in both the pre-war and wartime periods: two music festivals of spring 1939, the BBC, and the press, along with other published literature. Finally, I address the emergence of competitiveness within discourses of Britishness, and the curious place of Austro-German musical identities within that.

Two existing studies have been helpful in formulating this chapter. First, Bohlman’s *Music, Nationalism, and the Making of the New Europe*, which opens up the potentially infinite range of relationships that might exist between music and nation framing. As he puts it: ‘we can experience nationalism in any music at any time. Music is malleable in the service of the nation not because it is a product of national and nationalist ideologies, but rather because musics of all forms and genres can articulate the processes that shape the state. Music can narrate national myths and transform them to nationalist histories. Music marks national borders, while at the same time mobilising those wishing to cross or dismantle borders. Music enhances the sacred qualities of the nation, and it can secularise religion so that it conforms to the state. There is, then, no single place to experience the interaction of music and nationalism.’⁶

While recognising what he calls the ‘top-down’ approach which deals with musical elites, state institutions and ideologies, Bohlman is generally more concerned

⁴ The ‘von’ could not be part of a Jewish name. Therefore the name was presumably too uncomfortably German for Harten.

⁵ Although she possessed a German-sounding name, Helmrich was in fact an Australian singer, who in 1943 founded and presided over the Australian Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts.

⁶ Bohlman, *Music, Nationalism, and the Making of the New Europe*, 5–6.

with the ‘multitude of angles’ that can be adopted when considering the subject of nationhood.⁷ Music does not always have to be an official mouthpiece of the state to express ideas of nation. In line with this, as we will see, chamber-music platforms became mouthpieces for various organisations and individuals who explored, articulated and promoted concepts of nation that were particularly pertinent in wartime.

My second reference point is Powell’s *Nationhood and Identity: The British State Since 1800*. Powell suggests that the circumstances of the Second World War were particularly conducive to creating a strong idea of the nation state: ‘the experience of the Second World War, perhaps even more than the First, enjoined a more cohesive sense of Britishness. The completion of political democratization together with the extension of a comprehensive system of social welfare and the nationalization of large sections of the country’s industrial base encouraged citizens and workers to identify more directly with the central institutions of the British state.’⁸

I would build beyond his observation to note other reasons why ‘Britishness’ was such a tangible facet of the Second World War, compared to the first. People had time to prepare for the outbreak of war in 1939, and infrastructures were in place, unlike the time of the 1914 to 1918 conflict, which came upon the country as more of a shock.⁹ The lead-in to 1939 allowed people time to consider their own individual circumstances in relation to those of the nation. To some extent they were able to prepare for war in their own domestic environments by considering plans for air raids, shortages or employment. The then well-established BBC was also hugely significant in the dissemination of information and ideas, and of fostering a sense of shared community. News reports and commentaries as well as official directives could be heard in one’s own home, giving national events a new immediacy and simultaneity. Therefore in the lead-up to, and during, the Second World War, the ‘national’ was very quickly made a domestic concern. But what did that mean?

Constructions of Britishness

Powell’s work provides a good starting point:

⁷ Bohlman, *Music, Nationalism, and the Making of the New Europe*, 5.

⁸ David Powell, *Nationhood and Identity: The British State Since 1800* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 154.

⁹ The BBC, for example, had contingency plans in place at least as early as 1938, if not earlier.

with the larger question of ‘Britishness’ in the middle years of the twentieth century, although the image of the united, self-reliant Britain of the early 1940s is an important cultural reference point, it does not tell the whole story, or at least does not reveal its full complexity. A ‘British’ identity was still more difficult to define than the simplified verities of wartime propaganda or the post-war consensus might suggest. It was also constantly evolving, partly because of the impact of the war itself, partly because of the interaction of longer-term social, economic and cultural trends.¹⁰

A similar condition of complexity can be observed in the music world. For musicians there was no ‘simplified verity’ available for immediate propaganda usage. The nature of musical composition and performance necessitated understanding and familiarity with a range of national cultural products and traditions. A constant comparison and ‘measuring up’ against familiar and beloved Austro-German musical products added to the difficulty of nurturing a strong British musical identity. As Hughes and Stradling have pointed out, the revered individuals of the musical establishment took the Austro-German tradition for their compositional blueprint, or as Samson puts it, ‘the stylistic dialogue with Europe was one-sided, to say the least’.¹¹ Music in Britain was simply too German and steeped in German-ness to be of any great use in designing powerful British musical propaganda.

Despite our modern appropriation of Elgar as the essence of British musical identity, according to cultural historian Jeffrey Richards, Elgar was not constructed as particularly part of British musical identity until the 1960s, and his ‘reputation dipped after his death in 1934’.¹² Indeed, Richards suggests that Elgar’s association with imperialism was ‘ideological baggage’ that prevented, rather than hastened, Elgar’s acceptance by the highbrow.¹³

One of the ways that these complexities were realised was through broader negotiations about the enemy. As Morgan and Evans point out, the conflict was not necessarily mapped as nation against nation, but instead as many nations against a tyrannical regime. Morgan and Evans suggest that, ‘from the very beginning, the war against Hitler’s Germany was presented to the British people as a fight against tyranny

¹⁰ Powell, *Nationhood and Identity: The British State Since 1800*, 179.

¹¹ Hughes and Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance*. 156–7; Samson, ‘Nations and Nationalism’, in Samson, (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, 592.

¹² Richards, *Imperialism and Music*, 44.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 83.

and the destruction of civilized ways of life. In that respect, the confrontation was as much ideological as territorial'.¹⁴

In consequence, musical constructions of Britishness could merge within claims of universality, nuanced by specific national markers. According to historian A. J. Hoover, 'defending a just war requires hard thinking. If your side is right and the other wrong, there must be some criterion by which to judge. This must be a moral universe where truth and right are somehow grounded in the substance of eternal reality.'¹⁵

This moral universe was easily found in the music of the Austro-German canon, long celebrated as having universal quality. For example, William Weber makes the following suggestion: 'even though it was conventional to speak of the classics as German, the music spread so widely around the Western world and attained so high a cultural status that it functioned primarily as a cosmopolitan authority.'¹⁶ It could represent cosmopolitanism and civilisation as opposed to barbarism (and by extension, right and wrong), a perspective that was nonetheless somewhat difficult to uphold as a firm tool against the axis forces, because the axis forces themselves used it as well. As this BBC policy note observed:

One of Germany's strongest propagandist points is that the democracies are barbarians who care nothing for art. The cultural propaganda put over in the way of music, opera and drama is incessant and prodigious. At the Council we have constant appeals for something to offset the flood of stuff the Axis is still sending abroad; notably in Sweden, where the pressure is constant. ¹⁷

Therefore, a significant irony existed in the use of the same 'universal' musical-moral compass by both allied and axis forces in order to construct each other as barbarous. This also enabled each side to assume possession of the moral compass (in the shape of the Austro-German canon) and by extension prove their 'civilised' credentials. Britain was nevertheless understood by the Allies to be fighting a savage regime, rather than a nation, and the war was often configured in propaganda as civilisation against

¹⁴ David Morgan and Mary Evans, *The Battle for Britain. Citizenship and Ideology in the Second World War* (London: Routledge, 1993), 15. See also John Ramsden, *Don't Mention the War: The British and the Germans Since 1890* (London: Abacus, 2006), 182.

¹⁵ Arlie J. Hoover, *God, Britain and Hitler in World War II* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1999), 79.

¹⁶ Weber, 'Cosmopolitan, National and Regional Identities', 212.

¹⁷ BBC WAC R27/245/1 File 1A Music General. Music Policy 1930-43, Appendix A-A.1, orchestral resources, BBC music policy suggested revisions, 18 March 1942.

barbarism.¹⁸ From an allied perspective, the Austro-German music so revered and adored by the British could be discounted as a possible cultural alibi for Germany: it was considered ‘universal’, and therefore absolved in British minds from any sully involvement with the axis nations.

But it was not long before national identity entered, and civilisation was subsumed into constituting ‘Britishness’ while a brutish primitivism was German. Morgan and Evans intimate this in the following passage: ‘as leader of the wartime coalition, Churchill’s appeal to the chauvinistic traditions and sentiments of the nation aroused a unique combination of patriotic and radical sympathies. His invocation of a “common people” united in a common cause, though deeply nationalistic, did not rest upon such mythical abstractions as the “Aryan race” or de Gaulle’s transcendental vision of “la France”’: Churchill’s rhetoric was grounded upon his belief in the inherent qualities of the British people – their sense of community and fair play, their instinct for decency, justice and the rule of law and, above all, their determination to win the war.’¹⁹ However, in addition to patriotic fervour, the united British war-effort was also driven by a very real fear, especially after the German occupation of the Channel Islands, that mainland Britain would be invaded and occupied, like France.

In wartime, the forging of an identity was important in being able to produce propaganda that would appeal to people’s sense of patriotic duty and affection. It also follows that a sense of national ‘oneness’ or unity was integral in order to implement wartime policy such as rationing, blackouts, evacuation and military service. In order for government wartime policy to be effective on the ground, the individual must accept that s/he is subsumed into a larger whole and that in his day-to-day actions s/he serves the good of the larger whole – the nation.²⁰ National propaganda, then, utilised universal ideologies as highlighted by Haggith in his work on propaganda films. Government officials suggested that ‘the themes for propaganda should be: “(a) the sanctity of absolute values; (b) the sanctity of the individual and the family; (c) the community of nations”’.²¹

¹⁸ Pamela Potter, *Most German of the Arts: Musicology and Society from the Weimar Republic to the End of Hitler’s Reich* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), xii.

¹⁹ Morgan and Evans, *The Battle for Britain: Citizenship and Ideology in the Second World War*, 21.

²⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

²¹ Haggith, ‘Citizenship: Nationhood and Empire in British Official Film Propaganda, 1939–45’, 65.

However, some British specificity was also needed. Propaganda drew on aspects of perceived national ideals and characteristics in order to evoke a sense of the nation. These specifics were often pastoral, as Haggith explains: ‘Images of the British countryside and pastoral life were another regular feature of propaganda films, often providing an emotional framing for other more political images. For example *If War Should Come* [1939] ends with a timeless farmyard scene of men loading hay onto a horse drawn cart, the emotion of the image reinforced with a swell of classical music.’²²

The pastoral idyll, as depicted in propaganda, demonstrates in a very literal sense the connection between the people and the land. This imagery was still potent in spite of the increasingly urban nature of life in Britain, and highlighted the reciprocal relationship that exists between the tight-knit native communities and the earth on which they lived and worked. From this quotation we also glimpse how classical music could become an integral part of the civilisation and culture that was inherent in being ‘British’. More specifically, the use of the folk idiom in musical composition, or in the rural scenes in propaganda films emphasises what could be seen as the historical building blocks of the nation, the literal grass roots. Rural communities in particular had long been effective depictions of nationhood, in part perhaps because agricultural tasks (such as making hay ricks or harvest) were communal, each individual taking on a designated role. Nicholas reminds us how the reality was often far removed from the depiction and how the propaganda constructed a myth: ‘Although the conventional imperial imagery of late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain certainly survived, the aggressive, confident and overtly Anglocentric portrayal of the British nation was increasingly downplayed. A more popular interwar construction of the nation centred around a mythic rural vision of the “traditional” English countryside.’²³ Dibble concurs, and describes the way mythical constructions of Englishness involved folk music: ‘To be nationalist, or more precisely to be “English”, became the watchword in the 1920s, and found its natural home in the appropriation of folksong, a nostalgia for a lost pastoral Arcadia and the belief in a spiritual link with the Tudor period.’²⁴

²² Ibid., 64.

²³ Nicholas, ‘From John Bull to John Citizen’, 37.

²⁴ Jeremy Dibble, ‘Grove’s Musical Dictionary’, in Harry White and Michael Murphy, *Musical Constructions of Nationalism: Essays on the History and Ideology of European Musical Culture 1800–1945* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2001), 33–50.

We can also trace this in the music of Vaughan Williams, so we might identify two competing strands within constructions of Britishness. The first strand was the music of the old establishment, described by Boult in a letter to Vaughan Williams as the ‘Jerusalem Brand’.²⁵ In commissioning a patriotic song for the BBC, Boult advises Vaughan Williams that ‘it is certainly the “Jerusalem” brand that we want. If you can find your inspiration from the old masters, so much the better.’²⁶ The old masters Boult was referring to were Parry (who set *Jerusalem*), and by extension Stanford and Elgar (who re-orchestrated *Jerusalem*). The second strand, which we might describe as the ‘Vaughan Williams Brand’, shifted away from monarchy and empire as formulators of national identity and instead made use of folk song. Hughes and Stradling describe such use of folk elements in art music as primarily a ‘purgative of the Teutonic’.²⁷

Such views continue to have appeal today. Rural illiteracy and poverty are still twisted to depict idyllic quaintness, as we see particularly clearly in the film *War Horse* (2011). Portraying pastoral England in the 1910s, complete with rustic locals and chocolate-box country scenes, the film manufactures an English idyll. The film’s score, composed by John Williams, could be understood as a pastiche of Vaughan Williams, with vigorous cellos and soaring upper strings that make rampant use of open fifths, pentatonic melodies and ‘folk’ elements in the instrumentation. Given the evident desire to portray a particularly ‘English’ rurality, it is interesting that the film rejected ‘Kingsfold’, a folk tune from *English Country Tunes* (1893) which was harmonised and inserted into the *English Hymnal* by Vaughan Williams.²⁸ The tune was used to great effect in the stage play, arguably lending it greater domestic appeal than the pastiched film score could expect to generate.

Despite the use of the pastiched pastoral in constructions of Englishness or Britishness, the reality of how art–music performances intersected with nation during the Second World War was very different. The folk idiom, for example, was not necessarily seen as providing a legitimate British voice. In the following passage Ryan suggests that ‘current reality is informed by all that has gone before’.

²⁵ Foreman, *From Parry to Britten*, 232.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 232.

²⁷ Hughes and Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance*, 160.

²⁸ ‘I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say’, in *Hymns Old and New*, New Anglican Edition (Buxhall: Kevin Mayhew Ltd., 1996).

If one accepts the implicit argument that culture is a living organism, one that must perforce change to reflect the ever-changing reality, then it follows that the challenge for a musically literate people is to fashion an expression that can draw on the totality of past tradition and crucially one that reflects the current living environment. This corollary places the creative artist at the centre of our cultural life as an agent of that change. In musical terms it additionally suggests that the quality and currency of new music can stand as a barometer of the musical health of a nation. This is not an argument for dismissing the past; on the contrary, current reality is informed by all that has gone before. In musical terms both the indigenous tradition and the great Western canon contribute to what we are and to be constrained to elect for one over the other is spurious.²⁹

Of course, neither the elements of a posited ‘indigenous tradition’ (including reinvented heritage of Purcell and Byrd as well as the contemporary work of Vaughan Williams and Cecil Sharp), nor the great western canon (Austro-German repertoire) could express a ‘British’ identity very fully. For the nation that had apparently struggled to express a highbrow musical nationalism through departing from German romanticism towards a distinct national ‘style’, the act of musical performance, however, was to develop particular significance. Hans Keller’s words may be somewhat idealistic, yet they carry a ring of truth. In Britain, he claimed, ‘an enthusiastic, tolerant patriotism takes the place of an ecstatic, keenly destructive nationalism’.³⁰ It was performances (of works from all parts of the art–music world) rather than compositions, that were most unanimously constructed as ‘British’. This particular manifestation of culture could be claimed as a crucial component of the British sense of a musical self. We can see this demonstrated particularly clearly in the music festivals of 1939.

The 1939 music festivals

In the spring of 1939 two major music festivals took place in London. The first was called the London Music Festival, and ran from 23 April to 28 May. It was run by Owen Mase, an ex-BBC man turned concert organiser, who co-ordinated establishment

²⁹ Joseph Ryan, ‘The Tone of Defiance’, in Harry White and Michael Murphy, *Musical Constructions of Nationalism: Essays on the History and Ideology of European Musical Culture 1800–1945* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2001), 197–211.

³⁰ Hans Keller, ‘England’, in Christopher Wintle (ed.) and Alison Garnham, *Music and Psychology: From Vienna to London 1939–52* (London: Plumbago Books, 2003), 5. The essay itself was written in 1950.

institutions such as the BBC and the Royal Philharmonic Society, and gained the patronage of the royal family.³¹ The Festival was often referred to in the press as a ‘scheme’, in which many institutions and organisations were involved and which allowed the festival to represent a collection of the best that Britain had to offer. At the close, *The Times* claimed that the festival had received a total audience of 136,000.³²

While the organisers could not have predicted the outbreak of war a mere three months later, the political situation was volatile, and sources suggest the festival was a display aimed at the continent. It could also be seen as a self-affirming gesture for British musical industries such as concert halls, orchestras, music publishers and artists, a show of strength that reaffirmed the solidity and integrity of music in British culture. The festival brochure included the following introduction:

In assembling a five-week’s continuous programme of the finest music which can be offered, the first aim will be to attain, in every order of music presented, a standard of surpassing excellence. And, secondly, as Sir Thomas Beecham expressed it at the first meeting of the Festival Grand Council, to make apparent, not only to our own people, but to Europe, what we are doing as a nation, and where we stand, musically. Now that, through the discovery of broadcasting, every country overhears, and is overheard by, its neighbour, a mere whisper of perfect art in one may mean the setting up of new standards in another. For example to mention but one of the subsidiary undertakings of this Festival – it may be that British choral art will prove to have, next spring, a decisive message for visitors from the continent.³³

The festival is here configured as something that the nation (rather than individuals) was ‘doing’. It was anticipated that it might deliver ‘a decisive message’ to the continent. With the patronage of the King and Queen, and the Archbishop of York preaching at the opening service at Westminster Abbey, any message was delivered with the full weight of the British establishment behind it. The festival introduction goes on:

Nowhere in the world can be heard a wider range of fine music finely performed than in London. That this truth is not more widely known is largely because these vast musical resources have hitherto lacked any appreciable measure of co-ordination. The London Music Festival 1939 is the first occasion on which

³¹ http://www.naxos.com/mainsite/blurbs_reviews.asp?item_code=8.110877&catNum=8110877&filetype=About%20this%20Recording&language=English.

³² ‘London Music Festival: Total Audience of 136,000’, *The Times*, Monday, 5 June 1939, 10

³³ British Library. Henschel Box 26, 1939. London Music Festival May 1939: 23 April–28 May, the Festival Book, 5.

London's musical organizations have co-operated to provide the best music of every kind [. . .] it is arranged for the freshest and most attractive season of the English year and the time when London's brilliant social season is at its height.³⁴

From this text we sense an urgency in demonstrating the prestige and superiority of London's musical forces, which may imply that these had been in doubt. We also sense a need to demonstrate national unity through musical collaboration. Such morale-boosting strategies were not aimed solely at London residents. Rather, the festival was designed to attract international visitors to the capital, as well. The brochure was packed full of adverts for antique houses and top-end hotels, and all aspects of London's musical culture was portrayed as thriving. Importance was also placed on intellectual aspects of the festival. A reading room was set up at Novello and Co. where festival visitors could go and examine the scores of any of the works performed. Music periodicals were provided from many different countries so that 'visitors from abroad may keep in contact with music in their own countries'.³⁵ All this implies that the target festival-goer was foreign, wealthy enough (and leisured enough) to visit London for a month, and highly cultured. And it seems an international audience was forthcoming: 25,000 tickets had been applied for by the start of the festival from 'all over the British Isles and from Canada, Australia, South Africa, United States, Italy, Belgium, Holland, France, Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries'.³⁶

Despite the elevated aims of the festival, it met with criticism from some voices. The fact that British compositional and performing talent was not made a feature, and was not fostered in the aims and objectives of the festival, disappointed some. A BBC memo contained the following tirade, for example:

It was disgraceful that in the London Festival which has been conducted by Toscanini, only one British work had been played in four concerts. 'I feel most strongly that reciprocity as regards English music and foreign music, has not yet begun to be exercised or begun to be appreciated.'³⁷

³⁴ Ibid., 6.

³⁵ Ibid., 7.

³⁶ Ibid., 'London Music Festival: Opening Concert On Monday', *The Times* Wednesday 19 April, 1939, 12.

³⁷ BBC WAC R27/245/1 File 1A, Music General. Music Policy 1930-43, G28/42, 'Verbal Evidence Folio 0'.

And a letter to the editor of *The Times* expressed regret that the LMF appeared to have taken an active decision to limit the exposure of new music.

It might be assumed that the London Music Festival would include some manifestation that music was also being written to-day. To all intents and purposes there might be no music being composed at all to-day. One looks in vain for one of the Contemporary Music Section's concerts. [. . .] Another society much addicted to new music, the RAM New Music Society, asked to be included in the scheme, and was told that it would merely duplicate others. This possibility of duplication seems to have worried the organizers so much that they omitted it altogether.³⁸

On closer analysis of the programmes, the outraged BBC employee seems justified in his assertion that truly British 'products' were under-represented. Only one of the three string quartets used for the festival was made up of British players.³⁹ Visiting celebrity Toscanini was given all nine Beethoven Symphonies to perform with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, performances that were central to the structure of the festival. In addition, it can be observed that of the two concerts which truly feature contemporary British composers the first is billed as a 'Children's concert', and the second is performed by the London Junior Orchestra.⁴⁰ The 'Children's concert', in particular, seems to trivialise British composition as it is the only concert that has the vastly reduced prices of 2 shillings and 1 shilling, compared to the 25- to 40-shilling top-end prices for some of the other concerts. Other events that featured British composers included an outdoor massed bands performance on Hampstead Heath complete with fireworks and ballets. It should be noted that ballet at this time was considered to be merely 'light entertainment', *Punch* ranking it alongside 'revues and variety'.⁴¹ Therefore we might conclude that while there was certainly a presence of British composers at the London Musical Festival, this presence was kept to the periphery by the schedule and presentation of these works. Only Delius and Elgar, both by this time dead, are to be found programmed alongside the Austro-German canon in concerts that took place in the festival's prime venues with headline orchestras. Delius was performed

³⁸ 'Points from Letters: Letters to the Editor', *The Times* Tuesday 2 May 1939, 10.

³⁹ Of the three string quartets highlighted in this book, Griller, Lerner (Budapest) and New Hungarian Quartet, only one was made up of British-trained players.

⁴⁰ Although Myra Hess was soloist in this second concert.

⁴¹ British Library, *Punch* 5 February 1941, 'At the Ballet', 139. This particular review was of a ballet that actually included Margot Fonteyn, and yet the reviewer was damning of the farcical exploits he apparently viewed on stage.

once by the LPO at the Queen's Hall, and Elgar had three works performed at the Royal Albert Hall by various choral societies and the London Symphony Orchestra. Both were also performed in the children's concerts mentioned above.

So it was not British composers, and not even necessarily British artists that were the primary features of the festival. Rather, as Wright has already suggested in relation to the nineteenth century, the main 'selling point' was British concert life. The festival promoted the *variety* of live performance available in Britain and positioned these performances as the best in the world and a ubiquitous part of British cultural life.⁴² As traced in the following speech by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the festival also allowed for Britain to be 'positioned' as a civilised purveyor of 'Great Music' rather than as a supporter of the mere 'noises' that Caliban appreciates as pleasant but cannot understand.⁴³

Great Music and Savage Noises – Archbishop's Contrast

The Archbishop of Canterbury, (Dr. Lang) spoke at the final service of the London Music Festival held at Broadcasting House last night. He said: – Surely the festival must have stimulated the desire of all sorts of people for great music, for men must needs admire the best and highest when they hear it. They will be reluctant to descend again to the low levels of the trivial and vulgar. Doubtless there will always be a place for the lighter music which attracts the ear and enlivens the heart, but there ought to be no place for the savage noises sometimes heard. They are a degradation. I might use a stronger term – a prostitution of music.

Help in Forgetting

After referring to the manner in which the thoughts of those who listened to good music were raised to a world of order, harmony and beauty, Dr. Lang said: 'Seldom, surely, has there been more need for such an escape of the soul than now. We are oppressed by anxieties and fears and rumours of war. Doubtless some relief has come through the fixed resolve of this nation to make and to show itself ready for whatever may come, but a sense of uncertainty about the future remains. It haunts us – and it haunts not least the young . . . To all of us music can bring this welcome escape to a world of harmony and beauty where the discords of the lower world of strife are unknown.'⁴⁴

Dr Lang's barely concealed heaven-and-hell metaphor, where the listener attains heaven by listening to 'good music' or is tempted to hell by slatternly discords, alerts us to a

⁴² Wright, 'Music and Musical Performance, 169–206. 'Thus the degree of variety itself becomes an important characteristic of the vigour of the British musical environment.', 177.

⁴³ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act III, Scene ii, line 118, *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (Hampshire: Macmillan and the RSC, 2007).

⁴⁴ 'Great Music and Savage Noises: Archbishop's Contrast', *The Times*, Monday 29 May, 1939, 12..

crucial dimension of British musical self-celebration. The festival was after all book-ended by Church of England ceremonies, symbolic events which transcended elected governments, celebrity performers and musical institutions. The Church of England represented solidity, monarchy and resilience, but most of all it represented God's presence in the nation. Dr Lang's particularly lurid language, and his inclusion of the word 'prostitution', emphasised not only that anything less than 'great' music should be shunned, but even that it would be un-Christian not to do so.

The second festival I discuss here is of a rather different nature. It also took place in the spring of 1939, commencing a little earlier than the LMF on 1 April and lasting only three days. It was entitled 'Festival of Music for the People', and championed the socialist cause under the leadership of composer Alan Bush, who had become a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1935.⁴⁵ Notwithstanding its politics, the festival was able to use two prominent venues also enjoyed by the LMF, namely the Royal Albert Hall and Queen's Hall, for the opening and final concerts respectively.

While some of the venues were the same for both festivals, however, the composer line-up for the FMP differed dramatically, featuring a dazzling array of British composers. The opening night of the FMP at the Royal Albert Hall consisted of a work called '*Pageant: Music and the People in Ten Episodes*' with a scenario by Randall Swingler. The music was composed and arranged by Bush, Lutyens, Maconchy, Rawsthorne, Rubbra and Vaughan Williams, among others. The work featured five hundred singers, a hundred dancers and The People's Festival Wind Band conducted by Alan Bush.⁴⁶ Episodes in the work drew directly from socialist ideals, evoking workers' revolts and ideals of peace and freedom for the downtrodden.⁴⁷ The use of a wind band in the headline concert rather than an orchestra, as well as massed singers, challenged the establishment primacy of the symphony orchestra in 'serious' music, and replaced it with a music associated with the workers.

⁴⁵ See Maria Kiladi, 'The London Labour Choral Union, 1924–1940: A Musical Institution of the Left', PhD thesis, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, University of London, (forthcoming), Chapter 4.

⁴⁶ British Library. Henschel Box 26, 1939. Festival of Music for the People programme brochure.

⁴⁷ Episode titles were as follows. 'Feudal England', 'The Massacre of the Innocents', 'Peasants in Revolt', 'Soldiers of Freedom', 'Village Green to Concert Hall', 'Changing Europe', 'Prisoners', 'Slaves', 'The People Advance' and 'For Peace and Liberty'.

The second concert on 3 April took an international perspective. As well as English, Welsh and Hungarian folk songs, it featured Schoenberg's *Peace on Earth* and three works by his pupil, Eisler: *News from Vienna 1938*, *Exile Cantata* and *Prison House Cantata*. Medvedeff and a balalaika orchestra performed 'Russian Tunes of today'.⁴⁸ This choice of works demonstrates the political leanings of the organisers, and a progressive musical liberalism that was characteristic of several strains of socialism. While the performance of harmonically advanced works was certainly not unheard of in London at this time, such events were not embraced wholeheartedly by the performance establishment.

The final concert on 5 April at Queen's Hall made use of twelve co-operative and labour choirs, Denis Noble (baritone) and Alan Bush himself at the piano, with the London Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Constant Lambert. This was a considerable mark of status, one that the LMF also enjoyed. There was also a premiere of a specially composed piece, *Ballad of Heroes* by Britten, which followed on from a previous collaboration in 1938 with left-wing author Swingler, *Advance Democracy*.⁴⁹ Ireland's *These Things Shall Be* was performed, as were the 'Lento' and 'Finale' of Bush's *Piano Concerto*— during which 'the audience is exhorted to consider the position of the musician in present day society.'⁵⁰ In this example, a direct correlation is made between the contemporary social situation and the music that is being heard. The approach to the audience was didactic: they were to listen to the music as if it posited questions, or provided answers and commentary on a particular subject.

The reviewer for *The Times* evidently had mixed feelings about the festival, taking a distinctly highbrow and conservative position. The overtly socialist elements are treated with suspicious caution, and the opening pageant was deemed 'ineffective' primarily because 'there was not enough music'.⁵¹ The new Britten work, on the other hand, was praised as 'astonishing'.⁵² The concert was described by *The Times* as the

⁴⁸ British Library. Henschel Box 26, 1939. Festival of Music for the People programme brochure.

⁴⁹ Philip Brett, et al. 'Britten, Benjamin'. *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed 10 May 2013, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/46435pg2>.

⁵⁰ British Library. Henschel Box 26, 1939. Festival of Music for the People programme brochure.

⁵¹ 'Festival of Music for the People: An Ineffective Pageant', *The Times* Monday 3 April 1939, 12.

⁵² 'Music for the People: London Festival'. *The Times* Tuesday 4 April 1939, 14.

‘proper business’ of the festival.⁵³ The reviewer found the folk performances more cheery than the instances in which the concert platform was used as a soap box.

But this [the Balalaika Orchestra] band, in national costume, played with such zest and rhythm that it cheered up the audience after an excursion into the gloomy region where music reluctantly joins hands with pamphleteering...⁵⁴

While many composers and performers were perhaps left-leaning, or had leftist sympathies, it was only the minority, such as Bush, who combined their musical practice with ardent rhetoric. The participation of composers and musicians in the festival did not necessarily indicate a strong endorsement of Bush’s Marxist views.⁵⁵

The Festival of Music for the People was very cheap to attend, especially when compared with the LMF. The highest-priced ticket for the FMP concerts was only 5 shillings. In stark contrast to the adverts for antiques and hotels advertised in the LMF brochure, the FMP brochure ran adverts for the Co-operative printing society and Co-operative building society. However, the ardent left-wing rhetoric that was clearly associated with the festival alienated some by obscuring the ‘musical’ content with the political.⁵⁶ The inclusion of Second Viennese School works, new compositions and an emphasis on the contemporary musician could also be considered intellectually rigorous or even off-putting.

What the festivals shared was an explicit engagement with music and musicians as a part of the wider political and social context. In addition, despite their opposing political leanings, both festivals asserted that Britain was a truly musical nation. While the LMF approached its advocacy from an imperialistic, competitively international view, the FMP took on the rhetoric of Soviet writers, claiming that the British ‘masses’ desire meaningful music in daily life. The FMP brochure stated:

No people is more richly gifted for music than ours in Britain. Every period of our history is reflected in its changing image. Each stage of the people’s advance manifests anew its driving force. At present many obstacles lie in the way of musical production and enjoyment. Masses of people feel the remoteness of

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid..

⁵⁵ See Kiladi, ‘The London Labour Choral Union’, chapters 4 and 5.

⁵⁶ Kiladi discusses the reluctance of Vaughan Williams to become heavily involved in the festival. Kiladi, ‘The London Labour Choral Union’, chapters 4 and 5.

much current music-making from their daily lives and suspect it to be a means of distracting attention from the important issues before them.⁵⁷

Like the Archbishop of Canterbury, the FMP brochure positions some music as good and some as bad, some as functional, some as frivolous. The FMP takes its preoccupation with contemporary music to a new level by going as far as to suggest that 'current music-making' (i.e. the classical canon) was employed as a sweetener intended to seduce the common man away from the hard realities of the political situation, as the communists understood it. The text goes on to address the causes that lie behind the compositions heard at the festival:

Uppermost in all men's minds to-day is the thought of PEACE, the question of their FREEDOM as responsible citizens and the problems related to their WORK. What more promising themes than these could musicians have? People do not primarily seek in music a flight from reality. Many look to it for a clear signal, giving courage to attack the difficult situation ahead.⁵⁸

This hints at the idea that these new works have added integrity as beacons guiding people towards a future, both musically and politically. The inclusion of these types of emotive passages (in both festivals), however platitudinous, encourages the audience member to make the link between the nation, the musician, the international political situation, the music being performed and the act of performance itself. In the case of the FMP, it could be seen that this also implies that the classical canon is the escapist music of the past; a 'Jerusalem brand' catering to the imperial elites who are, in effect, cut off from a worker's reality. Much like the LMF brochure, this text does not go into political specifics about the 'peace' and 'freedom' highlighted in the passage. Both festivals promoted the nation and ideas or identities of the nation in the formation of their respective performances, despite their very different starting points and their opposing visions for the future.

⁵⁷ British Library. Henschel Box 26, 1939. Festival of Music for the People programme brochure, 1.

⁵⁸ Ibid. Capitalisations original.

*How did music and 'nation' intersect at the BBC?*⁵⁹

Our knowledge of the BBC is well served by very focused research, as well as general studies of the Second World War that necessarily include material on the BBC. I draw on these while presenting some new archival material as well, in order to give a fuller contextualisation of music's intersections with the nation at war at this time. One cartoon from an October 1939 issue of *Punch* mocks the inadequate efforts of the BBC as the war broke out. A BBC announcer is depicted in white tie formal dress, standing proudly as if making some great patriotic oration at the microphone. The caption reads, 'This is the BBC Home Service. Ladies and Gentlemen – a gramophone record!'⁶⁰ This was not an isolated perspective: rather, many claimed that the BBC had done an injustice to the nation in several ways. It was not only the swift relocation to Bristol that rankled (Beecham described the BBC as 'scuttling out of London') but also the perceived 'make do and mend' approach to broadcasting that persisted in the period immediately after 3 September.⁶¹ The frequent broadcasting of gramophone records was seen as distinctly inferior to live performances (which consisted solely of Sandy MacPherson who seemingly played the organ non-stop), although this situation was remedied as the war progressed. In a nation at war, the live performance may have signified the nation's vitality.

As the mouthpiece for the nation, the BBC had to balance and make compatible patriotism and what was perceived as artistic integrity, whilst retaining what Doctor refers to as the BBC's 'cultural-expansionist goal'.⁶² Doctor describes this as the goal 'to entertain, to educate and inform, to bring the art music spectrum – both familiar and unfamiliar, old and new, accessible and difficult, standard and controversial – into the homes of the British public on a daily basis'.⁶³ As Nicholas tells us, 'the BBC steered well clear of an MOI proposal to hold a competition to find the best new patriotic song,

⁵⁹ The BBC, as referred to in this section, denotes the BBC Home Service, available to and designed for audiences in Britain. To investigate the Forces Programme and the Overseas Service would constitute an entirely new thesis with an altogether different focus. Therefore, unless otherwise specified, all references to broadcasting content and policy etc. refer to the Home Service.

⁶⁰ British Library, *Punch*, 25 October 1939, 455.

⁶¹ Our London Staff, 'Music in War-time: Sir Thomas Beecham's Anxious View: The BBC "Scuttle"', *Manchester Guardian*, 28 September 1939, 12.

⁶² Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music 1922–36*, 334.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

but set out to encourage more ‘highbrow’ musical patriotism, commissioning Britain’s leading composers’.⁶⁴

This suggests that the BBC had an ongoing concern with expressions of British nationhood and national identity that related to perceived standards of musical quality. While popular songs and even light orchestral music were recognised as morale-boosters, unifiers and motivators, as exemplified in the Forces Programme, the expression and embodiment of a national identity and the musical outpouring of a spiritual nationhood needed to be the preserve of the ‘higher’ arts if the BBC were to remain meaningful and legitimate.⁶⁵

Of course, the most overtly ‘national’ piece of music was the national anthem, which, as Richards has explored, welded monarchy and ideologies of empire to the nation.⁶⁶ However, national anthems did not belong to the elite forms of musical composition; national anthems needed to have mass appeal and be easy to sing. In one of the earliest BBC wartime commissions, Granville Bantock was commissioned to produce new arrangements of the British, Polish, French and Norwegian national anthems. It was particularly desired that these should be ‘straightforward arrangements with traditional harmonies and simple links rather than a “Fantasia” with freely invented counterpoint’.⁶⁷ This directive points to a practical, rather than an entirely artistic, purpose for the new arrangements, with ‘straightforward’ perhaps also being synonymous with ‘accessible’. Similarly, in 1942 policy reviewers at the BBC suggested a ‘scheme of commissioning British composers to arrange our national music for brass bands. This last is primarily for Overseas Service in which the brass band is a unique instrument for propaganda, but it will result in the addition of valuable new works to the general repertory.’⁶⁸

This ‘national music’ is not specified, although we might suggest that it comprised the ‘national songs’ (collections of old and new popular songs and folk arrangements), that featured in such cheap publications as the *News Chronicle* or *Daily*

⁶⁴ Nicholas, ‘From John Bull to John Citizen’, 41.

⁶⁵ For example the ‘gentrification’ of folk tunes by composers.

⁶⁶ Richards, ‘Music for Official Occasions: Coronations and Jubilees’, in *Imperialism and Music*, 88–151.

⁶⁷ BBC WAC R27/221/3 Music General, Department Meetings (Weekly): Minutes 1939–41, music department meeting minutes, 14 November 1939. Conference Room, Pembroke Road.

⁶⁸ BBC WAC R27/245/1 File 1A, Music General, Music Policy 1930–43, BBC music policy suggested revisions, 18 March 1942.

Mail song books, printed with words and scored for piano. These ‘light’ forms of music certainly had nationally significant functions. The traditional British brass band music, performed by people in town, factory or coal mine bands, was utilised for propaganda purposes and to inspire patriotism. Using brass bands in particular for the foreign broadcasts, not only promoted a militaristic sound, but demonstrated the musical ability of the British working man, and therefore by extension his culture and civility.

As already noted in the festival context above, art music also contributed towards Britain’s international musical reputation. For both domestic and overseas listeners assessing British prestige on the international platform, the broadcasting output of serious music was a serious business. Within her work on contemporary music at the BBC, Doctor tells us that, ‘between 1930 and 1936 two prominent issues preoccupied policy makers. First, discussions centred on the degree to which British music and musicians should be promoted, and foreign music and musicians excluded, in BBC programmes. Second, they debated the extent to which box-office considerations should affect programme content and balance.’⁶⁹

According to Doctor, the British/foreign music debate was a preoccupation of BBC staff at this time, and sources suggest that this continued well after 1936. In the report below, the BBC assesses the proportion of British music broadcast in the context of all serious music after the first few months of war.

Figure 7: Proportion of serious British music (chamber and orchestral) to complete output of serious music.⁷⁰

Week beginning December 31st 1939

Serious Music 18 hrs.15m

British Music 3 hrs 4m

Proportion 16.8%

Week beginning January 7th 1940

Serious Music 17 hrs

British Music 3 hrs

Proportion 17.6%

Week beginning April 21st 1940

Serious Music 15 hrs.15m

⁶⁹ Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music 1922–36*, 189.

⁷⁰ BBC WAC R27/245/1 File 1A, Music General, Music Policy 1930–43, Table.

British Music 3 hrs 12m
Proportion 20.9%

As we may discern from these figures, although the proportion of British music broadcast increases as a percentage, the actual minutes of British music broadcast remain almost static. It therefore cannot be said that significantly *more* British music was broadcast. However, the figures encourage us to reflect that while art or serious music broadcasting declined in quantity, the broadcasting of British music did at least remain constant, for this period at least. The fact that such a report was produced signifies that there was concern, perhaps both inside and outside the BBC, that British music should not be overlooked. In terms of new British composition, however, there is no sign of any wish to flood the programmes with British works.

This contrasts with the preceding years, as Doctor tells us that ‘the severe economic and political conditions of the 1930s resulted in intense pressure on the programme builders to support British music and musicians at the expense of the international outlook encouraged in the early years’.⁷¹ It is worth noting that in the pre-war years of the 1930s, the BBC did have some anxieties about foreign influence. According to Scannell and Cardiff, ‘in routine day-to-day output the issues of national identity and culture posed problems which, on the one hand, arose from divisions within the supposed unity of British life and culture and, on the other, from the impact of foreign cultures and their perceived threat to traditional national values’.⁷²

These perceived threats were not necessarily coming from the direction in which the political threat seemed greatest. While the government was peering nervously east into Europe, the BBC music department was looking west, in fear of ‘Americanization’.⁷³ Scannell and Cardiff go on to highlight that ‘in 1929 Gerald Cock, in charge of Outside Broadcasts, wrote a report on “American Control of the Entertainment Industry”. He warned that the BBC’s monopoly would not necessarily protect it from the “ramifications of the Transatlantic octopus”’.⁷⁴

The rising popularity and influence of American dance music and jazz worried the BBC music department. By comparison the Austro-German canon, despite its

⁷¹ Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music 1922–36*, 333.

⁷² Scannell and Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting*, 289.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 289.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 292.

attendant rising political significances, was not seen as terribly problematic. Even during the war, most of the Austro-German canon was retained on programmes after some initial disruption in 1939. Works or composers that were considered ‘difficult’ were added to a ‘prohibited’ list as the war developed and progressed, something that will be explored in the last section of this chapter. For the moment it is sufficient to note that the BBC did not seek to present an explicitly ‘British’ musical perspective.

The BBC handled Britishness differently in other areas of programming. Hajkowski presents representations of British nationhoods as embodied in perceptions of monarchy and empire. He argues that these two facets of ‘Britishness’ were in fact engaged with heavily by the BBC: ‘in addition to unashamedly representing Britain’s imperial past, the BBC became a consistent supporter of the empire during the interwar years. It presented the empire as an environment in which the best aspects of the British character and British institutions were at work; the empire, as reflected by the BBC, both constructed and reinforced British national identity.’⁷⁵

Hajkowski highlights that this trend continued into wartime, and goes on to say that, ‘the sheer quantity of empire programs generated during the war is impressive given the myriad demands made on the BBC by the government. The BBC continued to employ the empire as a symbol of *British* unity and common effort. The themes of benevolence of British rule and imperial unity, well established in the programs of the 1930s, continued during the war.’⁷⁶

Scannell and Cardiff also point out that the BBC constructed the idea of ‘family’ through notions of royalty and therefore empire and nation, by broadcasting events such as royal weddings, funerals and coronations (as well as an abdication).⁷⁷ Yet presumably, programmes about empire and these royal events would have included music. We might suggest, therefore, that it was not the case that the BBC was reluctant to engage with explicit forms of Britishness that involved music, but rather that it was unable or unwilling to engage with a discourse of Britishness through British composition. This seems to be borne out by BBC involvement with the festivals I discussed above. The BBC Symphony Orchestra played in the LMF, which promoted

⁷⁵ Hajkowski, *The BBC and National Identity in Britain 1922–1953*, 20.

⁷⁶ This was despite American disapproval of the British and their history and relationships with the empire, which was perceived as hypocritical in the context of the Second World War. Hajkowski, *The BBC and National Identity in Britain 1922–1953*, 51.

⁷⁷ For more information see Scannell and Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting*, 289.

British performance, but was not involved in the FMP, which focussed more on British composition and new music. It seems that the BBC sought popularity, which was to be found particularly in the high-art music canon that attracted the largest audiences from the widest social spectrum.

The approach of the BBC falls in line with structures of empire. Britishness could be constructed regardless of geographical location (benevolent rule, fair play, respect for the law, civilising missions), and the ‘universal’ ideals of German romanticism could be appropriated as needed. In the same way that Britain appropriated cultures in the empire, musical cultures were welcomed and respected in the concert halls. Aside from Austro-German music and musicians a great deal of Polish, French and Russian repertoire in particular can be observed on London stages in the 1930s and during the war. It was this sense of ‘fair play’ and giving each nation its due that was also promoted as a ‘British’ trait. Just as we have already sensed from the LMF, British musical performance (especially if it could be thought of as ‘cosmopolitan’), could be constructed as particularly ‘British’ because it was considered to be of a high standard, embraced universal values as its own, and was a demonstration of an advanced civilisation that believed in inclusion and fair play, in contrast to Nazi barbarism.

While questions of (national) repertoire in general could be dealt with dispassionately, the artists’ national affiliations were more problematic. In promoting the high standard of musical performance as something peculiarly British, the artists used for performances had preferably to be British *and* capable of a world-class performance standard. However, when one of these prerequisites was not met, where should the BBC’s priorities lie? Should the highest possible standard of performance outweigh considerations of nationality? Programmes of both the 1939 LMF and other public concerts in London in the period suggest that the performers held in highest esteem were often of foreign origin. They included, for example, Max Rostal, Elena Gerhardt, Benno Moiseiwitsch (a naturalised British citizen by the outbreak of war), Sergei Rachmaninov, Arturo Toscanini, Julius Isserlis, Oda Slobodskaya, the Rosé Quartet, the Czech Trio and Nina Milkina, to name but a few.⁷⁸

It seems that musicians who had managed to get out of Europe in the 1930s were worst off in terms of their appointments at the BBC. The Corporation would generally

⁷⁸ Records on this topic are inconsistent during the war years, most notably because many music department meeting minutes are missing. The best data and explicit comment about artist nationality can be found from records relating to the 1930s.

only employ naturalised citizens, and those with refugee status. Those who had fled ‘early’ were not necessarily classed as refugees and neither did they want to become British; they qualified in neither respect for being employed by the BBC (many were also interned).⁷⁹ The music policy revisions of 1942 suggest that the quality of performance was to be a priority, but that no foreigners would be employed where a British citizen would be equally well-qualified:

A continuous sufficient supply of performers of an adequate standard is essential to the BBC. Particularly is this so in the case of solo singers, where the resources are most limited. The BBC while avoiding false encouragement by the lowering of standards, consistently helps British artists in various ways: e.g. the exclusion of foreign artists (except wartime refugees) where British artists would be adequate substitutes.⁸⁰

However, arriving at a consensus was not straightforward, as these memoranda from the 1930s demonstrate. On 13 May 1933, after receiving a complaint from Sir Landon Ronald about a lack of English works on the air, Boult writes:

Discussing the Bruno Walter question in the D.G.’s room two days ago, he almost took the side that it would be better to have second-rate direction of the Orchestra if it was British, than first-rate direction if it was foreign, and a remark of the same kind at the Meeting on Thursday evoked a reply from me somewhat on these lines – “Do you really mean that you would prefer us to employ a second-rate Britisher in place of a first-rate foreigner at a concert of first-class importance?” Allen’s own reply was qualified somewhat, but I have an impression that others murmured [sic] “Yes”, and I certainly noticed Sir Edward Bairstow saying “Yes, by all means”.⁸¹

Boult’s incredulity is plain, but the debate continued. Shortly before the meeting in 1939 described below, he drew up a note in response to a management enquiry about how many British and foreign artists were being paid by the BBC for engagements.

⁷⁹ For example, Leo Wurmser, whose case was dealt with by Vaughan Williams. Leo Wurmser had been expelled from appointments in Vienna because of his Jewish heritage and had resided in Britain since 1934. He was, however, interned in Britain. A particularly emotional letter from his mother, Winnie Dawson, was sent to Adrian Boult (22 October 1940) listing all her family connections in Britain (she was originally Scottish), and their occupations, in a plea for him to be given work. BBC WAC R27/3/1 Music General, Alien Composers, File 1 1939–40. Letters.

⁸⁰ BBC WAC R27/245/1 File 1A Music General. Music Policy 1930–43 Appendix A, Music Policy 1942, B.16, 15.

⁸¹ BBC WAC R27/432 Music General, Public Concert Policy, May 1933–April 1935, letter from Adrian Boult, 13 May 1933.

Between 1930 and 1935, British conductors and singers occupied the vast majority of the engagements at the BBC in comparison to their foreign colleagues. However, the reverse was true for instrumentalists, and not once in this period did the number of British instrumentalists surpass or even equal that of foreign artists.⁸²

things came to a head at the last meeting, which was a somewhat stormy one, although the views of the members were not unanimous.

McEwen, although I believe he has since denied it, did actually say that he thought it was the duty of the BBC to use British artists only in public as well as studio work. Sir Hugh Allen, Waddington, and Dale, were, to an extent, on his side, not so much saying that we should never use foreign artists but that our first and real responsibility was towards British artists, especially at public concerts. Walford Davies and Bliss, on the other hand, were entirely in favour of using the best artists irrespective of nationality. We are all agreed that where standards are equal, British artists should be given preference, but I am wholly in favour of a policy in which art and not nationality comes first.

[...]

I think it would be an excellent thing if you were to read out this memorandum at the next meeting of the M.A.C., saying quite definitely that the sense of it represents our policy once and for all, so that an end may be put to these bickerings and uncertainties. If any member of the committee finds himself unable to agree with it, he always has his own remedy, but I do not think it will come to any resignations.⁸³

It seems that at the conclusion of these discussions, artistic merit did indeed gain supremacy in the policy over and above considerations of nationality. However, it is interesting to note that these discussions were taking place long before the war. While during the war the BBC could not disregard questions of nationality (or political affiliations), it did not seem to let the war be an excuse for overtly nationalistic and protectionist stances towards the employment of artists, as the following policy document makes clear:

Section II The Best Possible Performance

No 6. Foreign artists. The inclusion in programmes of foreign artists of international repute is desirable in the interests of programme quality. Such representation should be reasonably controlled, having regard to the adequate representation of the best native artists. Foreign artists who fall short of international standards are included in programmes only if they have something distinctive to offer in repertoire or style which could not be supplied by British

⁸² Ibid., note drawn up by Adrian Boult.

⁸³ BBC WAC R27/432 Music General, Public Concert Policy, May 1933–April 1935, private and confidential BBC internal memo from: D. E. to: D. G., 18 December 1934.

artists. (The international complications of wartime inevitably affect the spirit and practice of this ruling. The scarcity of artists of international standing and the desirability of special compliments to our allies are two factors out of many which modify the normal peacetime policy.)⁸⁴

The nature of the national loyalty here is worth scrutinising. The policy calls for an ‘adequate representation’ of British artists, and *not* a primacy, or even an equality. Far from promoting or ‘protecting’ the employment of British artists, the statement refers to the fact that the conditions of war may give reason to actively promote the employment of foreign artists, as an allied duty. The construction of a British musical national identity at the BBC therefore relied upon the discourse of a ‘first-rate’ standard of performance and the idea that thriving concert life signified a tolerant, cultured and civilised people. Considering the preferences given to foreign performers noted above, it is likely that the BBC’s general perspective was that British performers were not always up to scratch. In his history of the Third Programme which began after the war, Carpenter reveals that, ‘the poor standard of English professional musicians in 1946 is a subject that recurs in early Third Programme memos’.⁸⁵ However complex the reasons, explicit promotion and nationalistic advocacy for British performers was not part of the BBC wartime strategy.

The British art–music scene as explored in the written word

I use this section to develop a further angle, now drawing on publications that addressed the British music scene at the time. While aware that I do not have space to develop a comprehensive reading of the situation, I hope to move beyond existing analysis which is based primarily on the writings of individuals (such as Alison Garnham’s work on the writings of Hans Keller). I have based my approach on that of Hughes and Stradling (2001) who bring together a variety of sources in order to provide a flavour of commentary from the period in question. I have chosen a range of texts, including essays written by music-industry professionals such as Carner, Keller and Vaughan Williams, commentary in the national press and specialist music magazines, and, finally, a propaganda pamphlet entitled ‘British Music’.

⁸⁴ BBC WAC R27/245/1 File 1A, Music General, Music Policy 1930–43, BBC music policy, G28/42, 1 April 1942. See also Foreman, *From Parry to Britten*, 274–5.

⁸⁵ Carpenter, *The Envy of the World*, 19.

My account draws out three strands of thought: the idea of a British musical inferiority complex; the consequent tendency for self-deprecation; and finally the idea of an active citizen contributing to a rich British musical performance life atoning for these conditions of inferiority and self-deprecation. Each of them can be considered to sit under the umbrella of an obsessive competitiveness with continental Europe. With British compositional heritage so obviously lagging behind on the competitive European stage, what emerges is a picture in which *performance* is often resorted to as a marker of British musical activity, quality and status. Most of all, these sources demonstrate that a rich debate concerning questions of British musical identity was taking place at the time.

The idea of musical identity being subject to questioning in wartime was a topic which *Punch* takes for the following cartoon in which Pan, the god of music, is challenged to prove his identity.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ British Library *Punch*, 26 May 1941. No page number.



“I said, ‘May I see your identity card?’”

Figure 8: ‘I said, “May I see your identity card?”’. The god of music, Pan, surrounded by an ethereal glow, looks out of place in this English country scene. Reproduced with permission of *Punch* Limited.

The cartoon, taken from a special colour summer edition depicting scenes of war, exemplifies three ideas. Firstly it chooses to portray music as a god (and therefore the humour lies in the notion that a deity could be questioned). In portraying music as a god, the cartoon reinforces the lofty status of music. Secondly, it shows that music was subject to wartime measures such as questioning, the same as any other facet of society. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the cartoon depicts music as an ‘exotic’, looking out of place in a very ‘English’ pastoral scene, and it is perhaps because of this anomaly that the soldier feels the need to question Pan about his identity. Notably, no answer is given. Tellingly, there is an implication that ‘music’ is not a natural part of the British identity and sits conspicuously, and awkwardly, within it.

In his essay, *Musical Self-Contempt in Britain*, Austrian-born Keller looks with both affection and non-native perspective at the British perceptions of their own musicality. He provides examples of anonymous English composers who were thrilled when he had described their work as ‘un-English’, particularly by his comment that ‘nobody could possibly guess that this has been written by an Englishman’.⁸⁷ He also observes the preoccupation with Austro/German legitimisation. For example, he discusses the attempts by critics to place Britten as an *instrumental* composer. ‘We observe, Ladies and Gentlemen, that musical self-contempt in Britain created the wishful and completely illusory rumour among the friends of Benjamin Britten’s music that the *Spring Symphony* would rehabilitate him as an instrumental composer (meaning: an un-British composer – meaning: an Austrian symphonist).’⁸⁸ Presumably a choral and song composer would indicate Britishness and therefore inferior skill. Keller goes on to say of the nineteenth century that ‘English music was in such a rotten state that an Englishman’s contempt of it would not necessarily indicate the presence of group self-contempt, but could simply be taken as an aesthetically realistic judgement.’⁸⁹ Keller’s assessment of British self-deprecation was that it was justified.

⁸⁷ Hans Keller, ‘Musical Self-Contempt in Britain’, in Christopher Wintle (ed.), *Music and Psychology*, 197–209. Keller moved from Vienna to London in 1938 and henceforth remained in London. He was an author and critic of music and in 1959 began work at the BBC, where he went on to become, among other things, in charge of chamber music. Christopher Wintle, ‘Keller, Hans’, *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed 20 May 2013, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/14843>.

⁸⁸ Hans Keller, ‘Musical Self-Contempt in Britain’, 197–209.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 205

Keller's observations of 1950 were manifest seven years earlier in a frank depiction of music in Britain published in 1943, in which the idea of the active citizen taking part in all forms of music-making is tempered by the use of self-deprecating asides. The first page of the British Council's guide to British Music for the non-native contains the following words. 'Music is one of the things that matter in England . . . The history of English music is a record not merely of composers but of musical activity.'⁹⁰ The wording here suggests an attempt to elevate the status of performance activity in contrast to a 'mere' list of composers. These statements precede a sweeping survey of British musical activities including emphasis on brass bands, cathedral choirs, the proms, communal singing, amateur practitioners and concert societies as well as the current situation and hopes for the future.

However, many positive descriptions of flourishing musical activity carry caveats as follows. After a passage on composers we read that, 'the music of Parry and Stanford, for all their skill and earnestness, does not show a very marked individuality', and in a section referring to opera that, 'opera has never been an integral part of musical life'.⁹¹ The performing conditions for Purcell's sacred music 'have not always been favourable' and from this composer's secular output 'the public knows little more than a handful of delightful songs and a single sonata'.⁹² The revisions to early volumes of the *Oxford History of Music* were deemed to have 'not been wholly successful' and attention was drawn to the precarious orchestral deputy system and the conservative tastes of the public.⁹³ After describing how some great composers such as Bantock, Elgar and Holst have written for brass bands, the author for this British Council publication, Jack Westrup, reminds the reader, before he or she gets too optimistic, that, 'it does not follow, however, that the normal repertory of the bands consists of music of this type. For one thing there is too little of it, for another the taste of the performers does not always keep pace with their skill.'⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Jack Westrup, *British Music – British Life and Thought*. (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1943), 5.

⁹¹ Ibid., 26, 14.

⁹² Ibid., 25.

⁹³ Ibid, 21.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 9.

These short phrases deal a blow to both the quality and quantity of British musical prowess. In a particularly damning verdict, Westrup makes the following suggestion:

The public in general has a profound respect for musical diplomas and degrees, not realising that they do not indicate outstanding excellence but merely prove a reasonably high standard of achievement. The passion which afflicts some musicians, particularly teachers, for collecting letters after their names can be ludicrous, especially when diplomas in one and the same subject are won at different institutions.⁹⁵

While this particular booklet illustrates a wide sweep of British musical life, it could not be accused of spurious flattery. The negative tone can also be traced in press discourse about British performances and/or the state of British music. In common with the music festivals and the BBC already discussed in this chapter, the intersection of music and British identity tends to emerge in the press within a discourse about performance prestige. However, what is more apparent in these more general discourses is the question of international perceptions, and it is from this preoccupation that the inferiority complex can be traced. The following article, appearing in the *Manchester Guardian* at the start of 1939, evaluates the international perception of British music quite literally, using the performance rights fees as indicators of international demand for British music relative to British demand for other nations' music.

Mr. Kenneth Wright, an assistant director of the BBC, told the annual conference of the Incorporated Society of Musicians in London yesterday that we paid about £10,000 a year in performing rights for serious music to some eight of nine European countries.

‘For every pound that goes to those countries we receive back sixpence for rights on British works played in them,’ he said: ‘We pay France £500 a year for every £1 they pay us. From Germany we receive £1 for every £75 sent.’ On the credit side, Holland paid us four times as much each year as we paid them, Denmark paid one and a half times as much. Poland twice as much, and for Italy the payments were equal.

Sir Thomas Beecham, who presided, said that France was looked upon almost as a hopeless case as far as the performance of British music was concerned. ‘We may find some consolation in this reflection,’ he said, ‘that the French do not like the greater part of their own music and do not listen to it. Germany entertains the idea, even more firmly and consistently than France, that there is no music in the world but German music.’ The business of introducing

⁹⁵ Ibid., 19.

English art to the Continent was slow, but it appeared that, with the exception of France and Germany, we were on the upgrade.⁹⁶

In reporting the ISM's findings this author seems indignant that while British performances seem to value the music of the French and Germans, there is no fiscal reciprocation. The figures presented here serve to feed the British musical inferiority complex by providing 'proof' that British music holds no economic weight. Beecham is scathing about European perceived attitudes towards the Austro-German canon, while almost mirroring (German) self-celebration by affirming that British performance, at least in quantity, is the world leader:

From the point of view of concerts London is the centre of the musical world. It is in advance of Berlin, incomparably in advance of Paris, and it is even ahead of New York in this respect. You can hear more good music in one week in London than in one month in Berlin.⁹⁷

It does not emerge from these accounts that a number of the most celebrated performers in London at the time were, in fact, foreign. Therein lay a further tension. Many welcomed the presence of foreign musicians (discursively at least), for it served to increase the image of Britain as host.

Alongside the promotion of municipal musical wealth, there was certainly a desire to protect and promote British artists. In a letter to *The Times* John Christie of Glyndebourne claims that British performers also had box-office power and had 'nothing to fear' from foreign competition. He makes a specific comment on the advertising of nationalities and argues that he was able to produce sell-out opera performances with 'only one foreigner'.

given the right opportunities and the right preparation, British artists have nothing to fear from foreign names. We claim also that this view was accepted by the British public. In the 1938 and 1939 festivals we published in the Press daily the nationalities of our singers. Covent Garden omitted the nationalities. Covent Garden in 1939 gave three performances of *Don Giovanni* with only one British singer and reduced their price to 25s., while we with only one foreigner, Baccaloni, maintained our price at £2 and sold out nine performances.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ 'British Music: Another Adverse "Trade Balance"', *Manchester Guardian*, 6 January 1939, 12.

⁹⁷ 'British Music: Another Adverse "Trade Balance"', *Manchester Guardian*, 6 January 1939, 12.

⁹⁸ 'Foreign Musicians: John Christie', *The Times*, Tuesday 24 February 1942, 5..

Christie's letter highlights that with 'only one foreigner' he manages to sell out with high prices, while Covent Garden has had to reduce prices with what is apparently an overwhelmingly foreign cast. This letter makes explicit the link between advertising the nationalities of performers and financial success: in this case Christie attempts to quash the common perception that foreign musicians were better for the box office by arguing that British artists have produced this success.

However, the foreign musician's power at the box office was only part of the debate. The musician's position in the wider context of national life was also in question. The foreign musician was revered and worshipped for an apparently superior musical skill and at the same time resented and blamed for what was perceived as British musical inferiority. In the passage below, Christopher Fifield paints a gloomy picture of musical impoverishment in the 1930s, and suggests that xenophobic elements were symptomatic of the economic climate. He argues that 'several factors seem to have contributed to the wave of xenophobia and protectionism which dominated the pages of newspapers and journals within and without the musical profession during the early 1930s . . . Home music making was substituted by the radio and the gramophone, sales in pianos slumped. Numbers of teachers (particularly the piano and singing) fell in due proportion to lower numbers of pupils. The standard of orchestral playing dropped, the deputy system became as bad as it had been at the turn of the century, concerts were put on with one rehearsal to save costs, the only standard which rose seemed to be that of sight reading.'⁹⁹

One factor which may have contributed to the 'wave' of protectionism, and perhaps xenophobia, that Fifield describes above can be observed in an issue of the *Musical Times* in 1931. This printed and commented on the latest manifesto of the Incorporated Society of Musicians, addressing the issue of the foreign performer on the British concert stage.

There has existed for many years past, and still exists among certain sections of the community, the idea that only a foreign performer must of necessity be the superior of our own musicians . . . For the well-being of music in this country, two things are of supreme importance – ability and opportunity. Ability our musicians have in plenty: their opportunity can only come from public support. They deserve it, and will justify it. We ask for this support in full measure, both from societies and individuals responsible for the organization of concerts, and

⁹⁹ Fifield, *Ibbs and Tillett*, 216.

from those who, in the field of hospitality, have too often preferred a foreign lion in music to a British one.¹⁰⁰

The editors of the journal do not think that the manifesto goes far enough, declaring that it was ‘too mild’ and encouraging musicians to take an active role in the protection of British interests.¹⁰¹ They go on to argue that:

As to the internationalism of art, we are frankly disrespectful; so far as this country is concerned, it has long since become a one-sided arrangement under which the imports swamp the exports. And if the artist has nothing to do with politics, so much the worse for both. There are many ways in which the lot of both art and artists in this country would be immeasurably better to-day had the profession in the past taken an active interest in politics, both local and national.¹⁰²

The article makes the point that the balance of musical imports and exports needs redressing and that to achieve this, the profession needs to engage in wider social and political debates.

This article is not an isolated case. Such questioning of the balance between British and foreign musical products and prestige was taking place throughout the profession and it continued into the Second World War. In an essay of 1942, in which he muses on the role that foreign musicians could play in the musical life of Britain, Vaughan Williams hints at the threat therein:

Perhaps the way our distinguished visitors can help us is by becoming musically British citizens; by getting at the heart of our culture, to see the art of music as we see it, and then to stimulate it and add to it with their own unique experience and knowledge. If, however, they propose to establish a little ‘Europe in England’, quite cut off from the cultural life of this country and existing for itself alone, then indeed they will have the enthusiastic support of those snobs and prigs who think that foreign culture is the only one worth having, and do not recognize the intimate connexion between art and life.¹⁰³

While he, then, in accord with the vast majority of the rest of the music industry, welcomed the input and influence of foreign artists, here he expresses a frustration not

¹⁰⁰ ‘Musicians and the Crisis’, *Musical Times*, 1 December 1931, 1073–4.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Vaughan Williams, *National Music and Other Essays*, 158.

only that a British musicality will be passed over in favour of a ‘little Europe’ but that the latter indeed would be ‘valued’ more by the establishment. In many ways, concerns about British musical citizenship such as those voiced by Vaughan Williams were diminished in 1945 with the premiere of *Peter Grimes*. Banfield identifies that moment as follows. ‘At the moment of *Peter Grimes* . . . the country could at last not only host a musical league of nations but had won itself a seat on the council.’¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, in the war years, Britain’s concert life, especially in London, defined and perpetuated its musical national identity without the need for predominantly native creativity. One contributing factor was a rise in the perception of the ‘active citizen’ who was involved in the fate of the nation. As historian Siân Nicholas has argued, ‘during the Second World War, a more positive model of patriotism and citizenship was articulated, particularly by the political left, with progressives such as J. B. Priestley, George Orwell, the ‘Mass-Observers’ and the “people’s Archbishop”, William Temple projecting a more inclusive and participatory concept of citizenship’.¹⁰⁵

If handled in certain ways, musical performance may lend itself well to promoting this kind of model. Performances of classical music (at CEMA concerts, National Gallery concerts, popular concerts and BBC broadcasts) in particular promoted the idea that *all* citizens in Britain had access to, and enjoyed, the noble pursuits of great art.¹⁰⁶ Performance was ostensibly participatory, while indicating serious, civilised pursuits. The concert audience could also be interpreted as an effective metaphor for the nation: a large group of seemingly unconnected people gathered to experience shared values. In such ways, national inclusivity, active citizenship and elevated moral and artistic values could all be implied through musical performance. Vaughan Williams in particular demonstrated his belief in this, when he constructed the active citizen as a force in sustaining and creating a musical identity for the nation. ‘We must cultivate a sense of musical citizenship’, he wrote in reference to England.¹⁰⁷ Along the same lines,

¹⁰⁴ Stephen Banfield, ‘Introduction’, *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain*, 1–6.

¹⁰⁵ Nicholas, ‘From John Bull to John Citizen’, 39–40.

¹⁰⁶ Nicholas suggests this occurred in the BBC’s outlook on audiences. ‘The BBC began the war with a crude emphasis on traditional stereotypes of national character. This emphasis evolved into a more complex pattern of regional, class and gender identities, in which the listener was represented not simply as a British subject (the product and representative of a proud but static heritage) but as a British citizen, actively engaged in the national struggle, looking to make a direct contribution to the future of his or her country.’ Nicholas, ‘From John Bull to John Citizen’, 37.

¹⁰⁷ Vaughan Williams, *National Music and Other Essays*, 10.

he praised the choral societies and amateur orchestras of Britain and described the amateur musician as the ‘musical salt of the earth’ or ‘the great army of humble music makers’ who provided the ‘solid foundation’ upon which the musical nation might grow.¹⁰⁸

However, the relationships between performance and composition and their function as symbols for nation and nationhood continued to be uneasy. While the BBC, the London Musical Festival and the press configured Britain as a nation that hosted and nurtured the best performances in the world, the attitude towards composition remained more strained, revealing once more the notion of inferiority. The following report from *The Times* not only demonstrates this notion of inferiority, but also suggests a national apathy towards the active promotion of British music.

Nevertheless, the season 1939–1940 leaves little to remember beyond its humiliating assumption that London audiences cannot be attracted to Queen’s Hall by any music composed later than the nineteenth century (with the occasional exception of Sibelius), and is completely disinterested in the music of native composers old or new. The British Council sends us a crumb of comfort in a long list of “Performances of British Music abroad since the outbreak of war,” which certainly suggests that other people are more interested in our music than we Londoners are supposed to be. The list consists of major works, mainly orchestral; the names of Delius and Elgar appear in it, but otherwise it is concerned solely with music by composers alive to-day... [and this list goes on to mention Ireland, Britten, Walton, Bliss, Vaughan Williams, Lambert etc] . . . How surprised we should be if any considerable number of the works here referred to were found to be included in the programmes for the season 1940–41 at Queen’s Hall! But why not? Surely the musical public would welcome a pleasant surprise by then, and most of these works can be commended as pleasant music, to rate them no higher than that.¹⁰⁹

This report suggests that conservative musical taste has led to the perception of a national apathy towards British music. In this instance, programmers for the 1939 to 1940 season are blamed for assuming that audiences have conservative tastes and would be uninterested in native products. In light of the author’s grumblings on the British reception of British composition, one might be perplexed by the dismissiveness of the last phrase. It does not strike the reader as a ringing endorsement for the native composition the author purports to champion. The article seems to suggest that notions

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 239.

¹⁰⁹ ‘British Music Abroad: A War Season’, *The Times*, Saturday 23 March 1940, 4.

of inferiority are so ingrained as to dissuade those responsible for repertoire programming from actively promoting native composition.

However, it was not just the lack of confidence in British music for British audiences that presented problems; the image that constant self-deprecation projected abroad was also of concern. In a diplomatic debacle, forty parcels of music, sent through diplomatic channels by the British Council, arrived in Moscow but were left unopened because the orchestras had been temporarily disbanded. This rather sad image of British music lying unopened and unheard in a distant Russian post-room was not lost on the commentators, and several articles in *The Times* followed. The following one in particular not only attacks the apparent apathy of the British towards their own music but also the particularly British trait of self-deprecation:

British music, like anything else British, has been so apologetically, so depreciatingly mentioned in the presence of foreigners that the Russians, intellectually alert though they are, probably take their notion of it from a typical English musician, one Bully Bottom. 'I have a reasonable good ear in music. Let us have the tongs and the bones.' Those, they may believe, are the sort of noises of which this isle is full.¹¹⁰

It is interesting that this commentator resorts to two Shakespeare references to make his point: Shakespeare and English literature were considered to be the most potent facets of English or British culture, much more so than music.¹¹¹ The idea of self-deprecation that this author describes can also be seen expressed in the *Musical Times* in 1944:

Today the British Musical Renaissance [sic] has proved itself, though we still have to reckon with native scepticism. I have never forgotten a remark made to me some years ago at an international gathering where I was, as usual, urging its claims. 'How can you expect us to be interested in your music,' I was asked, 'when there is so little evidence that, as a nation, you are yourselves interested in it?' There is still some ground for that reproach. Our task is to remove it.¹¹²

While the model of the superior outsider was the dominant feature of discussions, there were some contributors who wished to configure composition without reference to other national styles. Vaughan Williams attributed the apathy of British audiences directly to composers:

¹¹⁰ 'Lost Chords', *The Times*, Monday, 27 April 1942, 5..

¹¹¹ Temperley, 'Xenophilia in British Musical History', 13–14.

¹¹² Edwin Evans, 'Then and Now', *Musical Times*, September 1944, 269–71.

As long as composers persist in serving up at second-hand the externals of the music of other nations, they must not be surprised if audiences prefer the real Brahms, the real Wagner, the real Debussy, or the real Stravinsky to their pale reflections.¹¹³

Vaughan Williams can be seen here advocating the use of native folk music to really create a national music that appeals to the local, rather than a universal community. Erwin Stein writing in *Tempo* in 1945 focusses similarly on the internal situation, and even sees the lack of (British) compositional precedent as a significant advantage for contemporary composers.

It seems to me that Britten has made the best of the chance circumstance that he comes from a country without continuous musical tradition. He is not burdened, as composers of other nations, by a heritage which would compel him to continue the ways and manners of immediate predecessors.¹¹⁴

It is clear that Stein recognises *Peter Grimes* as something quite new, as he does not credit Britten's immediate predecessors as constituting a 'heritage'. Mosco Carner describes the process in socio-political terminology:

The younger generation, realising the inevitable limitations of a style in which conscious nationalism was so predominant, emancipated themselves and followed a less restrained and more international line, such as Bliss, Walton and Bush. Even Vaughan Williams was affected by this continental trend . . . the youngest British composers, like Britten and Berkeley, are steering a wholly international and eclectic course.¹¹⁵

Meanwhile such attitudes triggered anxiety in other quarters. Mátyás Seiber, for instance, warned against the isolationist attitudes that the conflict might have engendered.

We foreign musicians who have had the privilege of living and working in England during the last few years must, like anybody else, feel the aliveness, the oft-mentioned 'cultural upsurge' which permeates the artistic and musical life of the country these days. Something is happening, something which is essentially alive and sound: the musical atmosphere is exhilarating, it is full of interest and activity in which we gladly participate . . . It is rather easy to adopt a complacent

¹¹³ Vaughan Williams, *National Music and Other Essays*, 9.

¹¹⁴ Erwin Stein, 'Opera and "Peter Grimes"', *Tempo*, September 1945, 2–6.

¹¹⁵ Mosco Carner, *Of Men and Music* (London: Joseph Williams Ltd., 1944), 25.

attitude and to declare: ‘We have the best orchestras; we have the best soloists; we have the best composers; we have the best conductors’, etc., without really making sure by comparison that this is so . . . When the frontiers are open again and contact re-established, I think we may have quite a number of surprises, discovering new names and new talents of whom at present we know nothing. I hope, therefore, that the danger of isolationism, always inherent in an island community, will be avoided. Such an attitude, which is understandable in war-time, would be a fatal mistake in a post-war world, the greatest hope of which is international collaboration.¹¹⁶

The background to Seiber’s remarks lies in his own experiences of the situation as a foreigner, and these were undoubtedly mixed. As an immigrant refugee from 1930s Europe he was not in a strong position, as described above. Seiber urges a move away from thinking about music with a view to making competitive comparisons, and instead advocates a future where collaboration takes the lead. However, sources examined here so far indicate Britain’s general welcoming of, and indeed preference for, the foreigner in British musical life. The 1939 musical festivals in particular go against Seiber’s fear of isolationism.

Yet there are other writers from whom one can trace analogous positions. For instance W. R. Anderson, a regular contributor to the *Musical Times*, expressed similar views to Seiber in the context of composition.

It is no good Dr. Jacob’s pretending (or seeming to pretend: but I take his words on their face-value, naturally) that every man’s hand is against the British composer. That is nonsense. All we want is fine art – and today, for reasons perfectly obvious by now, we get precious little of it.¹¹⁷

Both Seiber and Anderson warn against approaching the question of British music by placing ‘us’ and ‘them’ in opposition; Seiber advocates caution in asserting that ‘we have’ this and ‘we have’ that and hopes, ultimately, for collaborative efforts; Anderson asserts that ‘all we want is fine art.’ Anderson then continues, in less than diplomatic language, to enlighten the reader to his pet hates in the rhetoric of British music, particularly the obsession with international validation.

Chauvinism: ‘Do not let us worry about what foreigners think of our music until

¹¹⁶ Roberto Gerhard, Egon Wellesz and Mátyás Seiber, ‘English Musical Life: A Symposium’, *Tempo* 11, June 1945, 2–6.

¹¹⁷ W. R. Anderson, ‘British Music’, *Musical Times*, October 1945, 313–14.

they begin to worry about what we think of theirs.’ There speaks the true Johnny Bull, in the succession of ‘There’s a foreigner, Bill; heave half a brick at him.’ I’m not alarmed at foreign opinion; but as I happen to have travelled fairly widely, I know what foreigners think, and it seems to me useful that we should consider (if not necessarily adopt) opinions outside the area of the parish pump, around which some composers here have perhaps tended too closely to huddle. ‘Do let us allow British music to have a character of its own’ (Dr. Jacob). Hear, hear! But I’d put it: ‘Let us *insist* that every composer we listen to has a character of his own’: not one borrowed from folkery or any other jiggery-pokery.¹¹⁸

In a barely concealed jibe at Vaughan Williams, Anderson views the folk idiom as too self-referential to ever constitute a legitimate British music; it is too self-conscious, and in being so perhaps loses integrity. Both Anderson and Seiber in their commentaries warn against heaving ‘half a brick’ at the foreigner in the pursuit of a British music. It would be unnecessary and ultimately destructive. In contrast, Vaughan Williams is concerned that without distance from the foreign masters and foreign musical heritage being created, a truly ‘British’ voice will not be cultivated.

The sources discussed in this section indicate that although the foreigner was omnipresent in British musical life during the Second World War, the status and constituents of British music in comparison to the overwhelming foreign influence was much debated. As a selection of published commentaries, these sources show us certain trends of thought: a preoccupation with Britain’s musical status, competition with the continent, the illegitimacy of Britain’s musical voice compared with the ‘legitimate’ array of continental voices (primarily Austro-German), and the idea that the British, despite these deficiencies, are active music-makers. Commentators (both British and foreign) acknowledged and mourned the musical inferiority complex and tendency for self-deprecation, and yet offered very little in the way of solutions. The question that is repeatedly posed from a variety of angles is how can Britain extricate herself from this position of inferiority. How can Britain become truly competitive in the continental musical sphere? The perceived audience apathy towards promoting British music was excused by the idea that Britain could assume the role of benevolent host and provide audiences with more cosmopolitan musical engagement rather than jingoistic (and therefore un-British) promotion of a national music. Within these commentaries described above, Britain is frequently positioned as ‘inferior’ when held up to the yard-

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

stick of continental musical products. Attempts to situate British musical life in a superior position use the idea of activity and performance, rather than the more problematic concepts associated with compositional style.

A 'European tournament of cultural prestige' and the cuckoo in the nest

By the time I had put my bowler hat under my seat in the grand circle at Queen's Hall I was in a state of unsporting excitement about Kreisler. The name itself was suggestive of eminence . . . My capacity for admiration was automatic and unlimited and his photograph on the programme made me feel that he must be a splendid man.¹¹⁹

Sassoon's fox-hunting protagonist views even this concert through a 'sporting' lens, and demonstrates how, in his cheerful mediation of widely held opinion, he becomes excited at the concert before even a note is played. The name of the recitalist suggests 'eminence', presumably because it was German-sounding, a situation that continued into the Second World War.¹²⁰ By that stage, German musical heritage could be considered a cuckoo in the British musical nest: like the cuckoo it was welcomed and nurtured, although at the same time questions were raised about the validity and status of native musical products.

However, these questions remained as mere questions, rather than translating into the more aggressive prohibitive actions that were experienced during the First World War; such musical xenophobia, described by Ehrlich as 'mean and philistine parochialism', had little credence by 1939.¹²¹ Indeed, despite such examples of adverts in the press, such as 'British Pianos for British Concerts' (by Chappell), it remained the case that German-made pianos were still in demand to grace the best chamber-music stages of London during the Second World War.¹²² This was not a wartime obligation. Many flyers and programmes of the day actively and proudly advertised their

¹¹⁹ Siegfried Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), 117–18. The protagonist, George Sherston, is a fictionalised version of Sassoon himself.

¹²⁰ Pamela Potter, *Most German of the Arts*, 203–4.

¹²¹ Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century*, 187.

¹²² Advertisement, *Daily Telegraph* 2 March 1940, 14.

possession of a Bechstein or a Steinway (an American company, with German founders). Steeped in the Austro-German tradition, any attempts at British musical ‘propaganda’ were fraught with complexity. In the music industry, where propagandistic jingoism simply would not work, the promotion of the British sense of ‘fair play’ had to suffice. In stark contrast to the Aliens Order of 1920, a policy of tolerance was negotiated mid-war in 1942.¹²³

There was also, at last, an agreement reached with the Ministry of Labour about alien musicians worked out between the Society, the Musicians’ Union, the Musicians’ Refugee Committee and the Ministry during a series of meetings in 1942. This stated: ‘The principle to be adopted should be, so far as is practicable, complete equality of treatment between the British musician and the Foreign musician; that is to say, that a Foreign musician may be permitted to accept professional engagements unless, were he a British subject, he would be liable for service in the Armed Forces or in civil employment connected with the war.’¹²⁴

How this policy was followed in practice in individual cases it is impossible to tell. The policy seems to construct a catch-22 situation from which most foreign musicians were likely to gain very little, if any, benefit. Indeed, it seems that only female or elderly foreign musicians (who, if British, would have fewer opportunities for war-work) had the chance to gain employment under such measures. The rapid pace of change in the international situation seems to have resulted in piecemeal (and seen with hindsight, inadequate) legislation. It is also difficult to tell how much this type of policy impacted on the ‘coal face’ of music performance, for example, in private hire halls such as Wigmore Hall.

As we shall see, the Wigmore Hall in particular seems to have had no problems producing concerts by foreign artists in great numbers. The Dartington Report of 1949 suggests that foreign artists had been particularly influential in the case of chamber music.

Great foreign artists have, by their excellence, helped to build the audience for recital and chamber music and, though there are now many more British artists

¹²³ Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century*, 187.

¹²⁴ Incorporated Society of Musicians. *The ISM. The First Hundred Years*, 27.

of standing, foreign artists have, and will always have, something to contribute. In any case, lack of international competition could only result in a lowering of British musical standards.¹²⁵

War with Germany in 1939 did not alter the British perception that these artists were still the authorising stamp of a good concert and the concert promoters were also alert to this view.¹²⁶ Indeed, in this article printed mid-war, it is suggested that nationalities are negligible when it comes to the performance platform. ‘And why bother so much about nationalities? The business of the concert-room is to bring, and keep, forward the best from wherever it comes, no matter its origin, country or date.’¹²⁷

This openness inside was also projected outwards. While the London Festival of Music aimed to deliver a ‘decisive message’ to the continent, the message was not necessarily a centralised statement of nationalism.¹²⁸ Rather, as we have seen, the repertoire and artists emphasised Britain’s role as imperial host and not Britain as a centre for nurturing native giftedness. Richards argues that reflections of Britain’s imperial role often meant communicating ideas of imparting peace, democracy, infrastructure etc, and could be positioned in opposition to the perceived aggressive, oppressive imperial styles of rule.¹²⁹ This also allowed for the conflicted relationship with Germany to be somewhat tempered. As Hughes and Stradling state, this continued to develop in the period:

English musical culture assessed its own image by reference to the received images of other nations. The tendency towards comparison was elemental and ubiquitous: constant self-audit was necessary to self-definition. The standard of comparison had always been Germany; after 1870 it became the new united Reich. Germany and its musical *Kultur* formed the stone upon which the blade of English music, that great Excalibur, could be honed – and, ultimately, the enemy against whom it was to be wielded.¹³⁰

¹²⁵ Dartington Hall Trustees, *The Arts Enquiry: Music*, 94.

¹²⁶ Pamela Potter, *Most German of the Arts*, 203–4.

¹²⁷ ‘Music in 1942: The London Concert-Room’, *The Times*, Friday 2 January 1942, 6.

¹²⁸ British Library. Henschel Box 26, 1939. London Music Festival: May 1939 23 April–28 May, the Festival Book, 5.

¹²⁹ Richards, *Imperialism and Music*, 14–15.

¹³⁰ Stradling and Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance*, 117.

Going on, they point out that the search for a British (or English) musical voice was highly contradictory, when one considers that the music of the nineteenth century ‘nationalists’ was considered inferior to the Austro-German aesthetic.¹³¹

The ongoing celebration of Germany and other countries in continental Europe, and the related self-criticism, can be explained through four main points. The first emerges from primary sources, and was the lack of infrastructure. For an author writing in the *Listener*, Britain’s lack of nationalised cultural structures (compared to the highly developed institutions of its European counterparts) remained an obstacle to the nation fulfilling its potential.¹³²

In this curious war, in which diplomacy outraces strategy and the aeroplanes are as busy transporting emissaries as carrying bombs, the arts have been added to the crafts of policy in the creation of prestige or, if we must use that much-abused word, propaganda. Does Germany wish to impress the Balkans? Then she throws in not only the inevitable Dr. Clodius, but the whole opera of Frankfurt, two hundred and fifty strong in the supposition that, if music be the food of love, ‘The Ring’ can at least be a bond of amity. Paris replies with an elaborate tour of the Comédie Française, a team of whose best players with a large repertoire are off to Turkey and Syria by way of the Balkan capitals. Britain is not unwilling to take part in this enlistment of art to be diplomacy’s journeyman, but we sadly lack the organisations. We have no State or municipal teams of players, singers and musicians to detach at will. It has been our pride – or was it just parsimony? – to keep art and policy asunder and to ridicule all thought of a National Theatre and Opera or a Ministry of Culture. We have a British Council, whose aim is the projection abroad of our ideas and ideals, but it lacks the existing artistic units with which to compete in this European tournament of cultural prestige.¹³³

According to this source, the cultural politics of the Second World War could have provided the catalyst for Britain to join the modern European tournament, and overcome its past imperial role. Similar views about infrastructure emerge from Westrup, writing on music for the British Council Pamphlets, *British Life and Thought*.

The festival that Rutland Boughton (b.1878) founded at Glastonbury in Somerset was a failure, not because the town was remote, nor because the conditions of

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Pamela Potter suggests that the Nazis provided structures and finances to assist music in order to ‘downplay their image as barbarians’, Potter, *Most German of the Arts*, xii.

¹³³ Ivor Brown, ‘Arts and Policy’, the *Listener*, London, 28 March 1940, 616.

production were inadequate, nor again because the emphasis was all on Boughton's own work, but because it was useless to rear a young plant before the soil was ready. Bayreuth was possible because opera was already an established institution in Germany. If we English want opera we must first have opera-houses and regular performances not only at Sadler's Wells but in every important town in the country.¹³⁴

As we can see, even in this British Council publication designed to promote Britain abroad, Westrup does not shy away from highlighting perceived deficiencies in British musical life.

Other writers sought to celebrate Britain's special place with respect to Europe, and defend it from the charge of inadequacy that way. Therein we might trace a second reason for Britain's lack of compositional weight, namely its historical role and ongoing as benevolent host to 'others' (as exemplified in the building of empire). Westrup contributes to the debate by dismissing the idea of 'competition':

From the seventeenth century onwards England has been a happy-hunting ground for Continental musicians. It was this receptive attitude that encouraged Handel to reside here, which made Mendelssohn the hero of the Victorians and gave Dvořák a welcome which he never forgot. Performers have had a similar experience . . . As for composers, we may admit without shame that we have had no Bach, no Mozart, no Beethoven – without shame, since other countries must make a similar confession and musical composition is in any case not a subject for international competition like football or aircraft design.¹³⁵

Despite Westrup's perspective, even after the war the idea of competition was a stock reference in music-industry commentators, as demonstrated here in the Dartington Report of 1949:

The popularity of the foreign artist remains an important factor in concert promotion, but since 1918 English artists have had some protection against excessive foreign competition through the Aliens Restriction Orders administered by the Ministry of Labour. Although foreign artists may still promote their own recitals, only international celebrities and artists offering specialised programmes are now normally allowed to accept paid engagements. Certain professional organisations have pressed for a stricter interpretation of these orders. Theirs, however, is a sectional point of view and further discrimination against the foreign artist would not be in the national interest. Great foreign artists have, by their excellence, helped to build the

¹³⁴ Westrup, *British Music*, 32.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

audience for recital and chamber music and, though there are now many more British artists of standing, foreign artists have, and will always have, something to contribute. In any case, lack of international competition could only result in a lowering of British musical standards. It also creates bad feeling abroad; there has even been some danger of a boycott on British artists being imposed in other countries.¹³⁶

Here Westrup's image appears in a slightly different form: Britain is not a benevolent host so much as a grateful host receiving honoured guests who, by their presence, elevate the host's status. In reference to the Royal Philharmonic Society, Ehrlich suggests that 'the Society was failing to "fulfil its function as a leader in the musical world" because the box office had become dominant: leading to the same programmes, conductors and soloists as could be heard anywhere else. Could the British Council help to arrange a visit from John Barbarolli ... or Stokowski? Could the Ministry of Information procure a Russian conductor?'¹³⁷ Britain's status as a musical world leader was defined by its ability to host the very best international artists. Whatever the nuances of the 'hosting' expressed in these various sources, the idea that Britain was a host, grateful, benevolent or competitive (or perhaps even all three), reinforces how the negotiation of British musical identity took place in relation to the ever-present 'other'.

A third reason, one highlighted by Nicholas Temperley writing in 1999, is also connected to competition. Temperley identifies non-musical competitive elements such as political, economic and military rivalry with Germany and the United States as likely positive motivators for the nurturing of native talent.¹³⁸ Temperley argues that 'the change of terminology ("Land ohne Musik" to dark age followed by renaissance) came with the rise of English or British nationalism in the Late Victorian era . . . So long as Britain was clearly the world leader among nations, we welcomed foreign imports, including music.'¹³⁹

To follow Temperley, the construction of a British musical identity takes on a more ambassadorial role, one projected outwards to mitigate future political, economic and military threats. Along the same lines, Banfield suggests that 'the twentieth century

¹³⁶ Dartington Hall Trustees, *The Arts Enquiry: Music*, 94.

¹³⁷ Cyril Ehrlich, *First Philharmonic: A History of the Royal Philharmonic Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 215–16.

¹³⁸ Temperley, 'Xenophilia in British Musical History', 3–19.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

has turned everything it touches into some structure of exclusion, some awareness (or unawareness) of an opposing Other, nowhere more so than in Britain'.¹⁴⁰ Langley identified the tendency in an earlier period, writing of the founding of the RAM (1822) and publication of John Sainsbury's *Dictionary of Musicians from the Earliest Ages to the Present Time* (1824), that, 'both these initiatives stressed the need to promote national achievement in music less for reasons of collective identity than patriotic defence, as if a cultural "threat from without" were still on the horizon. In music, unlike politics and commerce, Britain seemed in imminent danger of falling behind the rest of Europe (or of being ignored, which amounted to the same thing).'¹⁴¹

A final reason for British musical self-deprecation was the attitude that music did not constitute a 'serious intellectual pursuit'.¹⁴² British opinion was slower than that of Germany to celebrate music as an elevated form of art in the 19th century, so that literature, plays and the written word were the primary achievements and expression of Britishness.¹⁴³ This is further emphasised by Samson, who identifies a culture that did not foster composition, a point reinforced by the fact that up until 1944, composers were only a subgroup within the Incorporated Society of Authors and Playwrights.¹⁴⁴ Samson highlights the fact that 'in Britain bourgeois music-making devoted itself wholeheartedly to canonic and popular repertoires, cultivating the performer and listener at the expense of the composer and accepting more-or-less uncritically the commodity status of music'.¹⁴⁵

The Second World War period would bring some changes, however. In 1944, and perhaps with war as the catalyst, the Composers' Guild of Great Britain was founded with Vaughan Williams as the first President.¹⁴⁶ In a letter to the Anglo-

¹⁴⁰ Stephen Banfield, 'Introduction', in Stephen Banfield, ed., *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain. The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 1–6.

¹⁴¹ Leanne Langley, 'Sainsbury and the Rhetoric of Patriotism' in Christina Bashford and Leanne Langley (eds.), *Music and British Culture: Essays in Honour of Cyril Ehrlich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 65–97.

¹⁴² Temperley, 'Xenophilia in British Musical History', 13–14.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ 'Composers' Guild of Great Britain'. *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed 10 May 2013, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/06214>.

¹⁴⁵ Samson, 'Nations and Nationalism', 591–2.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Austrian Music Society of 1942, Vaughan Williams implored the society to nurture confidence in British musicality:

As you must clearly know from your sojourn in England there is a tendency among English people to take it that ‘Schmidt’ is *ipso facto* musical – while Smith is *ipso facto* unmusical. You must not stand apart and say ‘Schmidt is musical – you are not’ – you must help Smith to realize that he **is** musical, help him to discover where his artistic nature lies hidden and help it grow to full flower.¹⁴⁷

Here we see how powerfully the Austro-German association continued to shape efforts: we could go as far as suggesting that music was in itself defined by German-ness. The fact that Vaughan Williams felt moved to write a letter that actively warned against perpetuating the idea of a naturally musical Austrian at the expense of the unmusical Briton, demonstrates the idea that the musically dominant foreigner, the welcomed cuckoo, was smothering native potential.

The BBC was obliged to tread a line that pleased audiences, allowed musicians scope to perform their treasured repertoires, and fulfilled government requirements with respect to the political situation. In the 1930s, after German complaints had been received about the anti-German content of some programmes, the British government intervened and ordered the broadcast of a more pro-appeasement outlook.¹⁴⁸ During the war itself, composers and works were moved on and off the ‘prohibited’ lists regularly. For example when Boosey and Hawkes acquired the copyright of Mahler’s works, Mahler was removed from the ‘prohibited list’.¹⁴⁹ On the outbreak of war Mozart was permissible, but Beethoven was not, a policy that quickly changed to permit most Austro-German standard repertoire.¹⁵⁰ However, works such as *Karelia Suite* and *Finlandia* were prohibited on the grounds that they expressed nationalist sentiment. It should be noted that there does not seem to have been a single physical list of prohibited works and composers, and certainly not one that remained current for very long; indeed,

¹⁴⁷ Anglo-Austrian Music Society, *If Music be the Food of Love*, extract from letter 1942, inside cover (Publisher unknown, 1992).

¹⁴⁸ Scannell and Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting*, 82.

¹⁴⁹ BBC WAC R27/3/2 Music General, Alien Composers, File 2, 1941. Memo from: A. D. M. to: D. D. M. Copyrights.

¹⁵⁰ BBC WAC R27/219 Music General, Music and Music Department 1931–43, BBC internal circulating memo. Decentralisation, 25 October 1939. From: director of music to: director general.

composers and works moved fairly swiftly in and out of favour according to the conflict situation and a single list would have been difficult to keep updated. There are, however, many examples of small lists within memos that recommended the inclusion, exclusion, or reinstatement of works or composers into the BBC's schedules.

Such practices triggered incredulity among some employees. The BBC's north region music director observed that he had received a recent list of prohibited names (including Verdi, Humperdinck and Puccini) and that 'At first blow, so to speak, my colleagues and I are stunned.'¹⁵¹ The Midlands region music director expressed similar shock and wrote that 'now that I have read it carefully I find it very hard to swallow . . . I am, as I say, horrified, and also disappointed that this decision has been taken'.¹⁵²

It was not only regional directors who questioned the need for prohibition. The deputy director of music was uncomfortable with the idea of making a list and queried the prohibition of works on philosophical grounds.

Do you really think it is worth while making a list of 'offensive' works? I feel that we are apt to make ourselves over-conscious of the 'German Spirit' in certain works of music – e.g. portions of the 'Ring'. In broadcasting, one is not really conscious of this sort of underlying philosophy, which is chiefly evoked by the sight on the stage of those silly helmets and huge swords. For varying reasons one would probably exclude 'Kaisermarsch', 'Heldenleben', perhaps Brahms's 'Triumphlied', but I think the making of a list would be a controversial business. My point is that the very obvious works blackball themselves, and it is pretty safe to leave it at that.¹⁵³

Negotiating Germany's wartime status in relation to music was important, but concrete answers to these important questions were difficult to formulate. The author of the memo above suggests that it is not acceptable to use works that portray an overtly nationalist German philosophy or spirit, particularly perhaps, a war-like one. In 1940, E. M. Forster put forward the following assessment: 'in the Kaiser's war, Germany was just a hostile country. She and England were enemies, but they both belonged to the same civilisation. In Hitler's war, Germany is not a hostile people, she is a hostile principle.'¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ BBC WAC R27/3/1 Music General, Alien Composers, File 1, 1939–40. Memo 24 July 1940.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., memo from: D. D. M. To: C. (P.) 'Draft Copyright Music by Enemy Composers'.

¹⁵⁴ Ramsden, *Don't Mention the War*, 182.

As we shall see in Chapter 4, Forster was, like many others, unable to reconcile this ideological problem in the context of music. The idea that the British were fighting an ideology rather than a people or nation was not given practical substantiation. Ramsden describes how Germans who opposed Nazism were not acknowledged within establishments such as the government and the BBC, for example, and no efforts were made to direct anti-Nazi propaganda towards Germany.¹⁵⁵ He also demonstrates that Churchill frequently used ‘Germans’ and ‘Nazis’ as interchangeable terms.¹⁵⁶ The continued internment of German refugees on the Isle of Mann was said by Ramsden to demonstrate at best a ‘careless disregard by the British state for vulnerable people admitted as refugees; at worst, it shows continuing suspicion of ‘good Germans’, even those who had sacrificed everything to leave Germany’.¹⁵⁷

The only area that was perhaps relatively straightforward was the avoidance of works for which copyright was held in axis territory. One BBC file notes:

There is a widespread feeling among listeners with which even many British agents for enemy publishing houses are in sympathy, that such a policy is desirable, not only for psychological reasons, but because of the increase in performing rights which are thereby made available for British, allied and friendly composers to whom the PRS and its corresponding societies have access.¹⁵⁸

The idea of producing quantifiable financial benefits of performing copyrighted works from axis territories was clearly not congruent with British war aims. Some foreign composers did indeed have their British fee payments frozen.

Conclusion

When discussing British and German music during wartime there are inevitably going to be many ironies, perhaps most readily perceptible in the field of folk music. In considering folk songs as ethnic representations of nations and national bodies, one may

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 181–4.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 201.

¹⁵⁸ BBC WAC R27/3/1 Music General, Alien Composers, File 1, 1939–40, internal memo.

risk perpetuating the idea of a ‘pure’ culture, present only in the songs from the soil or landscape of that nation. Hughes and Stradling have already highlighted the idea that the use of folk elements in high art music was ‘thoroughly Germanic in theory and practice’.¹⁵⁹ In embracing national folk elements Vaughan Williams could be seen to be simply following on in the Austro-German tradition in his search for an authentically British voice. Similarly, the British appropriation of the Austro-German canon to reflect the best in British performance also perpetuated the idea that the music of German Romanticism was not Austro-German at all, but something bigger, more elemental and more transcendental, an idea that was also promoted rhetorically by the Nazi regime.

As we have seen, however, in the ‘cultural euphoria’ of the Second World War the presence of the German cuckoo began to be questioned.¹⁶⁰ The problem was that its presence was ubiquitous and desirable to British audiences. It was in fact constitutive of British music life. The war provided a catalyst, which did not result in an ousting of the cuckoo, but in an acknowledgement of it, and a redefinition of what might constitute the British musical identity. Banfield summarises the moment as follows: ‘if the twentieth century, in a central, pivoting political moment of which Britten was a kind of cultural correlative, has provided the supreme opportunity for national self-definition – that is, the moment when Britain saw that it was standing alone against the world in 1940 – every other moment has persistently posed the question of what “it” was or is.’¹⁶¹

I would suggest that in musical terms, however, Britain was far from ‘alone’. Instead, it was carrying the musical baggage of much of the continent with it into war, as exemplified by the London chamber-music stage. This appropriation of continental musical heritage highlighted the idea that performance diversity and standards could function as a method for self-definition and this can be clearly traced on London chamber-music platforms. The performance stages of London constructed this ‘national self-definition’ in multiple ways, many of which are explored in the following case studies.

¹⁵⁹ Stradling and Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance*, 160.

¹⁶⁰ Ehrlich, ‘The Marketplace’, 48.

¹⁶¹ Banfield, ‘Introduction’, *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain*, 1–6.

Chapter three. The Wigmore Hall

Introduction

Wigmore Hall, an unassuming building that could seat a modest 580 people, continued to function throughout the war as an independent, commercial concert stage.¹ The performances given there between the years of 1939 and 1945 were varied and vibrant, and also wide-ranging, involving programmes including Britten premieres and the London Women's String Orchestra, and repertoire from Bach to Schoenberg.

Wigmore Hall was primarily a venue hired for chamber-music performances, and these provide a very particular lens through which to view musical reactions to the political and social fluxes of the war years. Some of these are obvious, such as when a replacement had to be found for pianist Alan Bush at the world premiere of Ireland's *Sarnia* after Bush was called up at the last moment. Other reflections of war are more subtle, such as shifts in programming styles and trends. The Wigmore Hall can be seen to offer a snapshot of the developing relationship between the war and the concert platform within this six-year period.

The following chapter attempts to explore the concerts that took place during the Second World War from three perspectives. 'The fortunes of the wartime chamber-music concert and charitable performances' examines the physical challenges of running performances under war conditions and the financial implications for the hall, as well as looking at how chamber music became a vehicle for charitable causes. 'Repertoire, programming and new music' explores change and stasis in repertoire choice, the way performances were presented and the performances of new chamber music. Finally, 'National representations and identities' looks at how national groups used the chamber-music stage as a platform for discourses related to nationhood within the context of war. This structure offers a multi-faceted view of chamber-music performances that took place under the conditions of 'total' war.

It is useful to very briefly outline the pre-war situation first of all. In the hall's early days concerts were largely made up of standard chamber-music repertoire performed by routine

¹ MacRae, *Wigmore Hall: A Celebration*, 32.

configurations of ensembles and recitalists, some very famous and others completely unknown. However, in addition to the chamber-music canon (and indeed the regular and familiar artists), the schedules would also include what would now be seen more as oddities than as serious performances. It was not uncommon for performer–composers such as Bluebell Klean and Xenia Beaver to perform their own works, or for programmes to feature entire recitals by child ‘stars’, whose names faded into obscurity after one or two concerts.² One can also observe piano teachers (and artists in their own right), such as James Ching or Tobias Matthey, putting on pupil concert series that were sometimes several days long and often culminated in a ceremonial prize-giving. Additionally, the Wigmore was no stranger to variety performances, often produced by groups wishing to raise money. While variety shows, child prodigies and other light musical fare did not dominate the pre-war Wigmore Hall schedules, these types of performances certainly maintained a presence up until September 1939.

Perhaps surprisingly, these ‘lighter’ entertainments did not proliferate at the wartime Wigmore Hall and were quickly usurped by consistently ‘serious’ musical programming. Wigmore Hall entered the Second World War under manager Harry Brickell, who according to MacRae oversaw ‘many programmes of distinction, along with surviving elements of tosh’, a comment that suggests a broader ethos of increasing elitism in the period.³ Yet MacRae also suggests that in the early days of the hall, it ‘became a mirror of contemporary music making, reflecting current tastes, ideas of programming and levels of accomplishment’.⁴ Both these trends can be traced throughout the war.

However, by 1945, performances at Wigmore Hall more closely resembled the Hall’s schedule today than the pre-war performances did. Performances, both in 1945 and today, are made up exclusively of highbrow, ‘serious’ music with no place for lighter fare, suggesting that the war was a watershed moment for chamber-music performance at Wigmore Hall. Thus this chapter seeks to demonstrate how the Wigmore functioned as a mirror to ongoing political events, and absorbed changes back onto chamber-music performances.

² The unusual names and their spellings demonstrate the desire for the exotic. The box-office pull to attend these concerts probably did not consist in the repertoire, which consisted largely of compositions penned by the performers. This feature can be seen in many programmes that were scheduled in the early days of the hall.

³ MacRae, *Wigmore Hall: A Celebration*, 54.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

When we discuss Wigmore Hall within these pages, however, it should be noted that we are discussing not the artistic decisions or standards of Wigmore Hall management, but rather the actions of the clients, agents, performers and audiences that used the Wigmore Hall each for their own individual purpose. It was these multiple purposes and agendas that made Wigmore Hall a platform for so many people. Arguably, Wigmore can be viewed as more representative of the diversity of London music-making than other institutions operating under individual management such as Morley College or the National Gallery.

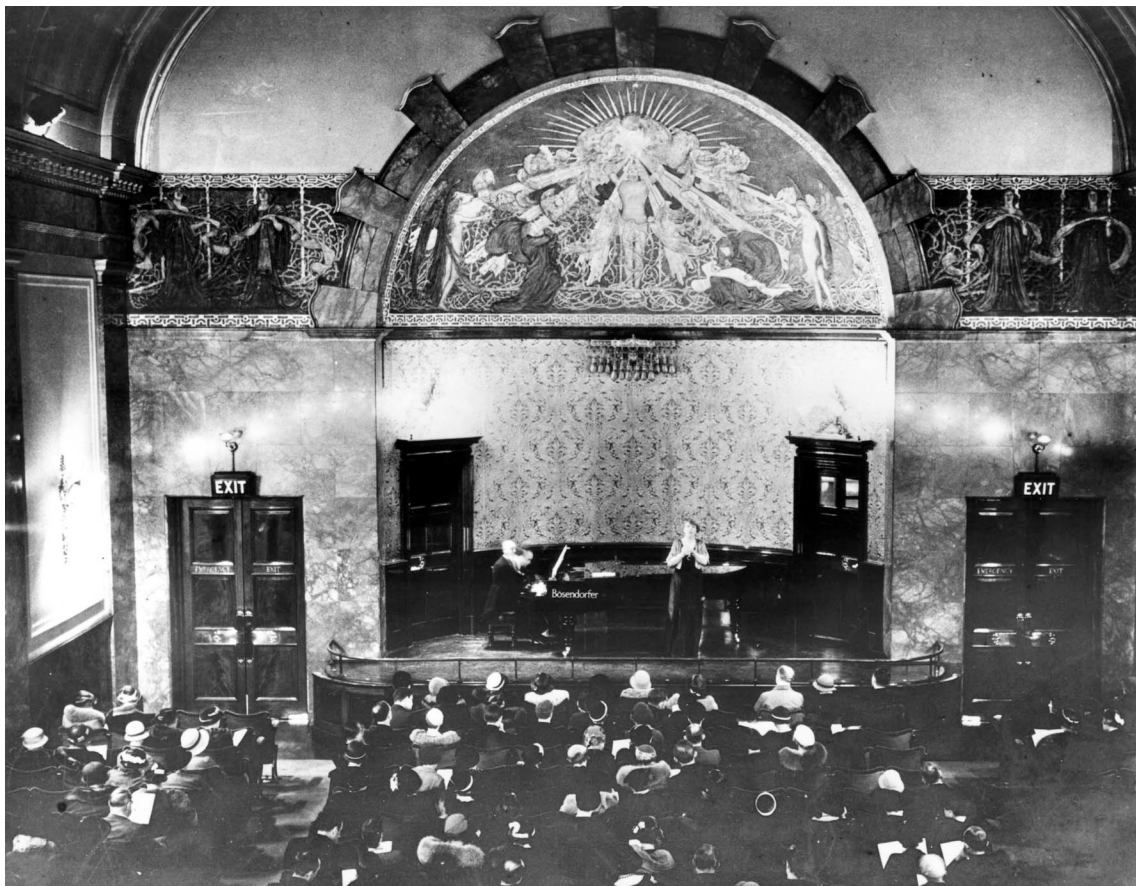


Figure 9: A concert at Wigmore Hall in the late 1930s featuring a female vocalist and accompanist. Judging by the number of hats, it seems that ladies make up a significant proportion of the audience. Reproduced with permission of Wigmore Hall Archive.

The fortunes of the wartime chamber-music concert

The physical challenges discussed in Chapter 1 intensified the already financially risky business of staging concerts, especially for those operating a private-hire system, as did the Wigmore Hall. However, what follows is far from a story of doom and gloom; in fact, the wartime Wigmore Hall is defined by some remarkable concert activity. Notably, it produced financial turnovers that not only met, but significantly surpassed, pre-war figures. This demonstrates a wartime chamber-music stage that was not only commercially robust but was also experiencing growth.

During the cultural blackout of September 1939, like all other entertainment venues in London, the diary of the Wigmore Hall was empty of engagements. On 7 October 1939, an elderly Frederic Lamond performed Bach, Liszt and Beethoven at 3 pm at the Wigmore Hall and broke London's cultural silence; other institutions immediately followed suit.⁵ Despite this delayed and uncertain start to the 1939 autumn season, the Wigmore reopened and relaunched in October, albeit with vastly reduced numbers of concerts, and a reduced variety of artists wishing to book the Hall.

In September 1940 the tension that had lasted for an entire year was broken and London suffered six months of nightly bombardment.⁶ The bombing was so intense and destructive in the autumn months that CEMA began to provide concerts in London, even though CEMA had been set up for the express purpose of supplying music to any location other than London. The relentlessness and severity of the bombing prompted CEMA to state that it 'feels that at the moment London deserves to be brought within its scope'.⁷

It is useful to consider that the different types of bombs used had different effects on the Wigmore Hall's fortunes, and as we shall see in Chapter 4, this was also true of the National Gallery concerts. The incendiary bombing in the 'Big Blitz' had a devastating effect on the Hall's finances, with extremely sparse scheduling and, considering the poor turnover, we may also

⁵ Elkin, *Queen's Hall 1893–1941*, 126.

⁶ For more information see Robin Woolven in Saunders, *London County Council Bomb Damage Maps*.

⁷ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive, Box 54, 28 September 1940. The statement reads: 'The Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts was founded to support the arts in places which are without London's opportunities and which are suffering particularly from war strain. It feels that at the moment London deserves to be brought within its scope.'

safely assume poor attendance. Even though Wigmore only hosted afternoon concerts, these did not attract enough audience members during the 1940–1 blitz period to turn adequate profits. Immediately before the war the vast majority of concerts commenced between the hours of 7.30 pm and 8.30 pm; and only a tiny (almost inconsequential) number of concerts took place in the afternoons. Without CEMA stepping into the breach and providing several concerts, only five concerts would have taken place in the four months from September to December of 1940.

From September 1940, all concerts at Wigmore took place in the marginally safer afternoon period, with start times of either 2.30 pm or 3.00 pm. The single exception is the final concert of the year on 16 December, which took place at 7.00 pm. This concert was a Lecture Recital on Ernest Bloch's String Quartet No 1 with 'musical illustrations followed by a performance of the work'.⁸ Concerts only began to take place regularly in the evenings again from the end of April 1941 onwards, commencing with a Circle of International Art concert ('a small society with a big title'), at 6.30 pm on 29 April.⁹ This pattern of afternoon concerts dominating the winter months continued through until January 1942, and from then on, with the threat of incendiary bombing mostly past, concerts began to appear in the schedules at around 6.00 pm until the evenings began to get lighter. When V weapons began to fall on London, 'afternoon-only' programming returned, from September 1944 through until mid-January 1945. Therefore, from the records we have, it must be concluded that from mid-September to mid-late April in the years 1939 to the autumn season of 1942 the Wigmore Hall was almost completely inactive during the evening sessions, and then again from September 1944 to mid-January 1945. During these periods, almost the entirety of the Wigmore's income was made in afternoon sessions.

Although during the blitz the Wigmore Hall and immediately adjacent buildings escaped physically unscathed, bomb-damage maps record heavy destruction in the locality of the hall in general. The repercussions of these air raids and the developing pattern of wartime concert

⁸ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive, Box 54, 16 December 1940.

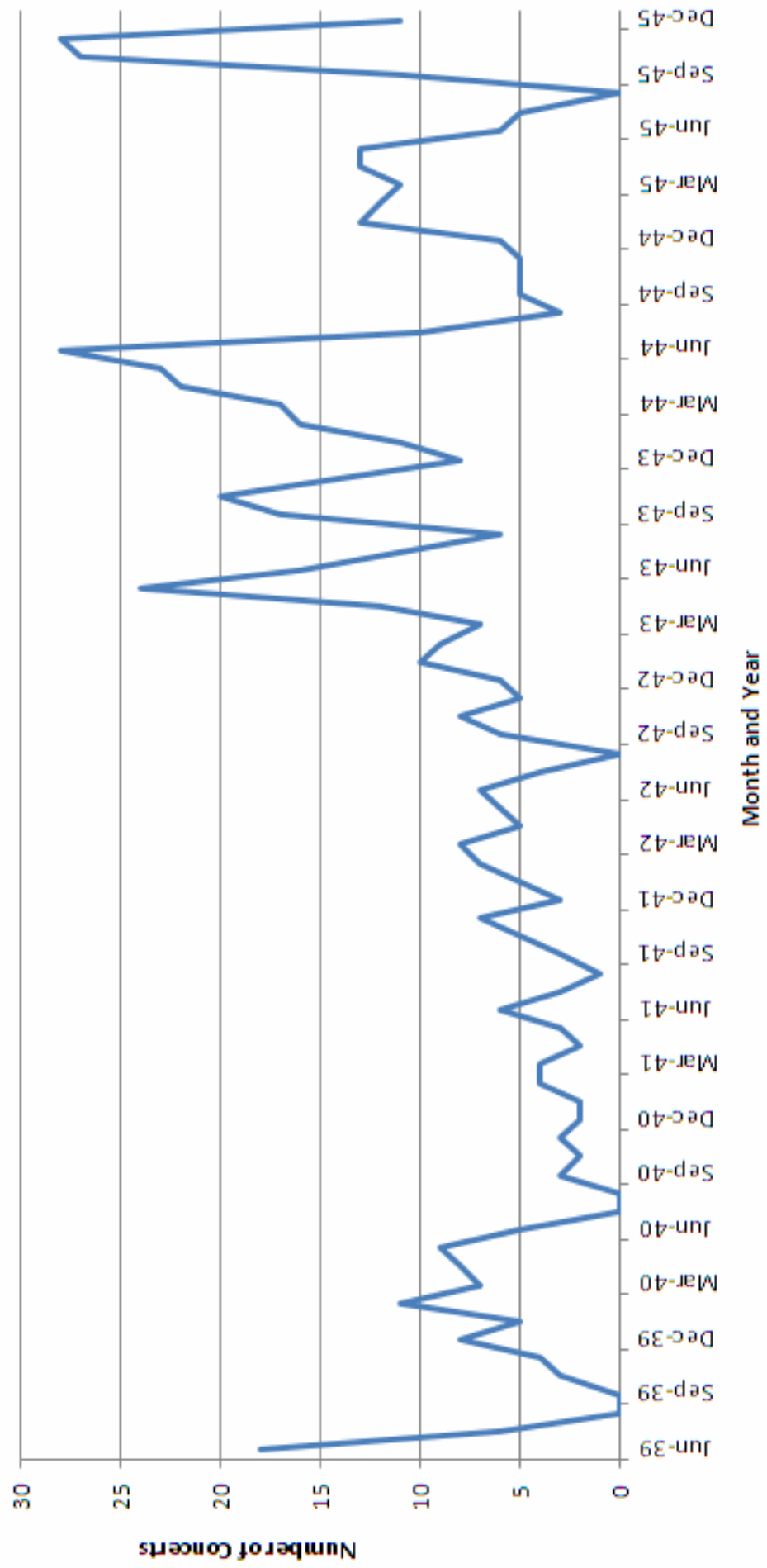
⁹ 'Wigmore Hall Recital: Miss Rena Moisenko', *The Times*, Friday 20 June 1941, 6

numbers can be seen illustrated in Figure 10 below, which shows the number of concerts taking place in any given month between the dates indicated.¹⁰

¹⁰ Data for Figure 10 Compiled from Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive, Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, concert programmes 1939–45, Wigmore Hall Archive, Boxes 53–5; and Wigmore Hall programmes, uncatalogued, 1944–5.

Figure 10:

Number of Concerts per Month Wigmore Hall June 1939 to December 1945



We can learn three things from this chart. The first, and perhaps most predictable, thing to note is the reflection of bombing patterns and seasonal fluctuations in the number of concerts taking place. The second is that for the first half of the war, there were consistently fewer than ten concerts a month taking place. The third aspect of this chart to note is the dramatic peaks in concert numbers from spring 1943 to spring 1944.

There are several nuances to be interpreted, however. Initially the statistics look as we might expect them to on the outbreak of war: the results of the cultural blackout can be seen between August and September 1939 when no concerts at all took place, for example. Even though no air raids took place in the initial year of war, the number of concerts performed then remained low and much of the Wigmore's schedule remained unoccupied for this peaceful period on the home front. The bombing period of September 1940 through to spring 1941 used incendiary bombs and the bombardment was heavy and relentless. Concert numbers remained low. However, in the period when V weapons were being used (from the autumn of 1944 to the spring of 1945) the impact on the number of concerts is not so great. While incendiary bombing kept concert numbers below five per month, the period of V-weapon bombing records consistently over five and, for several months, over ten concerts per month. Seasonal fluctuations can also be observed here. While there is usually an expected dip in concert numbers for August (the period when Wigmore would more or less close down for the summer), this dip is not so prominent in 1943 and 1944. However by 1945, the August dip has returned. Peaks can be observed to consistently occur in the middle of spring and autumn throughout the war.

The fact that less than ten concerts per month were performed until May 1943 indicates that the Wigmore Hall was struggling to function during the blitz. The bombing of London every night for six months between September 1940 and spring 1941 had a very clear impact. The less frequent sporadic bombing experienced between summer 1941 and spring 1943 still seems to have had a significant impact on concert numbers. Therefore, although bombing severity and frequency had decreased, this is only marginally reflected in the number of concerts per month shown in Figure 10, with a very slight climb discernible up to spring 1943. Significantly, these low numbers of concerts sit in stark contrast to the following years. However, it should be noted that although the number of concerts was low, Wigmore Hall remained a commercially functioning chamber-music venue, even if only one or two concerts a week took place.

The peaks that can be observed in spring 1943 through to spring 1944 were sudden and dramatic. 1943 is a stand-out year; there were 154 concerts scheduled in total. This figure was nearly three times that of 1941, which saw only forty-three concerts scheduled. Similarly, the spring season for 1944 had the highest volume of concerts of the entire war period, peaking at twenty-eight concerts in June, which is very nearly one per day. The drop in bombing frequency clearly had a marked impact on the number of concerts which could take place and these years should be considered significant boom years for the hall. This peak demonstrates that the number of chamber-music performances could be considered very healthy within certain years of the war.

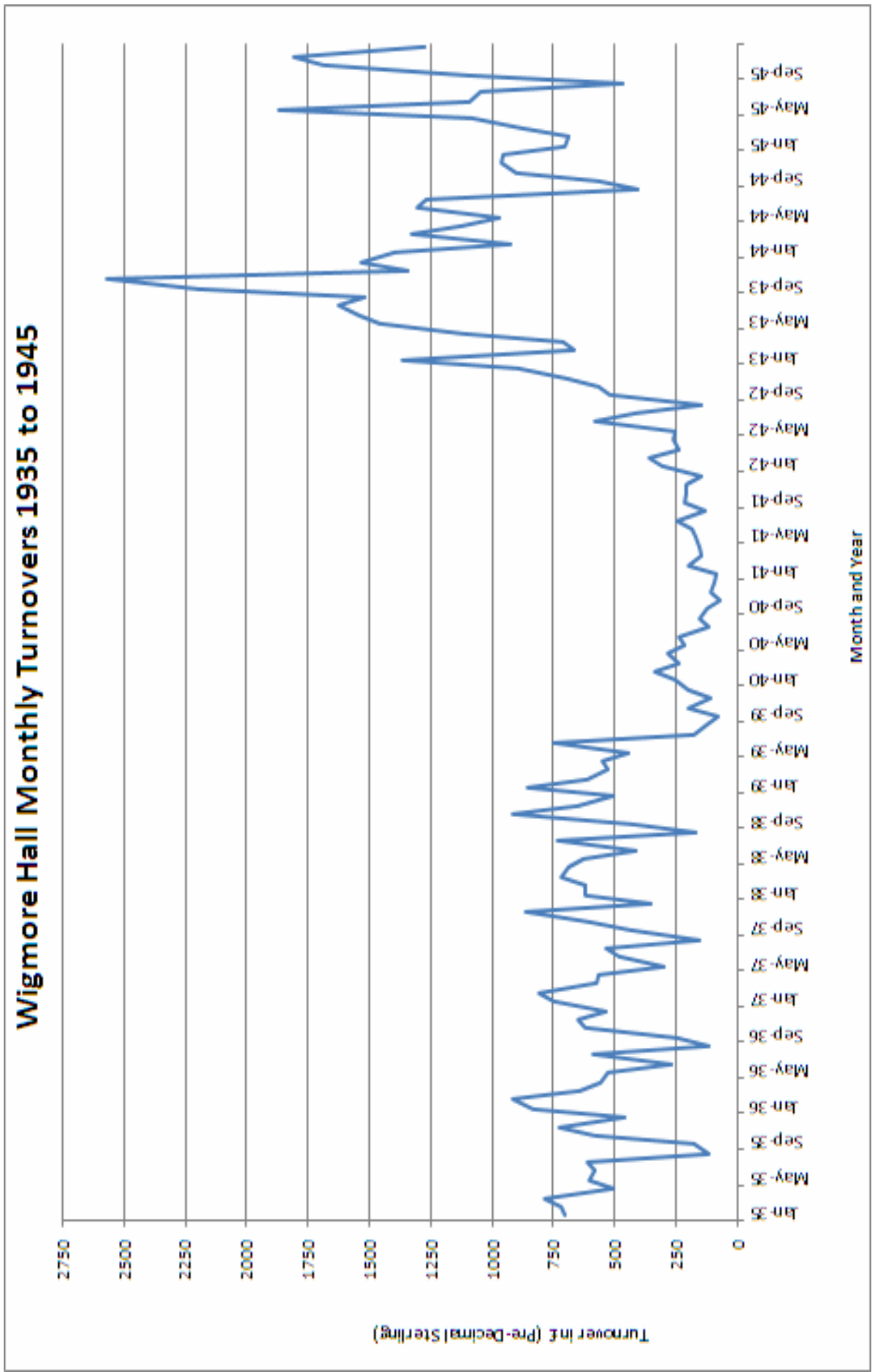
In considering the impact that the conditions of total war had on Wigmore Hall alongside the number of concerts that were taking place we can also look at financial data, where it is available. As we might reasonably predict, the turnover of the Wigmore Hall can be seen to be directly linked to the severity and length of blitz periods.

In terms of potential earnings, the cessation of evening concerts in the height of the season knocked at least six whole months of evening events off the Wigmore Hall's schedule. If we note that traditionally the concert season runs from the start of September to approximately the end of June, we realise that the Wigmore used its capacity for only three months of a ten-month year. It is clear that these restrictions on the schedule had a significant impact on income.¹¹ Figure 11 serves to illustrate a total picture of both the war and pre-war finances of the Wigmore Hall, thereby revealing both regular patterning and the deviations from these patterns.¹²

¹¹ To put these figures into a more general context, it should be noted that some plays in London were able to take £1,000 to £2,000 per week in 1940. One play did so well that they 'offered to give two spitfires to the nation from the receipts'. In contrast, the Wigmore Hall in the early years of war was only producing a couple of hundred pounds per month, demonstrating the niche role chamber music played in the capital's live entertainments industry. Hobson, *The First Three Years of War: A Day by Day Record*, 3 August 1940, 60.

¹² It must be highlighted that these figures are not only representative of revenue generated by concert performances. These figures represent a total figure for the activities taking place at the Wigmore each month. Although this, of course, does include concert performances, there are also payments from groups such as the Spiritualist Community and the New Liberal Jewish group, as well as audition sessions. Data for Figure 11 compiled from Bechstein Ledgers, Uncatalogued Cash Book – covering 1935–45, Royal College of Music Library.

Figure 11:



In Figure 11 we notice four significant aspects of financial patterns: regular pre-war patterning, irregular wartime patterning (including substantial highs towards the very end of the war), a substantial, sustained increase that commences in 1943, and a particularly sharp peak, also in 1943.

The period from January 1935 to September 1939 shows predictable annual dips, indicating when the hall closed for the summer (usually preceded by a smaller dip in May). There are peaks mid-spring and mid-autumn annually, with a small dip each December. While the lowest dips in August increase and improve very gradually over this pre-war period, the highest peak points do not experience a similar incline and remain static at between £800 and £900 approximately. This demonstrates that financial results were seasonal and predictable prior to the war.

This annual pattern is disrupted by the war. From September 1939 turnovers sink to what must have been terribly precarious lows. Figures only previously experienced in the summer lows of the pre-war years were now a constant. Monthly turnover remains below £400 from September 1939 until June 1942, and for most of the period it does not rise above £250. Even within the consequent peak years, a regular pattern that reflects the pre-war seasonal pattern is not discernible. For example, the regular peak in pre-war spring seasons is in fact reversed in the spring of 1943, when a significant dip can be observed between January and May. The usual summer dip is present but by 1943 it is nowhere near the same extent as it was before the war. The peaks and troughs become more polarised although a general incline takes place over the war years. Remarkably, Wigmore Hall ends the war producing higher turnovers than it did in any of the four pre-war years.

The year of 1943 is particularly significant. Suddenly, turnovers begin to increase with such rapidity that they not only achieve figures comparable to pre-war years, but swiftly surpass pre-war totals, reaching a peak of £2,573 in October 1943. Within a matter of months, chamber-music concerts at Wigmore Hall were turning over larger figures than had been achieved before the war, with totals for May 1943 to December 1943 consistently at least double the figures recorded in 1938.

What was it that made 1943 such a spectacular financial success? This year certainly had the largest number of concerts, even more than subsequent war years. Night time blitz attacks had drastically reduced in frequency, perhaps making people more inclined to venture out into

London. While the blitz experiences of 1940 to 1942 can be seen to have had major repercussions on both finances and concert frequency, the post-blitz period (before V weapons began to be deployed) saw turnovers that surpassed not only all previous wartime seasons, but also that topped anything seen in the immediate pre-war years.

The success of 1943 seems to have been maintained in the ensuing years to some extent. The V-weapon attacks experienced in 1944 onwards do not seem to have had as great an effect on financial success as the initial blitz. Although 1943 certainly stands out as the peak performer, 1944 still on the whole manages to record better turnovers than the pre-war years. For example, up until August 1944 turnovers are still hovering between the £1,000 to £1,250 mark. The boom of 1943 has been to some extent maintained as figures remain high and the spring season of 1945, followed by the first peacetime autumn season, can also be observed to maintain high turnovers, surpassing the £1,500 mark in both periods.

Despite the initial dramatic lows, then, the war years saw an increase in turnover figures at Wigmore Hall, a significant growth from pre-war years that seems to have been maintained. Chamber-music performances at Wigmore Hall therefore not only consolidated a financial position but experienced greater financial success and evidently thrived during the Second World War. By 1945, Wigmore Hall had not only managed to maintain pre-war financial turnovers, but had significantly surpassed them. The chamber-music business at Wigmore Hall had experienced a wartime growth. One contributory factor in this expansion may have been a new form of concert, which I discuss in the next section.

Charity performances

Since its first use in 1901 through to the end of the Second World War, Wigmore Hall had operated consistently as a hire hall. A private individual, an agent or any other organisation was able to hire the hall for a fee, depending on the type of event being held. Concert agents Ibbs and Tillett were the dominant users of Wigmore, providing engagements for their many illustrious artists, including Elena Gerhardt, Maggie Teyte, the Griller and Kutcher string quartets, Vera Benenson and Julius Isserlis. Artist representation agency Harold Holt also made extensive use of the hall, as did individuals or groups without representation, charities and other organisations.

What was strikingly new in the wartime situation was the use of chamber-music performances as vehicles for charitable causes.¹³ The first of these, devoted to a cause that was the result of the war, was staged before Britain had officially entered into any hostilities at all, on 18 March 1939.¹⁴ It was performed by Myra Hess and was for the benefit of the Lord Baldwin Fund for Refugees, which was dealing with what was by then a significant and apparent crisis. Then, from September 1939 to December 1945, 19 per cent of all concerts that took place at Wigmore Hall were for the benefit of charitable causes.¹⁵ It seems that using the chamber-music platform to raise funds for charity was a successful venture, as so many charitable groups were involved, and many high-profile artists can be seen performing for causes. For example, Isolde Menges performed for the Musicians Benevolent Fund, Myra Hess did so for the Home for Czechoslovak Forces and Joseph Weingarten played for Mrs Churchill's Red Cross Aid to Russia Fund.

The steps taken towards high-profile charity concerts may have been tentative initially, however. In the very early months of war, one musician articulated a warning not to set a precedent for 'free' music in a letter to the *Musical Times*.

Charity Concerts

Professional musicians are being asked to give their services at war-charity concerts. This was always expected, and musicians are generous; but may I suggest that in the extremely depressed state of the profession (far worse than in the last war: and the depression has begun much earlier than it did then), intending free-performers should think again, and realize that in being generous in one way, they are doing harm in another. If those who can still afford to do so perform for nothing, who is going to offer pay to any of us? We shall all be expected to do what a fortunate few can afford to do. I see that the ISM is asking its members to request a minimum fee of two guineas. This is surely reasonable, and I hope it will be maintained. If the performer does not wish, for any reason, to take the fee, it can be given to the Society's Benevolent fund, or to another of the bodies, such as the Musician's Benevolent Fund or the Organists' Benevolent league, that do something – though it is very little they can do – to relieve the distress already deepening among us.

I may perhaps usefully add that a very experienced musical organizer said to me; 'I should be careful about any "charity concert." Many will be

¹³ Due to the inconsistency of the ledgers, it is hard to determine if there was a difference in the charges set by the hall, and/or turnovers for charity concerts, in comparison to private events.

¹⁴ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive, Box 53, 18 March 1939.

¹⁵ See Figure 14.

genuine, but there are others.’ Some will remember these in the last war. This official’s advice was to avoid any concert in which at least ninety per cent of the proceeds do not go to a recognized charity.

London

HARD HIT¹⁶

This letter highlights a particular wartime tension. Musicians not in regular orchestral employment relied on chamber-music performances for an income, and yet chamber-music performances were particularly suited for charitable fundraising.¹⁷ A vast array of charitable performances could be heard at the Wigmore Hall, performed by both high-profile and less high-profile artists, as can be seen in the following list of causes that put on concerts, or that benefitted from funds raised at concerts. Causes that appear in red are present on the schedules more than just once; however, excepting the Musicians’ Benevolent Fund, multiple appearances of a charity never rise above five instances. The Musicians’ Benevolent Fund is by far and away the most frequently supported charity, with forty-one concerts during the 1939–45 period, the vast majority of these being staged by the Gerald Cooper Chamber Concerts series.

Figure 12: Wigmore Hall 1939–1945: charitable causes appearing in programmes.¹⁸

Causes presented in red are present on Wigmore Hall schedules more than once.

Anti Nazi Fighting Fund of the Free German League of Culture	British Council for German Democracy	Eastern Command Welfare Organisation
Association of Free Hungarians in Great Britain	British Sailors Society	Finnish Red Cross
Austrian Liberty Fund	Canadian Women’s Club for the Benefit of their War Emergency Committee Fund	French Benevolent Society
Austrian Youth House Fund	Comforts committee of the joint committee for soviet aid	Friends’ Ambulance Unit
Belgian Red Cross	Comforts for the Troops	Fund Lidice Shall Live
British Committee for Polish Welfare; Polish Children Rescue Fund	Comforts Fund for the Women and Children of Soviet Russia	Greek Red Cross
	Czechoslovak Red Cross	Henry Wood National memorial fund
		Home for Czechoslovak Forces

¹⁶ Hard Hit, ‘Charity Concerts’, *Musical Times*, December 1939, 820.

¹⁷ For example, even though Myra Hess refused all fees for her National Gallery performances, she toured the country extensively in order to maintain an income.

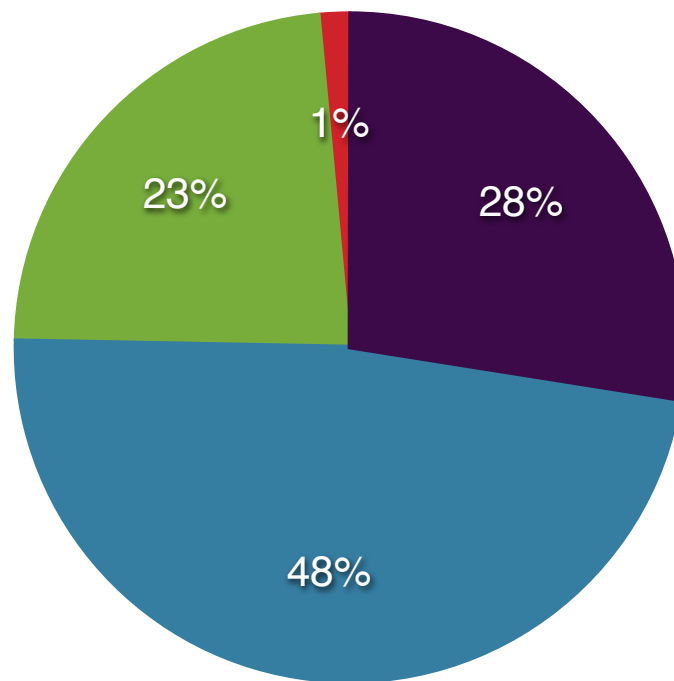
¹⁸ Compiled from Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive, Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, concert programmes 1939–45, Wigmore Hall Archive, Boxes 53–5; and Wigmore Hall programmes, uncatalogued, 1944–5.

Hospitality to Members of the New Zealand Forces	Polish Catholic mission in London
Hungarian Cause represented by the Association of Hungarians in Great Britain	Polish Jew War Emergency Fund by the Federation of Polish Jews in Great Britain
In aid of Young Talented Musicians and those of Merit whose careers have suffered through the war	Polish Jews in Great Britain (Federation of)
India Relief Committee	Polish Relief Fund
James Ching School Scholarship Fund	Polish writers in Poland
Jewish Fund for Soviet Russia	Ranyard Mission
JNF Charitable Trust	Red Cross
King George's Fund for Sailors, Merchant Navy Section	Red Cross in aid of the victims of Singapore
King Haakon's Fund for Relief in Norway	Red Ensign Club Dock Street
Kings College Hospital	Rescue Homes for Children
Lady Cripps's United Aid to China Fund	Royal Airforce Benevolent Fund
League of Mercy for the support of hospitals	Russian Orthodox Church in London
London Ambulance Benevolent Fund	Russian Women and Children
London and District Benevolent Society	Samaritan Fund of Royal Society of Musicians
Lord Mayor's Air Raid Distress Fund	Soroptimist Fund for Post War Relief in Europe
Lord Mayors Red Cross and St John Fund	St Dunstan's Hostel for Blinded Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen
Merchant Navy Comforts Service	St Mary's Hospital, Paddington
Mrs Churchill's Red Cross Aid to Russia Fund	St Marylebone Anglo-Soviet Committee
Musicians' Benevolent Fund	The Duke of Gloucester's Red Cross and St John Appeal
National YMCA War Services Fund	The Ivory Cross National Dental Aid Fund
Old Licensed Horse Drivers	War Services Fund
Old Scholars' Associations of Sidcup School	Welfare Committee for the Netherlands Fighting Forces
Order of St John of Jerusalem	York Children's Hospital
Our Dumb Friends' League	
Palestine Labour Political Committee	
People's Dispensary for Sick Animals	

Many of the causes are explicitly related to the effects of war both at home and abroad, but they are diverse in type. In the following chart I have split the listed causes into one of four categories, expressing each category as a percentage of the whole charitable causes concert output. The categories are those performed for war causes benefitting Britain explicitly; war causes benefitting foreign nations; causes that are for British benefit but not formed for, or related explicitly to the war; and causes for foreign benefit not related to the war.

Figure 13: Charitable causes in Wigmore Hall programmes, 1939–45, divided by type.¹⁹

- British war causes
- Foreign war causes
- British non-war causes
- Foreign non-war causes



¹⁹ Compiled from Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive, Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, concert programmes 1939–45, boxes 53–55; and Wigmore Hall programmes, uncatalogued, 1944–5.

Although many causes that used Wigmore Hall were not wholly devoted to supporting those affected by war, many charities did often find themselves supporting the war's secondary effects (this includes the Musicians' Benevolent Fund). Charities that raised funds for foreign nations experiencing the effects of war made up nearly half of all charitable concerns staged. In comparison, British war-related causes made up just over a quarter of the total. This is perhaps surprising: we might expect British war-related charities to have dominated on this London fundraising platform. However, this was clearly not the case. Figure 13 also serves to demonstrate the significant presence of 'other' national causes on the chamber-music stage, a subject that will be addressed in detail later in the chapter. The chart further shows that 'British' and 'Foreign' causes, both war-related and non-war-related, had an approximately equal share of the total number of charity concerts, 51 per cent and 49 per cent respectively.

The pre-war situation had been markedly different. From January 1935 to August 1939 only three charities had regularly staged concerts, and the combined total of charity concerts never exceeded ten occasions in a single year. All the charities that used the Wigmore Hall to raise money in the years immediately before the Second World War were British-based causes for British beneficiaries. The Second World War average was more than double the pre-war maximum, with an average of twenty-two charity concerts being staged at the Wigmore each year. Two of these three charities were for the benefit of soldiers who had fought in the Great War of 1914 to 1918. The Great War Adair Wounded Fund provided 'regular entertainment to hospital invalids still undergoing treatment for wounds received in the great war'.²⁰ This entertainment took the form of a 'Sunday Social' concert complete with tea. The other war-related charity was the St Dunstan's Hostel for Blinded Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen, but monies raised at St Dunstan's concerts were via a silver collection only, and not through ticket sales.²¹ The final charity, The Ranyard Mission, was nothing to do with the Great War at all, but was concerned with helping poor and socially deprived urban communities. (The Ranyard Mission staged only three concerts from 1935 to August 1939, and only one during the 1939–45 period.)

²⁰ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive, boxes 48–53.

²¹ *Ibid.*

This new function for Wigmore Hall must have contributed substantially to its capacity to function during the war. As we will see in the next section, however, it was not the only change. Wigmore Hall programming was in dialogue with the war, and responded in ways which secured its usefulness throughout the conflict.

Repertoire, programming and new music

As we have seen in Chapter 1, relationships between chamber-music performances and war developed in a variety of ways. In Chapter 1 we saw how new initiatives were still able (if not more able) to develop, and that a trend of increasing professional standards was further distancing music-making from the layman; this maintained the elevated status of chamber music while at the same time nurturing a ‘listening’ culture for serious music. As we will see, performances that took place at the Wigmore Hall affirmed these trends by introducing new initiatives, namely a decline in lighter programming and an increased prominence for new composition. In one particular development, in which performances mediated ideas about nationalism and national identities, we will observe how the ideas explored in Chapter 2 formed in intriguing ways. Considering these performances in light of the Anglo-Austrian relationship, the appropriation of folk music and the idea of Britain as a tolerant ‘host’ will be revealing once again.

The bulk of concerts were one-off events, but many were part of a series. For example, the Everyman Concert Society provided audiences with well-known repertoire, such as Beethoven and Chopin piano works, and, like other series groups at the time, ran themed, ‘mini’ series within their longer overall season.²² One short series within the Everyman Concerts included a run of three Bach and Handel concerts in 1941 and a separate run of concerts including all the Brandenburg concertos in 1940. The long-running French Concert series produced by Musical Culture Ltd. featured niche programming and high-profile performers.²³ Only works by French composers were performed, accompanied by copious programme notes and a patriotic blue, white and red programme design.

²² Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive, boxes 54 and 55.

²³ Ibid.

Poulenc himself performed at a French Concert on 2 December 1945 and Britten and Ferguson were also regular performers. Musical Culture's French Concerts gained the patronage of the French ambassador, starting out under the auspices of the French Committee for National Liberation, which changed to the French Provisional Government in 1945. Like the Everyman Concerts, the French Concerts were divided up into mini-series, which consisted of runs of two or three concerts, featuring one single composer in each, or featuring a group of composers, such as Les Six. Some individuals ran their own series, such as mezzo soprano Sarah Fischer, who put on four Sarah Fischer Concerts in spring 1940 and included some of the best-known performers on the London circuit, such as Kathleen Long and Gerald Moore.²⁴

The Gerald Cooper Chamber Concert series, a series that ran from 10 May 1943 right through till past the end of the war, generally focussed not on specific composers, but on specific ensembles, concentrating attention on the performance of works for string trio and string quartet. However, other ensembles were sometimes included: for example, the first concert on 10 May featured the London Wind Players conducted by Harry Blech, and on 14 May 1945 the series celebrated the music of Fauré with a song and piano recital with soprano Maggie Teyte, accompanied by Ivor Newton and pianist Kathleen Long. In the main, the Gerald Cooper concerts showcased many of the highest-profile quartets and trios on the London scene at the time, including the Zorian, Griller, Grinke Forbes Phillips, Blech, Hirsch, Menges, Ebsworth, Marjorie Hayward and Taylor ensembles among others. The Czech Trio are notable by their absence from the Gerald Cooper series.

After war had ceased, the first peacetime season in September 1945 saw a large number of concerts being performed as part of newly planned series (we might attribute this to musicians returning to London, and rediscovering career stability). As well as new series emerging, including the Edward Clark concerts, and recital series from individuals such as Denis Matthews and Astra Desmond, many familiar series from the war years continued with increased frequency of performances, including the Boosey and Hawkes, French Concert and Gerald Cooper Chamber Concerts series (the latter and former both running complete string-quartet cycles).

²⁴ Ibid.

As noted, however, the bulk of the Wigmore Hall schedule during the war was made up of one-off concerts. These were usually produced by agents. The main four agencies active at Wigmore Hall were Ibbs and Tillett, Musical Culture Ltd., Harold Holt and the Imperial Concert Agency; and they all promoted soloists and ensembles. Artist branding was important and a great number of performers carried with them their own personal advertising ‘branding’, allowing audiences to instantly recognise their favourite performers even by a simple typeface. Benenson, for example, always used an image of a bust of Beethoven. Frederic Lamond can be seen to always play under a grand heading which exclaims ‘The Greatest Living Exponent of Beethoven’, accompanied by bold black typeface on a violent red background, set underneath a picture of Lamond himself, who glares moodily into the distance, suggesting to the audience an emotional kinship between these two men of art.²⁵ Indeed, he had in his early career known, and played before, Liszt and Brahms. There were several instances of musicians, mostly pianists, taking the opportunity to sprinkle a few of their own works in with their programmes, as was common practice before the war. Examples included Ruth Gipps, Samuel Goldberg, Mischa Spoliansky and Franz Wagner.

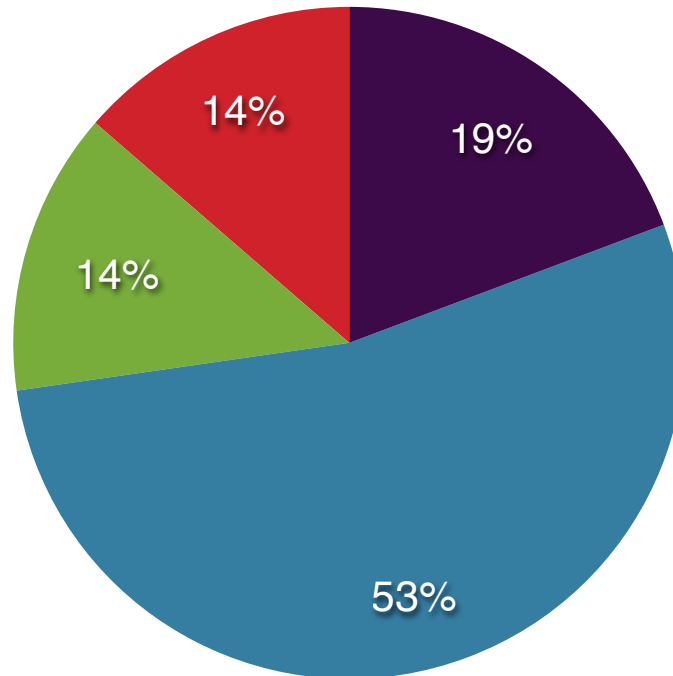
Across the divides of series and one-off events, we find concerts focussing on an individual composer. Recitals that used only a single composer were limited to either Beethoven or Chopin solo piano works and the frequency of these programmes suggests they more or less guaranteed box-office success. The *only* exception to this trend can be traced in three recitals of 1945 by Louis Kentner that focussed exclusively on Schubert works.

Figure 14 examines performances that took place at Wigmore Hall as defined by programme type. I use the ‘Charity’ and ‘Nation’ categories to denote a type of concert performed for the benefit of a charitable cause, and performed under the banner of a particular nation respectively. Programmes that were of varied content with no particular affiliations or themes are classed as a ‘Mixed’ programme, while ‘Themed’ programmes take an historical, compositional or other theme under which repertoire has been selected.

²⁵ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Archive, Box 54, 26 September 1942. This particular example also includes the legend ‘Reappearance of Lamond’, which I believe refers to his recent illness after some cancelled engagements earlier in the year.

Figure 14: Wigmore Hall, division of programming trends, September 1939–December 1945.

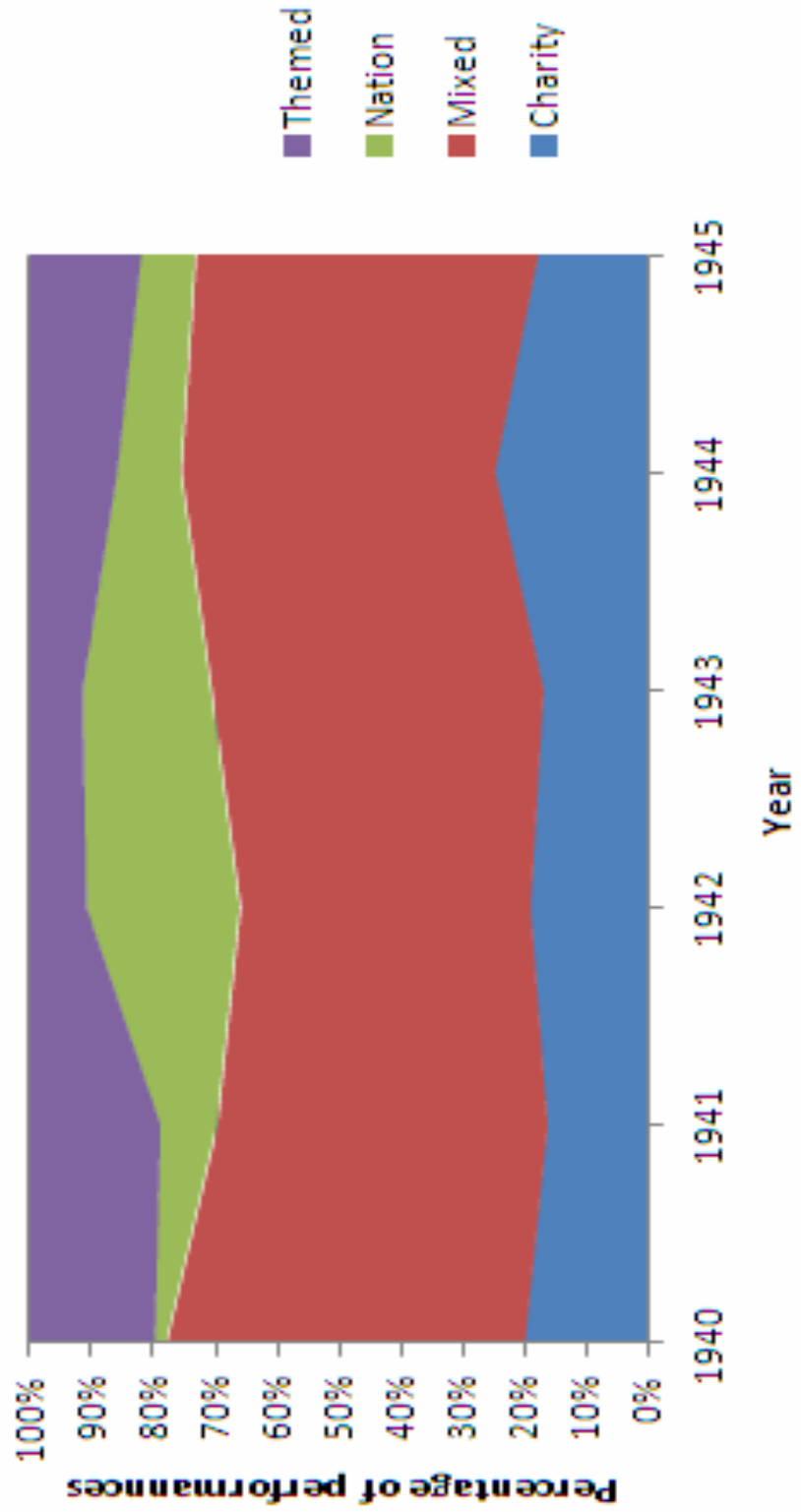
- Charity
- Mixed Programme Recitals
- Nationally Based Programmes
- Other Themed Programmes



The graph below goes on to demonstrate a year-by-year breakdown of these overall percentages for the same period.

Figure 15:

Percentage of Total Annual Performances by Programme Type



While concerts of mixed repertoire and no particular affiliations or agendas can be observed to be the most common format of concert at Wigmore Hall, we may discern some shifts in the formats that make up the remaining concerts. It must also be considered that both nationally themed programming and the large numbers of charity-based concerts were phenomena unique to the Second World War period. The two mid-war years of 1942 and 1943 saw a rise in the number of nationally themed concerts. While the number of nation-themed concerts in 1940 was negligible, by 1942 and 1943 this was the second most prominent concert type. In conjunction with this shift, we may also see a dip in the frequency of the variously themed concert, which moved from being the second most common type of programme to the least common in 1942 and 1943.

While the war years saw the addition of nation-themed concerts to the Wigmore stage and a dramatic increase in charity concerts, there were also losses to regular programming, most notably 'lighter' material and concerts billed as 'popular'. The variety programme favoured by non-music specific societies, including impressions, jokes and magic, was eradicated from the wartime Wigmore stage. These lighter programmes were not infrequent in pre-war schedules, but by 1939 variety scheduling was already becoming rarer. For example, a recurring series that ran at Wigmore Hall before the war, the 'Cramer' concerts, would feature 'Artistes' and as well as musical items often included acts such as a cartoonist and an entertainer.²⁶ This disappeared. There could be several reasons for this disappearance. With the entertainments boom in London it may have been the case that variety shows became so numerous elsewhere (such as at the London Palladium, or the Windmill Theatre) as to render the odd performance at a venue that was becoming increasingly highbrow redundant. In addition, it was likely that artistes with a solid reputation would have been working entertaining the troops, either independently or under the auspices of ENSA. Lastly, it could simply be the case that Wigmore Hall was becoming increasingly known as a highbrow venue and that variety acts no longer achieved economically viable audiences there.

Other 'lighter' concerts that had often taken place included pupil concerts and musical debutante concerts. As mentioned above, pupil concerts were organised by the teacher (usually of piano), in order to display his or her pupils on a public stage. This

²⁶ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Archive, Box 51, 14 October 1937.

benefitted both the young performers and the teacher, whose skills as an instructor would be praised in testimonies printed in the accompanying programme notes. Indeed, in the weeks before the outbreak of war, Myra Hess's teacher, Tobias Matthay, was still continuing his pupil concerts. Young (often terribly young) performers seeking a musical career (or parents seeking it on their behalf) also used the hall to make their public performance debuts by rolling out the classic repertoire.²⁷

During the war, the London Cab Drivers' Aid Association staged two concerts that are some of the last traces of lighter programming at Wigmore Hall. The programme below, performed on 26 June 1941, featured music-hall elements and style.

Mr Toller	<i>Overture</i>
Mr Sydney Waymont	Tenor
Dorothy and Helen	The Monday Night at Eight Girls
Mr George Ford	Comedian
Mr George Roberts	Actor vocalist (will render an impression of Charles Dickens's character Quilp)
Mr Malcolm Stevens	Entertainer
M'd'lle Jenny	English and French contralto
Mr Charles Coborn	Comedian
Miss Doris Humphries	Contralto
Mr Hugh Owens	Baritone <i>God Save The King</i>

Similarly, while previously there had been concerts billed as 'Popular Programmes', these also suffered a terminal decline. Before the war, 'Monday Pops' was a regular fixture at Wigmore Hall, usually occurring monthly in the pre-war years – the last concert

²⁷ Interview with John Amis, 14 February 2011.

appeared on 15 May 1939.²⁸ An audience member would pay 2/-, 6d for any seat in the house, and would hear ‘Two Major Works’ at each concert; these works would be drawn from the standard repertoire.²⁹ During the war only two concerts explicitly advertised themselves as featuring a ‘Popular Programme’, both performed by Gertrude Peppercorn at 3 pm and including Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Liszt, Schumann and Chopin. Prices were slightly cheaper than the standard pricing, at 6 shillings, 4 shillings and 2 shillings for an unreserved seat.³⁰ There were still instances of concerts featuring exclusively repertoire that had hitherto made up the ‘popular’ programme, but concerts were no longer advertised as such.

During the war there was a shift from variety programmes, pupil concerts and musical debutantes, to more highbrow programmes for what was presumably a musically literate and elite audience. The distinction between these styles of programming was evident at the time, as this review suggests:

Mr. Boyd Neel gave a concert for highbrows with his orchestra at Wigmore Hall on Thursday evening. The highbrows came in large numbers to hear an excellent programme in this kind of music of which the main strand was French influence . . . There is a price to pay for being a highbrow: in seeking out music that is ‘choice’ (in the shopkeeper’s sense) one may encounter dullness. Stravinsky pursuing aesthetic theory is a bore.³¹

This review also suggests that the shift towards the ‘highbrow’ does not indicate smaller audiences, despite the intellectual demands of the concert. While one might expect wartime programming to shift towards the lighter side of musical entertainment, at Wigmore in fact the opposite was true.

The idea of ‘popular prices’ nevertheless continued to function for a little while. Concerts that advertised ‘popular prices’ indicated that all tickets were priced significantly lower than standard pricing. CEMA, as a government-sponsored body providing concerts

²⁸ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive, Box 53. The idea of ‘pops’ or popular chamber-music concerts had in fact originated with Monday ‘pops’ at St James’s Hall, Regent Street.

²⁹ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive, Box 51.

³⁰ Both these concerts were performed for charitable causes, the first for the Greek Red Cross and the second for the Red Ensign Club, Dock Street.

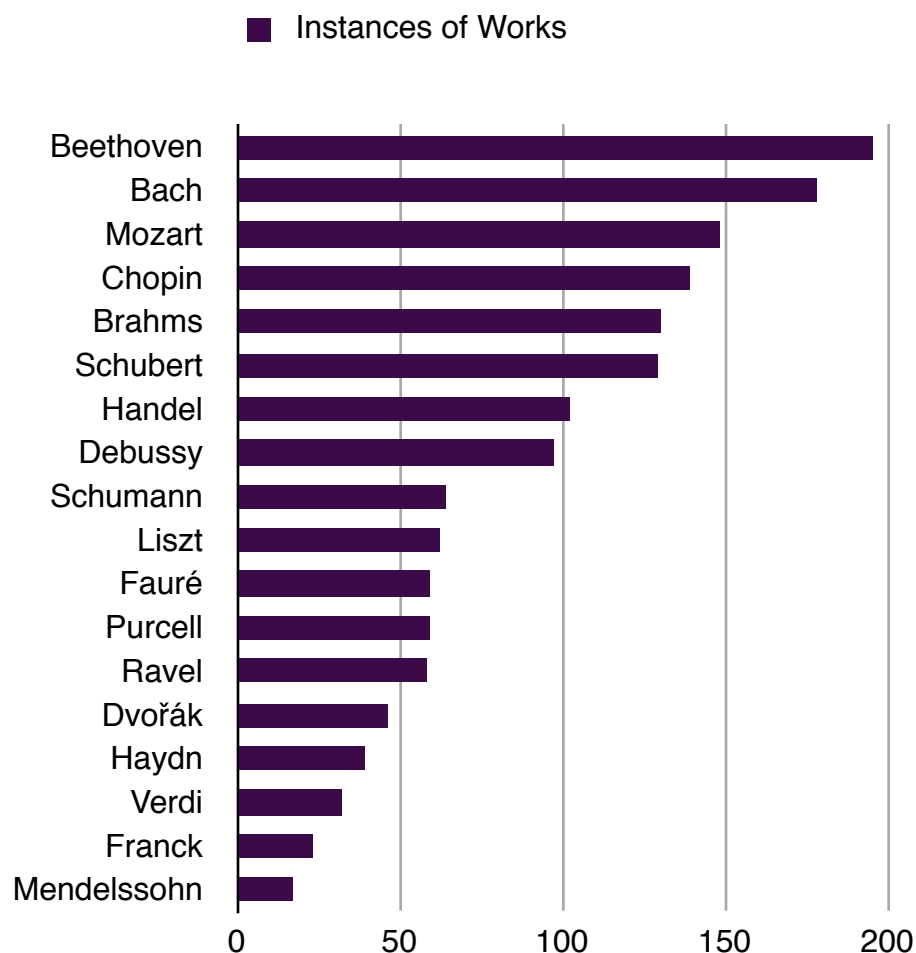
³¹ ‘Boyd Neel Orchestra: A Concert for Highbrows’, *The Times*, Monday 25 September 1944, 8..

as part of the war effort, used 'popular prices' to advertise almost all their concerts. These prices stood at 3s 6d, 2s 6d and 1 shilling. The Polish Musicians of London also used popular pricing to advertise their concerts, using lower prices as an incentive to audiences. Popular pricing, however, did not indicate popular programming. Indeed, many concerts featuring popular pricing leaned away from providing the generic Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms programme. For example Levitzki, Albéniz, Dvořák, Zarebski, Suk, Szymanowski, Bartók, Britten and Sibelius can all be found in programmes featuring popular pricing. Perhaps due to increasing financial pressures on artists, popular pricing had died out by the beginning of 1942. The large audiences recorded at other venues such as the National Gallery suggest that the decline of popular pricing was unlikely to be as a result of declining audience numbers.

Figure 16 demonstrates a selection of the composers of standard and familiar repertoire on the chamber-music platform, a canon in the sense of 'a corpus of works that is repeated constantly in the concert hall'.³² The chart demonstrates the number of instances of works each composer totalled at the Wigmore between the dates indicated.

³² Willem Erauw, 'Canon Formation: Some More Reflections on Lydia Goehr's Imaginary Museum of Musical Works', *Acta Musicologica*, 1998, 112.

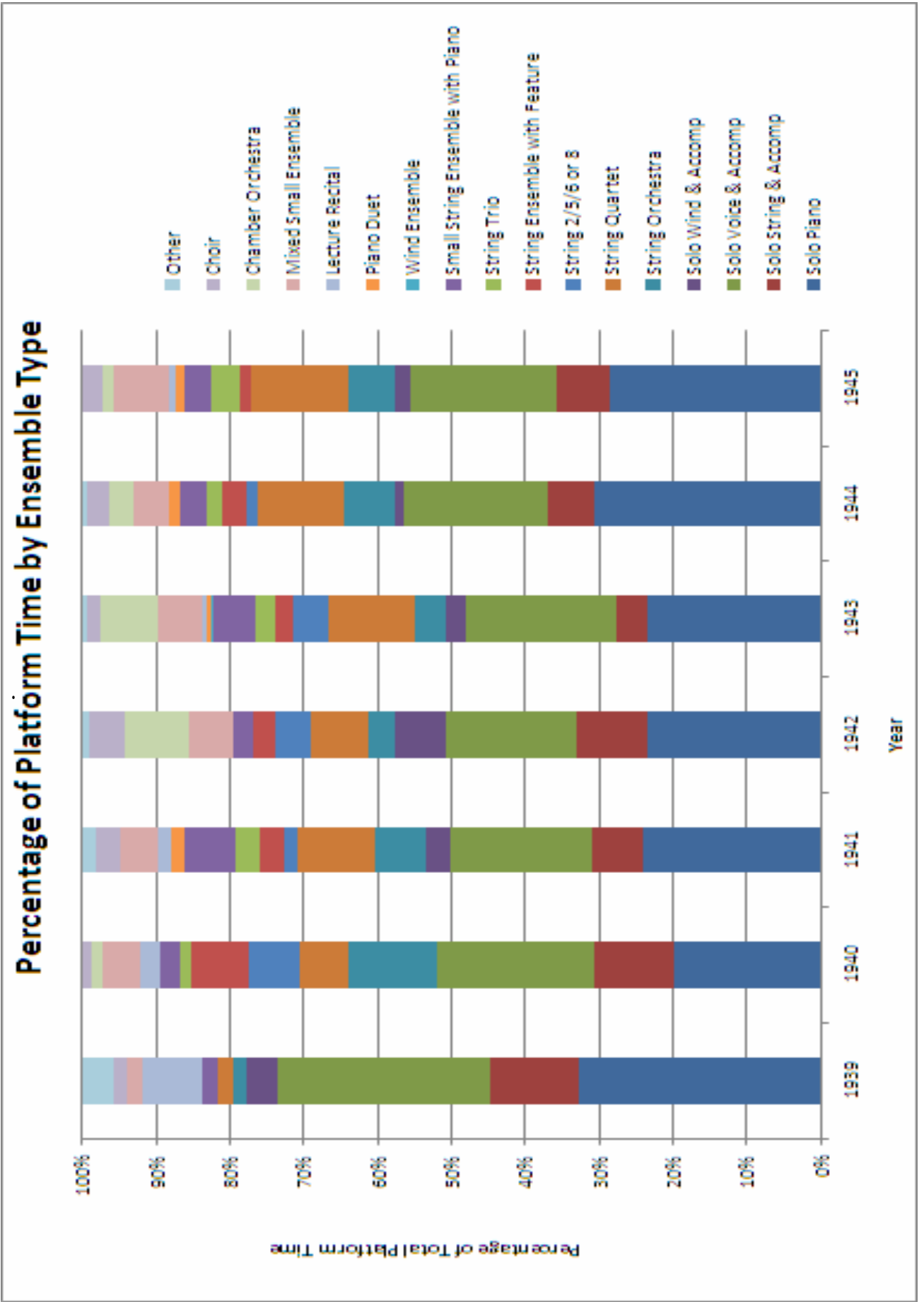
Figure 16: Selection of canonic composers, instances of works. Wigmore Hall, September 1939 to December 1945.³³



From this we can observe that Beethoven, Bach, Mozart and Chopin were the most performed composers of works, making up approximately half of the total of canonic performances. It is also worth observing the balance of ensemble types in programmes. Figure 17 shows the percentage of time each chamber ensemble type spent on the Wigmore Hall stage in any given wartime year. While the 1939 column only refers to the wartime months of September to December, the remaining columns all refer to complete years.

³³ Figures compiled from Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive, Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, concert programmes 1939–45, boxes 53 to 55; and Wigmore Hall programmes, uncatalogued, 1944–5. These composers are a selection of the most frequently performed composers at Wigmore Hall who could be considered to have achieved ‘canonic’ status by the 1940s. Other contemporary and living composers of the twentieth century who had works performed at Wigmore Hall are illustrated in Figure 20. Some composers who might be considered canonic are not included here as they had fewer than fifteen performances. For example, this includes Donizetti (thirteen), Gounod (eight), Grieg (eight), Milhaud (eleven), Smetana (thirteen) and Vivaldi (eight).

Figure 17:



Solo piano performances clearly dominated throughout the Second World War period, closely followed by performances featuring a solo voice with accompaniment. String Quartet performances should be noted for their increase in platform time as the war progresses, ending the war with the third biggest majority. Solo string instruments with accompaniment are also prominent in each year. These four types of chamber-music performance go to make up the bulk of performances that could be heard on the wartime Wigmore stage, consistently totalling more than 50 per cent per year and sometimes more than 60 per cent per year. The only other ensemble we can observe to have a solid presence is the string orchestra. This does indicate that between 40 per cent and 50 per cent of performance time during the war was taken up with ensembles *other than* the four most popular combinations mentioned above. All in all, it reveals that wartime conditions were not necessarily a barrier to variety in chamber-music ensemble.

If we turn our attention to new music, we find, similarly, that the situation was lively and varied: there were consistent and frequent performances of new and contemporary music. Unlike the National Gallery, which as we shall see stuck resolutely to well-known repertoire, the commercial platform of the Wigmore Hall played host to a stream of British premieres and world premieres of music throughout the war. The fact that it was a commercial stage and that performances were for profit is significant in terms of the London scene as a whole, particularly in this new music context. The following notes taken from a 1939 BBC report demonstrate that the broadcasting of new music was seen to be unpopular, a view that was difficult to reconcile with the BBC's perceived duty to act as patron and disseminator.

6. Composition of Concert Programmes

(3) The mention of contemporary music brought out pungent comments from those who dislike it. It was clear from these that even to an audience such as the Music Panel, the noticeable inclusion of more modern music would occasion an outburst of energetic protest. The following two comments, examples of the more and the less reasonable among the protesters, illustrate the types of objection that would be raised. One panel member wrote: 'Please give as little contemporary music as possible, i.e. as is consistent with fairness to the small minority who enjoy it. To me modern music lacks spiritual uplift, it is of the earth, earthy: one does not feel better or happier after listening to it, generally

the opposite', and a forthright sales ledger clerk wrote: 'I can't stand composers like Britten, Bax, Walton and the rest. For sheer, crude, brutal, unmelodious music their's [sic] is about the giddy limit. Walton's "Scapino" for example: I prefer "Tiger Rag" to that.'³⁴

Yet live performances of new music of both British and foreign composition can be observed to have thrived at Wigmore during the war, indicating a different level of tolerance or interest. The longevity of the Boosey and Hawkes series in particular might seem to indicate that some kind of demand or expectation was being met.

The Wigmore was the only significant public chamber-music platform in London staging new and contemporary music performances on a regular basis throughout the war. Ensembles from Morley College did occasionally perform new music for public audiences and we have seen that the CPNM did so for a private club. But performing new music at a commercial venue was financially risky. Sticking to the familiar canon was safer, especially once compounded by the perception that listening to chamber music was a highbrow, intellectual pursuit. Performing contemporary composition for chamber ensemble thus tended to target a particularly niche audience or ideal. For example, on 16 June 1943 at 7 pm, a programme of music was presented which contained several contemporary works and works by Second Viennese School composers.³⁵ The concert was performed by Maria Lidka, Savage Temple, Peter Stadlen, Arika Storm and the Fleet Street Choir, under the widening umbrella of the Anglo-Austrian Music Society, and featured 'A Programme of Austrian Music Banned by the Nazis'.³⁶ The concert included music by Schoenberg, Berg and Mahler and can be seen in full in Figure 18.

³⁴ http://www.britishonlinearchives.co.uk/document.php?cat=&sid=&cid=&pid=1248-R9-09&date_option=equal&page=&did=248-r9-09-06, accessed Wednesday 12 October 2011. Reports for 1939 BBC WAC Ref. LR/722, Audience Research Special Reports 1942.

³⁵ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive, Box 54, 16 June 1943.

³⁶ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Archive, Box 54, 16 June 1943. Composers that fell into this category included Mendelssohn, Schoenberg, Krenek and Webern, as well as the works of Brecht and Weill.

THE ANGLO-AUSTRIAN MUSIC SOCIETY
presents a programme of
AUSTRIAN MUSIC BANNED BY THE NAZIS
arranged by the
AUSTRIAN MUSICIANS GROUP
WIGMORE HALL
Wednesday, June 16th, 1943, at 7 p.m.

Programme

ADAGIO for Violin, Clarinet and Pianoforte - - - - - *Berg*
MARIA LIDDKA, R. SAVAGE TEMPLE AND PETER STADLEN

SONGS "Rheinlegendchen" } - - - - - *Mahler*
"Um schlimme Kinder artig zu machen" }
From the Cycle "Africa Songs": - - - - - *Grosz*
"Elend"
From the Cycle "Liebeslieder":
"Aus dem Magyarischen"
"Aus Tunis"
From the Cycle "Reisebuch aus den oesterreichischen Alpen," Op. 62 - *Krenek*
"Friedhof im Gebirgsdorf"
Fiedellieder, Op. 64

ERIKA STORM
At the Piano: MOSCO CARNER

PIECES for Pianoforte, Op. 23 - - - - - *Schoenberg*
PETER STADLEN

THREE POEMS by Angelus Silesius (translated by Hugh Ross)
for a Capella Choir for Four Voices *Wellesz*
"Where is my dwelling place?"
"Unfold, thou frozen Christian"
"Man, be from God reborn"

THREE MADRIGALS on Elizabethan Poems for a Capella Choir for Four Voices - *Gál*
"True Love" (*Sir Philip Sidney, 1598*)
"Cradle Song" (*Thomas Dekker, 1603*)
"Youth and Cupid" (*Queen Elizabeth*)

THE FLEET STREET CHOIR
Conductor: T. B. LAWRENCE

TICKETS: (Reserved) 10/-, 7/6, 5/-; (Unreserved) 2/6 and 1/6; from Wigmore Hall Box Office
(WEL. 2141) or Usual Agencies.

BAINES & SCARBROOK LTD., PRINTERS, LONDON, N.W.6

[P.T.O.]

Figure 18: A programme of Austrian music banned by the Nazis. Used with permission of the Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive and the Centre for Performance History.

We can see that the concert might not have had immediate appeal to the average person looking for an evening's entertainment. The programme is intellectually heavy and is

presented to the audience in such a way that clearly requires thought. One reviewer concluded that,

To ban anything quite so esoteric as atonal music would seem to show the extremity of apprehension for the atonal or twelve-tone compositions of Schönberg and Alban Berg yield little that is intelligible to the most patient and strenuous listening. It must be admitted, however, that Mr. Peter Stadlen played Schönberg's Pieces for piano (Op. 23) from memory, and as though they meant something to him.³⁷

This review pays the concert a rather back-handed compliment by suggesting that banning such works is indeed nonsensical because they meant very little to audience members. And yet the advertising strategy may well have drawn listeners in.

How familiar would London audiences have been with new, contemporary works and their composers? As we saw in Chapter 1, Doctor has already pointed out that harmonically advanced works such as those of Second Viennese School composers were being broadcast by the BBC; however, these works were not the usual fare for wartime chamber-music concerts that tried to 'reach out' to new audiences. Looking at the Wigmore schedules, we can observe that Schoenberg had some exposure in the war years, as his works appeared on five dates, including the instance above. These were *Three Piano Pieces* performed by Eileen Ralph on 26 June 1939; *Kammersymphonie* Op. 9 on 21 March 1942, performed by the LSO under Walter Goehr; *Verklärte Nacht* Op. 4, performed by the Jacques String Orchestra on 19 May 1943; and finally, *Ode to Napoleon* on 28 May 1945, given by the London Philharmonic Strings under the baton of Karl Rankl.³⁸ This last instance was in fact a British premiere and took place only twenty days after the armistice alongside the *Serenade for Tenor Voice, Horn and Strings* by Britten, a work receiving frequent performances at the hall. Five instances of performance in five years at Wigmore Hall suggests that Schoenberg's work was being explored on the commercial concert stage, and may have been symptomatic of the increasingly highbrow and 'serious' platform at Wigmore.

³⁷ 'Modern Austrian Music: Works Banned by Nazis', *The Times*, Thursday 17 June 1943, 6.

³⁸ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive, Box 53, 26 June 1939, Box 54, 21 March 1942; 19 May 1943, Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Archive; Wigmore Hall programmes, uncatalogued 1945, 28 May 1945.

Berg (who had only recently died in 1935) also had four other appearances outside the Austrian banned-music concert discussed above. Eileen Ralph performed the Piano Sonata Op 1 in the same concert as noted above in 1939, *Three Pieces from Lyric Suite* can be found on the schedule for 17 February 1940 performed by the London String Orchestra under Alan Bush, on 26 April 1944 *Three Movements from Lyric Suite for String Orchestra* is listed as being performed by the Boyd Neel Orchestra (programmed alongside the *Serenade for Tenor Voice, Horn and Strings*, as was Schoenberg) and finally *Five Early Songs for Voice and Piano* were performed on 28 September 1944 in a Boosey and Hawkes concert, again alongside Benjamin Britten.³⁹ Both composers had three performances of works in Boosey and Hawkes concerts during the war. Webern also had two performances of *Five Movements for String Orchestra* Op 5 in independent concerts, one in the newly inaugurated Edward Clark series in 1945 and one under Walter Goehr and Musical Culture Ltd. in 1943. This is significant insofar as it indicates that composers of the Second Viennese School had performances in schedules *not* designed for contemporary composers. In *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music 1922–1936*, Doctor tells us that ‘the impact of this music affected not only musical circles, but, to a surprising extent, the British public at large. The music and compositional aesthetics espoused by Schoenberg and his colleagues were known, heard and discussed in Britain throughout the interwar years.’⁴⁰

At Wigmore Hall from September 1939 to December 1945, performances of works by Berg, Webern, Schoenberg, Krenek, Wellesz, Eisler, Pisk and Weiss can certainly be traced, even while not particularly densely (see Figure 19 below). Harmonically advanced works were mixed into programmes performed with other more familiar works. Doctor suggests that the BBC had developed a public awareness of such music, at least, and the evidence supplied by programmes performed at the Wigmore seems to confirm this to an extent.⁴¹ The fact that independent concert promoters and musicians dictating their own programmes were including these works for performance suggests their performance had

³⁹ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Archive, boxes 54 and 55.

⁴⁰ Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music*, 3.

⁴¹ Doctor counts twenty-three London concerts featuring Second Viennese School works from 1912 until the advent of concert broadcasting in 1926. These concerts included works by Schoenberg (twenty-four instances of works), Wellesz (one instance) and Krenek (one instance). From 1926 to May 1936, Doctor records 113 concerts and broadcasts (by the BBC) of Second Viennese School works, including, in addition to the composers cited above, works by Berg, Eisler, Gerhard, Hauer, Koffler, Pisk, Von Hanneenheim, Webern, Weiss, and Zemlinsky. Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music*, 334 and 337–41.

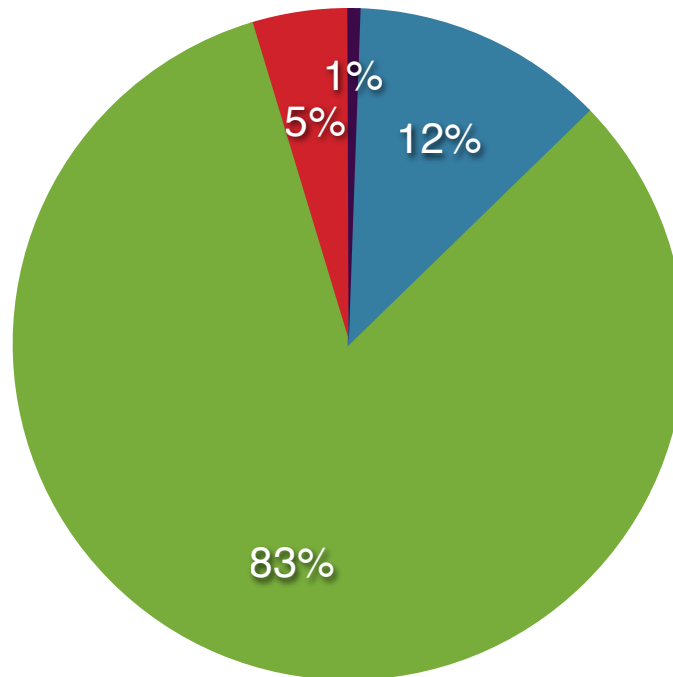
become part of the repertoire (although still a niche intellectual repertoire), and was not just confined to specialist new-music series or promoters. We should nevertheless remember that this is not to say that the Second World War experienced an overwhelming influx of performances of Second Viennese School, or harmonically advanced works.

The following chart demonstrates a breakdown in percentages of the repertoire 'output' of Wigmore Hall in terms of new or contemporary repertoire as opposed to repertoire that might be considered to be part of a canon. While the 'Second Viennese school' and 'Living composers' categories are fairly self-explanatory, a brief word is needed on my two other labels, 'Canonical' and 'Concert folk'. For these purposes I use the term 'canonical' to include almost everything that does not fit into the previous two categories; even though a work itself may not have been frequently performed, it mostly happens that the composer is 'canonical' insomuch as he or she has an entry in *Grove*, or similar ratification. Minor composer/performers, of which there were several noted at Wigmore, are covered by the 'Living composers' Category. The final category, 'Concert folk', refers to performances that are 'anonymous' in origin or are marked as 'traditional' or 'national'.⁴²

⁴² For example the Songs from the Steppe 'composed' by the USSR, are counted in this 'Concert folk' category, as are English folk songs, traditional ballads, etc.

Figure 19: Wigmore Hall, division of repertoire performances
September 1939 to December 1945.

- Second Viennese School
- Living Composers
- Canonical
- Concert Folk



When considering works from Second Viennese School composers, within the context of the whole repertoire output as surveyed at the Wigmore Hall, 1 per cent of the repertoire performed might seem insignificant. However, the significance may be seen to lie in the fact that harmonically advanced works were able to command a presence at all. As we have seen in Chapter 1, while the CPNM existed as a peer-review platform, Morley College was a place of education and the BBC was busy educating, informing and commissioning new works, the Wigmore Hall was a venue where new music could be performed live, on a mainstream platform and for profit. This was a singular wartime arena where new music could come into contact with a paying public.

In a Gerald Cooper Chamber Concert on 8 May 1945, the day war in Europe ended, the programme explained that ‘All these works were played for the first time at the London

Contemporary Music Centre Concert on May 3rd and are now receiving their first public performance.⁴³ The works performed were Sonata for Viola and Piano by Berkeley, Trio for Violin, Viola and Cello, Op. 5 No 4 by Lutyens, Sonata for Violin and Piano by Maconchy and Suite for Clarinet and Piano by Rainier. (There are no records to indicate how many people chose to attend this rather intense modern programme while a rather more celebratory atmosphere consumed the rest of the country.) In addition to concerts such as these, where the entire programme was contemporary music, often a modern or unknown work was performed alongside more standard repertoire such as some Mozart or Brahms. For example, Bloch can be seen alongside Mozart in 1943 and 1944, Stravinsky with Beethoven in 1942 and 1944 and Finzi with Bach and Purcell in 1940 and 1943.⁴⁴

For new music in general, the jewel in the Wigmore crown was the Boosey and Hawkes series. This existed specifically to provide a regular platform for new music, both for composers who were on their books, but also for those who were not.⁴⁵ The series was set up in wartime, with the first concert taking place on 4 October 1941, and ran throughout the rest of the war and beyond into peacetime. Its longevity, its concentration of new works (especially British works) and its ability to present the very highest-profile performers at the time made this series particularly special.

At a Boosey and Hawkes concert one could expect to hear modern works and new compositions, often with the composers present or, in some cases, performing; Benjamin Britten and Howard Ferguson were at the piano on more than one occasion. Composers who had world premieres of their works within a Boosey and Hawkes concert included Britten, Tippett, Vaughan Williams, Westrup, Rubbra, Bliss, Ireland, Moeran, Berkeley and Ferguson, to name but a few. Schoenberg, Bartók and Honegger also had British premieres in the Boosey and Hawkes series. Unusually for concerts at the Wigmore, Boosey and Hawkes crammed large volumes of dense programme notes onto the single sheet printed for a programme. This perhaps not only highlights the potential public unfamiliarity with

⁴³ Wigmore Hall Archive, Wigmore Hall programmes, uncatalogued 1944–5, 8 May 1945.

⁴⁴ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive, boxes 54 and 55, 26 January 1940 and 7 August 1943, 25 October 1942 and 17 December 1944, 19 March 1943 and 1 April 1944.

⁴⁵ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive, concert programmes, 1939–45, boxes 53 to 55; and Wigmore Hall programmes, uncatalogued 1944–5.

the works performed, and the desire to fully inform listeners, but also the fact that these concerts played to an audience which was musically knowledgeable, or literate to some degree.

The Boosey and Hawkes series continued into peacetime after the end of the war. Interestingly, it was only after peace had been declared that the publishers stopped their frenetic premiering, which crammed as many premieres as possible into one concert. It launched a more sedate string-quartet series on 22 October 1945, performing Bartók, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert string quartets.⁴⁶ Thus, the wartime musical mission seemed to be quite different from peacetime plans. During the war the Boosey and Hawkes concerts maintained a unique status as the only new music series at the Wigmore Hall.

Figure 19 demonstrates that 12 per cent of repertoire programmed was by living composers. It therefore represents a significant chunk of repertoire on offer to wartime audiences. Figure 20 demonstrates instances of works from living composers being performed, the number of premieres of works that took place, as well as how many of the instances of performance took place within a Boosey and Hawkes concert. It is important to draw attention to this distinction, as it demonstrates not only the large number of new works that the Boosey and Hawkes concerts brought to a public audience, but also how many living composers were managing to have their work performed in other concerts which weren't necessarily devoted to new music.⁴⁷

As Wigmore Hall was an active, significant chamber-music venue during the war, the list below may be regarded as fairly representative of composers who were producing work at this time. One instance equates to one work; therefore, three works by Bax in a single concert would count as three instances. Minor composers are not included here;

⁴⁶ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive, concert programmes 1939–45; Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive, boxes 53 to 55; and Wigmore Hall programmes, uncatalogued 1944–5.

⁴⁷ It must be noted that while this concept did overwhelmingly govern the Boosey and Hawkes repertoire, the concerts were not *exclusively* restricted to new works, or indeed to contemporary composers. However, the Boosey and Hawkes series was primarily for the promotion and performance of new and modern works.

however, composers that have survived into our wider modern repertoire are cited, even if they only attain one instance, for example Messiaen.⁴⁸

Figure 20: Performances of music by living composers, Wigmore Hall 1939–45.

Key: B=British premiere, W=World premiere, L=London premiere

Composer	Instances of works	Premieres	Boosey and Hawkes	Composer	Instances of works	Premieres	Boosey and Hawkes
Rachmaninoff	35	2W		Coates	4		
Bartók	32	1LP	8	Harty	4		
Ireland	30	3W	6	Maconchy	4	2W	
Vaughan Williams	26	1W	3	Martinü	4	1B	1
Britten	25	5W, 1B, 2L	10	Bowman	3	1W	1
Bloch	23		4	Copland	3	1B	2
Bliss	17	1B	3	Lutyens	3	1W	1
Stravinsky	17		3	Rowley	3	1W	
Spoliansky	17			Wellesz	3		
Bax	15	1W	5	Van Wyk	3	1W	4
Poulenc	15	3B, 1W	3	Alfano	2	1B	
Moeran	14	2W	2	Boulanger	2		
Bridge	11		1	Bryan	2	1L	
Milhaud	11			Cox	2	2W	
Berkeley	10	3W	2	Frumerie	2	2B	1
Strauss	10			Gál	2	1B	
Tippett	9	4W, 1L	4	Gardiner	2		
Finzi	8	1W	2	Holbrooke	2		
Rubbra	8	4W	3	Milford	2	1W	
Howells	7			Rainier	2	2W	

⁴⁸ Minor composers who have minimal instances of works performed, *or* whose biographical details do not appear in *Grove* include Francesco Ticciati, Franz Wagner, Randall Thompson (American composer noted for work as an academic) and Victor Hely-Hutchinson (director of the BBC Music Department from 1944), as well as many song composers too numerous to list here.

Composer	Instances of works	Premieres	Boosey and Hawkes	Composer	Instances of works	Premieres	Boosey and Hawkes
Sibelius	7		1	Reizenstein	2	1W	1
Honegger	6	2B	2	Searle	2	2W	1
Armstrong Gibbs	5	1L	1	Stevens	2	2W	2
Ferguson	5		3	Westrup	2	2W	1
Kreisler	5			Alwyn	1	1B	1
Nin	5			Barber	1		
Rawsthorne	5		2	W. Davies	1		
Schoenberg	5	2B	3	Lambert	1		1
Benjamin	4		1	Pitfield	1	1W	
Bush	4		1	Messiaen	1		

There is a notable lack of American composers, with, for example, Barber and Copland performing once and three times respectively. However, we are told by Boosey and Hawkes that it was difficult to obtain music from the United States.⁴⁹ (Although Bloch had returned to America on the outbreak of war, as his publishers Boosey and Hawkes were based in London there was no problem accessing his work.) In total, sixty-eight premieres are detailed above, forty-six of which are world premieres. Britten, Tippett, Berkeley, Rubbra and Ireland have the largest numbers of world premieres during this period, all of them, it must be noted, staples of the Boosey and Hawkes series. Others, now relatively unknown to mainstream concert audiences, had significant musical status at the time. For example, Bernard Stevens became Professor of Composition at the RCM and composed *Symphony of Liberation*, which was celebrated at the premiere under the baton of Malcolm Sargent at the

⁴⁹ It was difficult to obtain printed music from America during the war, and so American composers did not particularly enjoy much exposure at the Wigmore Hall in wartime, although Boosey and Hawkes did promise in 1944 that an American chamber-music concert was planned for the future. Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive, Box 55, 26 April 1944. There is potential for further research focussing on the international movement and accessibility of scores during the Second World War. We do know that there was a little movement to and from the continent, via the Red Cross at least, as demonstrated by the enterprising Lieutenant Wood, imprisoned at Eichstätt, who wrote to Britten requesting a piece of music, and detailing the musical forces available to him. On 20 February 1944, Lieutenant Wood conducted the world premiere of *The Ballad of Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard* which Britten had written and sent via the Red Cross especially for the men imprisoned at Eichstätt. Private Papers of R. Wood, 813 90/33/1 A., Imperial War Museum. Similarly, we know that the British Council were instrumental in the 'distribution' of British culture.

Royal Albert Hall in 1946.⁵⁰ Victor Hely-Hutchinson, not included in this table, had two works performed at Wigmore Hall and became music director at the BBC in 1944.

In total there are 459 instances of works by living composers performed at the Wigmore Hall during the Second World War, which is more than the total number of performances of Beethoven and Bach combined. As we will see in Chapter 4, this is a striking contrast to the repertoire programmed at the National Gallery. Far from being a static period suffering wartime austerity, then, chamber-music performance at Wigmore Hall included performances of new and contemporary composition as a significant presence. This indicates that it was not only performance activity that was flourishing on the public stage but also compositional activity. Even more significantly, new works were being performed on a commercial, public platform, in striking contrast to the way the CPNM was run, as we have seen. Along with the accompanying decline of ‘lighter’ performances, concert activity at Wigmore Hall thus reveals a thriving highbrow musical scene that was ‘alive’ and fostering London’s creative development despite the war.

National representations and identities

International war inevitably shapes questions of national identity and nationhood very dramatically. As I will discuss in this section, several threads can be observed during the Second World War period that bind chamber-music performances into complex, often paradoxical relationships with national identities and representations. Most strikingly perhaps, while chamber music was used as a vehicle to promote nationhood and national identity on a public platform it was not used to reinforce Britishness at all, perhaps because of the dearth of British chamber repertoire considered worthwhile. In fact not a single concert billed as ‘British’ or promoting ‘Britishness’ took place at Wigmore Hall. This is particularly notable in a context in which many other national groups, and indeed musical groups, clearly felt that chamber music, in particular, had something to say about, and contribute to, the construction of national identities and rhetoric. There was an influx of

⁵⁰ Malcolm MacDonald, ‘Stevens, Bernard’, *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed 3 December 2012, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/26730>.

nationally defined groups using chamber music for this very purpose -- the use of an art was perceived to provide intellectual legitimacy, which could enhance a nation's particular cause. In some cases politics and music-making became intertwined to quite a remarkable extent. As we will see, a particular example was the Anglo-Austrian music society, which sought to preserve a national culture untainted by Nazism with chamber music providing a partisan vehicle for the Austrian cause. Politically led programming often contained a paradox, because chamber music was expected to portray both specific national nuances and transnational ideals. As we have already seen in Chapter 2, the British perception of foreign artists was caught between the various pulls of patriotic conscience, reason and the deeply ingrained idea that continental people, particularly those of Austro-German origin (but also including Italians, French and Russians) were simply better at music (both performing and composing) than the British.

Concerts and national representations

MacRae suggests that wartime concerts 'reflected both the charitable and xenophobic nature of Britain in wartime'; however, this statement can only be seen to be true in part.⁵¹ While the charitable nature of the London public was certainly reflected in the plethora of charitable performances at Wigmore Hall, to suggest that concert activities demonstrated xenophobic tendencies is not representative of the hall's concert activity. In fact, the opposite could be seen to be true. Representations of nation and nationhood became commonplace on the Wigmore stage during the war and a large number of both allied and axis nations were represented.

Programming trends before the war were vastly different in this respect. From January 1935 to August 1939, the archive boasts only one national body putting on concerts at the Wigmore, this being the 'Friends of Italy' organisation, who hosted 'At Home' events

⁵¹ MacRae, *Wigmore Hall: A Celebration*, 199.

at the Wigmore on several occasions each year.⁵² Apart from this one group, no other national concerts took place at Wigmore Hall in the pre-war years; nationally based concerts, therefore, were a wartime phenomenon.

During the Second World War, it became common to see a ‘Polish Concert’, ‘Austrian Concert’ or ‘French Concert’ advertised, some performed in aid of national charities, some not. An example of the latter can be seen in Figure 21. Other national groups using the Wigmore included Hungary, Greece, Czechoslovakia and the Netherlands, as well as concerts in aid of Soviet Russian troops. These concerts usually contained music of the western canon, with perhaps a sprinkling of local flavour, which would either take the form of native composer’s works, or ‘traditional’ folk music performances. The balance would, however, be generally weighted towards canonical works, the only exception in six years being the Soviet concert, which featured an entire programme of music composed in tribute to the USSR.⁵³

⁵² Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Programmes Archive, Box 48, Friends of Italy concerts. The front page of the programme proclaims quotations from Virgil – ‘I seek thee Italy Mother of Nations’ and ‘Go seek your motherland, Italy’ – with drawings of wreaths, spears, stone tablets and other classical images surrounding the text. However, if the cover had stirred the audience member into an Italian nationalist fervour, there may have been disappointment when the musical offering was disclosed. With a programme of Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, Schumann, Scarlatti, Rossini and Chopin, the truly ‘Italian’ musical offering is scant indeed. It was not specific Italian identity that was central to the musical planning, but instead the representation of Italy through nationalistic feeling, and the excitement of evoking loyalty, appreciation of a shared aesthetic and other universal concepts. The explicitly Italian nationalistic mottos printed on the cover of the programme provided specificity.

⁵³ Soviet concert on 18 May 1944, Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Archive, Box 55. We know that this Soviet concert was not an event isolated to the Wigmore Hall. Elkin describes a similar concert at Queen’s Hall that took place on 13 March 1940 under the baton of Alan Bush. Elkin, *Queen’s Hall*, 127.



Figure 21: A programme from one of the most prolific nationally themed concert series that used Wigmore Hall during the war, the French Concert series. Used with Permission of Wigmore Hall and the Centre for Performance History.

In such politicised circumstances it was inevitable that political discourse sometimes took place within the programmes themselves. The following example appeared on a programme for a concert that took place on 28 May 1942. It was hosted by what were then three different bodies: the Free Austrian Movement, the Austrian PEN Club and the Austrian Musicians Group. The concert was held at the Wigmore in order to celebrate the centenary of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra (VPO). Paradoxically, this did not in fact include an orchestra. As well as the logistical difficulties of funding and assembling an

orchestra at this time, the lack of an orchestra may also have been indicative of a desire to demonstrate that the old VPO no longer existed and that its current form (under the Nazi regime) was illegitimate.

As it was, the concert showcased the prestigious Rosé String Quartet. Fred Rauter, who was in the process of founding the Anglo-Austrian Society, was at the piano and John Christie of Glyndbourne was the honoured speaker. The musicians performed Quartet in C KV465 by Mozart, Italian Serenade in G for string quartet by Wolf, and finally Piano Quartet in E flat Op. 87 by Dvořák. The following passage was printed on the programme.

In celebrating the Orchestra's Centenary we do not think of the remnant still carrying on under the famous old name, but transformed into an instrument to grace Nazi functions. Many of the orchestra's best members have been dismissed, conductors banned; composers disappeared from its repertoire. The orchestra, created as an interpreter of the Austrian spirit, is for the time being dead, struck down by the Nazi invaders. But it lives on in the heart of the Austrians, to whom the restoration of Austria will also bring the rebirth of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra as a cultural institution of the nation.⁵⁴

Within this text, the poignancy of the VPO's anniversary is highlighted and the orchestra is seen to fulfil and represent a spiritual, almost sacred, function for Austrians. Language such as 'transformed', 'interpreter of the Austrian spirit' and 'rebirth' encouraged the audience members to view and understand the function of the orchestra in the past, present and future tenses. In an explicit biblical reference, we are told that the orchestra as an embodiment of 'Austrian spirit' has been killed in body and yet lives on in the 'heart of the Austrians' who look to the inevitable rebirth of the orchestra and therefore a crucial manifestation of national identity.

Czechoslovakian concerts were particularly numerous on the Wigmore stage and featured Czechoslovakian artists, composers and charities. Concerts were run by several bodies, including the Czechoslovak Institute, the Council for Czechoslovak Women and the Czechoslovak British Friendship club. For example on 29 November 1942, merely months after the massacre at Lidice, which saw the entire village population either murdered or transported, a concert in aid of the 'Lidice Shall Live' campaign took place. The programme featured Smetana and Czech folk songs, Stravinsky and Mussorgsky, but also

⁵⁴ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Archive, Box 54, 28 May 1942.

included Beethoven and Schubert. The Czech and Russian repertoire could be seen to have national or political circumstantial significances, emphasising solidarity. However, the inclusion of Beethoven and Schubert is trickier to rationalise, particularly when one considers the appalling and very recent events at Lidice that the concert sought to commemorate. While these works must have functioned as universal elements in the programme, representative of a universal solidarity of humanity rather than anything specifically Austro-German, it is difficult today to fully understand how their inclusion could have signified their universality in a programme that seemed in every other way to point to a political performance that constructed a national solidarity. It seems today as inappropriate as commemorating the Holocaust with a performance of Wagner. But this must once again indicate the very different understanding of music's connection with nationhood that prevailed in that context, one in which (some) music was still 'above' nation (as were the arts more generally, as we will note below).

On 14 May 1943 Polish National Day was celebrated with a chamber-music concert. The event took place under the auspices of the Committee for Polish Welfare, and the following quotation was printed in the programme.

Mr Churchill's Message to the Polish Nation on the Polish National Day May 2nd 1943

On the occasion of the Polish National Day, I send you greetings of His Majesty's Government and the British people. We celebrate this anniversary to-day in renewed confidence that Poland's liberation has been brought nearer by the joint efforts of the United Nations during the past year. Poles both at home and abroad are at one in their determination to continue the struggle against the German oppressors of their country. The valuable contribution which they have made to the common cause of the United Nations has not been achieved without heavy sacrifices. But these sacrifices will be crowned by the restoration, to which we all look forward, of a great and independent Poland.⁵⁵

The repertoire performed was as follows.

⁵⁵ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Archive, Box 54, 14 May 1943.

<i>Hear Me Ye Winds and Waves and Ombra mai fù</i>	Handel
<i>Knight's Song</i>	Moniuszko
<i>Nocturne in B and Fantasia in F minor</i>	Chopin
<i>O tu, Palmero</i>	Verdi
<i>Serenade from Faust</i>	Gounod
<i>La Folia</i>	Corelli
<i>Polonaise in D</i>	Wieniawski
<i>Sarabande and Tambourin</i>	Leclair
<i>Spanish Dance</i>	Granados
<i>Zigeunerweisen Op. 20</i>	Sarasate

The speech itself, given originally by Churchill earlier that month, bears no direct relation to the concert for which it has been reproduced. Although the Polish National Day concert did include Polish composers, they were integrated with other repertoire including Spanish, Italian, French and British. The diverse selection of music reinforced Poland's national identity within the context of a selective European community. The concert organisers have ensured that Austro-German repertoire is entirely absent, but there seems to have been little problem including works from militarily inactive Spain and axis Italy.

The plight of Poland was particularly emotive. Another Polish concert performed for the Polish Relief Fund also made reference to Polish suffering and loss of identity by displaying a shredded and bullet ridden Polish flag on the front cover of the programme, depicted here in Figure 22.

WIGMORE HALL,
W. 1

THURSDAY, JULY 29th, 1943, at 6.30 p.m.



From the original by M. Zulawski.

PIANO RECITAL
BY
HENRYK MIEROWSKI

GIVEN
IN AID OF
THE POLISH RELIEF FUND

(Registered under the War Charities Act, 1940)

Hon. Management - HAROLD HOLT, LTD.

PROGRAMME

Figure 22: A concert in aid of the Polish Relief Fund featuring a torn Polish flag. Used with permission from the Wigmore Hall Archive and the Centre for Performance History.

Another concert on 18 August 1941 promoted a message of unity between the Polish and British nations. The programme ran as follows.⁵⁶

<i>Gaude Mater Polonia</i>	Gorczycki
<i>Warszawianka Song</i>	
<i>Knight's Song</i>	Moniuszko
<i>Air from Janek</i>	Zelenski
<i>Song of Songs</i>	Moya
<i>Ballad of Florian the Grey</i>	Moniuszko
<i>Land of Hope and Glory</i>	Elgar
<i>So Deep is the Night</i>	Chopin
Selection of Mountaineer's Songs and <i>The Hundred Pipers</i>	arr. The Conductor, Lieut. G. Koloczkowski
<i>The King Went to the War</i>	Koeneman
<i>Passing By</i>	Purcell
<i>Loch Lomond</i>	
<i>Ye Mariners of England</i>	Pierson
Selection of Soldiers' Songs	
Polish and British National Anthems	

British and Polish items have been carefully interspersed, finishing with both national anthems side by side. The repertoire features undeniably patriotic items, including folk songs arranged by the conductor, Lieut. G. Koloczkowski, patriotic texts and military as well as pastoral themes. This particular programme was printed in both Polish and English

⁵⁶ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Archive, Box 54, 18 August 1941.

on the same sheet of paper. The idea of British–Polish solidarity was manifested in almost every aspect of the concert performance.

One extraordinary concert which took place in 1942 is worth examining here because it demonstrates very clear engagement with the nationality of the performers. The concert was entitled ‘Great International Concert, Music of the Allies’ and was arranged by the Free German League of Culture. The performers were listed in the programme with their names adjacent to their nationality. The front page of the programme can be seen in Figure 23.

**GREAT
INTERNATIONAL CONCERT**

MUSIC OF THE ALLIES

WIGMORE HALL, WIGMORE STREET, W.1.

Sunday, February 22nd, 1942 at 3 p.m.

Arranged by : **FREE GERMAN LEAGUE OF CULTURE IN GREAT BRITAIN**

Admission for Members and their Guests.

Programme

Introductory words : CHRISTIAN DARNTON

Artists performing :

BRITISH :

PAULINE JULER (Clarinet)
ARNOLD GOLDSBROUGH (Piano)
Sonata for Clarinet and Piano (First movement) *by Arnold Bax*

RUSSIAN :

TAMARA AMERIDJIBI (piano)
Sonata (two movements) *by Shostakovitch*

BELGIAN :

ARABELLE CAMPS (Piano)
JEAN VOLCKAERT (Violin)
Sonata (two movements) *by W. de Fesch*

DUTCH :

MARIA VAN DER BEECK (Soprano)
Two Old Dutch Folk Songs (XVIIth Century)

GREEK :

GREEK CHOIR conducted by *Donis Albanis*
Greek Choral }
Two Folksongs } *arranged for choir by Donis Albanis*

FREE AUSTRIAN :

EDITH VOGEL (Piano)
Erlking *by Schubert-Liszt*
Paraphrase on "Die Fledermaus" .. *By Johann Strauss*

Figure 23: 'Great International Concert. Music of the Allies.' Another example of the politicisation of concert programmes. Used with permission from the Wigmore Hall Archive and the Centre for Performance History.

The full programme of artists, which cannot be entirely seen in Figure 23, ran as follows.

Concert given on 22 February 1942⁵⁷

Performers

Nationality	Name
British	Pauline Juler, Arnold Goldsbrough
Russian	Tamara Ameridjibi
Belgian	Arabelle Camps, Jean Volckaert
Dutch	Maria Van der Beeck
Greek	Greek Choir
Free Austrian	Edith Vogel
Czechoslovakian	Otakar Kraus
Chinese	C. Y. Hsieh
Free Roumanian	Carola Grindea
Free Hungarian	Clara Grosz
Polish	Adela Kotowska, Felix Vandyl
Norwegian	Waldemar Jonson
Free German	Sela Trau

The distinction made between individuals who are ‘Free German’ as opposed to ‘German’ must be highlighted. While the term generally applied to a German living in exile, for example in Britain, the ‘Free’ nations leagues were extremely left-wing, and quickly identified as such. These Communist leagues were treated with as much, if not more, suspicion than those on the far right.

⁵⁷ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Archive, Box 54, 22 February 1942.

The programme for this international concert was as follows, and was performed for the 'Red Cross in aid of the victims of Singapore and the Anti Nazi Fighting Fund of the Free German League of Culture'.

<i>Sonata for Clarinet and Piano</i>	Bax
<i>Piano Sonata</i>	Shostakovich
<i>Sonata</i>	Fesch
Two Old Dutch Folk Songs from XVII Century	
Greek Choral and Two Folksongs	arr. Donis Albanis
<i>Erlkönig</i>	Schubert-Liszt
<i>Paraphrase on Die Fledermaus</i>	Strauss
<i>Aria from Devil's Wall and Aria from The Secret</i>	Smetana
Chinese Folk Songs	
Romanian Folk Music	
<i>Dance from Roumanian Suite</i>	Chagrin
Hungarian Folk Songs	Bartók and Seiber
<i>Nocturne</i>	Chopin-Auer
<i>Caprice</i>	Wieniawski-Kreisler
<i>Two Songs</i>	Grieg
<i>Praeladium</i>	Bach
The Group Players of the Free German League of Culture ' <i>Frau Kraemer</i> ' (Moscow Radio to the German Women)	Words by H. Arundel, Music by E. H. Meyer

Although not made explicit in the programme, it seems that each performer played the item that corresponded to his or her own nation, so that Pauline Juler and Arnold Goldsbrough performed the Bax and so on. This concert of ‘Music of the Allies’ includes several instances of settings of folksongs and folk music, specifically Greek, Romanian and Chinese folk music, as well as of the Hungarian folk song by Bartók and Seiber. This seems to correspond to the ethos of the concert, which highlights native performers playing their ‘native’ music. Highlighting this phenomenon presented the audience with music not as an absolute or universal experience but as something very much defined and compartmentalised by national borders and rooted in specific national cultures and traditions. This concert is unusual because it stages cultural nuances and difference rather than a set of common aesthetic ideals. If there was a unifying experience to be had at this concert, it was not in the shared experience of the canon, but in the act of performance itself.

Under the baton of Alan Bush, the Workers’ Music Association performed many concerts profiling Soviet Music under the auspices of the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR. These concerts included works by Tchaikovsky, Mussorgsky or Shostakovich, as well as a repertoire of regime-approved and newly composed Soviet folk songs including such titles as *Patriotic War*, *Our Village*, *The Steppe* and *Collective Farm Song*.⁵⁸ One such concert can be seen illustrated here in Figure 24.

⁵⁸ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Archive, boxes 54 and 55 and Wigmore Hall programmes, uncatalogued, 1944–5, WMA concerts 1943–5.

WIGMORE HALL

WIGMORE STREET, W.1.

Monday, July 24th, at 6.30 p.m.

Concert of
Contemporary British, Czech, and Soviet Music

RENA MOISENCO AND **MARGARET KNIGHT**
(Soprano) (Piano)

DIANA POULTON
(Lute)

W.M.A. SINGERS

Conductor - - ALAN BUSH
Accompanist - - MURIEL RUBENS

In aid of British Red Cross and St. John Fund

TICKETS - - 3/6, 5/-, 7/6 and 10/6

May be obtained from Box Office, Wigmore Hall, Tel. WELbeck 2141.

P.T.O. for PROGRAMME.

Figure 24: A Workers' Music Association concert. Used with permission from the Wigmore Hall Archive and the Centre for Performance History.

In some Soviet concerts however, the line between nation and music seems to have become blurred. There are instances of the state itself taking ownership and creative credit for the music, with the 'USSR' itself being listed within the programme as the composer of some works. In this case the music really was portrayed as having been conceived by, and out of, the republic. These concerts sometimes ended with the Soviet anthem or *God Save The King* – on one occasion, both anthems were performed. Apparently with access to significant financial resources, larger-scale USSR concerts were also performed at Queen's Hall. One of these concerts was reviewed by the *Musical Times*:

The Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR, fortified no doubt by the principle that art transcends even moral frontiers, gave a concert of Soviet orchestral music at Queen's Hall on April 13. It must have been an expensive concert, for the L.P.O. was engaged at full strength and had been given three rehearsals. Moreover the audience, though numerous for a gathering of Saturday afternoon culture-seekers, was not of a size to gladden a concert-agent. Evidently the cause of Soviet music is happy in its financial backing.⁵⁹

Despite the use of a full orchestra, audiences do not seem to have been overwhelming in number. The fact that this concert took place before the USSR became an allied force and the Nazi-Soviet Pact was still in place is something on which the reviewer passes dry comment. Nevertheless, the critic in question is fairly positive in his review of the performance of 'new and modern' music, despite his neighbour leaving disillusioned halfway through.⁶⁰ The transcendence of 'moral frontiers' also echoed through other programmes, for example in the legend, 'Every nation has its Art. ART has no nation', printed at the head of a rather expensive song-recital programme in 1944.⁶¹

⁵⁹ 'London Concerts', *Musical Times*, May 1940, 227.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Archive, Box 55, 4 May 1944.

The Anglo-Austrian Music Society

One particular group that relied heavily on the idea that art would transcend the current conflict was the Anglo-Austrian Music Society (a sub-group of the Anglo-Austrian Society already mentioned). The activities of this society brought chamber music and politics into a close relationship designed to shape a vindicated Austrian identity. The development of intertwined and apparently reciprocal relationships between the chamber-music stage and national groups, especially the Anglo-Austrian Society, demonstrates the increasingly partisan role for which chamber-music performances (and repertoire) were utilised. As we have already seen in Chapter 2, the (one-sided) musical–national relationship between Britain and Austria/Germany was under increasing self-scrutiny. It is therefore interesting that the newly formed Anglo-Austrian Society staged concerts during the war at Wigmore Hall and was the most consistently active nationally defined musical group seen on the Wigmore stage.

Officially founded on 12 July 1944, the society's roots can be traced to two years earlier in 1942, when concerts were already taking place under the name of the Austrian Musicians Group. Before that year there was also a rather bewildering array of bodies that claimed to represent Austria on the platform. For example, there was the Council of Austrians in Great Britain, who alongside the Free German League of Culture in Great Britain staged a Mahler memorial concert on 18 May 1941. On 28 May 1942, the Free Austrian Movement, together with the Austrian Musicians Group, performed a concert to celebrate a hundred years of the Vienna Philharmonic Chorus. (The Free Austrian movement did in fact come to be regarded with some wariness by other Austrian groups, due to the perceived underlying communist agenda.)⁶² Another interesting group was the Young Austria in Great Britain Group, which included the following passage on one of its programmes on 15 May 1942 at the Wigmore Hall:

“Young Austria” is an organisation which is open to all young Austrians in this country, irrespective of political party or creed, who are prepared to work with us for the liberation of Austria and for the building of a firm and enduring

⁶² Frederick Scheu, *The Early Days of the Anglo-Austrian Society* (London: Anglo-Austrian Society, 1969), 3–4.

friendship between Austrian youth and the youth of Britain and the allied countries. Founded 3 years ago, on the first anniversary of the annexation of Austria, “Young Austria” now has a membership of more than 750 young people, most of whom came to this country while still very young, but who have found in our ranks an opportunity to maintain contact with fellow young Austrians, to study and generally to obtain the background which will make them useful citizens of the Free Austria for which we work [. . .]

To strengthen and cement our friendship with the youth of Britain and the allied countries, we affiliated to the International Youth Council. Finally, in the ranks of the Free Austrian Movement, we take our stand for the full participation of every Austrian in all spheres of the national effort; and for the establishment of a free Austrian Fighting Force, so that in the front line, too, we can play our part in the complete and final destruction of Nazi-fascism.⁶³

The focus of the passage is the cementing of good relations between Austria and Britain with special attention to the future relationship. A strong military flavour is discernible within the wording, and no reference is made to music, or to the concert being performed. The passage seems to want to emphasise the active military steps being taken in order that Austrians are seen to be active participants in the ‘complete and final destruction of Nazi-fascism’.⁶⁴

The repertoire chosen for this concert, however, indicates another affiliation. It included Brahms, Schubert and Haydn but also featured two performances of Second Viennese School works, *Solidaritätslied* by Eisler and *Gebet aus dem 20 Jahrhundert* by Pisk. Eisler had been forced into exile after his left-wing activism in the 1930s alongside Bertolt Brecht ensured that the Nazi regime banned the performance of his music.⁶⁵ Musicologist David Blake goes as far as to describe *Solidaritätslied* and other Eisler works as ‘classics of the socialist movement’.⁶⁶ The concert also presented the premiere of *Three Lieder* by Weiss, noted for being composed in an internment camp, as well as music of Soviet extraction including Shostakovich and a piece entitled *Cavalry of the Steppes* by

⁶³ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Archive, Box 54, 15 May 1942.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ David Blake, ‘Eisler, Hanns’, *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed 1 December 2012, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/08667>.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Knipper, whose work at this time explored ‘social and political themes’.⁶⁷ The inclusion of these Soviet works coincides with the relatively recent Soviet switch to join the allies. It can be observed, therefore, that much of the repertoire chosen for this concert was highly politicised, even without the Austrian militant platform.

Let us return, however, to the main focus of this section. On 15 December 1942 a concert entitled ‘Anglo-Austrian Concert’ was given at the hall. The programme does not specifically cite the Anglo-Austrian Music Society, but instead the Austrian Musicians Group. This group was nevertheless responsible for the formation of the Anglo-Austrian Music Society proper, and this was their first concert as Austria’s official representative body. The programme boasts the patrons of the concert as ‘Dame Myra Hess, Sir Adrian Boult & R. Vaughan Williams OM’, indicating endorsement by a solid British musical establishment. The performers included the Menges String Quartet, Marjorie Ffrangcon-Davies, Claire Born (of the Vienna state opera), Franz Osborn, Max Rostal and Georg Knepler. Within the programme appeared the statement, ‘to demonstrate mutual understanding and appreciation between the two countries, music of each country will be performed by musicians of the other’.⁶⁸

The programme for this concert in 1942 marked the public start of the Society’s cultural activities, and the printed statement signals the priorities of the Society, namely shared experience, reciprocity and mutual respect. The repertoire chosen was specifically Anglo-Austrian, as were the artists, in order to allow the performing ‘exchange’ to work.

<i>String Quartet D min</i> (Op. posth.)	Schubert
<i>Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen</i>	Mahler
<i>Address to Britain</i>	Purcell
Dejanira’s Aria from <i>Hercules</i> ‘Where shall I <i>fly</i> ’	Handel

⁶⁷ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Archive, Box 54, 15 May 1942; Yelena Dvoskina, ‘Knipper, Lev Konstantinovich’, *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed 3 December 2012, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/15201>.

⁶⁸ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Archive, Box 54, 15 December 1942.

<i>String Quartet D min</i> (Op. posth.)	Schubert
<i>Take O Take Those Lips Away and Late</i> <i>Summer</i>	Warlock
<i>Silent Noon and Greensleeves</i>	Vaughan Williams
<i>Sonata for Violin and Piano</i> <i>in E minor Op. 82</i>	Elgar

Amongst twenty Wigmore Hall concerts run by other subgroups or sister groups of the Anglo-Austrian society active in London at the time, six concerts at the Wigmore Hall ran under the banner of the Anglo-Austrian Music Society. They also ran a concert series at Bloomsbury House, which operated a scheme of free lunchtime concerts and lunches at 1.15 pm in Bloomsbury Street. Immediately after the cessation of hostilities, resources began to be put in place to form the Aid to Austria Appeal Committee, with J. B. Priestley as the Honorary Treasurer. From 1946 to 1947, this organisation provided tangible aid in the form of food parcels and clothing to Austria's hungry and those left destitute by the conflict.⁶⁹ For such an organisation that was pro-active in so many ventures, the musical 'wing' of the group was a crucial part of their activities, not so much for fundraising as for oiling the wheels of cultural relations and raising awareness of the society's work. Music, in particular, was an area in which the idea of shared commitments and values could be demonstrated, and chamber music lent intellectual gravitas to the cause.

As well as concerts, several lectures were given in order to raise money for the society and to resituate Austria's intellectual and cultural property as independent from Germany, and rehabilitate the same from the shame of collusion. In the staging of these events it was important for the society to emphasise the innocence of Austria, both nationally and culturally, and to attempt to obscure any allusions to passivity or collaboration with the Nazis. Lectures that were given in London included *Anglo-Austrian Cultural Relations*, *Austrian Science Past and Present*, *The History of the Austrian Art Collection* and *Musical Revival in Austria*. Austrian ownership of intellectual products was

⁶⁹ Anglo-Austrian Music Society Archive, Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies, Senate House Library.

emphasised in order to distinguish between the increasingly blurred and diminishing boundaries (both real and imagined) between Austria and Germany. The following passage taken from a programme featuring music banned by the Nazis also demonstrates a desire to separate the 'Nazi creed' under which Austrian musical life laboured, and the real Austria as exemplified in the banned works which were then performed.

The 'Reichsmusikkammer' set up by Hitler as an institution for the supervision of musical life in Germany and Austria has thoroughly eliminated all music regarded as not in accordance with the Nazi creed. Thus not only has music by composers of Jewish descent been prohibited, but also music by 'Aryan' composers of a marked progressive attitude, such as Berg and Hindemith. The ban extends further to musical works written on subjects from the Old Testament, and therefore most oratorios by Handel are banned. Even many songs by as popular masters as Schubert and Schumann have been eliminated from musical life in Nazi Germany because they were written on poems by Heine, the great German poet, who was of Jewish extraction.⁷⁰

The following passage from a pamphlet published on and by the Anglo-Austrian Society reasserts the desire, not only to culturally distance the 'true' Austrian nation (as represented by democratic Austrians) from external fascism, but also from any internal extremism, both right- and left-wing.

Its purpose was to interest the British public in the fate of Austrian independence and democracy and to help in preventing Austria from falling into the Russian sphere of influence in Europe . . . There was no Austrian Government in Exile. Memories of the civil war of February 1934 made cooperation between Austrian Socialists and conservatives difficult. The field was left free for the communists who quickly seized their opportunity. Early in the war, while the Austrian Socialists in Britain were still inclined to leave the ultimate decision about the fate of Austria to the Austrian people themselves, the Austrian Communists had first built up the 'Austrian Centre' and then, in cooperation with some right wing groups the Free Austrian Movement which, while never revealing its true political inspiration, gathered around it a large number of Austrian cultural organisations. Many of the people active in these cultural organisations had no clear conception of the character of the political leadership.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Archive, Box 54, 16 June 1943.

⁷¹ Scheu, *The Early Days of the Anglo-Austrian Society*, 3.

This last sentence hints at those high-profile musicians such as Fred Rauter, Max Rostal and Arnold Rosé, all of whom can be found on ‘Free Austrian Movement’ concert programmes, and who later performed regularly under the banner of the Anglo-Austrian Music Society.⁷² Within this text we can perceive a very real fear of the political far left, a fear that was particularly pronounced in Britain. It is interesting that the distaste in this passage is founded around the ‘gathering’ of culture, and its deceptive appropriation by the ‘free’ leagues. This asks us therefore to recognise the difference between culture appropriated for ‘national’ causes, and culture appropriated by political factions, distaste usually being reserved for the latter.

When considering these examples of Austrian defiance, accusations of cultural theft and misuse and the reassertion of ownership of national cultural property, the Anglo-Austrian Society and the Anglo-Austrian Music Society can be seen to be engaging in detailed and explicit discourse about their experiences of invasion, occupation and the future of Austrian cultural life. As demonstrated above, detailed texts, often printed in concert programmes, outline situations, arguments and commentary from the Austrian perspective. Other national bodies using the concert platform had tended to exploit the format to promote their nation and inform the concert-going public about particular artists and repertoire, for example the French concerts, or perhaps a particular charitable cause, such as the Comforts Fund for the Women and Children of Soviet Russia, or the Polish Relief Fund. The Austrian groups, movements and societies (but mainly those under the Anglo-Austrian banner) went a step further, and took the concert platform very seriously as a mediator for contemporary Austrian political and national discourse and as a way to start reconstructing and rehabilitating Austrian national identity.

The Anglo-Austrian Music Society attracted some of the most significant musical personages in London at the time, helped by the support of prominent Austrian musicians. As well as those mentioned previously, Benjamin Britten also actively supported the society by giving a performance alongside Peter Pears after the war was over.

⁷² Anglo-Austrian Music Society Archive, Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies, Senate House Library, Accounting Sheet, Anglo-Austrian Society, Box 21.

9th August 1945

Dear Mr Rauter,

Thank you for your letter of appreciation and also for the moving criticism that you sent later. Peter Pears and myself were delighted and honoured to be able to perform for your society which has done fine work, and hope to have the opportunity perhaps to do so again in the future. I enjoyed also meeting and talking with you after so many years when I had known your name and admired your and Miss Lund's great work.

Yours Sincerely,
Benjamin Britten⁷³

Here we can discern that both Britten and Pears offered practical and moral support for the 'fine work' that the Society strove to undertake. Britten's close association with the Anglo-Austrian Society continued throughout his life; both he and Pears travelled to Vienna to give recitals for the Society and performed in London for the twenty-fifth- anniversary concert. Perhaps most notably, Britten wrote *Golden Vanity* at the society's request, which was subsequently premiered by the Vienna Boys' Choir in 1967.⁷⁴ The society, therefore, was not lacking in support from musical talent of the first order. The cream of London musical society at the time had lent their names to the Anglo-Austrian cause.

However, the subtlety and intimacy of the chamber-music platform was not suited to producing high-impact events and it was felt that orchestral forces were needed for a post-war boost to Austria's cause. Boult, in particular, took an active part alongside Harold Holt in the organisation of a post-war grand concert to take place at the Royal Albert Hall under the auspices of the society, from which the proceeds would be donated to various war-aid related causes including, it was proposed, aid to Austrian Victims of Nazi Concentration Camps.⁷⁵ Boult offered his services for free, as well as suggesting that some of the proceeds should go towards a 'special fund for the resumption and promotion of

⁷³ Anglo-Austrian Society Archive, Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies, Senate House Library, Box 11, letter.

⁷⁴ Anglo-Austrian Music Society, *If Music be the Food of Love – Play on! Anglo-Austrian Music Society 50 Years 1942–1992* (Publisher unknown, 1992). From the chapter 'Music for Special Occasions'.

⁷⁵ Harold Holt was a successful concert agent active during the Second World War, often to be observed representing artists who appeared at Wigmore Hall.

cultural relations between Britain and Austria'.⁷⁶ He clearly took the Anglo-Austrian relationship extremely seriously. However, the programming of such a concert revealed potential problems.

In a discussion with David Bach the question was considered whether modern Austrian music should be performed. [David] Bach, one of the champions of modern music in Austria, at first favoured this course, but later agreed with Harpner that at a large representative function of this kind it would be wiser and safer to play works of the classical 'Big Four': Mozart, Haydn, Schubert and Beethoven.⁷⁷

The concert had to limit itself to familiar programmatic territory, considering the size of the venue and the significant financial investment that must have occurred in order to stage such an event. Indeed some ticket prices were grossly expensive, the best seats costing up to 2 guineas. Berg, Schoenberg, Webern and Wellesz were therefore relegated to a niche concert given at Cecil Sharp House in the November, an out-of-the-way location which had suffered very serious bomb damage in the blitz, and which cannot have been a comfortable or convenient concert venue so soon after the war. This highlights some of the distinct advantages of the chamber-music stage over the orchestral platform, especially when it came to new and unfamiliar music. In chamber-music performance, risks could be taken to a greater extent and perhaps even more frequently than in large-scale performances.

Nevertheless, despite the high profile support of its cause, the Anglo-Austrian Society seems to have struggled financially, suggesting that there may have been a lack of public support at the concerts themselves. The quite substantial losses detailed below point to minimal ticket sales. Here we can see the profits and losses that were recorded after the official formation of the society. Earlier concert figures cannot be discovered.

⁷⁶ Scheu, *The Early Days of the Anglo-Austrian Society*, 7.

⁷⁷Ibid, 13.

Figure 25: Anglo-Austrian Music Society. Profits and losses on functions between 16 February 1943 and 30 June 1945.⁷⁸

Date	Artists	Artist fees	Total expenses	Total receipts	Profit	Loss
1943						
21 April	Rosé Quartet, Heim and Stadlen	£31 10s	£78 3s 10d	£33 14s 8d		£44 9s 2d
12 May	Vogel, Trau, Teyte,	£21	£53 13s 5d	£35 1s 7d		£18 11s 10d
16 June	Fleet St. Choir, Stadlen	£47 5s	£94 19s 3d	£24 10s 6d		£70 8s 9d
27 October	Rosé Quartet, Hess	£21	£51 6s 11d	£150 10s 8d	£99 3s 9d	
1944						
19 January	Rostal Octet	£47 5s	£82 14s 9d	£84 16s 3d	£2 1s 6d	
23 February	Hilger, Osborn	£19 19s	£60 5s 2d	£33 9s 1d		£26 16s 1d
22 March	Jacques Orchestra	£45 10s	£97 0s 4d	£49 2s		£47 18s 4d
9 September	Lund, Rauter	not recorded	£7 14s 6d	£7 5s		9s 6d
8 October	Kitchen	not recorded	£7 0s 11d	£4 16s 5d		£2 4s 6d
2 December	Kennedy, Rauter	not recorded	£15 10s 10d	£9 17s 10d		£5 13s
1945						
27 January	Lund, Rauter	not recorded	£11 13s	£14 9s	£2 16s	
15 April	Heim	not recorded	£11 4s 3d	£16 14s 6d	£5 10s 3d	
21 June	Pears, Britten	not recorded	£16 1s 6d	£31 5s 10d	£15 4s 4d	

Not included on this chart are the ‘at home’ events, which consisted of a soirée-style evening hosted by private individuals, with music and strudel. These events usually made small profits of under ten pounds, as there was no hall fee to be paid and the artists performing were usually not of the first order, and therefore either performed for free or for a very small fee. Membership of the Anglo-Austrian Society was small. By June 1945, eighty-nine people had renewed their subscriptions to the society and twenty-seven new members joined, giving a total of 116 members by the end of the war.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Anglo-Austrian Society Archive, Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies, Senate House Library, Box 21. Compiled from accounting sheets.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

The concert that stands out in the table above occurred on 27 October and featured Myra Hess. This single concert made over £99 out of a total £109 profit for the society that year.⁸⁰ In contrast, the Fleet Street Choir concert on 16 June made a disastrous loss of over £70 for the society. This is surprising as the Fleet Street Choir were regular performers at Wigmore Hall, often appearing in Boosey and Hawkes concerts to premiere new works. Even the highly respected Rosé Quartet, which performed with Hess in October 1943, had made a large loss of over £44 in April of the same year. Indeed, concerts by Hess and Britten seem to have been the only performances that kept the Anglo-Austrian Society concert funds going.

Financial losses for concerts organised by the society were not just substantial but also occurred on a regular basis. Out of the thirteen concerts detailed in the table above, eight failed financially and five turned a profit. Overall, for concerts staged at Wigmore Hall from 1943 to 1945 the Anglo-Austrian Society made £216 11s 4d worth of losses and £124 15s 10d in profits, resulting in a £92 4s 6d deficit. Consequently, it is unlikely that the message of the society was communicated to a large and receptive public and therefore the impact of performances would have been limited. It seems particularly ironic that the two largest profits made for the Anglo-Austrian society were made with British performers.

What was the reason for this struggle? There is no question that the Austrian repertoire was popular and performed regularly in other concerts, not least in the National Gallery concerts which played to sell-out audiences and to great acclaim. The artists detailed above also performed widely in many other contexts and most were well-known. The Anglo-Austrian concerts do not seem to have been able to capture British concert-goers' support. While the repertoire was still highly revered by the British, it does not seem to have been effective when used in a nationally specific context in order to shape an anti-Nazi Austrian identity. It was only in its post-war activities that the society would really come into its own, with a children's exchange programme which ran into the 1970s.

As we have seen in Chapter 2, the relationships between Britain and Austria concerning music were being questioned and renegotiated in the printed press. The Anglo-Austrian Society was different in that it attempted to bring this debate explicitly on to the

⁸⁰ Ibid.

chamber-music stage and, crucially, present a possible solution (mutual co-operation and respect leading to the redemption of ‘Austrian’ music). We might suggest that by pursuing this agenda during the war, by attempting to rehabilitate a national identity prematurely, the Society was too forward-thinking. (A less charitable way of interpreting this would be to read it as a denial of what was underway – on the part of the British at least.) By constructing new links, and enhancing the existing cultural bonds between the two nations, Austrians in Britain were attempting to reinforce a cultural kinship. But the society could not compete with the realities of the war situation and the ominous information in circulation about what might be happening to minority groups under Nazi rule.

British and foreign musicians

‘The second world war heightened national consciousness in Britain . . . prompting a thorough examination among the nation’s elites of what constituted British national identity.’⁸¹

‘foreigners had long been welcome, indeed preferred’⁸²

The juxtaposition of these quotations neatly demonstrates one of the difficulties in British music at this time already encountered in Chapter 2. While all around Britain and the empire during the war a national identity was being articulated in a range of ways, musicians, composers, audiences and others associated with the music industry were questioning whether music in Britain needed to be extricated from immersion in, and reverence for, foreign influence. The part played by the British in British music and the ‘foreigner’ in British music, was constantly being negotiated and explored. The problem was that while a British musical identity was yet to be confidently declared, the heightened consciousness described in the quotation above meant that British musical identity had first to be defined in relation to *other* national musical identities. Discussions in the press, the

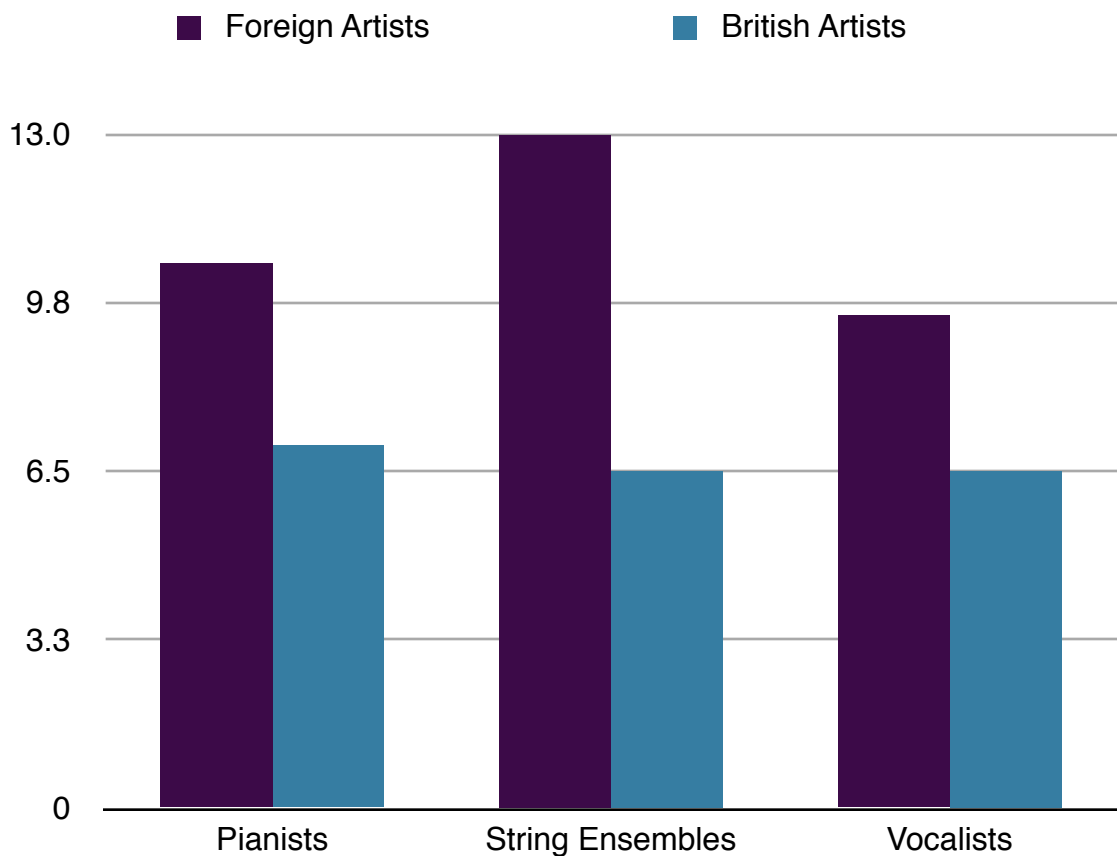
⁸¹ Weight, ‘State, Intelligentsia and the Promotion of National Culture in Britain’, 83.

⁸² Ehrlich, ‘The Marketplace’, 42.

advertising of performer nationalities and the pricing of concerts provide clues as to how these perceptions of national identities manifested themselves in practice.

When looking at Wigmore Hall concert ticket prices for the Second World War period, it can be observed that foreign performers tended to command a slightly higher ticket price on average than British performers. Some extremes are apparent as well. The graph below demonstrates the average spend for an audience member wishing to purchase a top-price ticket for selected genres, each divided into British artists and foreign artists.

Figure 26: Average spend for audiences purchasing a top-price ticket at Wigmore Hall September 1939–December 1945.⁸³ Figures presented as shillings.



⁸³ Based on selected records. Records selected to the following criteria: the artist/ensemble must occupy the entirety of the concert in question and be advertised as such; and a full record of ticket prices must be available.

As the graph clearly demonstrates, it is very likely that an audience member would have to spend more for a top-price ticket to hear a foreign artist, than to hear a British performer at Wigmore Hall.⁸⁴ The average ticket price for a concert given by a solo foreign artist was in all three cases at least 50 per cent more than the average price for a British artist, indicating a link between artist nationality and potentially higher ‘worth’. It seems that the agencies and individuals responsible for setting the ticket prices were in accord with Vaughan Williams’s view that the British public would prefer to listen to (and attach more worth to) a performance by ‘Schmidt’ over ‘Smith’ in chamber music, at least.

Instances of note include Max Rostal on 9 March 1944, who asked 21 shillings for a single top-price ticket, a very large sum. A typical ticket price around this time at the Wigmore Hall was about 5 shillings up to about 7/6, but one could hear most concerts in the cheap seats for as little as 2/6d. Oda Slobodskaya commanded a top price of 11/6, whereas Dorothy Moggridge, on the other hand, had a top-price ticket of only 6 shillings.⁸⁵ Even British pianist Myra Hess, possibly the most celebrated pianist in London during the war (apart from perhaps the brief visit from Rachmaninov), would only charge standard Wigmore Hall prices with 7/6 as a top-price ticket.

Performers’ nationality was in many cases used as a marketing tool, and accordingly was often cited alongside their name. For example ‘Julius Isserlis, the Russian Pianist’, Franz Wagner ‘Czechoslovak Pianist’, Julia Hilger the ‘Austrian Dramatic Soprano’ or Ruby Davy ‘Australia’s First and Only Woman Doctor of Music’.⁸⁶ Ensembles were often named after their common nationality, such as the Belgian and Polish String Quartets, and the Czech Trio, again because the British attraction to the European in music was well-known. The Belgian quartet was promoted in *The Times* before their concert was given:

A pianoforte quartet has been formed in London of Belgian instrumentalists of high standing in their own country. It gave a concert at Wigmore Hall on Saturday afternoon in aid of British and Belgian charities which showed that here is another chamber *ensemble* of great merit with a distinctive contribution to make to our

⁸⁴ Although these figures give us some idea of ticket price trends, they are not necessarily an indication of which artists had the largest audiences.

⁸⁵ It would be better to substantiate such findings with profits of these concerts. However, the lack of a complete set of data makes this task a near impossibility.

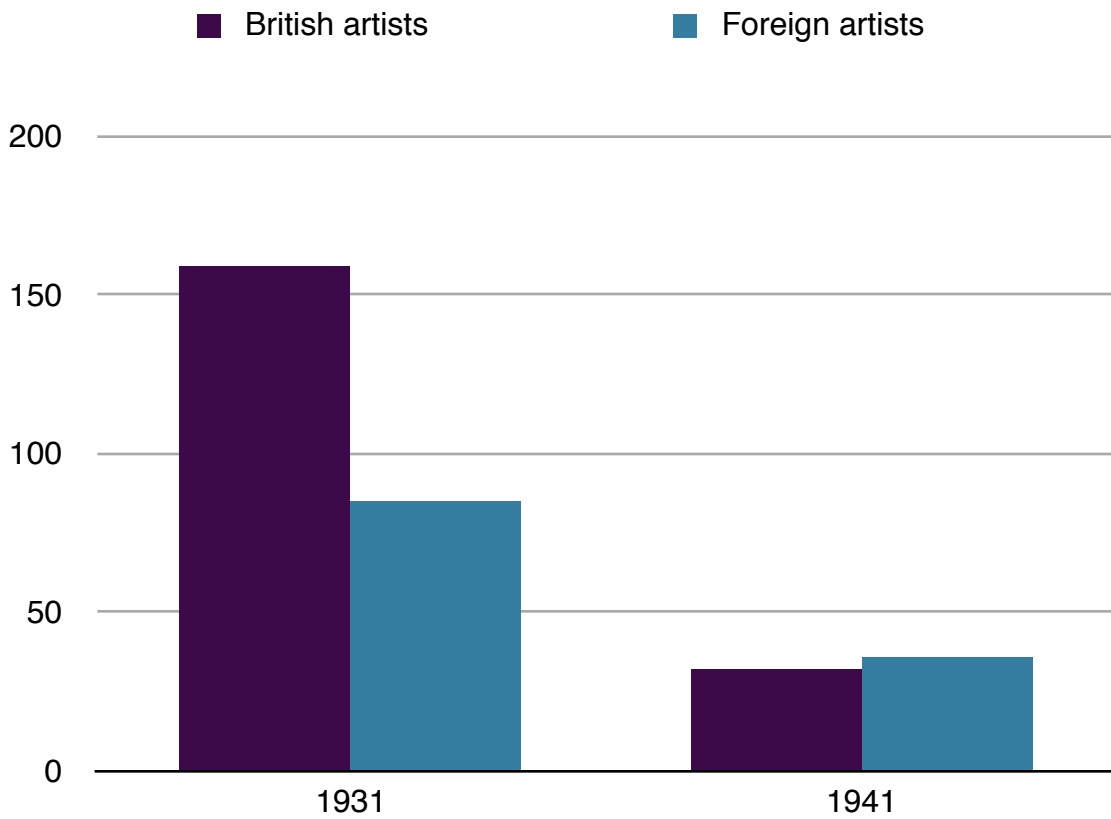
⁸⁶ Centre for Performance History, Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall Archive, Box 54, 3 January 1942, Box 54, 2 October 1941, Box 55, 23 February 1944, Box 53, 21 October 1939.

musical life, if only we will let it and not strangle it officially with red tape and short views.⁸⁷

This article demonstrates that ‘national’ variety was promoted as a good thing for British musical life, while the fact that the author has felt the need to include a warning against xenophobic ‘short views’ indicated the tense context.

Such short views can be traced in legislation proposed by the Ministry of Labour that would limit the numbers of ‘alien’ performers in 1931. Ibbs and Tillett produced some figures in order to protest and demonstrate that such limits were unnecessary. Fifield presents us with these figures in a table produced by Ibbs and Tillett, referring to 1931. In Figure 27, I have combined Fifield’s figures with data from my own research into 1941 at the Wigmore Hall.

Figure 27: British artists and foreign artists at Wigmore Hall 1931 and 1941
1931 figures compiled from Ibbs and Tillett: *The Rise and Fall of a Musical Empire*.⁸⁸



⁸⁷ ‘Wigmore Hall: The London Belgian Quartet’, *The Times*, Tuesday 30 September 1941, 6.

⁸⁸ Fifield, *Ibbs and Tillett*, 223. The figures from 1931 have been compiled from Fifield’s table set out on page 223, as referenced. The figures from 1941 are the results of my own research and the two sets are provided together here by way of making a comparison.

This chart demonstrates two main points. The first is that Ibbs and Tillett's figures for 1931 go some way to dispelling the idea outlined above that the foreigner (the 'imports') dominated the chamber-music stage in Britain. It is clear that British artists were in the majority in 1931. The second point we might take from this graph is that the war did in fact produce a more equal balance of numbers between British and foreign artists at Wigmore Hall. In total, 159 recitals given at the Wigmore in 1931 were by British artists and eighty-five were by foreign artists.⁸⁹ If we look at the programmes for 1941 in comparison, it can be observed that thirty-six of the artists were foreign and thirty-two of the artists were British. Many reasons could be given for such a shift, including the taking-up of war work by British musicians. Unlike their British counterparts, foreign musicians in Britain could not enlist in the military and other avenues of war employment would have been similarly restricted. Therefore, perhaps surprisingly, for 1941, at least, the idea that foreign musicians dominated was in fact true to a small extent. Wigmore Hall as a private hire hall does not, then, seem to have been subject to restrictions on foreign musicians. The matter was discussed in the mainstream press. The following example is from *The Times*, 1941:

It became apparent a month ago when the Dvořák centenary was due for celebration, and it was found that a representative group of musicians called the Czech Trio could only participate in it by special permission granted for that occasion only by the Ministry. Certain British musicians then exerted themselves to secure that permission, and, having done so, retired with the comforting sense of having done their duty and settled a difficulty.⁹⁰

The Czech Trio in particular can be found regularly on the schedules at Wigmore Hall and their regular appearance suggests that no restrictions were placed upon them there. Respondents to *The Times* article are largely in favour of encouraging foreign musicians in order to maintain 'a higher standard among our young chamber music artists'.⁹¹ Although the graph above indicates that slightly more foreign performers were billed at Wigmore Hall than British players during 1941, it is likely that this trend is unique to the Hall.

⁸⁹ Fifield, *Ibbs and Tillett*, 223.

⁹⁰ 'Foreign Musicians: Art and Industry', *The Times*, Friday 3 October 1941, 6..

⁹¹ 'Foreign Musicians: B. Tufnell', *The Times*, Thursday 16 October 1941, 5..

Institutions such as the National Gallery and the BBC as public concerns faced tighter restrictions than the privately managed Wigmore Hall. *The Times* continued,

The public wants to hear certain artists in certain kinds of music, and it is no use to say to the provider of concerts ‘You must find good British performers instead of these foreigners.’ To do so is merely to depress the concert-giving industry still further by emptying the concert rooms.⁹²

A very similar debate about the employment of British over foreign musicians took place at the BBC, as we saw in Chapter 2. The article above acknowledges that any legislation would not be of benefit to the concert industry. The commerciality and independence of Wigmore’s administration seems to have allowed the hall to remain free of such employment restrictions, as hirers of the hall remained self-employed. Perhaps protectionism and the promotion of native talent during war could not compete with the idea that foreign influences provided healthy competition and raised standards and aspirations.

* * *

Finally, then, how can we sum up the Wigmore Hall’s contribution to the question of musical Britain? Banfield’s analogy to a ‘league of nations’ may be apt: the platform was apparently open to anyone commercially viable, constituting a pan-national community on the concert platform. This also adds weight to the idea explored in Chapter 2 that Britain was better-placed to act as a benevolent musical ‘host’ rather than as a promoter of British musical nationalism. This may also be in line with Anderson’s theorisation of the national imagination, in which the nation is ‘imagined as a community, because . . . the nation is always conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship’.⁹³ Yet when considering this in the context of music, it is difficult to reconcile with the multi-layered significances of performance. For example, in the case of folk music and the use of folk nuances, a ‘horizontal comradeship’ is being sought through the use of common national, and usually pastoral, tunes. This then allows high-art music that makes use of the folk idiom to point to

⁹² ‘Foreign Musicians: Art and Industry’, *The Times*, Friday 3 October 1941,6.

⁹³ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

a national identity. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the search for a ‘British’ musical ‘comradeship’ in a British compositional voice, the obvious example being the work of Vaughan Williams. However, the established canon of high-art music that was performed and revered in Britain, which consisted primarily of Austro-German composition, functioned as a canon, in part, on the basis that the language it seemed to speak was perceived to be ‘universal’. Here the ‘horizontal comradeship’ is not national, but purportedly pan-national, based on the perception that the best music expresses a shared humanity rather than national boundaries.

As we have seen, programmes and repertoire that drew attention to national aspects of performance can be seen to be actively engaging in nation-specific discourse with the audience and performers through various channels, including repertoire selection, artist selection and programme text and design. Paradoxically, elements of national specificity could signal a ‘universal’ attraction to the power and patriotism of nationalism in general, as well as a specific national identity. The use of chamber music to mediate the idea of nationhood seems to have trodden a fine line between emphasising shared values and the one-ness of western civilisation, while also specifying how and why a specific nation mattered. As the historian John Baxendale suggests, ‘although national identity is culturally constructed, it does not depend on everyone agreeing about what the nation is. It is the *process* of national culture which makes the nation, rather than the particular ideas or beliefs which the culture disseminates about it.’⁹⁴

The Wigmore Hall in the Second World War represents both a logical continuation of British chamber-music performance life, and at the same time a paradox, given the war situation. As a logical continuation, repertoire was varied and seems to have remained oblivious to the political conflict surrounding the performance. British audiences still wanted Austro-German music and wished foreign performers to perform it, so long as the connection was not made too explicit, perhaps as suggested by the failure of the Anglo-Austrian music society. Putatively universal works of art were used to promote nationalisms from all quarters and chamber music became a vehicle for national

⁹⁴ John Baxendale, “‘You and I – All of Us Ordinary People’”: Renegotiating “Britishness” in wartime’ in Nick Hayes and Jeff Hill, *Millions Like Us: British Culture in the Second World War*, (Liverpool University Press, Liverpool 1999), 295–322.

representations. Meanwhile, let us not forget that ‘British-ness’ was never explicitly promoted in the ‘national’ concert format at all.

Such a variety and volume of activity at the Wigmore Hall, we may conclude, seems to demonstrate part of a not only healthy but vigorous chamber-music scene in London during the 1939 to 1945 period. The boom in charity concerts benefitted both British and foreign causes. The hall not only provided a place in which new works and contemporary composers could thrive alongside a familiar canon, but as a result of the war it also became a space in which those with political and national agendas could engage directly with concert audiences. Developments in the wartime Wigmore Hall have been shown to have taken unpredictable turns. The Austro-German canon and indeed foreign artists continued to thrive at Wigmore Hall. Programming trends shifted towards the highbrow and exceptionally high financial turnovers were recorded for the mid-war years, beating even pre-war totals. The Wigmore Hall thus provides a compelling snapshot of how these relationships played out and developed during the course of the Second World War.

Chapter four. The National Gallery concerts

Introduction

In December 1939, just over two months after the first National Gallery concert, *The Times* suggested that, ‘so far the account has been one of gradually retrieving losses. There have, however, been profits, of which the most conspicuous and considerable is the series of daily midday concerts at the National Gallery.’¹ The National Gallery concerts were an unprecedented wartime phenomenon that placed chamber-music performance at the heart of articulating a British musical identity, bolstering propaganda, and providing a lynch-pin in London’s daily performance life. The concerts were set up in response to war, and their engagement with war can be traced in various ways.

Hitherto, the concerts have most often been discussed in relation to their ‘morale-boosting’ properties, often within the context of the personality cult of Myra Hess.² In my exploration I shall consider three other aspects, each of which further develops themes explored in earlier chapters. The first section entitled ‘Musical displacement and emplacement’ looks at the physical and logistical ways in which the concerts were set up and run in relation to the war, and their function within this context. ‘Audiences and repertoire’ takes a different approach and analyses the components of audience preference and attendance using data gathered from various sources, as well as taking a closer look at exactly what was performed at the Gallery. The final section, ‘Ideologies, propaganda and myth’, looks at the strong ideological influence on the processes and performances that took place as part of the National Gallery concerts and examines how the image of the National Gallery concerts has been constructed and mediated in propaganda.

¹ ‘A Stock Taking: National Gallery Concerts’, *The Times*, Saturday 30 December 1939, 4.

² See Suzanne Bosman, *The National Gallery in Wartime* (London: National Gallery Company, 2008); Denise Lassimonne, *Myra Hess by Her Friends* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1966); Marian McKenna, *Myra Hess: A Portrait* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1976).

Musical displacement and emplacement

For Londoners, the Second World War caused ‘displacements’ in many facets of life. While many children and families were domestically displaced in evacuation, workers were professionally displaced by their call-up papers. Displacements often led to a change of function for the person or object in question; women were displaced from the domestic and emplaced into the professional sphere; gardens were occupied by Anderson shelters; parks and flower beds made way for vegetable plots; and underground stations became sleeping places. As we have already seen in Chapter 1, chamber-music performances began to take place in new locations or with new (often missionary) focus. Therefore, in this respect, the National Gallery concerts were not unusual. When chamber-music concerts were started in the National Gallery, not only had the traditional act of performance been displaced, but the social and artistic functions of that performance altered in accordance with its new ‘emplacement’. While displacement is often regarded as a destructive event and can be seen to describe the moving of chamber music out of its traditional concert rooms and into the National Gallery, this description does not adequately encompass the changed function of chamber-music performance in this new location. At the same time, the National Gallery concerts were created as a response to the war, and therefore these new concerts must be described as being ‘emplaced’ (an active, creative act).³

The National Gallery had already experienced a change in function and a ‘displacement’ when the national art collection was evacuated to Wales. In wartime, the symbolic value of the National Gallery and the national collection of art works was acknowledged to be great. Nevertheless, this symbolic value had to be reconciled with the more tangible commercial value of the collection. When asked if the National Gallery Collection should be evacuated to Canada for the duration of the war, Churchill replied, ‘hide them in caves and cellars, but not one picture shall leave this island’.⁴ Although the pictures were not to be exhibited, it was important that they should remain present.

³ The OED defines emplacement as ‘putting in position; platform for guns’. Robert Allen (ed.), *The Pocket Oxford English Dictionary* 7th edition, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 240.

⁴ Bosman, *The National Gallery in Wartime*, 31. As Bosman and other war historians describe, the pictures were evacuated to Wales and housed in coal mines.

Bosman describes the effect of the concerts as having ‘breathed cultural life back into the building that could so easily have become another anonymous war ministry’.⁵ The nature of musical performance as a living, breathing event seems to have been important in energising and reinventing an identity for the Gallery. In addition, the fact that the Gallery was ‘national’ was important. In providing ‘enjoyment, solace and encouragement of any who may seek it in this building which belongs to the nation’, the concerts also symbolically ‘belonged’ to the nation.⁶

The building itself was just as symbolically significant as the paintings it housed. Sir Kenneth Clark, the youthful director of the National Gallery, was very aware that ‘to close the National Gallery was a political act’.⁷ As a symbol of the nation’s artistic sensibilities and imperial achievements, the National Gallery embodied both ideas of British identity and broader notions of ‘civilisation’ that could be contrasted with Nazi barbarism.⁸

Clark made no secret of his intellectualism and describes how his work at the Ministry for Information on propaganda was gloomy and directionless.⁹ The idea for the National Gallery concerts, proposed by Hess, a fellow member of the artistic elite and an intellectual equal, must have been supremely attractive. In a BBC broadcast, Clark commented that, ‘although we are at war we do not want an unrelieved diet of hearty songs and patriotic imbecilities, and all the rubbish which is excused because it is supposed to be cheering us up, and which actually drives any intelligent person into a still blacker despair’.¹⁰

The displacement of chamber music into a ‘non-music’ venue undoubtedly contributed novelty value to the concerts, but the context was difficult. Music critic

⁵ Ibid., 37.

⁶ British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/1, Volume I, Concert Programmes October 1939–August 1940, Frank Howes, Hundredth Concert Speech, 28 February 1940.

⁷ Kenneth Clark, *Another Part of the Wood* (London: Coronet Books, Hodder and Stoughton, 1974), 241.

⁸ Indeed Clark’s most well-known authored work is ‘Civilisation’. Kenneth Clark, *Civilisation* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and John Murray, 1969). As a young and wealthy aesthete, Clark was a key player in the intellectual and artistic establishment during the Second World War. See also British Library Deposit 2009/01. His friendship with Myra Hess can be traced in a mutually affectionate correspondence.

⁹ Clark said: ‘I never lost my feeling of isolation and I knew that I was wasting my time.’ Kenneth Clark, *The Other Half* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1986), 21.

¹⁰ National Gallery Archives, NG16/47/1 Concerts 1939–46: Setting up of, broadcast by Sir Kenneth Clark, 24 October 1939.

Frank Howes, a member of the Executive Committee of the National Gallery concerts, observed that the concerts in the gallery were, by displacement from the traditional concert hall, meeting a need of the London public in wartime. Howes commented that: ‘I believed that adaptability was the only way of saving music in the wreck of war and evacuation: let music be given at different times and in other places than the usual to meet the London public’s enforced change of habits.’¹¹ Using the National Gallery in particular for concerts had both practical and symbolic implications for the concert-going public, but the concerts did not claim to bring music to the people in the way that CEMA or ENSA were doing in the factory canteens. High art was not being displaced into a location perceived as lowbrow, an act that could be (and sometimes was) interpreted as condescension.¹² Chamber music had been displaced, but *within* its intellectual milieu into an alternative high-art establishment building.

Setting up the concerts

The National Gallery concerts were an institution provoked by, set up and managed in a nation at war. Therefore, the concerts were, on many levels, defined by the war, not least in that Myra Hess, the founder of the series, regarded the concerts as her official war work. Hess’s original intent on the outbreak of war was to become an ambulance driver. Carola Grindea, pianist and wife of Miron Grindea, recalls her meeting with Hess soon after the outbreak of war.¹³

while we were having tea she said I locked my two pianos and I have to do something for the War effort and she said the only thing I can do I can drive so I offered already to drive an ambulance . . . Then just before leaving I said ‘wouldn’t you open one piano and just play for us one Brahms intermezzo’ so she said yes I will. So she unlocked the piano and she asked me which one, I said please which ever you want, your group of intermezzi, which you played in Bucharest, were unforgettable. So she started to play, I remember the C major it was 118 and I was crying and she was crying and then she finished and I said please go on and she went on and on and on and we were all crying.

¹¹ British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/1, Volume I, Concert Programmes October 1939–August 1940. Frank Howes, Hundredth Concert Speech, 28 February 1940.

¹² See Chapter 1.

¹³ Carola and Miron Grindea had arrived in England from Romania, just in time on 1 September 1939. Whilst Miron worked on *ADAM*, his journal for Architecture, Drama, Art and Music and at the BBC, Carola fitted her piano playing around her war work, also at the BBC. She is best known today for her work in piano-teaching method.

So then at one moment she stopped and I said ‘this is what you have to do. People would need the music. This would be your War work’. She said ‘yes, I’ll think about it’ and within a few days she went to the National Gallery talked to Kenneth Clark.¹⁴

It is clear that Hess was preparing for alternative employment and initially saw no place for her skills as an artist in the conflict.¹⁵ Other artists undertook their official war work alongside their musical career. The well-known violinist Eda Kersey worked in administration for the Women’s Land Army, alongside performing on forty occasions at the National Gallery and elsewhere in the country. Both Dennis Brain (who premiered Britten’s *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings*) and Howard Ferguson, among others, served with the RAF band at Uxbridge. Indeed, the Central Band of the RAF absorbed many professional musicians from the London concert platforms and were considered during the war to be one of the finest orchestras available in London.

The idea for the concerts quickly gathered pace, as this letter sent from Hess on 29 September 1939 demonstrates:

Am just going to a meeting about some concerts I am organizing – mid-day for working people of all classes – in aid of unemployed musicians. I hope and believe that I am to be allowed to give them in the National Gallery (twice a week) in connection with the Government National Service – No time for one more word now.¹⁶

The idea that the performance of chamber music could be so intimately connected to the war as to be called ‘National Service’ was clearly important for the integrity of what Hess wanted to achieve.

The most striking aspect of the letter is the indication that even as late as 29 September, Hess was still holding out for only two concerts a week, and that the venue was still not completely certain. After the meeting of 29 September, Hess quickly established a great friendship with Clark and their mutual accord seems to have

¹⁴ <http://www.movinghere.org.uk/deliveryfiles/mol/99.33/0/3.rtf>, Museum of London. Reference 99.33, date: February/March 1998, interviewer: Hannah Burman. Text appears as in the original transcript.

¹⁵In the following passage, Grindea recalls visiting the concerts as an audience member. ‘I had a card from Myra Hess we have entrance every day we are her guests every day so just show the card but we always went round if she was playing and she would say “oh if not for this little Romanian I would have never played the piano again I owe this to her.”’ <http://www.movinghere.org.uk/deliveryfiles/mol/99.33/0/3.rtf> Museum of London. Reference 99.33, date: February/March 1998, interviewer: Hannah Burman. Text appears as in the original transcript.

¹⁶ British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/11. Item 1 in MS Line breaks removed.

facilitated a swift and smooth start up to the concerts. Clark recalls that, ‘into this atmosphere of defeat and gloom came the conquering, radiant presence of Myra Hess . . . In a few minutes everything was agreed.’¹⁷

The speed with which such a large undertaking was initiated was indeed notable. In the following extract from a letter to Sir George Gater, Hess outlines her ambitious plans for the benefit of the Home Office. As the concerts were to take place in a national building and as the scheme was to be considered as Hess’s national service, it was imperative that the relevant government departments were involved from the start. It must be remembered that in preparing for the concerts Hess was also suggesting a scheme which would force a u-turn on the recently implemented government policy that had closed all theatres and concert stages. She wrote:

moreover the whole of the ground floor is immensely strong and even a very large audience would get as good shelter as is provided almost anywhere else . . . I do feel that it is worth stretching a point to make these concerts possible . . . Nearly all the best musicians have promised to play for very small rates and I believe that we would not only be doing a service to musicians, who are badly hit by the war, but to the whole cultural life of the community . . . Of course the sooner we can start the better as this is the period when people are beginning to feel the want of nourishment for mind and spirit and it would be a great thing for the National Gallery to give a lead.¹⁸

It seems that the idea was immediately embraced by the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, her fellow artists and the Home Office, and a swift start-up was facilitated. The National Gallery first opened the gates to a concert audience at 12.30 pm on 10 October 1939, ready for the concert to commence at 1 pm, with very little over two weeks’ real preparation; in the committee’s own words, ‘we began in a hurry’.¹⁹ Indeed, the first public announcement was broadcast by the BBC on Friday 6 October, only four days before the opening performance.²⁰ Such urgency also seems to have been felt by the Chairman of the National Gallery Board of Trustees, Lord Balniel, who had not been given time enough to consult the board.

¹⁷ Denise Lassimonne, *Myra Hess by Her Friends* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1966), 56–7.

¹⁸ NGA, NG16/47/1, Concerts National Gallery 1939–1946: Setting up of, Correspondence.

¹⁹ British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/1, Volume I, Concert Programmes October 1939–August 1940, Frank Howes, Hundredth Concert Speech, 28 February 1940.

²⁰ *National Gallery Concerts 10th October 1939–10th October 1944*, foreword by Howard Ferguson, (London: Printed for the Trustees, 1944), 8.

He regretted that it had not been possible to consult the Board as a whole on this subject but he had felt that such concerts were urgently required and had taken the step on his own responsibility. The first concert had been held that day and proved to be a remarkable success.²¹

Hess had also rapidly assembled a General and an Executive Committee. Dr Vaughan Williams, Sir Kenneth Clark, Sir Henry Piggott and Hess made up the General Committee and Frank Howes, Howard Ferguson and William Gibson (keeper of the National Gallery) made up the Executive Committee, alongside Hess and Clark.²² Hess took the chair at the Executive Committee meetings.²³ It is notable that several names from both committees were considered the intellectual and artistic heavy-weights of the musical and artistic establishment at the time, thereby lending the new venture legitimacy and gravitas.

Within five weeks of the declaration of war and the closure of all theatres and concert halls, the chamber-music concerts at the National Gallery were up and running. The ticket price was a flat-rate 1 shilling, and audiences could expect to hear some of the highest-profile artists in London at the time. On the first day, Hess played Scarlatti, Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin and Brahms, ending the programme with a performance of her own arrangement of *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*, the first of 138 appearances that Hess was to make at the Gallery.²⁴

²¹ NGA, National Gallery Minutes of the Board of Trustees Volume XI, 10 October 1939.

²² During the war, Sir Henry Piggott was appointed as Regional Transport Commissioner for the South having previously served in various government departments as permanent secretary. Presumably, Hess invited Sir Henry to join the committee because he would serve as an important link between the concerts and government, his presence serving to smooth the legislative path. 'PIGGOTT, Sir Henry Howard', *Who Was Who*, A & C Black, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing plc, 1920-2008; online edn, Oxford University Press, Dec 2012 ; online edn Nov 2012 <http://www.ukwhoswho.com/view/article/oupww/whowaswho/U241823>, accessed 14 Sept 2013. Frank Howes was not only music critic of *The Times* but also on the Executive Committee of the Musicians' Benevolent Fund, the charity that was the sole beneficiary of the concerts. Howard Ferguson assisted with programming and was a great friend of Hess. William Gibson was keeper of the gallery, a prestigious position in which he worked closely with the director.

²³ The Executive Committee was formed of those expected to take a more active role in the day-to-day organisation of concerts.

²⁴ Steinway loaned a piano to the National Gallery for the concerts. Later in the war, Steinway lent a second instrument to enable concerts to take place in the shelter if so needed. Hess did not take a fee for these performances. Touring allowed her to take a fee and reviews of her provincial tours often referenced her work at the National Gallery. She toured the country on many occasions every year from just after the National Gallery concerts started in late October 1939, right through beyond the official end of hostilities. Venues included Edinburgh, Brighton, Sunderland, Harrogate, Reading, Sheffield and Bristol, among others.

Maintaining the concerts

Single concerts had very occasionally taken place before, organised by groups such as the Royal Philharmonic Society, and the Griller String Quartet had performed at the Gallery in 1939 as part of the London Musical Festival.²⁵ However, the reason why the wartime concerts seem so unusual now lies in the longevity of the series, the frequency and unbroken continuity of performances and the regular appearances by some of the best artists and ensembles of the day.

For that first performance 861 people were admitted to the space under the dome where the concert took place. However, Ferguson claims that there were probably more like a thousand people, including the press, present at that first concert.²⁶ It is estimated that another few hundred were turned away. After the government capitulated on the cultural blackout policy and allowed public gatherings, Hess was given permission from the Home Office to perform to two hundred people at any one time.²⁷ The audience figures recorded by her niece, Beryl Davies, seem to suggest that these rules were often quietly ignored, and more people were admitted than the fire regulations stipulated.²⁸ In reality numbers were only severely restricted during the months of the blitz when performances would take place in a small basement room, called the 'shelter'.

This, then, was the first of 1,698 concerts that were to grace the National Gallery continuously throughout the war, five days a week (Monday to Friday), excepting Christmas and Easter. Tuesday and Friday programmes initially were repeated at 4.30 pm on the same day, although these ceased on 22 December 1939, due to low attendance. Small programmes were produced for every single concert, and weekly

²⁵ NGA, National Gallery Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Volume XI, 8 June 1939.

²⁶ *National Gallery Concerts 10th October 1939–10th October 1944*, 9.

²⁷ NGA, Information File, NG WWII: Concerts and Canteens, Correspondence, Letter to Sir George Gater.

²⁸ Davies as Hess's private secretary and niece worked as fastidiously as her aunt on the administration of the concerts. Amis, however, also describes in his book, *A Miscellany: My Life, My Music*, how he got the job of 'nannying' the concerts through his friendship with Howard Ferguson. It is likely that both Amis and Davies shared the role. Indeed, 500 chairs were always in place for the audience, not the official number of 200.

billings and large posters were displayed on the underground at no cost to the concert administration.²⁹

At the suggestion of Lady Gater (a concert attendee and the wife of Sir George Gater), and under her direction, a canteen opened in the gallery on 2 November.³⁰ It was staffed by volunteers, and served sandwiches, cakes and hot coffee. By the end of the war Lady Gater had in fact two canteens running in the gallery, one for the concerts and one solely for the use of war workers, with admission obtained by a pass. The doors of the Gallery now began to open even earlier, at 12.15 pm, to allow people to enjoy the use of the canteen before the concert commenced at 1 pm. There is no doubt that the addition of a canteen not only further removed the concerts from the traditional concert conventions, but, by increasing convenience, also increased their popularity. Indeed, the canteen served on average 1,460 meals daily.³¹

The following extract from the *The Times* suggests another contributing factor to the success of the concerts. The article suggests that ‘the type of short chamber concert in which the smaller forms of music could be enjoyed with the informality for which they were designed has been publicly unobtainable hitherto’.³² The format was unusual, new and fresh; brevity and informality in particular were qualities often cited in contributing to the concerts’ ‘accessibility’. Supporting the claim above that such concerts had been hitherto ‘unobtainable’, Ferguson, in his passage for the fifth year anniversary publication, notes that, ‘such an undertaking was without precedent and it was impossible to judge what the public response to it might be’.³³ Indeed, the reason that Hess performed the first concert was ‘in case . . . the whole thing is a flop’.³⁴ Chamber-music performances were a niche entertainment in London and were perceived to be the preserve of the musically literate; therefore the National Gallery concerts negotiated a hitherto untested demand. There is no doubt that the novelty of the concert format certainly played a large part in the popularity of the recitals.

²⁹ NGA, NG16/47/1 Concerts 1939–1946: Setting up of, minutes, 2nd meeting of Executive Committee, 17 October 1939.

³⁰ *National Gallery Concerts 10th October 1939–10th October 1944*, 10.

³¹ NGA, Information File. NG WWII, Concerts and Canteens, archive sources, 27 November 1943.

³² ‘A Stock Taking: National Gallery Concerts’, *The Times*, Saturday 30 December 1939, 4.

³³ *National Gallery Concerts 10th October 1939–10th October 1944*, 9.

³⁴ Lassimonne, *Myra Hess by Her Friends*, 91.

Part of this novelty must also be attributed to the physical dangers of war that necessarily impinged on concert operations, most notably aerial bombardment. The National Gallery concerts were not placed in a central London architectural landmark to be distanced from the physical effects of war, but rather to be actively embroiled in them. Indeed, the pathos of the juxtaposition of chamber music and air raids was not lost on observers; one review described the concerts as ‘modulating from Beethoven to the Barrage’.³⁵ Unlike commercial concerts, which had no immediate infrastructures for dealing with blitz conditions, the National Gallery concerts were set up with blitz performances in mind. A move into the basement of the gallery was well planned and the swift change from the platform under the dome to the basement shelter was able to take place from one day to the next as necessity dictated. Beryl Davies records that the air-raid sirens begin to sound from 16 August 1940, a day after the bombing of Croydon airfield.³⁶ However, the concerts did not relocate to the shelter until 4 September. There seem to have been some attempts to relocate back upstairs, but on 11 September it was noted that all concerts were to take place in the shelter. Thereafter, concerts continued downstairs until 2 June 1941.

The shelter was cold and uncomfortable, by all accounts, and suffered from severe water leaks and damaged windows.³⁷ In addition, the shelter had a very limited audience capacity. Nevertheless, Steinway had provided a second piano specifically for this emergency room. The absence of evening concerts at the National Gallery meant that the heavy evening and night-time raids impacted relatively little on the actual concerts themselves. It was the bombs left over from such raids and the resulting damage that caused the most problems.

The gallery did suffer several direct hits in the course of the war, and yet only once were the concerts forced to quit the building entirely. The Griller Quartet on 15 October 1940 performed in the South Africa House Library, just across Trafalgar Square, as the Gallery had suffered a direct hit the previous night.³⁸ Such an evacuation was, however, the exception. A few days later, on 18 October, Davies records a time-

³⁵ British Library Special Material Add.MS.59860, Press Cuttings, Volume II, *The Sunday Times* 6 October 1940, 97.

³⁶ British Library Call No. Cup. 404.c.1/1, Volume I.

³⁷ NGA, Information File. NG WWII, Concerts and Canteens, Correspondence, letter, 2 May 1941, to the Treasury Chambers.

³⁸ In her notes for this day, Davies records ‘Collection Taken’ in place of the normal shilling entrance fee.

bomb hitting the gallery and the concerts being moved into the East Wing.

Notwithstanding the presence of an unexploded bomb, the concerts continued while the bomb remained in situ unexploded for three days. On the fourth day, 23 October, Davies dispassionately records, ‘Bomb exploded 1.30 pm’.³⁹ The Stratton String Quartet were in the middle of a Beethoven Scherzo at the time, and apparently ‘did not miss a beat’.⁴⁰ An unexploded bomb which fell on gallery 26 on 12 October came a little closer to disaster. The Board of Trustees recorded their outrage at the incident: ‘the Royal Engineers had conducted members of Lady Gater’s staff to see the bomb some 20 minutes before its explosion. The Board expressed very strongly its opinion of the very scandalous nature of this conduct.’⁴¹

Despite the relatively minimal damage to the gallery itself, it was difficult for concert finances to remain healthy in such an extreme situation. By 4 April 1941 the Concerts had lost £806 due to the blitz forcing them into the basement shelter. However, fuelled by press reports, substantial donations began to arrive from the US. The US had provided £708 6s 2d by 13 February 1941 and by October donations totalled £3,200 (Toscanini had given over \$200).⁴² Indeed, American donations seem to have been vital to the continuation of the series during periods of bombing.⁴³

Knowledge of the concerts was not confined to London. Mainstream publications that covered material on the National Gallery concerts included the *Daily Worker*, the *Daily Telegraph*, *Picture Post*, *Evening Standard*, *The Times*, the *Star* and the *Daily Mail*, as well as music-specific publications. The *Sheffield Telegraph*, the *Manchester Guardian*, and the *Sunderland Echo* are some examples of provincial newspapers that covered the concerts. The diverse nature of this list indicates in turn a diverse readership. Coverage occurred throughout the war, with press interest intensifying when the end of the series was announced. It is also to be noted that nationwide interest must have been further encouraged by Hess’s extensive provincial

³⁹ British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/1, Volume II.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Volume III, speech given by Hess at the 500th concert.

⁴¹ NGA, minutes of the Board of Trustees, Volume XII, 29 October 1940.

⁴² British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/11, Item 105.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Volume III, speech given by Hess at the 500th concert. As concerts in the shelter depleted the reserve fund, Hess describes America as coming to the rescue after funds started in her name began to send aid. Hess’s testament that she had received hundreds of letters from ordinary Americans suggests that press coverage in the US was significant.

touring during the war. The concerts seem to have been able to make a significant provision for audiences during the war; in total, 824,152 audience members attended the concerts over six and a half years.⁴⁴ The total turnover of the concerts amounted to £56,876 and £12,505 was given to the Musicians' Benevolent Fund.⁴⁵ Figure 28 shows one concert scene.



Figure 28: A National Gallery concert in progress. Myra Hess speaks to the audience and audience members can be seen perching on each side of the platform. Reproduced with permission of the National Gallery Archives.

⁴⁴ This is not to say that 824,152 different individuals attended the concerts, as some audience members undoubtedly attended on multiple occasions.

⁴⁵ British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/11, Item 145, Final Accounts sheet.

Considering the large sums raised and donated, as well as the number of people attending the concerts, it may seem obvious to suggest that chamber music experienced a surge in popularity. Hess suggested that because of the concerts, chamber music had ‘won ground’, presumably meaning on London music platforms, and that the genre had undergone an ‘historical advancement’.⁴⁶ However, the idea that the concerts were popular with audiences because they provided a platform from which to discover or rediscover the joys of chamber music is, I would suggest, inaccurate. We have already seen in Chapter 1 how the BBC struggled to promote chamber music within its own schedules. While the concerts temporarily raised the profile of chamber music, and certainly can claim to have reached large audiences with a vast amount of repertoire, I would suggest that the reason was not that audiences came to realise a love for Haydn’s quartets, but that the displacement of chamber music from its established trappings into a severe juxtaposition with war provided audiences with a unique way of engaging with musical performance. The displacement from the concert hall and associated established modes of operation was eccentric enough to be interesting and yet the emplacement of the concerts into the National Gallery ensured that it could not be considered anarchic. The concerts derived their impact not from the provision of Mozart to ‘the masses’ but from their physical and perceived ideological engagement with the war. The perceived gap between this intellectual and ‘elite’ type of music performance and the potential audience member was bridged by their common relationship with the war.

The end of the concerts

The nature of the concert series meant that when a state of war ceased to exist, there was also less reason for the concerts to exist. After the gallery closed for two days on 8 and 9 May to celebrate the VE Day holidays, the future of the concerts became uncertain and a mere week later, on 17 May, fifty pictures returned to the Gallery, ready for display.⁴⁷ The London cultural scene was catapulted back into life with the premiere

⁴⁶ British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/1, Volume VII, Monday 18 March 1946, National Gallery Archives, NG WWII Concerts and Canteens, Correspondence.

⁴⁷ BL Call No. Cup.404.c.1/1, Volume VI, Concert Programmes May 1944–May 1945.

of *Peter Grimes* at Sadler's Wells on 7 June. Boosey and Hawkes had bought the lease for the Covent Garden theatre, assuring its future as a high art venue and the newly formed Arts Council had begun the process of acquiring Wigmore Hall.

As it became apparent that the conflict was coming to its long-awaited end, Hess was aware that the return to peace might render her concerts unworkable, especially in the current not-for-profit administrative model. Cultural activities were returning to their established homes and patterns, and the temporary and displaced nature that had contributed to the concerts' popularity now contributed to a somewhat precarious position. Initially, 'The Trustees had no hesitation at all in saying in their view the concerts should continue.'⁴⁸ Kenneth Clark had already approached the Treasury, 'and he was glad to say that they were not opposed to the idea'.⁴⁹ Hess voiced her concerns to Clark on 1 May 1945:

Dear K,

I do hope that tomorrow's meeting may bring a solution of our difficulties. Something unprecedented has happened to music in the National Gallery and I am sure that it could not be captured elsewhere. I have been trying to analyse the reason. It was easy to understand that the concerts provided a point of relief and balance in the early days of the war; but it has been proved in these five and a half years that music has become part of the daily life of thousands of people.

This need is certainly not going to cease with the Peace; in fact its importance will increase in the difficult years ahead. It recurs to my mind again and again how significant it is that this historical advancement of music should have taken place in the National Gallery, with its great tradition as one of the Art centres of the world. Surely this conjunction is worth serious consideration, especially at a time when the union of the Arts may have so great an influence in reconstituting our permanent values in the shattered world of today.

As you have said yourself so often, music has helped to make the Gallery more 'humanly accessible' and I believe you feel as I do that the extra thousands whom music might bring to see the masterpieces for the first time would more than make up for the comparative few who might be deprived of seeing the particular pictures in the Dome, during the lunch hour.

⁴⁸ NGA, Information File, NG WWII, Concerts and Canteens, 18th meeting of Concerts Committee at the National Gallery, 27 March 1945.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

I won't worry you with more now,
With my love, Myra⁵⁰

Sharing Hess's concerns, Howard Ferguson had produced a detailed post-war plan in readiness for peacetime operations. The administration of such a venture in peacetime would become costly and complex. The reliance on volunteers had to end with the return to peace, and staff must be given adequate wages, which Ferguson calculated to be in line with similar posts at the BBC. The new plan projected attendance of approximately two thousand people per week, spread over five concerts.⁵¹

unwieldy audiences would in future be rare, since the programmes would be devoted mainly to established chamber music ensembles and to the younger artists, rather than to 'celebrity' soloists with an embarrassingly large following . . . The success of the concerts must largely depend in the future, as it has in the past, on the goodwill of the Musical Profession. Many musicians have already expressed their readiness to co-operate by continuing to appear for a flat-rate 'expense' fee; and it is felt that others will be no less anxious to do so . . . Furthermore, the National Gallery Concerts provide a platform, the like of which has scarcely existed before, where established Chamber Music ensembles (such as String Quartets, Piano Trios etc) can perform the whole Chamber Music repertoire with reasonable frequency, to the benefit alike of audiences and themselves; and where young and promising performers can gain (without expense) that experience which is so essential for their development and for the ultimate good of the profession itself.⁵²

Ferguson's plan clearly maintained the original aims and objectives under which the concerts were conceived and run as far as possible; the focus on assisting young artists, and the exposure of the repertoire, remain key points in the post war plan. A low entrance fee was maintained, suggesting that the objective of keeping chamber music ticket prices 'accessible' was still a priority. As one can observe in Ferguson's plan, projected profits were not large, and consequently the financial risk was more substantial. While the National Gallery Board of Trustees did not disagree with these principles, with the transition to peacetime the location of the concerts in the middle of the galleries was of great concern.

⁵⁰ NGA, Information File, NG WWII, Concerts and Canteens, Correspondence.

⁵¹ NGA, NG16/47/1, Concerts 1939–46: Setting up of, memorandum marked confidential by Howard Ferguson, IV, 1945.

⁵² *Ibid.*

The tension was felt on 20 September 1945 when Hess and Davies noted on a programme that they had one room less than usual, due to the return of many pictures, and that as a consequence 400 people were turned away.⁵³ The concerts in peacetime were attracting between 300 to 800 people per concert, even with the doubling of the entrance fee. It was, however, difficult to gather in over a thousand people due to the new limited seating imposed after 15 October 1945, although the very last concert squeezed in an extra thirty-nine audience members on top of their restriction of a thousand.⁵⁴

Upon hearing the news that the concerts were to cease, audience members offered their own solutions: ‘would it be possible to carry them on in the basement? Or are there any other rooms in the Gallery? Or in the National Portrait Gallery? . . . My husband was wondering about the Crypt of St Martins? Or the LCC School of Art halfway up Charing Cross Road?’⁵⁵

Although there seems to have been a great deal of support for the continuation of the concerts, this support was not universal. One personal protest came from within the committee itself. Following his resignation from the Concerts Committee in June 1945, Mr William Gibson, keeper of the Gallery, penned these words of protest that the concerts had not yet ceased, something he found ‘shocking and heartbreaking, one more instance of the fact that when the welfare of the visual arts clash with any other interest in this country, the visual arts are sacrificed’.⁵⁶

Gibson regarded the concerts very much as a wartime phenomenon and could not sanction their continued position in the Gallery in peacetime: without the war, the concerts had lost their function. The emplacement and displacement of the performances could no longer be positioned against the context of war and so lost

⁵³ British Library Call No. Cup 404.c.1/1, Volume VII, Concert Programmes June 1945–April 1946.

⁵⁴ It must also be noted here that children began to have a significant presence at the National Gallery concerts. The entrance fee for a child was half that of an adult (post-war), at 1 shilling only. One must presume that due to evacuation measures, the concerts committee had had no significant need previously to introduce a fee for child members of the audience. It can be seen that in the holiday periods of late December 1945 and early January 1946, the numbers of children attending the concerts were indeed significant, reaching ninety-two and ninety-six respectively in the weeks before and after Christmas 1945, and sixty-eight in the first week of 1946. See British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/1, Volume VII, Concert Programmes June 1945–April 1946.

⁵⁵ NGA, NG16/47/1, Concerts 1939–1946: Setting up of, Correspondence, letter, 17 May 1945.

⁵⁶ British Library Call No. cup.404.c.1/11, Item 54.

significance. Another example of protest can be read in this second letter. The author begins by confirming his own love and appreciation for music, but goes on to say that:

the National Gallery is the Nation's principal home for the great masters of Painting . . . Music must have its own home . . . Of course certain interested persons wish to perpetuate what was an excellent war time expedient. Then it was a happy idea under the circumstances to have the concerts but now it is a different matter...Our National Collection is too fine to remain crippled longer than necessary by it being only possible to hang a small selection . . . knowing that people in this Country mostly are not very strong on art or scholarship, and are sometimes given to sentimental campaigns without calmly considering the merits of the case, the writer wished to enter his plea on the side of those against the continuation of the concerts at the National Gallery.⁵⁷

In describing the concert supporters as 'sentimental' this author also implies that people were clinging to something that was no longer present; any real significance that was attached to the concerts being in the unusual location was now defunct. A return to established cultural norms was an important part of rehabilitating and reassuring an exhausted people. Chamber-music performances must be re-placed into their own designated cultural spaces. A parallel may be drawn with Churchill's failure to lead the subsequent peacetime government.⁵⁸ Like Churchill, the concerts, admired and valued as wartime heroes, had no place in peaceful reconstruction. There were also financial implications that can be seen in this letter from the Arts Council, which stated the reasons why the concerts were turned away from Wigmore Hall in 1946:

2/- Midday Concerts in the Wigmore Hall would cut unfairly across the normal afternoon and evening recitals. One would find, for example, a Piano Recital or a String Quartet programme at midday with a 2/- entrance charge, and exactly the same sort of programme later in the day with the normal Wigmore Hall charges. Surely this would be unfair?⁵⁹

The cheapness of the concerts, a quality that in wartime proved to be a great asset as a necessary factor of 'accessibility', had in peacetime become a source of unwelcome competition. The concerts were commercially unviable.

⁵⁷ NGA NG/16/47/1 Concerts 1939-1946: Setting up of, Correspondence, letter, 2 April 1946.

⁵⁸ Churchill had to content himself with becoming Leader of the Opposition after the July 1945 General Election.

⁵⁹ British Library Call No. cup.404.c.1/11, Item 69.

The displacement and emplacement of chamber-music performances as exemplified at the National Gallery was perhaps best summarised in an article in *The Times* as ‘freedom from the tyranny of the machine’. Significantly, the article states: ‘That machine will have to be reassembled and restarted one day, but for the moment we can seek our music with a new zest and enjoy it with a new relish’.⁶⁰ The ‘machine’ could be seen to allude to the societal processes that underpinned cultural establishments and performance conventions: for example, fashion, ritual, cultural ‘literacy’, cultural canon and societal strata. War had provided both an excuse for performances to be released from these conventions and a context in which they could be branded restrictive, dictatorial and monotonous. Indeed, the author of the article uses the word ‘tyrannical’. However, when he reminds the reader that the ‘machine will have to be reassembled and restarted one day’, the implication is that what might be considered monotonous and tyrannical in a wartime context, would function differently in peacetime. Cultural rituals, although perhaps monotonous and restrictive, could also provide familiarity and security. Therefore, by continuing into peacetime the concerts were seen to be impeding a return to peace.

Audiences, repertoire and taste

Although the concert series at the National Gallery was brand new, the venture very quickly gained the respect of audiences and musicians alike, thanks to the prestigious location, the use of high-profile artists and the driving force of Myra Hess, whose own reputation was already significant. The series was on more than one occasion dubbed the ‘Proms’ of chamber music, alluding to both the frequency of concerts, their perceived ‘embedded-ness’ in British musical life and perhaps the affection in which the concerts were held by audiences.⁶¹ The affinity between the Proms leviathan and the (by comparison) minnow-like chamber-music series was coincidentally made stronger as both their directors (Henry Wood and Myra Hess) shared a strong disapproval of the

⁶⁰ ‘The Informal Concert: Counting Our Blessings’, *The Times*, Saturday 18 November 1939, 4.

⁶¹ BL Call No. Cup.404.c.1/11, Item 28, Special Material Add.59860, Press Cuttings, Volume II, *Time and Tide* 16 March 1946, 149; ‘A Stock Taking: National Gallery Concerts’, *The Times*, Saturday 30 December 1939, 4.

BBC's perceived abandonment of London in September 1939.⁶² In addition, Henry Wood was invited by Hess to conduct at the National Gallery and Hess continued to perform on the Proms stage through the war. After barely eighteen months of National Gallery concerts, the *Musical Times* stated early in 1941 that 'they have now become an institution'.⁶³

The canon and beyond

The concerts evidently found a place at the forefront of musical performance in London during the war. It is likely that this was achieved in part as a result of the prevalence of a conservative repertoire programmed at the gallery. As the woman who had the final say in repertoire selection at the concerts, Hess's own artistic preferences were reflected in the concert programmes. She defended her repertoire preferences as exemplified in her lifelong career as follows:

In my early days I did a great deal [of modern music], but at that time contemporary music was more romantic and melodic than it is today, when composers use the piano mainly as a percussive instrument. This is something I have spent my life trying to avoid, for to me music should sing and if it does not, it eventually makes one cross and irritable. I have played many of Howard Ferguson's works; for although his is a new and personal idiom, he still asks the piano to sing.⁶⁴

Despite her taste for the traditional set of Austro-German works, Hess made an exception for the compositions of her close friend and fellow committee member, Howard Ferguson. Usually, Hess's repertoire at the National Gallery (and elsewhere) focussed on the Austro-German canon, her fame deriving from her Beethoven and Mozart sonata performances, as well as from her performances of Bach and Brahms. However, Hess had control over the content of all programmes presented at the Gallery, not just her own. When questioned about her apparent neglect of modern British composers at the National Gallery she stated that, 'we do give modern English music,

⁶² Henry Wood continued to run his Promenade concerts without the BBC. See Jennifer Doctor, 'A New Dimension: The BBC Takes on the Proms, 1920–44', in Doctor and Wright *The Proms*, 74–129. Hess (as we shall later see) refused permission for the BBC to broadcast concerts until the corporation recognised its 'responsibilities', referring to the fact that the BBC had left London.

⁶³ 'London Concerts', *Musical Times*, January 1940), 36–7.

⁶⁴ British Library Deposit 2009/01. Notes for a BBC interview with John Amis.

but we find that what audiences want is the music of Beethoven, Mozart, Bach, Brahms – they do not want to sit forward and grapple with new works, but to sit back and listen to the great music that they know'.⁶⁵

It seems that Henry Wood had similar sentiments. In a 1940 letter to Julius Harrison, composer of *Bredon Hill*, Henry Wood wrote, 'there is only one thing to do these days, and that is to give the public what you know it wants, and not perhaps just what *we* should *like* them to hear'.⁶⁶ The '*we*' in italics very firmly separates the audience from the elite musician, and his suggestion that 'there is only one thing to do these days' implies that there is a morally correct course of action in terms of musical provision in relation to the war. As we have already seen in the case of the BBC in Chapter 1, the question of repertoire programming during the war (and even at different stages of the war) triggered such moral ambiguity. Unlike the BBC, which took great pains to prove that they were supporting British musical talent (as shown in Chapter 1), it appears that the National Gallery concerts committee felt no obligation to promote British composition, or even British performers.

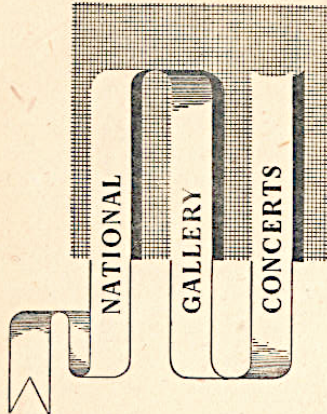
Of course, some of the details of programming can be put down to the practical considerations of what each soloist or ensemble had in their repertoire and the timings of pieces. However, Hess and Ferguson had the task of constructing programmes that provided enough weekly variety to encourage frequent and repeated audience visits, but within such limits that spontaneous attendances would not be deterred. Beethoven's Sonata in C Minor Op. 111, for example, although a popular choice with both performers and audiences, could not be programmed twice in one week. Repetitious programming was also at odds with Hess's wish that the whole (or as much as possible) of the standard chamber-music repertory be presented to the public.⁶⁷ A typical week of programmes can be seen here, in Figure 29.

⁶⁵ Special Material Add.59860, Press Cuttings Volume II, *The Sunday Times*, 6 October 1940, 97.

⁶⁶ Foreman, *From Parry to Britten*, 226.

⁶⁷ Repetitive programming was harder to avoid at a commercial venture such as Wigmore Hall, as artists made their own programming decisions. Repertoire choices at the National Gallery concerts were planned in advance by Ferguson and Hess.

Figure 29: A typical week of performances at the National Gallery



NATIONAL GALLERY CONCERTS

**NOVEMBER 23rd—
NOVEMBER 27th 1942**
Monday to Friday at 1 p.m.
Organised by
MYRA HESS, D.B.E.
IN AID OF
THE MUSICIANS BENEVOLENT FUND

LUNCH-TIME CONCERTS

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23RD AT 1 P.M.
MARIA LIDKA (*Violin*)
MAX ROSTAL (*Violin*)
JOHN WILLS (*Pianoforte*)
Sonata for Two Violins and Piano in C major (*Bach*)
Duo for Violin and Viola in G major, K. 423 (*Mozart*)
Duos for Two Violins (*Bartók*)
Duet for Two Violins, Op. 67, No. 2 (*Spoehr*)

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24TH AT 1 P.M.
THE GRILLER STRING QUARTET
SIDNEY GRILLER (*Violin*)
JACK O'BRIEN (*Violin*)
PHILIP BURTON (*Viola*)
COLIN HAMPTON (*Violoncello*)
JOHN FRANCIS (*Flute*)
BERNARD WALTON (*Clarinet*)
MARIE KORCHINSKA (*Harp*)
Quintet for Harp and Strings (*Bax*)
Quartet for Strings
Septet (*Ravel*)

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25TH AT 1 P.M.
JOHN HUNT (*Pianoforte*)
Fantasia Sonata (Après une Lecture de Dante) (*Liszt*)
Sonata in A minor, K. 310 (*Mozart*)
Sonata in E major, Op. 109 (*Beethoven*)

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26TH AT 1 P.M.
SABINE KALTER (*Contralto*)
GERALD MOORE (*Pianoforte*)
Song Cycle "Lieder eines Fahrenden Gesellen" (*Mahler*)
Songs

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27TH AT 1 P.M.
THE LONDON POLISH STRING QUARTET
F. HERMAN (*Violin*)
Z. DYMAN (*Violin*)
S. JARECKI (*Viola*)
K. NEUMANN (*Violoncello*)
Quartet in D major, Op. 64, No. 5 (*Haydn*)
Quartet in E flat, Op. 74 (*Beethoven*)

STEINWAY PIANOFORTE

ADMISSION—ONE SHILLING. Doors open at 12.15
Refreshments can be obtained at the Sandwich Bar from 12 to 1 o'clock and after the Concert.
Detailed programmes on sale daily.

Price One Penny

Please turn over

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Fest Press

Nevertheless, some modern works did receive performances at the Gallery. In the six and a half years of the National Gallery Concerts, there were 62 works had some sort of ‘premiere’ tag attached to their performance.⁶⁸ Although no work was ever billed as a ‘World Premiere’, the works below were billed as a ‘First Performance’. (While the Bach and the Krumpholtz works are not modern works, their performances were thought to be ‘firsts’.)

Figure 30: The National Gallery concerts 1939–46. Works billed as ‘First Performance’.

Composer	Work	Date
Bach, J. C.	Quartet in D Major	29 March 1944
Berkeley, L.	Sonatina for Violin and Piano	4 May 1944
Berkeley, L.	Piece for Unaccompanied Oboe	27 December 1945
Ferguson, H.	Five Bagatelles	29 September 1944
Finzi, G.	Prelude and Fugue	11 September 1941
Finzi, G.	5 Shakespeare Songs for Vaughan Williams’ Birthday	12 October 1942
Finzi, G.	4 Bagatelles for Clarinet and Piano	15 January 1943
Krumpholtz, J. B.	Sonatina for Violin and Harp	26 March 1941
McEwen, J. B.	Sonata for Violin and Piano	13 April 1943
Reed, W. H.	Sonata for Violin and Viola	17 October 1941
Rubbra, E.	Kyrie and Creed from Missa Cantuariensis	12 July 1945
Rainier, P.	Sonata for Viola and Piano	18 March 1946
Tausky, V.	Coventry Meditation for String Quartet	17 March 1942
Vaughan Williams, R.	String Quartet in A minor	12 October 1944

Although the list is not extensive considering the large number of concerts that took place, it does include prominent composers such as Vaughan Williams, Rubbra, Finzi and Berkeley. For the National Gallery series, it was the act of performance that was important to their aims and objectives; the promotion of contemporary composition was not a priority. However, in addition to premieres there were rather more performances of works by living composers, as the following table demonstrates. The selection of

⁶⁸ BL Call No. Cup.404.c.1/7. Tags included, ‘First Performance’, ‘First Public Performance’, ‘First London Premiere’, ‘First Concert Performance’ and even ‘First Public Performance in England’.

‘canonic’ composers is given in order that we may be able to contextualise the number of performances over the six-and-a-half-year period.

Figure 31: Instances of works by living and ‘canonic’ composers.

Composer	Instances of works at National Gallery
Canonic (selection)	
Bach (J S)	721
Beethoven	672
Brahms	716
Mozart	634
Haydn	194
Living (selection)	
Bartók	17
Britten	13
Hindemith	13
Poulenc	32
Rachmaninoff	106
Schoenberg	1
Stravinsky	25
Vaughan Williams	78

Although it is clear that the programming bias was certainly slanted towards the standard repertoire, or ‘sit back’ music if we were to use Hess’s phraseology, it can be seen that there was a not insubstantial number of performances of works by living composers, including a number by contemporary British composers. The following table provides a fuller demonstration of performances by living (or very recently deceased) British composers.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Selective. Compiled from Howard Ferguson and Timothy Scott (Compilers) *Music Performed at the National Gallery Concerts* (London: privately printed, the Shenval Press, 1946).

Figure 32: Performances of works by living or recently deceased British composers.

Composer	Instances of Works	Composer	Instances of Works
Alwyn	1	Finzi	35
Arnold	1	Gibbs	10
Baird	3	Goossens	9
Bantock	9	Harrison	4
Bax	45	Holst	23
Benjamin	3	Howells	10
Berkeley	9	Ireland	23
Bliss	10	Jacob	5
Boughton	7	Lutyens	1
Britten	13	Maconchy	1
Butterworth	22	Moeran	23
Davies	2	Rubbra	8
Delius	52	Tippett	8
Elgar	20	Vaughan Williams	78
Ferguson	13		

Although Hess never stipulated that performances of British works were to be actively promoted, it can be observed in this table that contemporary British composition certainly had a presence. The list ranges from Elgar and Delius, who had only very recently died, to those who went on to become mainstays of the British contemporary repertoire, including Howells, Tippett, Finzi and of course Britten.

Nevertheless, some works were notably off limits. Composers associated with the Second Viennese School were not prominent at the gallery. The single Schoenberg work performed was *Verklärte Nacht* Op. 4 for string sextet, an early work that could not be classed as atonal, although it was perhaps still regarded as experimental. Similarly, Berg's Piano Sonata Op. 1 was also performed once at the gallery. These two

works, which did not employ twelve-note serial techniques, were the only works by Second Viennese School composers performed. However, the inclusion of ‘tougher’ works that were not so easy on the ear would have been going against the overall ethos that Hess was trying to create and maintain: that of musical (and actual) accessibility. The focus on the act of ‘performance’ (by providing as many concerts as possible), rather than the production of new works, is further underlined by the fact that the concerts committee never commissioned a work for the series.

There were, however, other works that stand out on the programmes as being perhaps at the challenging end of the spectrum. As well as several piano works, the six string quartets by Bartók were performed in November and December 1945, after Bartók’s death earlier that year. The National Gallery also performed *Five Pieces from Mikrokosmos arranged for String Quartet* under the direction of Mátyás Seiber in a lecture recital, in 1945. Seiber himself had five performances of works at the gallery, including his *Serenade for Wind Instruments*. Stravinsky stands out having received twenty-five performances of sixteen of his works at the National Gallery, including the *Suite, L’Histoire du Soldat* for clarinet, violin and piano, as well as five performances of the *Danse Russe* from the *Petrushka Suite*. In addition, Hindemith’s *Sonata No. 1*, *Sonata Op. 11 No. 4* for Viola and Piano and his *String Trio* were all performed twice, and Van Wyk’s *Five Elegies* for string quartet (only just completed) was performed on three occasions. Even Lutyens was briefly showcased when her *Four Poems* were performed.⁷⁰

We might consider these works to have been at the boundaries of the conservative taste prevalent at the National Gallery. *The Times* approved these ‘proper limitations’.

Modern music has, of course, not been excluded, though the experimental has (for reasons that are as sound as they are obvious), and a quite astonishing variety has within these proper limitations been made available to a heterogeneous public.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Many of these composers maintained close friendships and working relationships during this period. Hess was great personal friends with Ferguson, who was in turn a close friend of Finzi. Seiber maintained a close network of composers working in and around London at this time through his work at the CPNM.

⁷¹ ‘A Stock Taking: National Gallery Concerts’, *The Times*, Saturday 30 December 1939, 4.

It seems that atonal works, or works that explored an extended tonality, rather than contemporary works, comprised what *The Times* meant by ‘experimental’, and the author above wholeheartedly approves of such omissions. The article is in no doubt that the experimental falls outside of ‘proper limitations’. ‘Experimental’ in this context may well have referred to works such as those of the Second Viennese School which explored realms significantly beyond a recognisable tonal context, given that recent British and French tonal music in particular had a distinct presence, especially in terms of composers working in the folk idiom. In total the National Gallery heard works by 158 different living composers, although many of these were minor composers who have since sunk into obscurity.⁷²

It should be noted that there were 740 instances of ‘anonymous’ folk songs being performed at the National Gallery. These were by no means only British songs; 242 performances were of British folk songs and the rest was made up of seventeen different national divisions, including songs from axis nations. For example, there were a significant number of German and Austrian folk songs, as well as Italian and Finnish songs. There were also a large number of French folk songs, as well as songs from Yiddish, Czechoslovakian, Swedish and Norwegian cultures.⁷³ There were therefore more instances of folk song performed at the gallery than there was music by any other single composer, although we must consider that one folk song was likely to be a great deal shorter than one Beethoven work.

The fact that the number of performances devoted to folk song was as significant as those devoted to the primary composers of the Austro-German canon reflects the public taste for the folk idiom at this time, as well as revealing that Hess must have regarded the folk idiom as aesthetically important in chamber-music performance. While the appropriation of folk tunes by ‘high-art’ composers has received much scholarly attention, the repertoire at the National Gallery also demonstrates that the idealisation of ‘folk’ was not just being appropriated by composers, but also by programmers. As we have seen in Chapter 1, the use of folk song to articulate an ‘authentic’ national voice was an idea that was much debated. As we saw in the Wigmore Hall repertoire in Chapter 3, the wide range of nations from which folk songs at the National Gallery were drawn indicates at once national specificity, as well as a

⁷² Ferguson and Scott, *Music Performed at the National Gallery Concerts*.

⁷³Ibid.

desire to use their ‘universal’ appeal. It seems particularly significant that all the 740 instances of folk songs detailed above are listed as ‘anonymous’, in other words that the arrangers or setters of these songs are either truly anonymous or have not been included on the programme. This lends the folk song performance an added perception of ‘authenticity’, at once further distancing them from the performances of Haydn and Mozart quartets, while at the same time engineering an aesthetic space for folk song that is shared with the Beethoven sonata.

Performers and their audiences

The wide range of chamber-music repertoire heard at the National Gallery was undoubtedly one of its draws. The following article on ‘The Informal Concert’ suggests that chamber-music programming during the Second World War in London experienced a formative and developmental process. What it also reveals, however, is delight in the variety of genres and ensemble types.

The specialization of peace-time makes the simple mixed programme, given, say, by a violinist and singer, seem anomalous, and no one would dream of interrupting a chamber concert of string quartets with piano solo . . . We Londoners . . . have discovered almost with surprise the pleasure that is to be had from a programme of small songs and piano pieces at the National Gallery; we have learned at the R.C.M. that a first-rate piano solo between two quartets enhances the virtues of both; and we can welcome without a cultural qualm a groups of Quilter’s songs between a couple of Violin sonatas when the Incorporated Society of Musicians offers it to us.⁷⁴

This ‘mixture’ programming was an ever-present feature at the gallery, apart from when periods of air raids made it simpler to have just one artist or group of artists performing. As can be observed above, other institutions followed suit. Private concerts at commercial venues, for example Wigmore Hall, were staged for the private profit of individual artists and it was therefore not necessarily in the interest of artists to produce a concert of mixed ensembles. However, the charitable status of the National Gallery concerts, as well as the presence of a ‘programming’ role, ensured both daily variety and enabled mixtures of ensembles and repertoire to be included with no financial risk. A mixture of artists also underlined the co-operative ethos under which the National Gallery concerts were run.

⁷⁴ ‘The Informal Concert: Counting Our Blessings’, *The Times*, Saturday 18 November 1939, 4.

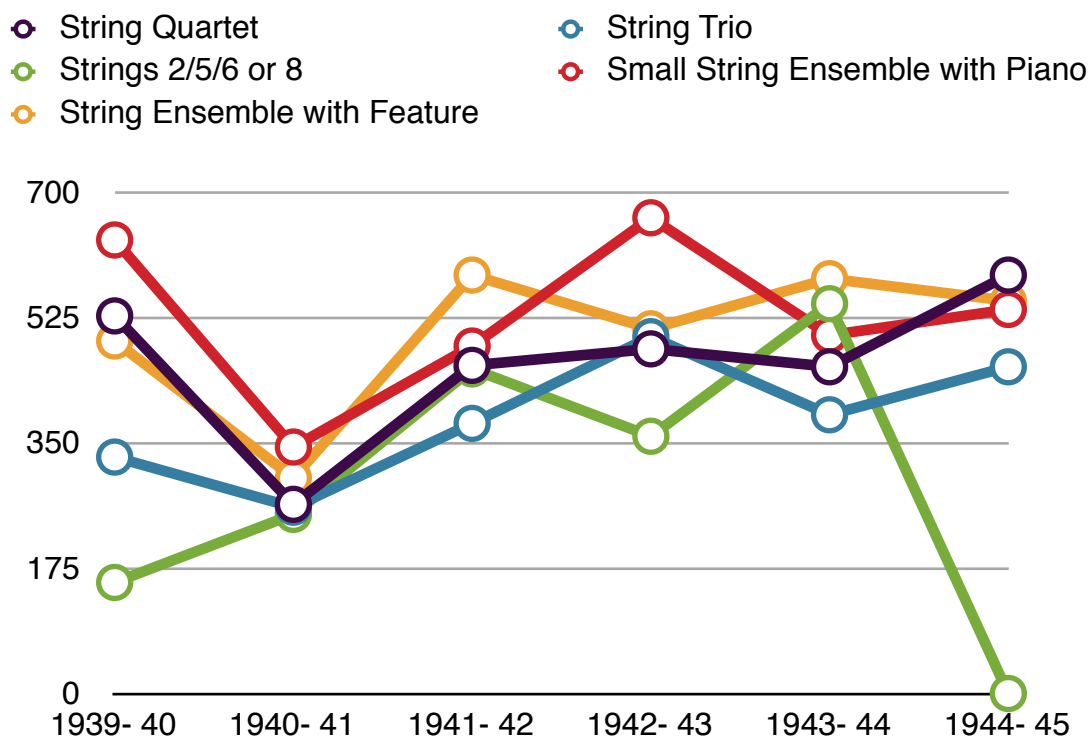
In addition to providing variety through mixed programming, the National Gallery concerts rang the changes by offering mini-series of themed concerts. This ‘series within a series’ concept included a run of concerts featuring, for example, the Bartók string quartets, the Mozart piano concertos, a Mozart festival week and a Beethoven quartet lecture series, which included short talks by Ivor James.

Individual works can also be observed to have been distinctly popular by frequent repetition. A popular work often seen opening a programme at Wigmore Hall, Bach’s Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue, was also among the most performed pieces at the National Gallery with fifteen appearances in total, although not always as a concert opener. Works for a stringed instrument and piano seem to have been the most repeatedly performed works at the gallery. Brahms’s Violin Sonata in G major Op. 78 was performed on seventeen occasions, and the Cello Sonata in E minor Op. 38 was given eighteen performances, making this the most frequently performed piece at the Gallery. Beethoven’s Piano Sonata in A flat Major Op. 110 and Violin Sonata in C minor Op. 30 No. 2 were both performed seventeen times each, and Mozart’s Violin Sonata in B flat major K454 was heard in sixteen concerts. From the Chopin Etudes, Op. 25 No. 1 in A flat major and No. 3 in F major both achieved this same figure of sixteen performances, with the Piano Sonata in B minor Op. 58 being performed on seventeen occasions.⁷⁵ This selection of frequently performed works provides a taster of what one might have expected to hear at the National Gallery, and of which works were popular. As we can see, the works most often performed are very nearly all solo piano or string sonatas, and while two of the Chopin works are not sonatas, they are still solo piano works.

While the most frequently performed works can tell us a little about what audiences may have liked to hear, we can tell a little more about audience preferences by looking at general trends in attendance. The following graphs demonstrate audience attendance patterns in relation to ensembles throughout the National Gallery series. The half year from 10 October 1945 to 10 April 1946 has been discounted, to enable us to compare six complete years running, with a ‘year’ commencing in October.

⁷⁵ Figures compiled from Ferguson and Scott, *Music Performed at the National Gallery Concerts*.

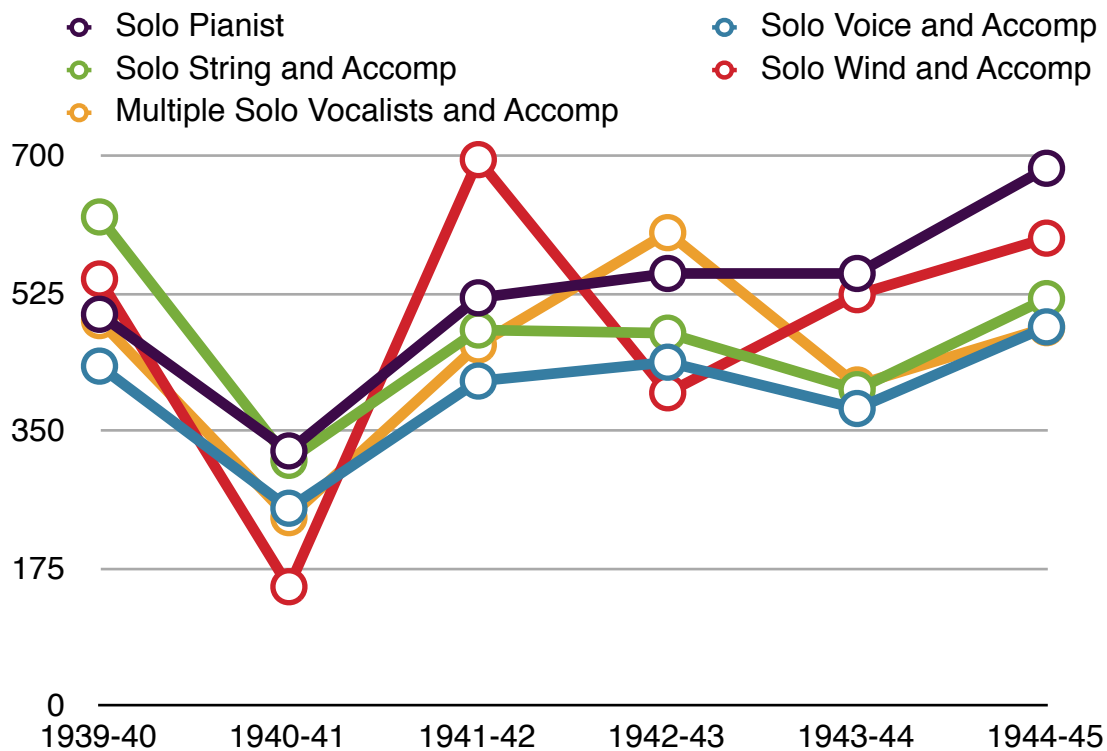
Figure 33: average audience attendance by ensemble type – small string-based groups.⁷⁶ National Gallery concerts 10 October 1939 to 9 October 1945.



This analysis demonstrates that the average audience for small string-based groups remained over 350 for the vast majority of the concert series. The only significant dip coincides with the period of the ‘big blitz’ in the autumn, winter and spring of 1940–1. Even then, the average audience remained well over a hundred for each ensemble type. String ensembles with featured instruments and string ensembles with piano seem on average to be better attended than string trios and string duos, quintets, sextets and octets. This suggests that the piano or a ‘feature’ instrument was a significant draw. The V-weapons assault in 1944 and 1945 seems to have had very little impact on audience numbers, if any. Overall, small string-based groups have a wide audience range and shift from attracting anything between just under 175 to over 600 people per concert. The anomalous result (1944–5) for the more unusual string combinations indicated by the green trend line indicates the complete lack of instances of this type of grouping in the October 1944 to October 1945 period.

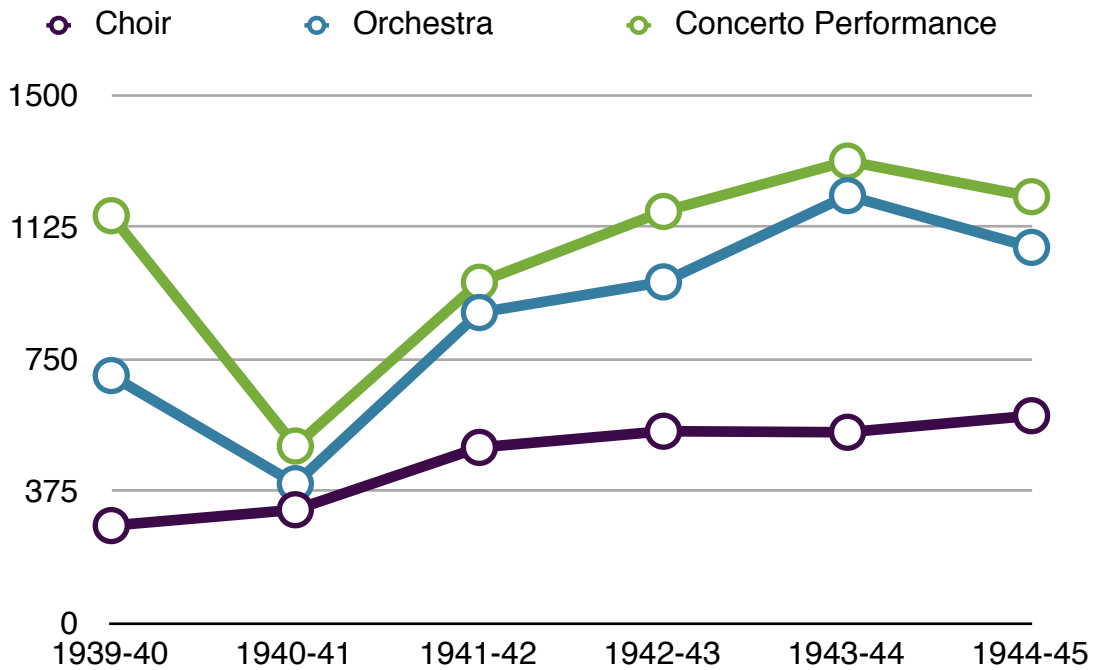
⁷⁶ The averages for each year are calculated from 10 October to 9 October inclusive. Programmes featuring two types of ensemble are counted in both categories. Programmes featuring more than two types of ensemble are included under ‘mixed ensemble’. A ‘feature’ player as detailed in addition to a string ensemble can be almost anything except piano, for which there is a separate category. There are, for example, many instances of a String Quartet or Trio adding a clarinet, voice, harp, etc. to their number.

Figure 34: average audience attendance by ensemble type – soloists.
National Gallery concerts, 10 October 1939–9 October 1945.



Overall, the average audience for soloists in any one year can be seen to be much narrower in range compared to small string ensembles above. While for small string ensembles there is significant differentiation in audience attendance between the types of string ensemble performing, for soloists we can see that the average audience figures are grouped fairly closely together within a single year; there is not the same extent of audience differentiation between the type of soloist performing, as there is for small string ensemble performances. The rather erratic trend of the solo wind recital is accounted for by the very small number of performances that took place, and the fact that the few that did take place featured the ‘star’ of the woodwind genre, Pauline Juler, performing with Myra Hess in the 1941–2 period. This analysis demonstrates that the solo pianist experienced the most dramatic increase in audience attendance. However, it also demonstrates, perhaps surprisingly, that the solo vocalist remained the least well-attended of all solo performances for four out of the six years analysed.

Figure 35: Average audience attendance by ensemble type – large ensembles, National Gallery concerts, 10 October 1939 to 9 October 1945.



This analysis demonstrates very clearly the high attendance at concerto performances, and the larger-scale performances in general. It is also very clear that choirs did not attract as many concert-goers as orchestral performances. This may have been, in part, due to the National Gallery being perceived as more of an instrumental music venue than a choral venue. Despite low figures compared to other large-scale performances, audiences for choral performances did, however, attract similar audience numbers to small string-based groups and soloists, peaking in 1944–5 with an average audience of 589. Although concerto performances were relatively few in number, they consistently attracted the largest audiences, even more so than performances of solely orchestral works. This could be a reflection of the combination of solo and orchestral elements in the performance of a concerto, which are two elements most likely to attract large audiences. When one considers that the soloist was most often a pianist (the most popular solo genre), it is unsurprising that concerto performance consistently achieved the largest audiences at the National Gallery. The large figures presented here on the Y axis indicate, when compared to the previous two graphs, the popularity of the large ensemble ‘spectacle’, while highlighting the fact that with a generally small-scale genre such as chamber music came small-scale audiences.

In addition to the performance configurations above, there were lecture recitals, wind ensembles, piano duets, mixed small ensembles and ‘other’ miscellaneous performances. However, with very few performances of each one, no ‘trend’ can be discerned and the results are too erratic to lead to any useful conclusion.

While these results cannot be taken as a generalisation of London audience patterns as a whole, they can nevertheless provide us with an indication of trends at a popular venue in which the standard of artists performing was monitored, and was perceived to be high. All the graphs demonstrate a significant drop in audience numbers in the 1940–1 period of heavy aerial bombardment. In contrast, despite their enormous destructive power, the V-weapon attacks in late 1944 to early 1945 seem to have had very little impact on concert-going at the National Gallery, something we have also seen to be the case at the Wigmore Hall. On 5 December 1944, when Davies recorded V1 and V2s falling on London, Hess still managed to attract 1,203 people. Indeed, the V weapons did not even manage to keep the concerts in the shelter, with performances moving tentatively upstairs in mid-September 1944.⁷⁷

In order to contextualise these audience attendance figures, the following table demonstrates the percentage of concert schedules that was occupied by each ensemble type.

⁷⁷ British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/1, Volume VI.

Figure 36: ensemble type and their percentage share of schedules,⁷⁸ 10 October 1939 to 9 October 1945.

Ensemble	% of schedules
Solo pianist	19.9
Solo voice and accompaniment	15.5
Solo string instrument and keyboard accompaniment	14.2
String quartet	10.4
Mixed small ensemble	8.8
Small string ensemble with piano	8.6
Wind ensemble	0.9
String ensemble with 'feature' player	4.7
Orchestra	3.0
Piano duet	2.9
String trio	2.3
Choir	1.9
Concerto performance	1.5
Lecture recital	1.4
Multiple solo vocalists	1.4
Solo wind instrument and accompaniment	0.8
String duet, quintet, sextet or octet (with and without piano)	0.7
Other	0.2

In accordance with the popularity of 'star' performers, we can see that it is soloists who occupy the majority of the concert schedule. Solo pianists and solo vocalists had, and still have today, significant box-office power and 'star' status. Amateur musicians and music-lovers performing in a domestic setting were likely to be either pianists or vocalists and therefore the core repertoire (Beethoven, Chopin, folk songs and operatic

⁷⁸ Percentages have been rounded to one decimal place.

arias) would be familiar to many. In addition, the solo, and therefore 'virtuoso', nature of vocal and piano performance also encouraged a strong audience following.

Perhaps the most surprising figure here is that connected to the performance of a solo voice and accompaniment. With 15.5 per cent of the platform time at the National Gallery, the solo vocalist is the second most frequently heard performance type on offer at the gallery, surpassed only by a solo pianist. However, when compared with the audience attendance graphs above, we can see that the solo vocalist remained one of the least attended genres. We cannot attribute this to audiences tiring of frequent vocal performances because the same certainly does not ring true for pianists; the solo pianist has both the highest percentage of platform time, *and* some of the highest audience averages for solo repertoire. It seems that the public taste at the National Gallery was, at this time, skewed in favour of the solo pianist. We might speculate that this could be attributed to the increasing popularity and fame of Myra Hess.

It can be seen from the figures above that it was solo performers who achieved the highest percentage of the schedules, solo pianists, solo vocalists and solo string instruments combined making up approximately 50 per cent of the schedules. Therefore, solo vocalists and pianists claimed more platform time than all small string groupings put together, despite string quartets being the fourth most common ensemble at the National Gallery. At the other end of the scale, wind instruments hardly figure at all, with both wind ensembles and solo winds not even achieving 1 per cent each.

It seems that these findings were casually observed at the time very early on in the series, in 1939. In an article from *The Times* in December of that year, it was claimed that 'the National Gallery concerts have proved that singing makes less appeal than formerly'.⁷⁹ Another, published earlier that season, asserted that 'since the end of the last War standards (except in singing) have risen, most conspicuously in orchestral finish and in the general level of pianism'.⁸⁰ These commentaries may not only suggest a decline in the popularity of vocalists with audiences, but also perhaps an elevation in popularity for other chamber music:

The public taste at the moment, so far as such a complex of varying factors can be even approximately determined, is running strongly for pure instrumental

⁷⁹ 'A Stock Taking: National Gallery Concerts', *The Times*, Saturday 30 December 1939, 4.

⁸⁰ 'The Informal Concert: Counting Our Blessings', *The Times*, Saturday 18 November 1939, 4.

music: the orchestra first favourite, the piano a strong second, and chamber music with a smaller following but still preferred to vocal music – an odd state of affairs in a land that has had an unbroken tradition of solo and choral song for 500 years and has come late into the field of instrumental music. But there it is: two large halls at Oxford Circus were packed out last Sunday for performances of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, and 800 people came to the National Gallery on Wednesday morning to hear a quartet and a quintet, whereas the attendance on Monday at the Bach Choir's concert, at which *Dona nobis pacem* was sung, was small.⁸¹

To what extent these claims, based on anecdotal evidence in *The Times*, and the audience figures, based on concert data at the National Gallery, can be taken to indicate 'public taste' is debatable. Nevertheless, what we *can* deduce from this material are general trends in audience preference at this time. The National Gallery suggests itself particularly as being a more accurate measure of audience preferences than most other venues, because it was unique in running a concert every single day at the same time for a number of years, thus providing enough data to even out any anomalies.

One such anomaly was the 'star' performer. For example, while we can see that the average audience numbers for string quartets are consistently higher than those for solo vocalists, they are only higher by an average of sixty people, and star performers would attract a great deal more. Elena Gerhardt, for example, was capable of attracting higher audiences than any string quartet ever did at the gallery. However, although Gerhardt regularly performed to well over a thousand people when billed alongside Myra Hess, when billed alone (usually accompanied by Gerald Moore) her audience would be nearer to 500.

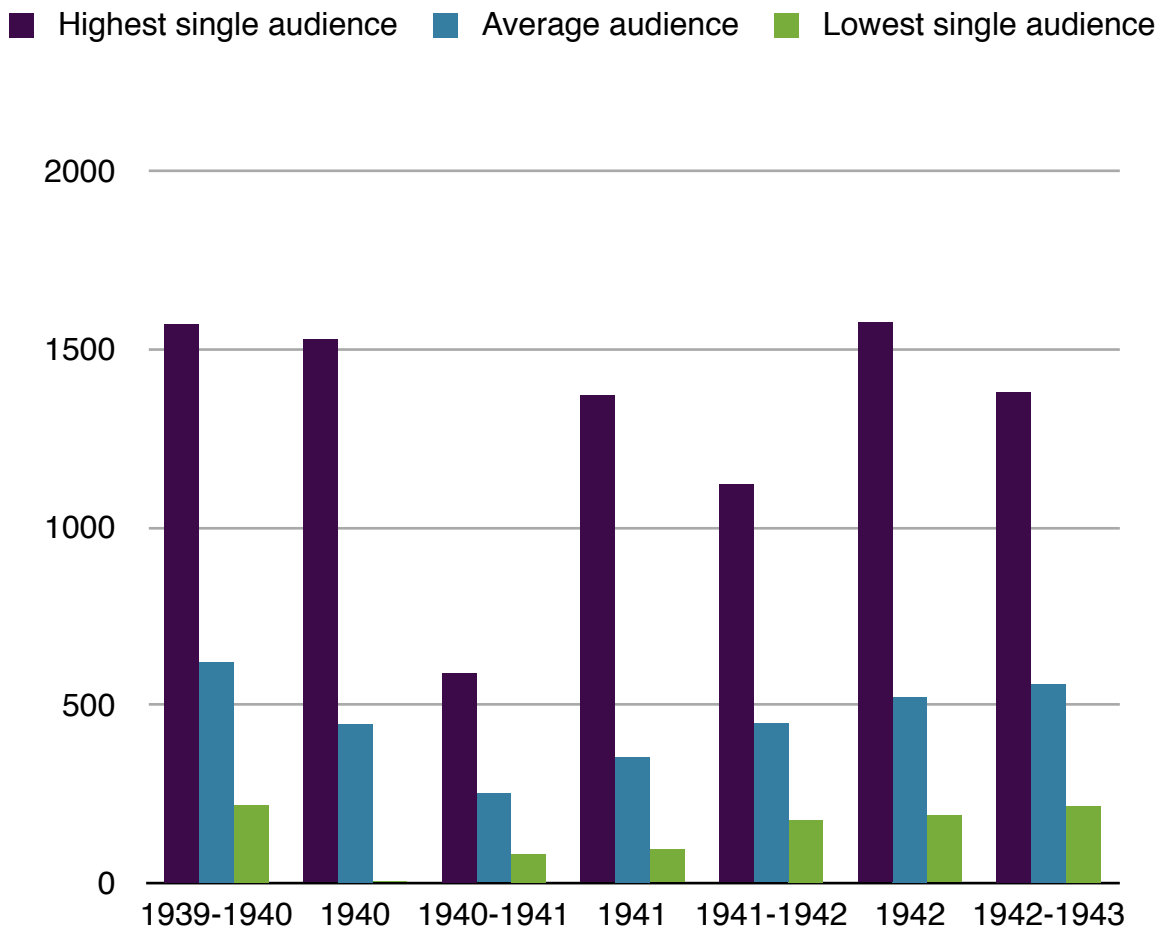
As mentioned above, 'star' status was a significant 'pull' factor for an audience most frequently observed in soloists and conductors. A popular and high-profile solo pianist on their own might often attract well over a thousand people at the National Gallery (notably Hess, Solomon and Moiseiwitsch), and yet a string quartet on its own never achieved this figure. While we can indeed usefully trace smaller fluxes in trends as we have outlined above, it is still the case that a solo or 'featured' high-profile performer was the biggest draw. At the National Gallery, it was a star *pianist* who would be most likely to draw sell-out audiences. For example, in twenty performances throughout the series, Moiseiwitsch attracted on average 988 audience members per

⁸¹ 'Occasional Music: Politics and Sonata Form', *The Times*, Saturday 20 January 1940, 4.

concert, with a high of 1,317 people for a solo concert on 27 October 1943. The audiences for Hess and Solomon are similar.

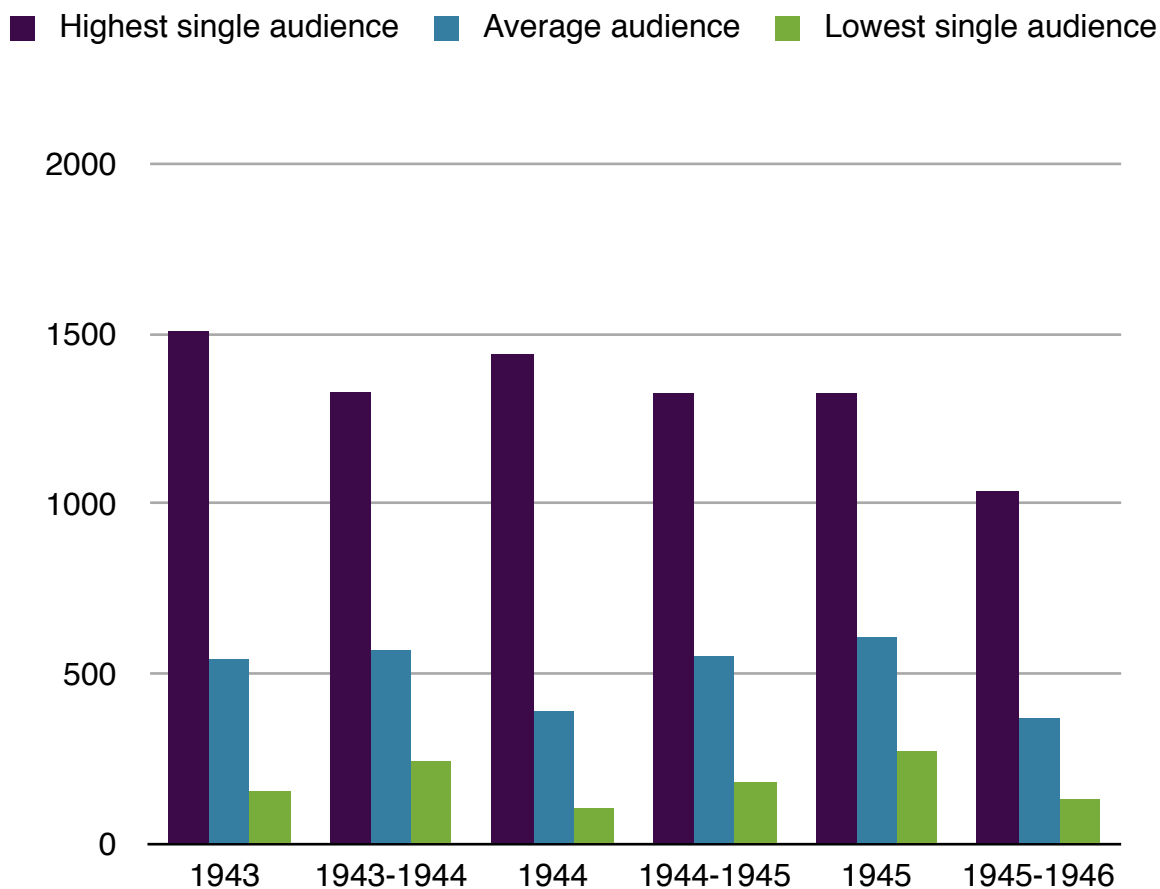
While we have already seen how audience attendance was linked to the type of ensemble performing, it is now useful to consider briefly how audience attendance fluctuated over time. The following two graphs demonstrate, in periods of six months, the maximum, minimum and average audience figure for each period. The first graph commences with the period from 10 October 1939 to 9 April 1940.

Figure 37: National Gallery concerts, maximum, average and minimum audience figures for six-month periods. Commencing six-month period: 10 October 1939 to 9 April 1940.⁸²



⁸² The lowest single audience figure for 1940 (April to October) was only six people. Such a small number does not register on this scale graph.

Figure 38: National Gallery concerts: maximum, average and minimum audience figures for six-month periods. Commencing six-month period: 10 April 1943 to 9 October 1943.



Many of the fluctuations in the figures above are predictable, and yet such an important aspect of the National Gallery concerts' history cannot be allowed to pass without comment. As might be expected, the number of concert attendees was lowest during the period of the heaviest and most constant bombardment of late 1940 to early 1941. The big blitz period maximum audience figure was only just over 500, a significant indication of how the big blitz impacted on London concert life. It should also be noted that the minimum audience during this period was six, for a concert on 13 September when Jean Sterling Mackinlay and Maurice Jacobson performed folk songs to this tiny audience. On this day the air raid siren had been sounding constantly from 9.45 am through until 2pm. However, this spectacularly low figure is not representative of audiences in the big blitz, and we can see that the average audience was still around 250 people.

However, apart from this big blitz period, all maximum audience figures stay above the thousand mark, suggesting that during all other periods of war, the concerts continued to provide a big draw for audiences. Confirming what we have seen in chapter three in relation to Wigmore Hall, concerts in the second half of the war particularly were notably well attended and profitable. After the big blitz of 1940-41, the average audience number steadily increased throughout the series, only dropping during the summer months of 1944. This was recovered immediately during the October 1944 to April 1945 season and the summer months of 1945 saw an average audience of over 600, a figure not seen since the very first 6 months of concerts. Therefore, the concerts were neatly book-ended by their highest average audiences, of over 600 people, occurring at the very start and at the very end of the war. This fact in particular suggests that the fortunes of the concerts were very much defined by the war and that the provision of and perceived need of the concerts, as articulated by audience attendance, was directly related to the international situation. This is further underlined by the significant drop, in fact the halving of, the average audience figure in the final six month peacetime period, from October 1945 to April 1946.

The evidence presented here cannot allow us to make assertions about broader musical life in Britain because the National Gallery was a unique venture with no precedent. Nevertheless, it does allow us to observe in detail how a section of the musical establishment (including audiences) in London at this time responded to the war in relation to musical performance. In the final section of this chapter, I will examine in finer detail the ideological contexts and rationale for what we have already learnt about these concerts which seemed at once to define and to distance performances of chamber music performance in relation to the ongoing experience of war.

Ideologies, propaganda and myth

The concerts at the National Gallery were, from their conception, organised in line with particular aims and objectives which emphasised the fact that they had a special purpose and various social functions. This was no doubt due, in part, to Hess's conviction that the concerts would be her national service. The aims of the concerts were described by Howard Ferguson as follows:

The aim of the Concert organizers has been twofold. To present the complete literature of first-rate Chamber music, ancient and modern, at a price which all can afford; and to give young and promising performers an opportunity of appearing, side by side with well-known artists, before a ready-made and appreciative audience.⁸³

Four main points can be deduced from this statement. Firstly, we trace the idea of ‘first-rate’, a notion of quality and prestige that has already surfaced in relation to the Wigmore Hall, the BBC and the 1939 music festivals. To exclude the notion of ‘second-rate’ repertoire or performance says much about the image that the National Gallery concerts wished to project, as well as raising questions about what was deemed to fall into these categories and why. Secondly, we are told that the price is to be one that ‘all can afford’; and indeed the 1 shilling entrance fee was very cheap by comparison to other venues.⁸⁴ This suggests that the concerts committee had a particular audience demographic in mind. Thirdly, we are told that the performers are also to be selected in order to achieve a balance between well-known artists, who would be popular with audiences, and new artists, who may benefit from high-profile exposure, suggesting a concern to support budding artists.

Finally, audiences are cited as being ‘ready-made and appreciative’. This suggests that audiences were perceived to be loyal and regular, as well as perhaps being grateful for the performances that were being provided. The audience is configured very much as a non-critical body; the concerts were not performed in order to provoke critiques and reviews about aesthetic quality, but instead were being marketed as a service that met a demand and for which audiences were grateful. The quality of both performers and repertoire was to be understood as ‘first-rate’ even before a concert had begun, by very virtue of being included in the National Gallery concerts in the first place. With performers and repertoire being overseen by Myra Hess, the concerts, although brand new, already had a validating stamp of quality under her name. This final section of the chapter will deal with the ideological web woven from the issues articulated above, including audience demographics, socialist financial models and perceptions of prestige. One final discussion point will be the ways in which the concerts engaged (or avoided engaging) with issues of nation and nationality.

⁸³ *National Gallery Concerts 10th October 1939–10th October 1944*, 10.

⁸⁴ The cheapest ticket at Wigmore Hall was 2/6.

Both new audiences and new performers seem to have been supported by the structures put in place for the National Gallery concerts. The newness of the National Gallery stage, and the unusual practices (including having no pre-bookable tickets, no reserved seating and the use of a canteen) obscured the usual concert conventions, encouraging audiences to take a fresh approach. Moreover, the tickets were all one price (an affordable 1 shilling) and the concerts ran as a not-for-profit concern that maintained a charitable purpose. The management of programmes by a single committee allowed audiences to hear a large and varied range of chamber repertoire. New audiences were especially supported by the informality and brevity of performances. The aims of the committee and the structures used to run the concerts seem to have distinct left-leaning overtones. Mutual and equal support as exemplified in ideas of charitableness and classlessness were achieved by providing a not-for-profit platform.

Musicians new to the profession were often given appearances that in private commercial venues would have proved impossible. In a letter of thanks to Hess after his performance at the National Gallery, a young musician wrote: 'I am sure that many young artists feel as I do, that through these concerts the whole course of their career has been raised to a new level and for this we owe you a great debt of gratitude.'⁸⁵

Hess also made use of students from the Royal College and the Royal Academy as attendants and doormen.⁸⁶ The concerts enabled less high-profile musicians to appear alongside established artists and by 28 November 1939, out of some sixty-nine artists who had performed at the gallery, forty were freelance musicians and only twenty-nine were under professional management.⁸⁷ Indeed, the left-wing paper, the *Daily Worker*, approved of the ethos of the concerts wholeheartedly, and especially of the fact that 'Famous players, promising young performers, all received the same fee.'⁸⁸

Audiences, however, were less easy to control. The great myth connected to the National Gallery concerts is that they were attended by people from all classes and from all walks of life. While the concerts certainly opened up the *idea* that chamber music

⁸⁵ British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/11, Item 36.

⁸⁶ NGA, NG16/47/1, Concerts 1939–46: Setting up of, Notes.

⁸⁷ British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/11, Item 86.

⁸⁸ Special Material Add.59860, Press Cuttings, Volume II, *Daily Worker*, 30 March 1946, 149.

could be for all people, the reality beneath the gloss suggests that a great classless audience was not in fact created.

On nearly every occasion I found that a swarm of more or less leisured women in more or less expensive coats, with a modicum of servicemen and students, invaded the Gallery at noon, deposited scarves, hats or other personal effects on all the seats that were worth having, and then descended to the basement where they devoured sandwiches and coffee, returning to the concert room a few minutes before the time the concert was due to begin. The unfortunate worker, therefore, unless he was in a position to take two hours off for lunch, was left standing and lunchless.⁸⁹

Of course it is difficult to deduce how representative this account is of an average day at the National Gallery. Nevertheless, this report does imply that leisured women dominated the audience and enjoyed the luxury of being first in line. This report from the *Sunderland Echo* also seems to portray the audience demographic at the National Gallery as fairly middle-class and well-to-do.

Business girls who spent their lunch-hour eating sandwiches and listening have written. Housewives from the suburbs have written to say that lunch-time was the only time in which they could get away from the cares of home. People have written from the provinces to say they planned their visits to London around the lunch-hour concerts.⁹⁰

Business girls and suburban housewives do not seem to be such a radical departure from the typical concert-going classes as the myth may otherwise suggest. However, vocalist Engel Lund describes an early audience enthusiastically in a letter she sent to Hess after her performance:

It was such a wonderful experience to sing at the National Gallery and it meant so much to us both, The audience was lovely, it consisted just of the people an artist is wanting to get hold of, the people who mostly cannot afford the usual concert prices.⁹¹

This artist at least recognised in the make-up of her audience new types of faces from those to whom she was used to performing, and defines these new faces as ‘people who mostly cannot afford the usual concert prices’. Ferguson describes the very first

⁸⁹ Ibid., *Time and Tide*, 23 March 1946, 149.

⁹⁰ Special Material Add.59860, Press Cuttings, Volume II, *Sunderland Echo*, 7 March 1946, 146.

⁹¹ BL Call No. Cup.404.c.1/11, Item 33.

audience as being ‘from every walk of life: members of the forces, civilians carrying gas-masks, ARP workers, office-boys, workers from government offices’.⁹² However, on closer inspection this description does not necessarily encompass a particularly wide range of the class spectrum. Most members of the forces, for example, had until very recently been civilians themselves and workers from government offices were likely to be educated. An example of a National Gallery audience is depicted in Figure 39, in which audience members are photographed leaving the gallery at the end of a concert.



Figure 39: Audience members leave a concert. A brief taste of the sorts of people attending concerts can be discerned here, with a woman in the foreground clutching a fox fur, and a man in military uniform in the top right. Reproduced with permission of the National Gallery Archives.

It is better to suggest, therefore, that the National Gallery concerts, through cheap entry and a daily programme during the working week, enabled and encouraged a

⁹² *National Gallery Concerts 10th October 1939–10th October 1944*, 9.

greater quantity of people to spend their lunch hour attending a chamber-music recital; the concerts fostered the inclusion of chamber music in the accoutrements of the ‘middlebrow’. These people were not drawn from the lower or working classes in any significant number. It was white-collar workers who had a significant presence at the concerts and not factory workers or labourers. It should not be supposed that by trying to widen the audience for chamber music, the intellectual distinctions in musical culture were blurred; indeed, as previously described in Chapter 1, snobbish attitudes were very much in evidence and were indeed built into the very ethos of the series itself.⁹³

However, in a satirical report, *Punch* presented quite a different slant on the idea that audiences were gaining musically elevated taste (or what we might term ‘cultural capital’) from the concerts.⁹⁴

Mixed audience. Some smart women. A few recognisably from offices. One uniform (with brassard and reverently lowered head). Lots of earnest older people and only a few intellectuals . . . The sonata is finished. Can you remember a single phrase of it? Or of the Mozart? Have you been listening? Well, it was a lovely concert, and thank you, Miss Myra Hess, and we shall certainly come again. We’ve perhaps not concentrated upon Mozart and Franck, but we’ve never once thought about the war!⁹⁵

This fictionalised account suggests that people were not even necessarily listening to the music, and despite the ‘reverently lowered’ heads, had perhaps enjoyed the concert as an event, rather than as spiritual nourishment. In this instance, the writers of *Punch* poke fun at the earnestness of concert-goers while implying that in most cases, no spiritually transcendental event had occurred; the concerts had served to block out reality, not to lend it spiritual significance. The article lampoons both the concerts and the concert-goers, the former for positioning Mozart (et al.) as an antidote to war, and the latter for an apparent inability to engage with, or understand, the music itself.

The National Gallery concerts cultivated an idealised left-leaning persuasion within the concert hall itself, perhaps observed most acutely when Queen Elizabeth attended the performances. As there were no private boxes or elevated seating, the Queen took her place alongside other concert-goers in the rows of chairs. Some of the

⁹³ See Chapter 1.

⁹⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984).

⁹⁵ ‘At the National Gallery’, *Punch*, 1 November 1939, 494, British Library, P.P.5270.

more famous images of the National Gallery concerts depict audience members standing, leaning against walls, sitting on the floor and even perched on the edges of the stage, and the single ticket price also provided some financial obscurity. Therefore, in some ways, the National Gallery concert arrangements did function as a social leveller, the lack of the established infrastructure of concert-hall seating rendering some of the markers of wealth invisible. In a speech given at the final concert in April 1946, Hess remarked on what she felt the concerts had achieved:

OUR FIRST IMPULSE at the beginning of the war, was to provide an antidote to the prevailing sense of doom and destruction, but gradually we found that we were realising an ideal; that music should be an integral part of the life of the nation, and not merely an occasional pleasure or a luxury FOR THOSE WHO COULD AFFORD IT.⁹⁶

This extract not only suggests that chamber-music concerts could be affordable and accessible, but also that the regular performance of chamber music was somehow connected to the articulation of national musical identity.

It is clear that Hess recognised and addressed some of the issues surrounding the perception of chamber music as an elite pastime for the musical connoisseur. Typical concert protocol was consciously eliminated to as great an extent as possible, people being encouraged to come and go, and even eat and drink during the performance at their leisure. The short performance time was more likely to attract the musical newcomer than a three-hour epic would, and was more conducive to fitting into a busy wartime day. The lack of pre-bookable tickets also forced audience members into the same boat, by making every audience member join that foundation stone of socialism, the queue. Such arrangements seem to be in keeping with the rise in social consciousness exemplified in the Beveridge Report of 1942. However, the almost socialist administrative structures were distinctly at odds with conservative cultural establishment norms found in interwar and 1940s Britain. Nevertheless, as we will see, the BBC and the government were keen to uphold the concerts as integral to British identity.

The idea that the concerts might elevate musical taste was not one of the original aims and objectives of the concerts. In her work on the history of the gallery, Bosman

⁹⁶ British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/1, Volume VII, British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/1 Volume VII, Concert programmes, June 1945–April 1946, Final Speech by Hess.

recounts the following story. ‘On hearing a soldier whistling *Jesu Joy of Man’s Desiring* during a train journey, a journalist asked, “Are you interested in Bach?” “No,” the soldier said. “But you’re whistling a Bach composition,” the journalist persisted. “That’s not Bach,” came the reply. “That’s Myra Hess.”⁹⁷ The telling of this story (whether true or otherwise) demonstrates the idea that a number of people may have developed their musical tastes through the National Gallery concerts. The soldier’s ignorance is juxtaposed with his familiarity with and enjoyment of the ‘high-art’ tune he whistles. While the BBC worked explicitly to ‘elevate’ the musical taste of the nation, these concerts embodied other priorities, concentrating on the idea of provision rather than mission. For example, no programme notes were ever provided. Even though severe paper shortages limited printing, it might still have been possible to add two or three sentences about each work to the little single-sheet programmes distributed at the gallery. This was only undertaken on the very odd occasion, such as at the premiere of a new work, most often by Ferguson. By contrast, a Boosey and Hawkes programme (also a small, single sheet) from Wigmore Hall was always packed with small-type paragraphs of technical information on each work, the negotiation of which required a fairly high level of musical knowledge. The lack of even minimal programme notes at the National Gallery reinforces the fact that the active education of audiences about musical forms and theory was not part of the committee’s aims and objectives, and that it would have conflicted to some extent with the desire to provide rest and pleasure through performances.

Co-operative finance

The financial set-up at the gallery was intended to have as many mutual benefits as possible, a sort of musical co-operative. Performers would perform for a flat rate, but a guaranteed fee thereby eliminated the elevated financial risk of performing during wartime. As no concert was autonomous (unlike at Wigmore Hall, where each concert was a self-contained event) but part of a large and ongoing series, the days of low audience turnout could be offset by the days of high audience turnout. Likewise, the high-profile artists were in a financial position to perform for the flat-rate fee, thereby supporting new artists without a public following, and who might not be in a position to

⁹⁷ Bosman, *The National Gallery in Wartime*, 52.

take the financial risk of a private concert in wartime. A circle of mutual social benefits was created wherein the rich took a little less, in order that the less advantaged could share in the benefits. Therefore it was not just the audiences that experienced a ‘concert-hall socialism’; the performance platform also functioned under a financial co-operative.

Hess had intended from the very start that all profits of the concerts would go to the Musicians’ Benevolent Fund, which existed in order to aid musicians in financial distress caused by ill-health or other difficult circumstances. In his letter accepting the post of Committee Member, Vaughan Williams suggests an alternative structure.

Oct 5th
My dear Myra

Of course use my name and let me do anything else I can to help. One suggestion – would it be better to pay the nominal fee, as you suggest to the artists, and then divide the profits (?) up between them – and not give it to the Mus: Ben: (they could . . .) – but I daresay you have thought it all out . . .

. . . RVW⁹⁸

However, the structure proposed here by Vaughan Williams was not conducive to fostering financial equality between artists. High-profile artists with popular followings would derive greater financial benefit than other musicians, thereby creating a system in which those with the smallest need would gain the greatest benefit and vice versa. Such a structure would have fundamentally undermined Hess’s co-operative system, whereby the less-established artists were in effect supported by the success of established performers. In addition, under Vaughan Williams’s proposals, only artists selected to perform at the gallery would have been able to reap the benefits. Under Hess’s system audience attendance figures had no bearing whatsoever on the artist’s financial reward.

Therefore, Hess kept to her original plan, allowing funds to be distributed more widely and fairly than Vaughan Williams’s alternative scheme. By 17 November 1939 a set fee for performers had been established which was as follows:

Solo artists – 5 gns per concert
Accompanists – 3 gns per concert
Quartets – 12 gns per concert

⁹⁸ British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/11, Item 3.

Large group – rate to be decided by Miss Hess and Miss Bass⁹⁹

Performer fees over the course of the series gradually increased as confidence in the financial stability of the venture made it possible to keep a reserve for leaner weeks, notwithstanding a downslide in May 1940 when the performer fee was temporarily lowered.¹⁰⁰ In applauding the concerts committee's equal fee policy, the *Daily Worker* suggests that it also had artistic implications: 'Artists could give the music nearest to their hearts without worrying about the box office.'¹⁰¹ The administrative system set up by Hess was, in theory and in practice, a model of a socialist financial operation in which the strong, by their success, supported the weak.

It appears, however, that this was sometimes difficult to reconcile with the ongoing political ramifications of war. The following letter was written by Hess and printed in *The Times* in February 1942:

Foreign Musicians

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir, – The question of the employment of foreign musicians during the war has been raised in your columns. May I add a word from my experience gained in organizing the daily concerts at the National Gallery for the past 2 1/2 years?

The great majority of performers at these concerts are, as they should be, British. But the public also appreciates the opportunity of hearing certain proved and distinguished foreign artists, some of whom are allied refugees. Indeed such foreign artists are needed to provide variety in our daily round of music making. How can we avail ourselves of their services? We offer a flat-rate fee (regrettably small) to the artists we engage. Apparently these allied refugees may not accept our modest offer. Instead we are required to accept the generosity of their respective Governments who are to pay them and present them to us.

Should any concert-giver be enabled, nay encouraged, to obtain the services of any artist without paying him directly? I think not. But at any rate the condition is beneath the dignity of such an institution as the National Gallery concerts. We will not be beholden in this way to foreign Governments who are the guests of our nation at this time. We stand by the principle on which these concerts were founded in 1939, the principle that every artist engaged is paid by the shillings taken at the door. Private generosity from well-wishers both here and in America has from time to time supplemented these takings. For that we are most grateful. But we have never accepted a gift carrying with it the condition that any artist or group of artists shall occupy the platform of the

⁹⁹ British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/11, Item 84.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., Item 99.

¹⁰¹ Special Material Add.59860, Press Cuttings, Volume II, the *Daily Worker*, 30 March 1946, 149.

National Gallery, nor do we intend to do so. I am unhappy that we are thus prevented from extending our courtesy to these artists and so satisfying the public demand.

Yours &c.,

MYRA HESS¹⁰²

Legislation surrounding foreign nationals performing in Britain had been complicated by the war and was often in flux, as we have already seen. But the concerts were intended to be separate from national rhetorics and discourse, even within their financial arrangements. Hess demanded that the way in which artists were paid was to be via purely ‘musical’ structures, and condemned the prevailing system in which governments in exile were to pay artists a fee and then supply them to the gallery. To do so would have necessitated a recognition of a division between ‘us’ and ‘them’. However, if artists were paid from the takings, the audience were paying for the music, something ‘universal’ without national ties. Her letter to *The Times* replicated above demonstrates that even within financial structures, the concerts were configured by Hess as spiritual, quasi-religious events that transcended nation and the superficial divisiveness of nationhood. Nations and nationalities were deconstructed.

Financial structures also seem to have caused aesthetic headaches. Frank Howes, Committee member and music critic of *The Times*, seems to have struggled with the relationship between the ticket price and the musical content:

Mr Howes said he was a little apprehensive of the idea getting about that people could get 1/- Orchestral Concerts, the National Gallery Concerts were regarded as essentially Chamber Music concerts. The Chairman [Myra Hess] reminded Mr Howes that the proposed Orchestral Concerts were to consist of Mozart programmes, which could not adequately be given in any large hall, in fact they could be included in the heading of Chamber Music. The Chairman further suggested Mr Alec Sherman and his Orchestra. Mr Howes mentioned that his only objection was the fact that there would be 1/- Orchestral concerts in London.¹⁰³

Howes’s concern was rooted in the idea that the distinction between a chamber-music concert and an orchestral concert should be clear from a financial point of view; an orchestral concert should carry a dearer ticket price than a chamber-music concert. He

¹⁰² ‘Foreign Musicians: Myra Hess’, *The Times*, Friday 20 February 1942, 5.

¹⁰³ NGA, NG16/47/2, Concerts 1939–46: Film. Meeting minutes, 24 September 1942.

seems to have been worried that an idea would be ‘getting about’ that tickets to orchestral concerts in London could be obtained for 1 shilling. By implying that genres of musical performances should be ranked by a corresponding ticket price, Howes raised the idea of prestige, and how the prestige of music performance is constructed and disseminated. Orchestral concerts, the jewel in London’s cultural crown, would perhaps have their prestige undermined if it was thought the ticket price was too low. In addition, there was the simple logistical problem that the costs associated with orchestral concerts were higher than those for smaller-scale performances. Cheap orchestral concerts would set a dangerous and unsustainable precedent that would undermine the necessity for more expensive ticket prices.

The lure of ‘prestige’

At the National Gallery, the art world was also having to balance the concepts of ‘quality’ and prestige. The Gallery’s Board of Trustees had to negotiate the curation of their own small exhibition, called Picture of the Month, which was attracting several hundred visitors daily, a small entrance fee being payable.¹⁰⁴ The selection of ‘Picture of the Month’, undertaken at the discretion of the director, was precise and needed to balance the risk of air-raid damage with the need to show as high a quality of work as possible. Therefore, pictures of the very best quality were not to be shown. Pictures of a low quality did not please the public and therefore despite the air-raid risk, pictures of *good* quality were to be shown.¹⁰⁵ It may be noted that Constable’s *Hay Wain*, and works by Turner, Botticelli and Rembrandt fell into this category, and attracted anything between 500 and a thousand visitors a day.¹⁰⁶

Prestige was a particularly important concept in wartime, especially when prestige involved public events such as concerts. Perceptions of ‘quality’ and the high-level cultural literacy of the British people were important signifiers in constructing a British musical identity, and by extension contributing to propaganda which reinforced

¹⁰⁴ Picture of the Month did in fact start as Picture of the Week, when a picture would be chosen from the storage facility in Wales and exhibited at the gallery for a short period of time. It was thought, however, that for the public to fully enjoy the picture, an exhibition period of at least three weeks needed to be provided. Two pictures were selected at the discretion of the director, from the stored collection to be brought up from Wales periodically.

¹⁰⁵ NGA, National Gallery, Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Volume XII, 6 July 1943.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, Volumes XI and XII, 1939–45.

the idea of British cultural superiority both at home and abroad. As a concert series that was set up in reaction to the war, the concerts were able to represent a dignified and highly cultured (and therefore ‘British’) response to the conflict and therefore gained fame and prestige through extensive media attention within their six-and-a-half-year life span. Indeed, media attention was excitedly anticipated, Clark being told in September 1939 that ‘It is a story the press will leap at.’¹⁰⁷ In a letter to the Treasury Chambers in May 1941, the concerts committee requests that the fixing of air-raid damage to the glass in the dome be made a priority in order that the concerts may relocate out of the basement shelter as soon as possible:

Miss Hess makes a great point of the propaganda value of the concerts and Sir Kenneth Clark who was instrumental in getting them started in the Gallery, writes from the Ministry of Information to support their going upstairs. One argument is that they are the main instance of cultural activities continuing unbroken in war-time London and another, that this fact being known in America produces considerable effect over there.¹⁰⁸

The value of the concerts as propaganda both for people in Britain and abroad is made very clear here and in the meeting minutes for the Executive Committee, where it is reported that ‘Both the BBC and the Ministry Of Information frequently use the National Gallery Concerts as propaganda’.¹⁰⁹ Although no further details are given about the ways in which the concerts are used, we do know that the concerts were periodically broadcast on both the BBC Home and Foreign Services.¹¹⁰ In October 1941 it was brought to the attention of the Committee that the ‘British Council had expressed the wish to send Foreign Residents to the concerts’ and a system of admission vouchers was approved for the use of the British Council.¹¹¹

While the concerts themselves were used in the ways described above, in many ways it was *the idea* of the concerts and their symbolic potential that had the most propagandistic potency. The use of the National Gallery concerts in the film *Listen to Britain*, directed by Humphrey Jennings, features Myra Hess performing with the

¹⁰⁷ NGA, NG16/47/1, Concerts 1939–46: Setting up of, 22 September, 1939

¹⁰⁸ NGA, Information File, NG WWII Concerts and Canteens. Correspondence, letter, 2 May 1941, to the Treasury Chambers.

¹⁰⁹ British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/11, Item 111.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., National Gallery concerts, 1939–46, all volumes.

¹¹¹ Ibid., Item 107, 3 October 1941.

Orchestra of the Central Band of the RAF. The film is one example of the National Gallery being used to represent ideals of civilisation as demonstrated in the provision of chamber-music performances, and the perception of British audiences' cultural literacy and familiarity. The fact that the concerts were in the National Gallery reinforced the implication that the performances were representative of, and belonged to, the nation, and therefore contributed to a national identity.

However, the film's symbolism in connection with the concerts could be seen to run deeper. The use of the Central Band of the RAF for the film, which included shots of the orchestra performing in military uniform, enabled a link to be made between the great ideological struggles of war and the great ideological questions with which the canonic repertoire grappled. The film, which has no script or commentary but only soundscapes, uses the concerts to achieve two ends. Firstly, the use of the concerts defies and dispels the idea of 'Das Land ohne Musik', by demonstrating that the British have made high-art music a priority, even in the dark days of war. Secondly, the image of the RAF orchestra in particular at the National Gallery performances enables a symbolic victory to be claimed over Germany through the military 'capture' of the Austro-German repertoire.¹¹²

In addition to films, the best medium for disseminating propaganda at the time was, of course, broadcasting. Despite the BBC's enthusiasm for the National Gallery concerts, Hess refused permission for the BBC to broadcast from the Gallery until the hundredth concert. Her sympathies lay with Sir Henry Wood, whose own Promenade Concerts had been abandoned by the BBC after the corporation's flight from London. The following concerts committee minutes of November 1939, in which Hess took the Chair, make her feelings plain.

Broadcasting: Mr Ronald Jones reported that the British Broadcasting Corporation had asked permission to broadcast the concert on Friday 17th November. He believed that they would be willing to pay the artists their full fees, and to preface the broadcast with some statement about the National Gallery Concerts. The Chairman was opposed to broadcasting. She said that the BBC had voluntarily relinquished their leadership in music, and that it would be a mistake to support them until they showed some sign of recognising their

¹¹² The Orchestra of the Central Band of the Royal Air Force was in fact a regular performer at the National Gallery, often sharing the stage with Hess, as it accompanied her in concerto performances. Many professional musicians had their wartime home in the RAF orchestra, including Leonard Hirsch (leader), the entire Griller quartet, Harry Blech, Dennis Brain and Denis Matthews among others. It was therefore not unusual to see musicians in uniform on the stage.

responsibilities in this field. The money they spent on broadcasting concerts from the National Gallery would be deducted from the amount they would spend on engaging artists for their own programmes. Their broadcasts from the National Gallery would only benefit the better known artists, who were not so much in need of the extra money. After discussion IT WAS AGREED that the Chairman's points involved important principles, and the Committee unanimously decided not to broadcast at the present moment.¹¹³

While these minutes read like a matron's reprimand of an errant child, they also highlight the fact that the concerts committee had the luxury of being able to rank artistic and moral principles above the box office. After what Hess deemed a suitable period of reflection and time for remorse, the BBC was permitted to broadcast the hundredth concert. Hess wrote to the BBC suggesting that 'in the event of the BBC wishing to broadcast subsequent Concerts, may we leave it that each request to do so will be considered separately and on its own merits by our Committee? This, I think, should be the most satisfactory plan for everyone concerned.'¹¹⁴

Many subsequent concerts were broadcast and some of these, especially in 1942, were broadcast on the Eastern Service, thereby giving the concerts an international platform. However, Hess retained complete control over the media access to the concerts as other external bodies saw the potential value of the National Gallery image. For example, in maintaining responsibility for the prestige of what was now a national institution, quality control was strictly regulated. When it was proposed that an image of the gallery should be used in a film featuring an unknown conductor, it was Hess and not the gallery's board of trustees who had the final word:

Dame Myra Hess is very much against this, as she does not think Mr Dunbar a good conductor (this seems to be the general opinion) and she does not wish it to be thought that the National Gallery have employed him. As her word must be final in all matters concerning the National Gallery Concerts, I am afraid that we cannot allow the Gallery to be used as a background for this scene.¹¹⁵

The desire of an external body to use the image of the gallery as a backdrop to musical performance demonstrates the symbolic prestige of the gallery as a venue for music

¹¹³ NGA, NG16/47/1, Concerts 1939–46: Setting up of, Meeting minutes, 3rd Meeting of Executive Committee. 7 November 1939.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., Correspondence, letter to Mr Ogilvie, 24 November 1939.

¹¹⁵ NGA, NG16/47/2, Concerts 1939–46: Film. Letter.

performance. Hess's control in cultivating the public image of the concerts can also be seen in the initial correspondence with Humphrey Jennings in a letter of 7 May 1941.

Dear Mr Jennings,

I had a visit today from Miss Hess's niece, Miss Davies, who is rather upset, as she has heard that you are proceeding with the choice of music for the film of a concert, without further consultation with Miss Hess. I am afraid Miss Hess will expect to have a say in particularly the choice of music and musicians.

The concerts are entirely her creation, so to say, and I do not think we should proceed to any definite decisions about the filming of them until she is back in London to be consulted.¹¹⁶

The international prestige war

While this prestige question is so closely linked to Hess as an individual, it was nevertheless linked to much broader concerns of nationhood and, indeed, war. Most obviously, the perceived prestige of the performances was connected to the use of the concerts as propaganda. Unlike art exhibitions of old masters, the performances demonstrated activity and creativity. That this activity should be musical activity gained extra significance considering the Austro-German dominance of music in Europe. A memorandum was written to the Secretary of State for the Air Force, emphasising the potential international significance of the concerts to the war effort:

It is further agreed that one of the chief weapons in the war of propaganda must be the performance and broadcasting of serious music, at a standard of performance which shall compare favourably with that heard in enemy countries . . . the prestige of the country will not be improved by the admission that the second-rate is quite good enough for us.¹¹⁷

Therefore, the National Gallery concerts, both in live performance and through broadcasting, were able to promote 'serious' musical performance (exemplified by the rarified performance of chamber music) as an integral part of British identity. The idea of competition was also expressed explicitly in the BBC Music Policy 1942–6:

¹¹⁶ NGA, NG16/47/1, Concerts 1939–46: Setting up of, Correspondence, letter, 7 May 1941.

¹¹⁷ British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/11, Item 49.

Music is an international ‘language’, which through the medium of broadcasting is heard and understood all over the world. This impact involves immediate competitive and prestige considerations of great consequence to broadcasting, with ultimate implications in the sphere of international goodwill of the very highest importance.¹¹⁸

Far from being a musically passive non-runner in the European cultural competition, prestigious and ‘first-rate’ musical performances, exemplified in the National Gallery series, were part of a British musical identity that could compete with the musical behemoth of Austro-Germany. The concerts had a far greater significance than simply being a morale-boosting force as they are so often portrayed. They constructed and disseminated the idea that first-rate musical performance was distinctly British and that the British people understood and valued such performances.

Therefore, programming decisions that focussed the concerts on the Austro-German repertoire had not only practical but also ideological functions. The focus on the music of German Romanticism allowed the National Gallery to project an image of striving for the sublime in the midst of war and an identity that pivoted on the expression of the universal and the idea of the purity of the pastoral ideal, something that we also saw used in the 1939 London Music Festival described in Chapter 2. The irony is perhaps only perceptible with the benefit of hindsight; the idea of purity in particular meant that the repertoire of the Austro-German canon upon which Hess insisted the concerts should be based became entangled in National Socialist ideology. However, the repertoire had to be presented on its apparent ideological merits in order that the Austro-German national presence at the Gallery could be camouflaged. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, the use of the ‘universal’ enabled the National Gallery to signal that Britain was a truly musical nation. Similarly, the lack of any specific championing or even discourse surrounding specific nationalities (unlike Wigmore Hall concerts) points to the idea that nations and nationalities were deliberately avoided on the National Gallery stage, in order that a ‘utopia’ of music could be constructed.

Indeed, the rhetoric surrounding the concerts made use of sublime or religious imagery, hinting at the apparent utopia or transcendental experience that could be provided by the performances. The ‘need’ for music was most often expressed by either ‘food’ or ‘hunger’ analogies, or ‘light’ metaphors. Phrases such as ‘pathetic hunger’,

¹¹⁸ Foreman, *From Parry to Britten*, 273.

‘crumbs of nourishment’ and ‘more hungry for music than for lunches’ all express the idea that music was vital to existence.¹¹⁹

The drought has broken. The parched area of Central London is beginning to show a few shoots of musical growth that look like becoming quite respectable plants . . . Like other crops, public concerts need light and we are not likely to reap a normal autumn harvest so long as we are blacked out at night.¹²⁰

Looking at it like this, it seems that the performances themselves were used as a metaphor for the ideological justification for the war itself, or even as the means by which fascism could be defeated.

It is worth looking carefully at the way the National Gallery concerts were described in reference to deep spiritual and religious significance. The idea that the chamber-music concerts provided ‘light’ has religious connotations, as well as obvious references to the experiences of the blackout. Phrases such as ‘keeping a flame alight on the altar of music’, ‘a glow in the heart of London’ and ‘kept the light of music burning’ conjure images of shrines, worship and devotion.¹²¹ Indeed, Hess often made the links between the concerts and a religious or transcendental experience explicit.

...those somewhat uncomfortable months downstairs were extraordinarily moving...and proved once and for all that music is not only a pleasant diversion...as some would have us believe...but to many thousands of people it is a necessity - for the preservation of those spiritual forces for which we, as a Nation...are ready to give our lives.¹²²

The ideals of a sublime and almost religious euphoria associated with the music of the Austro-German canon seemed to be, for Hess, the foundation upon which the concerts functioned. She described the concerts as providing a ‘sense of direction’ and demonstrating a ‘spirit of unity in the Nation for the preservation and strengthening of

¹¹⁹ Panter-Downes, *London War Notes 1939–1945*, 16; NGA, NG16/47/1, Concerts, National Gallery 1939–46: Setting up of, BBC Broadcast about National Gallery concerts, 24 October 1939.

¹²⁰ ‘Music Revived: The Public Concert’, *The Times*, 14 October 1939, 6.

¹²¹ Lassimonne, *Myra Hess by Her Friends*, 12; Special Material Add.59860, Press Cuttings, Volume II, *Manchester Guardian* 6 March (no year), 91; British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/11, Item 29.

¹²² British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/1 Volume III, *Concert Programmes July 1941–June 1942*,
Speech given by Hess at the 500th concert.

spiritual values'.¹²³ In an article entitled 'Music can Help to Heal World Says Myra Hess', she expresses these sentiments in a more defined manner. She suggests that 'through beauty, music could awaken a true sense of values, and so become a potent factor for good'.¹²⁴ and goes on to tell the interviewer: 'I firmly believe that in music the highest inspiration has a close affinity with deep religious faith.'¹²⁵ Kenneth Clark was similarly susceptible to the idea that the concerts had a parallel with worship. He recounts, on seeing the audience at the very first concert watch and listen to Hess play, that it was 'how men and women must have looked at the great preachers who gave them back their courage and faith'.¹²⁶

The explicit engagement with the war on an ideological level, most notably the idea of the universal ideal, underpinned the functioning of the National Gallery concerts and set it apart from concerts at Wigmore Hall. The National Gallery series rarely produced nationally themed concerts, nor entered into nation-based discourse within the structures of the concerts themselves. The following letter from Sir Kenneth Clark was written to composer Priaulx Rainier on 20 December 1939.¹²⁷

Dear Mrs Rainier,

. . . Deeply as I sympathise with the sufferings of Finland, I am afraid that it is not possible for me to agree to a collection being taken at the doors of the Gallery in aid of the Finnish Red Cross. We have had to make an inviolable rule not to allow these special collections in connection with the concerts, and I'm sure you will understand that with all the numerous claims of the kind we receive, it would be invidious to make even one exception, although it were for a cause so appealing as yours.

Please believe how much I regret being obliged to refuse your request, and accept my best wishes for the success of your efforts.¹²⁸

¹²³ British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/1 Volume VII, Concert Programmes, June 1945–April 1946, Final Speech by Hess.; British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/1 Volume III, Speech given by Hess at the 500th concert.

¹²⁴ Special Material Add.59860, Press Cuttings, Volume II, *Sheffield Telegraph* (no date) 1946, 144.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Lassimonne, *Myra Hess by Her Friends*, 57.

¹²⁷ Rainier was appointed to Professor of Composition at the RAM in 1943.

¹²⁸ NGA, NG16/47/1, Concerts 1939–46: Setting up of, Correspondence.

The only nationally based concerts to take place at the National Gallery were French and Russian concerts, which took place only very rarely, three and six times respectively, as well as one concert of Indian music. Unlike Wigmore Hall, the repertoire at these concerts was exclusively representative of the nation in question. However, the Gallery did occasionally play host to other evening concerts, unconnected with Hess's series. In the following minute, the Board of Trustees discusses the staging of an Anglo-French series of evening concerts.

if the Board was agreeable the concerts could be held on six evenings in June at the Gallery. He explained that the festival was an expression of cordiality between England and France and was viewed as such by the French Minister of Information as well as by our own. The Board expressed its approval of the scheme and agreed to allow the concerts to be held.¹²⁹

Had the National Gallery concerts become a platform for national causes, as the Wigmore Hall had done, the vision of utopia that the performances were engineered to construct would not have been able to emerge. It would have been compromised by the demarcation of national borders and boundaries. Performances of folk song defined by nation of origin could, conveniently, be exempt from this problem for two reasons. Firstly, as many different nations as possible were represented in the selection of folk songs (crucially, including the axis nations); secondly, folk song represented both the pastoral and the pure, enabling its performance to fit the Romantic ideological mould that prevailed.

The nationalities of artists seemed to pose little problem. In the following passage, Hess describes the reception of German mezzo and Gallery regular, Elena Gerhardt:

There is, on the evidence of these concerts, nothing nowadays of the misguided patriotism that, between 1914 and 1918, placed German music under such a cloud. A Lieder recital in German by Mme Elena Gerhardt was one of the greatest successes of the series. 'It was just after the Germans had overrun Holland, and Mme Gerhardt offered to withdraw; I asked her to carry on, and the audience gave her a most moving reception. They made it unmistakably clear that they were welcoming her as a great artist irrespective of her nationality.'¹³⁰

¹²⁹ NGA, National Gallery Minutes of the Board of Trustees, Volume XII, 21 May 1940.

¹³⁰ Special Material Add.59860, Press Cuttings, Volume II, *The Sunday Times*, 6 October 1940, 97.

The fact that Gerhardt suggested that withdrawal from the concert might be appropriate demonstrates some tension was perhaps discernible or expected surrounding German nationality on the chamber-music stage. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, German-ness was still a stamp of musical validity in Britain in both performers and composers, and the presence of Austro-German repertoire and musicians was perceived as a hallmark of both musical excellence and legitimacy.

This is not to say that the performance of German music was exempt from questioning, as we have already seen in Chapter 2. In Humphrey Jennings's film *A Diary for Timothy* the narrator, reading text by E. M. Forster, reflects on a scene in which Hess performs Beethoven at the National Gallery:

They do like that music the lady was playing. Some of us think that it is the greatest music in the world. Yet it is German music, and we are fighting the Germans. There's something we will have to think over later on.¹³¹

Forster does not attempt to provide answers to the moral conundrum set by the concerts, but simply acknowledges that it needs to be reconciled at some future juncture.¹³² The statement is made not against the backdrop of the concerts (a scene which has just abruptly ended), but against a scene in which two roofers are working on the roof tops, with the music still audible, implying that other work, including reconstruction, must take place before audiences would be in a position to address the question of German music. The only narration that occurs over the actual scene set inside the National Gallery is a repetition of a short phrase from a wireless report about a trapped regiment. This phrase ends 'it rained and they caught the water in their capes and drank that'.¹³³ The symbolic significance with the performance that is running concurrently with this wireless report is unmistakable. Both the repetition and the juxtaposition of the phrase points very clearly to a parallel between the words and the performance of Beethoven. The rain (from heaven) was like the Beethoven performance; it was necessary to sustain life, and 'caught' by grateful people who were suffering.

¹³¹ *A Diary for Timothy* (1946) director: Humphrey Jennings, writer: E. M. Forster, featuring: Michael Redgrave, Myra Hess, John Gielgud. Taken from *Land of Promise: The British Documentary Movement 1930–1950*, British Film Institute, DVD 2010.

¹³² E. M. Forster was known to attend the National Gallery concerts on occasion, and therefore was able to comment from his position as a member of the audience.

¹³³ *A Diary for Timothy* (1946), director: Humphrey Jennings.

As we have seen in Chapter 2, performances of chamber music in particular had to draw heavily on the Classical and Romantic Austro-German canon. The very genre of chamber music was Austro-German in constitution: for pianists, vocalists and string quartets the rejection of Haydn, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Beethoven, Schubert and Schumann would have decimated the repertoire. The idea that the performances in the National Gallery dealt with, and reiterated, life-affirming truths and articulated an unattainable utopia stemmed from the perception that the repertoire itself was, in performance, making these very concepts reality.¹³⁴ In doing so, the performance of such repertoire defended and justified Britain's war aims.

This is where the ideological underpinnings of the National Gallery concerts could be seen to fall apart, as it was these very same concepts that underpinned National Socialist ideology. And yet at the same time, the National Gallery concerts exemplified the use of Austro-German repertoire as a defining aspect of Britain's musical identity. The performance of the 'best' repertoire was integral to the prestige of the concerts, as was their apparent effectiveness as an articulator of British identity and British war aims: the eventual triumph of good over evil. In contrast to the deliberate construction of nations on the Wigmore stage, the National Gallery strategy was more concerned with appearing above and beyond these constructions, deliberately using the idea of a musical utopia to deconstruct national markers and to render the Austro-German repertoire less problematic. Therefore, while the National Gallery concerts were a product of and a response to the war, they were simultaneously constructed as ideologically divorced from the national wranglings of the conflict.

Conclusion

Many accolades awaited Hess when peace returned to Britain, including honorary degrees from both Durham and Cambridge, as well as a formal commemorative dinner sanctioned by the Queen. Poems were composed and a bust of Hess was unveiled in

¹³⁴ Eleanor Thackrey, 'Nation, Nationhood and the Chamber Music Concert', given at Plymouth University History Department conference, *The Arts in History*, 15 June 2012

October 1944 at the gallery.¹³⁵ The concerts and their founder were recognised by the pillars of the British establishment. However, the failure of the concerts to transfer successfully to peacetime suggests that the concerts met a demand created by war. The National Gallery concerts provided a platform from which live chamber-music performances could function in a variety of ways in wartime, and this functionality made the performances applicable to daily wartime life. The concerts' immersion in (and indeed reliance on) the wartime context was nevertheless offset by an intense ideological need to remain divorced from the national 'details' of war. To have engaged in the nitty-gritty of an Anglo-German conflict would have diminished the ideological impact and function of the Austro-German canon of chamber-music repertoire.

¹³⁵ Although the concerts did not return to the National Gallery within Hess's lifetime, 2006 saw the inaugural Dame Myra Hess Day at the National Gallery, instigated by both the gallery and Jewish Culture UK, and supported by the Ernest Hecht Charitable Foundation. Hess's model of chamber concerts as observed at the National Gallery, specifically to help young musicians, was recreated and continued in Chicago in the 1970s. For more information see NGA, NG Information File, WWII: Concerts and Canteens; and British Library Deposit 2009/01.

Conclusion

The chamber-music scene in London, as it stood in 1945, was the result of a gradual evolution of public musical entertainments that had been taking place in London over the previous century. The period so often referred to as a ‘renaissance’ in British music had seen major changes to British musical infrastructures, including the publication of *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians* in 1879, the opening of St James’s Hall in 1858 and Queen’s Hall in 1893 and the founding of the Royal College of Music.¹ Hughes and Stradling suggest that the experience of musical performance in the Victorian era was determined by class and social status: the music hall was for the ‘urban masses’, the middle classes had genteel domestic music-making and the upper classes attended Philharmonic Society concerts or the Italian opera.² This is not the only story, however. The Victorian past also saw the beginning of democratisation attempts, which we have traced further here. A search for audiences from a broader social and economic spectrum was a feature of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century musical life. It could be seen in the expansion of cheaper concerts, and in the increase in the number of publicly accessible concerts (as opposed to private events).³

I hope to have demonstrated in this thesis that chamber music offers a special lens through which to trace this continuing progression, and that the Second World War does as well, in surprising ways. The idea that chamber-music performance required a certain level of intellectual engagement and was ‘serious’ music was a long-standing belief; thus apparent widening of accessibility and availability of performances during the Second World War could be particularly powerful in propaganda.⁴ The Second World War was, then, a catalyst for change in chamber-music performances. Other types of rarified performance experienced the war as a watershed moment as well. This applied to opera, for instance, which in London had been plagued by financial insecurities hitherto (exemplified, not least, in Thomas Beecham’s multiple and

¹ Nicholas Temperley, et al., ‘London (i)’, *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed 10 May, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/16904pg6>.

² Hughes and Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance 1840–1940*, 4–5.

³ Nicholas Temperley, et al., ‘London (i)’, *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed 10 May 2013, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/16904pg6>

⁴ Bashford, *The Pursuit of High Culture*, 348–50.

financially disastrous efforts to establish it), but which got on to a firmer footing after the war.⁵

Throughout the Victorian and post-Victorian period, although there was an increase in the awareness of British musical products (as demonstrated in the idea of a ‘renaissance’), reverence for the foreign influence remained the overwhelmingly dominant force, seen especially in the ongoing protection of canonised repertoire, and in performances by star conductors and performers. Therefore the events documented in this thesis should be understood as part of a long and gradual trajectory of increasing activity and expanding accessibility coupled with an enhanced professionalisation of performance, with which accessibility was in tension. These traits developed in some friction with the formation of a nationally defined body of musical repertoire.⁶

I suggest there are three main conclusions to draw from this thesis, and I refer back to the research questions I posed at the start in order to draw these out. To reiterate: firstly, how did chamber-music performances function in a capital city experiencing total war? Secondly, how can we situate these performances within the wider context of British musical life? Thirdly, in what ways did articulations of ‘nation’ develop in chamber-music performances during the course of the Second World War?

Chamber-music performances had multiple and complex relationships with the war, including a number of explicit functions. They became an effective vehicle for foreign, domestic and musical charitable causes. At the Wigmore Hall, performances were vehicles for the projection or formation of national identities and concert programmes for these events were carefully constructed to convey particular elements of national imagery. Despite the popular rhetoric that some chamber-music performances functioned as morale boosters, we have seen that the picture was in fact a great deal more complicated: perhaps the rhetoric was as much of a morale booster for specific groups as the performances themselves. The concerts at the National Gallery were used in propaganda and yet in contrast to the performances at Wigmore Hall, the concerts committee at the gallery was at pains to construct musical performances as above and beyond the conflict, in order to at once extricate music from nationalistic

⁵ For more information, see John Lucas, *Thomas Beecham: An Obsession with Music* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011).

⁶ Nicholas Temperley et al, ‘London (i)’, *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed 10 May 2013, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/16904pg6>.

concerns. Yet at the same time they sought to demonstrate how high-art music performances could be relevant to civilians who were living through war, nested in the international conflict itself.

The idea that these conditions would promote a state of classlessness was a ‘riff’ of wartime discourse and propaganda. Historian Nick Hayes thus poses the following question: ‘had culture transcended class boundaries in the melting pot of war or were contemporary claims – subsequently endorsed by historians – for a newly discovered mass audience for the arts wildly exaggerated, essentially one further myth née propagandist line laid bare by wartime reality and post-war experience?’⁷

Hayes goes on to suggest that in London, at least, it was usually the audiences that already craved high-cultural products, those whom one journalist termed ‘culture seekers’, who patronised the new wartime offerings, rather than a mass of ‘new’ audiences flooding the concert halls as CEMA would have had it.⁸ Musicians were playing to people who already considered themselves ‘arts audiences’. Hayes nevertheless goes on to say: ‘but then with London’s arts audiences starved of concerts and exhibitions, everything offered was eagerly consumed. It follows that had a larger menu been available, queues at the National Gallery and elsewhere – if not the wartime stories about those queues – would have been shorter.’⁹

I would argue that this counterfactual speculation is not helpful; we might as well speculate that had there been no war, there would have been no queues at all. Hayes’s suggestion could also be considered inaccurate, because some performances were in fact very badly attended. The audience figures at the National Gallery supplied in Chapter 4 demonstrate that audiences were still discerning in their choice of event. Whatever speculations can be made about whether or not audiences wanted high-art performances, it cannot be denied that there was an increase in chamber-music activities during the war in London: I hope this can be traced in detail in Chapter 1. The war provided conditions in which new opportunities for chamber music could be found, perhaps due in part to diminished opportunities elsewhere.

The National Gallery concerts and Wigmore Hall performances did not *only* supply musical performances to meet a demand. Both venues provided employment

⁷ Hayes, ‘More than “Music-While-You-Eat”?’ , 210.

⁸ ‘London Concerts’, *Musical Times* , May 1940, 227.

⁹ Hayes, ‘More than “Music-While-You-Eat”?’ , 212.

opportunities and income for artists, as well as charitable income. Wigmore Hall provided a platform for national groups (not seen before the war) and in 1943 saw an extremely high turnover that surpassed pre-war figures. The National Gallery concerts ran on a co-operative financial system that was made possible by the circumstances of war, and functioned in an unusual space that encouraged the elimination of some traditional concert rituals. The war created the conditions in which chamber music could fulfill traditional aesthetic functions as well as changing political and social functions, arguably to a greater extent than in peacetime. I would suggest that the war, far from further destabilising the genre's place in London musical life, enabled greater prominence, widened audience accessibility and created new functions for chamber music.

With respect to my second research question, I suggest that a tension can be traced between the variety, cosmopolitanism and accessibility of performance that was configured as an integral part of British musical life and identity on the one hand, and the increasing professionalisation, intensifying obsession with high standards and the ongoing perception that chamber music was an elite form of music-making on the other. This tension was in part due to the fact that musical performance lent itself to being portrayed as a key element of democracy and, by extension, civilisation. The idea of being 'democratic at all costs', itself a product of wartime thinking, has permeated other arts organisations throughout the twentieth century and continues to prove influential today.¹⁰ The need for democratic structures in music-performance activity was enshrined in government policy in the founding of the Arts Council in late 1945. This subsidy was supposed to provide a secure financial underpinning that would support the artistic industries. However, in today's climate that emphasis has become somewhat skewed, and in order to obtain and retain funding, arts organisations such as concert halls and opera companies must justify their existence not through the provision of performances, but by proving the effectiveness of their outreach programmes, demonstrating the impact of their work and being aware of their social accountability.

From this perspective, the National Gallery performances could be considered ahead of their time: performances promoted democratic ideals in their infrastructures, including the ways in which artists were paid, cheap admission was allowed, seating

¹⁰ Blom, *Music in England*, 199.

was non-reservable and a not-for-profit ethos focussed on reaching new audiences.¹¹ The fact that these were chamber-music performances which were playing to large audiences contributed to the (false) impression exploited in propaganda films that large swathes of the British public had a hankering for elite forms of music performance. The performances at Wigmore Hall, a private, commercial platform, hosted a vast range of concerts from a variety of national groups as well as a wide range of repertoire choices including significant amounts of new music. The variety on offer at Wigmore Hall means that we could also consider this platform ‘democratic’, or at least ‘inclusive’, as it exemplified a large cross-section of the London demographic and of wartime musical creativity, even from such groups related to axis countries such as the Anglo-Austrian Music Society.

Here, too, of course, we encounter the tension once again between democratic structures and processes and an increasing professionalisation of performances, along with consequent elements of eliteness. Chamber music’s intimacy no longer represented the music of the private, domestic sphere, but instead a rarified public and highly professional space. For example, the National Gallery concerts were extremely selective in their choice of artists and maintained control over what repertoire could be heard. The idea that high standards should be cultivated and monitored was inherent in the National Gallery concerts’ aims and objectives. Similarly, ‘popular’ programmes, amateur programmes, and lighter styles of programming ceased entirely during the war at the Wigmore Hall and were replaced with programmes that focussed on new music and niche, themed performances of high-art music, including baroque concerts or quartet cycles.

Tension between social cohesion and elitism was also connected to the fact that compositional heritage could not plausibly contribute to a British musical identity (especially through chamber music) and that some other aspect of musical life (as representative of civilised life) needed to be appropriated in consequence. Thus, the idea of prestige and excellence in London’s musical performances recurs in the discourse. I would suggest that while, during the Second World War period, the variety and high standards of London performance platforms were configured as part of musical Britishness, this continued into the post-war periods, culminating in the Festival of

¹¹ The idea of ‘outreach’ now permeates the activities of most arts organisations in Britain.

Britain (1951) and the Coronation (1953). Even in 2012, the London Olympics was accompanied by a Cultural Olympiad.

My final conclusion follows on directly from that, relating to the way in which British musical identity was shifting in response to its complex relationship with the musical primacy of Austro-Germany. As we have seen, while many different national identities were explored on the Wigmore stage, the National Gallery attempted to obscure nationality, in order to position the music of the Austro-German canon as a morally superior universal force. Meanwhile, Britishness was not promoted explicitly on the chamber-music stage at either Wigmore Hall or the National Gallery. Even the BBC offers no indication of jingoistic promotion of 'Britishness'. Plainly, the search for a British compositional voice was still ongoing and fraught: neither the 'Jerusalem brand' (in the Austro-German vein) nor the 'borrowing' of folk elements were seen as wholly satisfactory. The problem remained that the idea of musical legitimacy was, in British eyes, inextricably linked to Austro-German performers and composers. The obsession with international validation and the competitive comparison to the European 'other' meant that a British musical identity that was based on compositional heritage was never going to be able to compete.

This thesis documents an area of historical research previously unexplored. While the existing literature demonstrates that Second World War music-historical material is often subsumed into studies that focus on institutions, biography, or general histories, there is rarely a focus on the war period and rarely a consideration of chamber music. By limiting my research to both the subjects of chamber-music performances *and* the Second World War, I hope to have filled a significant gap in the history of musical performance activity during this period.

There are, however, some problems that can be traced. By focussing my research only on chamber music, a niche performance genre, it is difficult to assess to what extent the conclusions drawn here can be applied elsewhere. For example, did the issues explored here have the same applications in orchestral performances, or was chamber music an isolated case? Without a wider frame of reference it is difficult to assess exactly how these findings can feed into the broader wartime situation, and further work needs to be done in order to fully situate these findings in the musical landscape of the time.

There is also the danger, when working within such narrow parameters, that the findings are overemphasised and made to seem more important or influential than they actually were. For example, compared to popular music performances in music halls and dance halls, chamber music was but a drop in the ocean. Indeed, the figures put forward by the BBC in Chapter 1 demonstrate the minimal appeal for chamber music. However, I would argue that it was always the intention that this thesis would illuminate an area of research that has been presumably passed over in the past for these very reasons. The point was to give a voice to this musicological underdog.

I now perceive several particular lines of enquiry which would benefit from further research and would add to our understanding of this period. For example, there is potential to conduct further investigation into the role that music played at the British Council and into how this body, responsible for promoting British interests abroad, used music and the arts in its work. It is clear that music played some role in diplomatic efforts at this time and it seems that the British Council was responsible for sending sheet music abroad, as well as for using music performances to provide entertainment for foreign guests. In addition, the Council published books and pamphlets on all facets of British life, including music, examples from which have been included in this thesis. These publications alone are worthy of closer investigation in terms of how this organisation mediated British musical life through printed text, but a large amount of further British Council material exists in various archives.

There are many questions to ask here. What musical material was sent abroad and to whom? What were the aims and objectives of the British Council's actions in regard to music at this time? Were these aims and objectives fulfilled? To what extent were individuals from the musical professions involved at the British Council? What musical materials were selected for use by the Council and why? What were the hoped-for gains from the use and promotion of British musical life? How was the British Council's work viewed by its foreign recipients? There are many avenues to be explored.

Another area for further investigation partly ties in with the suggestions above relating to the British Council: I believe there is potential to undertake more detailed study than has been possible here into the relationships between Britain and other nations during this Second World War period, as exemplified in the use of music-performance platforms. This thesis has focussed mainly on the relationships between

Britain and the Austrian and German national groups which used chamber-music platforms, as well as documenting instances of other national groups that used music performance. However, this only scratches the surface of what could potentially be a much larger project, which would look at many different national bodies, their wider use of musical performances and their respective histories.

For example, there is particular scope to investigate the musical relationships between Britain and the USSR during the Second World War.¹² In the course of my research, it became apparent that the USSR had a presence on the musical platforms of London (in both chamber-music and orchestral performances). The relationships between the USSR, Britain and the concerts being staged under USSR auspices deserve further attention, especially when one considers the mid-war switch of the USSR from axis to allied forces. Many questions are raised by this interaction. What bodies were responsible for producing concerts under USSR auspices? How were these concerts funded? Did they win public support, and did public support differ before and after the breaking of the Nazi-Soviet pact? There are also many other nations that used music performances in wartime London to raise the profile of their charities and their governments in exile. There is plenty of scope to conduct further research into the relationships between Britain, musical platforms and the national bodies that utilised musical performance.

One final area in which I believe there are opportunities to be explored is a study of the Society of Women Musicians (SWM). This society had many distinguished performers on its Executive Committee and brief investigations into the archive for the purposes of this thesis revealed significant amounts of material. The Society of Women Musicians seems to have been fairly active during the Second World War, giving performances and building a library, and the substantial archive suggests that the society was also undertaking significant amounts of activity in the surrounding decades. Potential lines of enquiry include the following. How were the activities of the SWM received? What activities were undertaken in public and private spheres? How did the activities of the SWM evolve over its lifetime? Founded in 1911 and representing

¹² Pauline Fairclough, currently at Bristol University, is working on western culture in Soviet Russia and the Cold War cultural exchange.

women in the music profession for sixty years, the work of the society deserves further attention.¹³

There are many further questions to be asked that can be drawn out of this thesis, and to my mind these can be divided into three sets. The first set of questions addresses the situation of chamber music in the immediate post-war years. How did chamber music performances post-war compare with the wartime situation in London? Were the repertoire and the types of concerts the same or different? Was the Wigmore Hall's financial success maintained in the immediate post-war years? Can we make useful comparisons between the chamber-music activities of the war years and the immediate post-war years? Drawing comparisons with periods outside the war years would usefully contextualise the impact, or lack of impact, that the war had on the continuance of musical performance life.

The second set of questions would expand the focus out from London to include other British cities. What was the chamber-music scene like in other major cities such as Manchester or Edinburgh? Did these cities also see an increase in chamber-music activity in wartime? How did chamber-music performances function within the entertainment landscape of these other cities during the war? The impact of war on the chamber-music scene in London has been discussed here in detail and to shift the focus to other cities for comparison would, I believe, be an interesting exercise, especially in the case of cities which experienced heavy air raids similar to London's, as well as, perhaps, those cities which experienced very little bombardment.

The third and final set of questions explores chamber music from angles other than those presented in this thesis. What chamber music was being recorded for the gramophone in the 1930s and 1940s? Which works were being recorded? What were the sales of chamber-music recordings in relation to other types of recordings? Who was buying these recordings? This leads on to questions surrounding music in the domestic environment. Which chamber works were being performed in domestic environments in the 1930s and 1940s? What types of ensembles were being used and who was performing? Was much educational material available to purchase for the domestic musician attempting 'serious' works? It is likely that these final questions in particular would present significant challenges in terms of finding primary sources.

¹³ Although there is an entry in *Grove* for the Society of Women Musicians, it is rather short. I believe that there is a great deal more to say on this subject.

This thesis has documented many facets of chamber-music activity in wartime, and in doing so has answered some key questions and raised the possibility of addressing others. While this thesis contributes to the documentation of the history of chamber-music performances in Britain, it also highlights something even more important, namely that there is a great deal of work still to be accomplished in promoting the history of small-scale music-making in the historical and musicological literature.

Appendix. Primary and archival sources

As mentioned above, this section includes some material that, despite being published and in the public domain, has been treated as an archival source. There is an inevitable diversity of cataloguing detail when it comes to different archives: some archives are extremely well catalogued (such as the BBC Written Archives), whereas others are hardly catalogued at all (for example, the archives for the Committee for the Promotion of New Music collection held by Sound and Music). It would be impossible to list every item handled in the course of this research, and therefore in many cases I have made a general indication of the type of material that can be found in each file and location and that was particularly useful to me.

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- Programme analysis

BBC WAC R27/3/1 Music General, Alien Composers, File 1, 1939–40.

- Letters
- Internal memos, including lists of individual composers and works
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- Press copies

BBC WAC R27/3/2 Music General, Alien Composers, File 2, 1941.

- Internal memos including discussions on copyright, individual composers and works

BBC WAC R27/46/1 Music General, Chamber-Music Concerts 1932–6, File I

- Internal memos

Letters and documents analysing policy relating to chamber-music broadcasting

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British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/1, Volume VII Concert Programmes June 1945–April 1946

British Library Call No. Cup.404.c.1/6
Card indexes listing all performers and performances at the concerts

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Box 49: January–October 1936
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Box 51: June–December 1937
Box 52: January–December 1938
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Conway Hall

<http://www.conwayhall.org.uk/sunday-concerts-2>

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This bibliography is not representative of all the material consulted, but only includes items directly related to the thesis content. Most primary sources have been listed in the Appendix. However, there are some exceptions. Some of the texts listed below have, because of their date of publication, been treated in this thesis as primary sources. These include novels, pamphlets and published essays, and as a general rule, anything published before 1950 has been treated as a primary source. However, as they are published books, they are listed here. The date of publication listed can not be relied upon to indicate whether a source has been treated as a primary or a secondary source. For example, the novel listed below by Siegfried Sassoon was first published in 1925, but in this case a 1960 edition has been used. Other types of published sources, for example articles from journals and newspapers at the time (published pre-1950), have also been treated as primary sources and are listed in the Appendix.

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