Elder Conservatorium of Music
Faculty of Arts
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‘An Anatomy of Betrayal’: metaphor, method and meaning in the opera *Taverner* by Peter Maxwell Davies

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

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Adelaide, November 2020 (revised January 2021)

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Abstract

This thesis is the first detailed and evaluative study of the opera *Taverner* (Op. 45) by Peter Maxwell Davies. It is presented in two parts: Part A (Perspectives) and Part B (Critique).

Part A contextualises the opera. It considers its subject, describes its genesis and location, identifies its influences and shows how the opera intersects with other works. Part B considers the opera's component parts through an explanation of its principal themes, appraisal of the libretto, discussion of structure and an examination of compositional style.

This is a critical study which is empirical as opposed to theoretical in character and takes as its point of departure an existing work and does not seek to apply or develop any particular theory. The methods involve a review of existing primary materials, chiefly the opera's score, writings and talks by the composer, plus secondary sources. This project will not explore Davies's compositional techniques through analysis since extensive research has already been done in this field. The thesis favours a hermeneutical approach and embraces influence study in seeking to explain the opera's considerable extra-musical dimensions.

As there is no detailed critique of *Taverner* the primary objective of this study, and in which lies its doctoral originality, is to address that omission. By a comprehensive reappraisal of the opera, the thesis aims to acknowledge the work's seminal importance and confirm its pivotal position in the composer's completed oeuvre. Further, a lack of critical engagement with the work allied to its continued absence in the opera house may conspire to the opera acquiring the status of neglected masterpiece. Hence, a secondary objective of the project is to stimulate renewed interest and make a case for the revival of *Taverner* on stage.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide.

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I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines.

I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Acknowledgements

This thesis has taken four years to research and write but its inspiration dates from twenty-five years ago. Because of this, in addition to thanking those individuals who have been of assistance to me more recently, I must also pay tribute to those with whom I have worked and been supported by over a longer period of time.

First and foremost is Max. Between 1995 and 2010 I was employed as a Music Producer for BBC Radio 3 based in Glasgow and was fortunate to work closely with the composer on many occasions. During all our encounters, in the recording studio, the concert hall or, post-concert, in the St Magnus Festival Club in Kirkwall, Max was a formidable, generous and inspirational presence. It was a privilege for me to have played a very small part in bringing his music to life.

I thank my friend and colleague, the conductor Martyn Brabbins, a long-time advocate for Max's music and crucial in realising the BBC's concert performance of *Taverner* in 2009.

I acknowledge Glenys Hughes MBE (Honorary Vice-President, St Magnus Festival), Sally Groves (formerly of Schott Music, Musical Executor and trustee of The Max Trust), Emma Kerr (Boosey and Hawkes), Lorna Liebow (BBC Scotland), Annette Jackson (the British Library) and Eilís McCarthy (the Royal Opera House Collection, Covent Garden). I also extend thanks to Hugh Macdonald (former Head of Music, BBC Scotland and Director, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and to Vincent Ciccarello (Managing Director, Adelaide Symphony Orchestra).

I owe much to my Principal Supervisor at the Elder Conservatorium of Music, University of Adelaide, Professor Charles Bodman Rae and to Dr Mark Carroll and Dr Luke Dollman for their guidance during my candidature.

I thank my family: my parents for instilling within me a love of music from an early age and my two children for their patience whilst I have been holed-up writing. Finally, I thank my wife, Elizabeth, for her support, perspicacity and constancy.

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Synopsis of the opera

Act I

Scene i A Courtroom

John Taverner is on trial for being in possession of books supporting the Lutheran heresy. The court is presided over by the White Abbot. Taverner tries to defend himself by attacking the Catholic church. He is saved by the intervention of the Cardinal who needs Taverner for his music.

Scene ii The Chapel

Music sung by the chorus is based on the *In Nomine* from Taverner's *Missa Gloria Tibi Trinitas*. Taverner decides to put his fate in the hands of God.

Scene iii The Throne Room

The King is in conference with the Cardinal. Taverner is not on stage and the orchestra does not play. A consort of viols and lute accompanies the King as he tells of how a split from Rome will be of great benefit. It will make money and allow him to divorce his wife and make his mistress Queen. The Cardinal is indecisive but decides to try to persuade the Pope to accept the King's position. The Jester appears and comments on the hypocrisy of the situation.

Scene iv The Throne Room

The Jester removes his mask and reveals his true identity, Death. He commands Taverner to confess. Two monks appear and, along with Death, confuse Taverner so that he is unable to tell good from evil. Taverner condemns Rome as the Antichrist. At the mention of his name, the Antichrist appears and declares that it is virtuous to kill Protestants. Taverner declares his loyalty. Death tells Taverner that he must also renounce his own humanity and his music. Taverner's mistress, Rose Parrowe, tries to persuade Taverner that he is making a mistake and to stand by his art. Rose fails and Death wins. Taverner signs his confession and swears that he is reborn and will defend Christ's faith with 'sword and fire.'

Act II

Scene i The Courtroom

Taverner has become the judge and the White Abbot is the defendant. The music of this scene is based on that of Act I, scene i, but is now compressed and speeded up. The scene ends as Death spins a Wheel of Fortune.

Scene ii The Throne Room

The Cardinal tells the King that his second marriage is forbidden by the Pope. The King rebukes Rome. Death re-appears, removes the Cardinal's robes and replaces them with the garb of an Anglican archbishop; he then grants the King his wishes.

Scene iii The Chapel

The condemned White Abbot and his monks are celebrating Mass in Latin. Taverner enters and accuses the Catholic church of corruption. The Mass continues until the King's soldiers rush in and announce the dissolution of the monasteries.

Scene iv The Market Place, Boston

There is to be no reprieve for the White Abbot. He is to be burned at the stake. In the White Abbot's final moments he makes a plea that 'I am fell into the hands of those who, preaching free thought, do burn me for opposing it.' Taverner kneels before the pyre and prays. Rose Parrowe, a representation of Taverner's music, stands beside him but her love for Taverner is no more – he has betrayed her and she sings: 'The Lord has made thee a stranger, drunk with wormwood.'

Synopsis provided by the author and not by the composer.

Performance history to date

12 July (World-Première) and 26 September 1972
Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London, England, UK

John Taverner	Ragnar Ulfung
Richard Taverner	Gwynne Howell
Cardinal/Archbishop	John Lanigan
King	Noel Mangin
Jester/Death	Benjamin Luxon
White Abbot	Raimund Herincx
Priest-Confessor/God	James Bowman
Boy	David Pearl
Captain	Paul Hudson
Antichrist	Robert Bowman
Archangel Gabriel	John Dobson
Archangel Michael	Dennis Wicks
Two Monks	Francis Egerton and Adrian de Peyer
Rose Parrowe/Virgin Mary	Gillian Knight

Royal Opera House Chorus and Orchestra
Early English Consort of London
Schoolboys from Finchley Catholic High School and Haberdashers' Aske's School, Elstree

Conductor	Edward Downes
Designer	Ralph Koltai
Producer	Michael Geliot

29 June 1983 (revival)
Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London, England, UK

John Taverner	Ragnar Ulfung
Richard Taverner	John Tomlinson
Cardinal/Archbishop	John Dobson
King	Paul Hudson
Jester/Death	Alan Oke
White Abbot	Raimund Herincx
Priest-Confessor/God	James Bowman
Boy	Michael Watkins
Captain	Geoffrey Moses
Antichrist	Mary Moise-Boycott
Archangel Gabriel	Kim Begley
Archangel Michael	Roderick Earle
Two Monks	John Winfield and Paul Crook
Rose Parrowe/Virgin Mary	Sarah Walker

Conductor	Edward Downes

24, 26 and 29 November, 3, 11 and 13 December 1984, 11 and 30 January, 6 March 1985
Royal Swedish Opera, Stockholm, Sweden

John Taverner	Thomas Sunnegårdh
Richard Taverner	Rolf Cederlöf
Cardinal/Archbishop	John-Erik Jacobsson
King	Arne Tyrén
Jester/Death	Staffan Sandlund
White Abbot	Lars Kullenbo
Priest Confessor/God	Lennart Löwgren
Rose Parrowe/Virgin Mary	Anne-Lise Berntsen

Conductor	Gary Berkson
Designer	Lars Millhagen
Producer	Göran O Eriksson
Translated into Swedish by	Kasper Verne-Carlsson and Lennart Nyberg

19, 21, 24 and 28 April 1985
Opera Company of Boston, Boston, Mass., USA

John Taverner	John Moulson
White Abbot	Raimund Herincx
Richard Taverner	James Rensink
Jester/Death	Alan Oke
Rose Parrowe	Rose Marie Freni

Conductor	Sarah Caldwell
Designer	David Sharir
Producer	Sarah Caldwell

8 November 2009 (Concert performance)
BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, City Halls, Glasgow, Scotland, UK

John Taverner	Daniel Norman
Richard Taverner	Richard Angas
Cardinal/Archbishop	Martyn Hill
King/Archangel/Michael/Captain	Stephen Richardson
Jester/Death	David Wilson-Johnson
White Abbot	Roderick Williams
Priest/God	Andrew Watts
Boy	Michael Yeoman
Antichrist/Second Monk	Stephen Jeffes
Archangel Gabriel/First Monk	Christopher Bowen
Rose/Virgin Mary	Susan Bickley

Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Drama Chamber Choir
University of Glasgow Chapel Choir
Royal Scottish National Orchestra Junior Chorus

Conductor	Martyn Brabbins
Producer	Simon Lord

Prologue

An Anatomy of Betrayal[1]

Peter Maxwell Davies's first opera *Taverner* (Op. 45) has long been regarded as something of an enigma. For some, it marks the beginning of the end of Davies's early creative period, whilst, for others, it represents the end of the beginning of his maturation and is his greatest work, possibly his masterpiece. The opera's long creation occupied Davies for over a decade and it has a unique, pivotal position in the composer's completed output. In *Taverner*, Davies excavates, for the first time, one of his lifelong pre-occupations, betrayal.

This doctoral study considers *Taverner*'s status, locates the work as part of Davies's compositional legacy and in the context of middle to late twentieth-century British opera. It is the first detailed study of *Taverner* and aims to offer a comprehensive account of the opera's genesis and its musical, technical, aesthetic, psychological and philosophical substructures.

I first encountered *Taverner* when employed by BBC Radio 3. In 2009, as part of a major retrospective project mounted in Glasgow to mark Davies's seventy-fifth birthday, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra presented a concert performance of *Taverner* for which I was the Senior Music Producer. A review stated that the production 'demonstrated beyond doubt that the opera is a masterpiece.'[2] Masterpiece or otherwise, the opera made a lasting impression upon me and many of my colleagues and, when considering a suitable topic for doctoral investigation, prompted by Davies's death in 2016, *Taverner* loomed large as a work of considerable significance and one which I wished to return to.

For the opera's BBC production in November 2009, Davies attended the rehearsals and the semi-staged concert performance at Glasgow's City Halls. As the project's Producer, I was fortunate to work closely with the composer, the conductor, the cast and orchestra and gained valuable insights into the opera. However, my fascination with *Taverner* began years earlier during the late 1990s and early 2000s when working for the BBC at Davies's *St*

[1] Stephen Pruslin, 'An Anatomy of Betrayal', *Music and Musicians*, 20 (July 1972).
[2] Rowena Smith, *The Guardian*, 10 November 2009.

Magnus Festival on the Orkney Islands in the north of Scotland. At that time, I became familiar with the composer's orchestral music including the *Second Taverner Fantasia* which the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra performed in St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall in June 1998. Following countless conversations with musicians and colleagues along the way, *Taverner* became something of a running theme. In 2009, to celebrate the composer's birthday the opportunity arose for me to produce and record *Taverner* and the opera revealed itself to be a powerful, multi-dimensional, albeit technically challenging work. Throughout the planning and casting processes, rehearsals and performance, Davies's score compelled, but it also presented challenges which raised questions about the efficacy of the opera's libretto, its vocality and dramatic shape. Nonetheless, my close involvement in bringing *Taverner* to life in 2009 was a privilege and went on to serve as the inspiration for the writing of this thesis a decade later.

This is the first detailed, evaluative study of this major work. The project builds upon existing scholarship and seeks to advance our understanding of *Taverner* through its focus on the opera's genesis, context, structure and compositional style and to establish its central position in the composer's completed oeuvre.

The critical methods involve a review of existing primary and secondary sources and the contextualisation of the work during the era in which it was created. The study is empirical in character, as opposed to theoretical, and takes its point of departure a work which exists rather than seeking to apply or develop any particular theory. In seeking to reveal aspects of this work, the thesis draws upon a wide range of methods and approaches in keeping with the eclectic and multi-faceted nature of the complex work itself. The study does not limit itself to the development or application of any single theoretical approach. The project draws upon both primary and secondary source materials. Primary sources include the published score of *Taverner*, the composer's pre-compositional sketches (lodged in the British Library, London, UK) and documentary materials relating to the opera's first performance (held by the Royal Opera House Collection, Covent Garden, London) including production papers, internal and external correspondences, minutes of the Royal Opera House Board of Directors, minutes of the Royal Opera House sub-committee, printed programmes, original production and design photographs and newspaper articles and

periodical pieces previewing and reviewing the opera's original 1972 production and its 1983 revival. An invaluable addition to the literature is a collection of selected writings by and talks given by Davies edited by Nicholas Jones which includes commentary about *Taverner*, related works and other matters germane to this study. There are also transcriptions of interviews with the composer discussing his views on religion, ethics, education and politics.[3] There exist four BBC audio recordings of *Taverner* dating from 1972, 1983, 1996 and 2009. Secondary source materials include all books, theses, press preview features, reviews and articles as detailed in the bibliography.

The thesis is presented in two parts: Part A (Perspectives) and Part B (Critique). In Part A, Chapter 1 (Subject) offers a brief survey of the life, times and music of John Taverner. Chapter 2 (Creation) examines the opera's long gestation. It shows how *Taverner* spawned and informed other works written simultaneously with and subsequently to the opera and demonstrates how it is at the centre of a constellation of works. Chapter 3 discusses Davies's stylistic evolution and the opera's reception; it shows how *Taverner* intersects with other works and ideas.

Part B of the study offers the first detailed examination of the opera's component parts and seeks to clarify how prequels, sequels, recurrent themes and ideas ferment, coincide and reach maturation. Chapter 4 unpacks the opera's main themes. Chapter 5 examines the work's structure. Chapter 6 considers the composer's libretto whilst Chapter 7 appraises Davies's compositional style in *Taverner.*

This project does not intend to present a meticulous exposition of Davies's compositional techniques through analysis, since extensive research has already been done in this field. David Roberts,[4] Rodney Lister[5] and others have all provided detailed commentaries on Davies's compositional procedures ranging from his early serial methods, ordered pitch-

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[3] Nicholas Jones (editor) *Peter Maxwell Davies*, *Selected Writings* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018).
[4] David Roberts, *Techniques of Composition in the music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, PhD thesis (Birmingham University, Department of Music, Faculty of Arts, 1985).
[5] Rodney Lister, *Steps through the Maze: Image, Reflection, Shadow and Aspects of Magic Squares in the works of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies* (PhD thesis, Boston Mass., Brandeis University, 2001).

class sets and transformational processes through to the composer's manipulation of magic squares used to generate musical structures. In David Roberts's seminal study of Davies's musical syntax, he provides a detailed discussion of the techniques used in Act I, scene iv of *Taverner* and in the *Second Taverner Fantasia*. Also, Jonathan Rees has examined in detail the construction of Davies's music-theatre piece, *Revelation and Fall*.[6] Rees provides a detailed assessment of Davies's development of transformational processes as employed in the *Second Taverner Fantasia* and, comprehensively, explores how and why the composer integrates medieval and renaissance elements such as plainsong, canons and dance forms into his work.

Davies's approach to these forms and processes in *Taverner* will be amplified in Part B of this study which aims to further our appreciation and understanding of the opera in its entirety. It is this holistic approach which, as Rees contends in the Abstract to his thesis, avoids 'restricting an analysis to the serial level of organisation [which] cannot prove the musical viability of the work.'[7] Consequently, in critiquing the opera, I acknowledge Kevin Korsyn's theory of 'influence study' as a model which seeks to integrate historical, psychological, theoretical and critical concerns in its methodology.[8] In doing so, Part B endeavours to address Korsyn's complaint that some analyses of music tend to 'view works as autonomous, synchronic entities, divorced from an artistic continuum of historical development.'[9] In that context, the thesis seeks to offer an interdisciplinary and holistic critique of *Taverner.* Part B of the study builds upon the analytical work done by Roberts, Rees, Lister et al., but it does not intend to compete with or duplicate it, rather only to enhance our comprehension and appreciation of the work.

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[6] Jonathan Rees, *Peter Maxwell Davies' 'Revelation and Fall' - influence study and analysis*, PhD thesis (The Open University, 2010).
[7] Ibid.
[8] Kevin Korsyn, 'Towards a New Poetics of Musical Influence', *Music Analysis,* Vol 10, No.1/2 (March-July 1991), pp.3-72.
[9] Ibid.

Peter Maxwell Davies died at the age of 81 on 6 March 2016. In the composer's obituary notice for *The Guardian*, Ivan Hewett wrote,

> Davies himself thought that the 1950s were his best period, but the general consensus is that beyond the oft-performed expressionist scores, his really great work is *Taverner*, which has not been seen since its inaugural production. All these works dramatize deep tensions, between rationality and instinct, and between institutional authority – with its realpolitik and moral equivocation – and the unclouded vision of the lonely creator.[10]

Even though the opera has been recorded commercially[11] and presented in a concert performance, as Hewett notes, it still remains to be 'seen' in a contemporary production in the opera house. Even though he asserts that the opera is a 'really great work,' its absence from the stage may be explained by its mixed critical reception in 1972 and subsequent comments by Davies that he regarded it as forming part of his apprenticeship as a composer.

> …all those early works, up to about 1964, I think of as apprentice pieces. I knew what I was doing: I was building up a solid foundation of compositional technique, and the last two things I did like that were *Taverner* and the *Second Taverner Fantasia*. Even as early as 1962 I could feel that there was something about to happen which was going to burst out of the style in which I was then writing, and you can already feel that in the *Second Taverner Fantasia* and in the opera, I wasn't aware what the musical consequences of the upheaval were going to be, but I knew that I had to have enough technique to be able to withstand the shock of it.[12]

The study seeks to explain some of those 'musical consequences' and challenge its categorisation as an 'apprentice' piece in the light of its renewed status as a 'masterpiece.' It also shows how compositional techniques used in *Taverner* prefigure or 'burst out' in later works, a notion supported by Davies's comment that it was 'much more extrovert than anything […] before… In fact the opera has a lot of techniques used for the first time which I later used in other things.'[13]

Since its first performance in 1972, there have been various published writings in periodicals, journals and books about *Taverner*. There remains, however, no detailed

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[10] Ivan Hewett, *The Guardian,* 15 March 2016.
[11] NMC, D157, BBCSO, Oliver Knussen (conductor), rec. 05-14 Dec. 1996.
[12] Davies, quoted in Paul Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies* (London, Robson Books, 1982), pp.109-110.
[13] Davies, in conversation with Stephen Walsh, 'Taverner', *Musical Times,* Vol. 113 (July 1972), p.653.

critique. The primary objective of this study has been to address that omission. Also, given *Taverner's* limited performance history, there has been a lack of critical engagement with the work since its world-première and revival in 1983.
Joseph Kerman considered *Taverner* to be ‘a rather marvellous score but rather less marvellous as a theatre piece’[14] whist for others the production was ‘impossible to penetrate.’[15] In the work’s defence, Hans Werner Henze praised ‘the sense of a dialectic mind working in a theatre of ideas’[16] and, at its revival, Andrew Porter believed *Taverner*’s structure to be ‘formally strong.’[17] Paul Griffiths regarded the opera to be ‘a work of immense richness and vigour.’[18]

Although Griffiths, Smith, Hewett and other commentators may regard *Taverner* as one of Davies’s finest creations, if not his ‘great work,’ its continued absence from the opera house increases its risk of becoming a neglected masterpiece. Only through performance is it possible fully to re-assess and realise the value of the opera. Consequently, a secondary objective of this project is, through reappraisal of *Taverner*, to stimulate renewed interest and, hopefully, to encourage its revival on stage.

Davies began work on *Taverner* in 1956 and he completed it in 1968. Part of the opera was reconstructed in 1970. Its world-première was at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden in London on 12 July 1972, conducted by Edward Downes. It is a watershed work without which the neo-expressionist music-theatre pieces of the 1960s such as *Revelation and Fall* (Op. 31), *Eight Songs for a Mad King* (Op. 39) and *Versalii Icones* (Op. 42) seem unimaginable. It was through these works that Davies gained his reputation as an *enfant terrible* of British music. In the late 1960s, European art music was dominated by figures such as Boulez, Stockhausen, Nono, Maderna, Berio, Xenakis, Ligeti et al. Along with Davies, they represented the last generation of the European post-Second World War avant-garde. Many had championed modernism, total serialism and challenged national and cultural identities in favour of aesthetic autonomy and greater internationalism. This

[14] Joseph Kerman, ‘Popish Ditties’, *Tempo* No.102 (Summer 1972), p.20.
[15] David Roberts, ‘Taverner’, *Musical Times*, 124 (September 1983), pp.562-63.
[16] Hans Werner Henze, ‘Letters to the Editor’, *Tempo*, No. 103 (1972), p.63.
[17] Andrew Porter, ‘Opera on Radio’, *Opera* 48/6 (1997) p.741.
[18] Paul Griffiths, ‘Much Dared, Much Achieved’, *The Times*, 1 July 1983.

internationalism and the search for a new musical *Lingua franca* was exemplified by the birth and growth of the Darmstadt International Summer School, which Davies attended in 1956 and 1957.[19] As with many composers writing in the aftermath of World War Two, Davies advocated for a musical language which possessed integrity, was unprejudiced and free of nationalism. Writing in 1959, he stated that 'there is no longer any place for nationalism in music: our problems are fundamental, general, international' and that 'any living Englishness will be spontaneous - and at first unrecognizable as such; it will be the natural expression of English composers solving their problems in an unselfconscious way.'[20] And although, Davies may have advocated for an international perspective, he actually turned to the national and, for many years, immersed himself in the study of the life and music of a quintessentially English composer, John Taverner.

Davies's image as a radical, firebrand composer was forged in the 1960s yet he was equally keen to identify with his musical past and, specifically, to acknowledge a lineage of English composers which reached back to William Byrd (1539-1693), John Dunstable (c.1390-1453) and John Taverner (c.1490-1545). Gabriel Josipovici believed that,

> …it is not surprising that a young musician, feeling his Englishness strongly, yet repudiating the narrowness and bigotry of the established musical traditions in this country, should, in the years following the Second World War, have turned back to the roots of those traditions to discover the sources of his own music.[21]

Davies's obsession began when he was eighteen years old, just seven years after the end of World War Two. As post-war Europe rebuilt itself, Davies held up a mirror and looked into it. He saw John Taverner, an enigmatic composer, who like Davies, had lived through conflicts, both public and personal, albeit four hundred years ago. Verisimilitude is the name of the game, where, at the dramatic heart of the opera, nothing is ever quite as it seems and, ultimately, where irrefutable truth, is replaced by ambivalence. *Taverner* was long in gestation but there is a sense of the inevitable about its creation. It was impossible for the composer not to give voice to that audible connection with his past whilst simultaneously articulating the contemporary and examine the ceaseless tension between the mortal and

[19] For an account of the composer's recollections of Darmstadt, see Davies in Jones, op. cit., pp.172-173.
[20] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'Problems of a British Composer Today', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.33.
[21] Gabriel Josipovici, '*Taverner*: Thoughts on the Libretto', *Tempo* No. 101 (1972), p.13.

the eternal, church and state, the public and the private. Davies's first longform texted work was to be a modernist opera, albeit of grand proportions, inspired, by a shadowy English Renaissance composer.

PART A: Perspectives

Chapter 1

Subject

> The ambitious cardinal gathered together into that college whatsoever excellent thing there was in the whole realm ….as were found to excel in any kind of learning and knowledge [including] Taverner of Boston, the good musician.[1]

In order to understand how and why Peter Maxwell Davies found inspiration in the music and the life of John Taverner (c.1490-1545), this chapter offers a brief introduction to the composer. It also considers Taverner's status, profile and developing reputation during the early and middle years of the twentieth-century.

Davies was only eighteen years of age when his obsession with the music of Taverner began. The attraction may have, in part, been because of the composer's mysterious and controversial past. Gabriel Josipovici has remarked that:

> ….when it appears that a great composer of Henry's [Henry VIII] time, one of the finest late medieval musicians, unable to square the edicts of the Church of Rome with his own conscience, turned Protestant, turned informer, 'repented him very much that he had made songs to popish ditties in the time of his blindness', and wrote no more, it is easy to see the fascination exercised by John Taverner over Peter Maxwell Davies.[2]

This fascination was ignited by a piece of chamber music: Taverner's *In Nomine* for organ.[3] Reflecting on this in 2000, Davies stated 'until 1968 I had respectfully used plainsong and medieval/renaissance polyphony as the basis for some of my music, most obviously in those of my works based on John Taverner's *In Nomine*.'[4]

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[1] John Foxe, quoted in Hugh Benham, *John Taverner, his Life and Music* (Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2003), from *The Acts and Monuments,* v pp.4-5 based on the 1583 edition. The 1563 edition (as quoted in Tudor Church Music, i, p.1) had the expression 'Taverner of Boston, a man very singular in music' instead of 'Taverner …. the good musician.'

[2] Gabriel Josipovici, '*Taverner*: thoughts on the libretto', *Tempo* No. 101 (1972), p.13.

[3] An arrangement of part of the *In Nomine Domine* from the Benedictus of the *Missa Gloria Tibi Trinitas*.

[4] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'A Composer's Point of View (II): Parody, References and Meaning', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.220.

Also, he remarked that his early interest in medieval music stemmed from 'purely the sound' and that:

> …from being involved in performances of plainsong, of Renaissance music particularly. On a technical level I think I was first sparked off by isorhythmic processes, and by the medieval rhythmic modes…. I'll admit that perhaps I deceive myself in thinking that my interest in old music is of primary importance and I've often thought I'm using this as a catalyst – acting rather like a catalyst in a chemical reaction.[5]

Taverner's music and particularly his *In Nomine* was certainly a catalyst but the renaissance composer's life also provided inspiration.[6]

John Taverner was born circa 1490 and died in 1545. The precise date and place of the composer's birth remains unknown, although there are records of families with the name of Taverner dating from the late middle ages living in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. There is no known existing documentation which traces the composer's musical education but it is probable that he was a member of the collegiate establishment in the village of Tattershall in Lincolnshire. This college had a musically literate community including a well-regarded choir. The boy choristers attending the college were taught to play the organ, perform plainsong and study both written and improvised polyphony.[7] Education at Tattershall Collegiate College was so heavily biased towards music that a visiting bishop, William Atwater of Lincoln, was to complain that:

> The present instructor teaches the boys only music, and little or no grammar. The Lord enjoins that henceforth, after the boys are versed adequately in song, they ought to be taught grammar diligently as well.[8]

Following Taverner's education, David Josephson believes that the musician moved to London to search for employment amongst the city's many churches. In 1514 there is a record of a John Taverner and his wife joining the Fraternity of St Nicholas, the guild of parish clerks in the City of London, membership of which was necessary for any musician

[5] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'Musical Innovation', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.78.

[6] The life and work of John Taverner was an essential stimulus for Davies, but the time in which Taverner lived was an equally important inspiration. Davies had a strong spiritual affinity with the renaissance, but he physically immersed himself in this historical period. One of Davies's homes, was, reportedly, filled with objects from the early renaissance and the middle ages.

[7] David Josephson, 'In Search of the Historical Taverner', *Tempo* No. 101 (1972), pp. 42-43.

[8] Ibid.

seeking to earn a living as a church musician.[9] However, other commentators believe this was not the composer but a different John Taverner. Taverner's biographer and editor Hugh Benham states that, 'at least one John Taverner who was not a musician is known to have lived in London at that time; and there is no other reason to connect the composer with the capital in the early or mid 1510s.'[10]

Josephson asserts that Taverner went to London in an effort to access the court of Henry VIII and that the composition of the *Western Wynde Mass* was 'a presentation piece for the King' to gain a foothold in the royal establishment.[11] However, Taverner did not attain a position at court and subsequently returned to Tattershall Collegiate College. This is confirmed by the Bishop of Lincoln's chancellor since, in May 1525, Taverner is listed as one of the six adult singers or 'clerk fellows.' In 1526, he moved from Tattershall to become *informator choritarum* (the instructor of the choristers) at the newly established Cardinal College, Oxford,[12] subsequently, Christ Church, Oxford. This appointment occurred through an invitation from John Longland, Bishop of Lincoln[13] who was the representative of Cardinal Wolsey. Initially it appears that Taverner was reluctant to accept the position but on 17 October 1525, the Bishop of Lincoln wrote to Wolsey informing him that,

> It may please you to understand that Taverner, a singing man whom I sent for by virtue of the king's commission to have been informator of the children of your chapel in your honourable college at Oxford (who no doubt of [it] is very meet for the same), I can in no wise have his good will thereunto. He allegeth the assurance and profit of his living at Tattershall: and that he is in way of a good marriage which he should lose if he did remove from thence.[14]

Taverner may have been trying to negotiate the best possible financial terms for his new role, but when pressure mounted with the prospect of a different appointee, he accepted the position. Hugh Benham notes that the expectation for Taverner to excel at Cardinal College must have been great as the institution sought to surpass the musical standards being set by the other colleges in Oxford and Cambridge. Even the Protestant Martyrologist

[9] Ibid.
[10] Hugh Benham, *John Taverner, his Life and Music* (Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2003), p.6.
[11] Josephson, op. cit., p.44.
[12] Founded by Thomas Wolsey (1473-1530), churchman, statesman and Cardinal of the Catholic church and Lord Chancellor to King Henry VIII, 1515-29.
[13] At this time, Oxford formed part of the diocese of Lincoln.
[14] Benham, op cit., p.9.

John Foxe,[15] who was no admirer of Wolsey, described Cardinal College as 'whatsoever excellent thing there was in the whole realm…Besides that, he [Wolsey] also appointed unto that company all such men as were found to excel in any kind of learning and knowledge [including] Taverner of Boston, the good musician.'[16] As the College's *informator* Taverner was required by the college statutes to possess a good singing voice, to be a competent organist, an accomplished teacher and to direct the music. There are no records of any commissions for compositions from Taverner during his tenure at Cardinal College, but, as Benham suggests, it is likely that some of the music written there included various votive antiphons. Josephson asserts that a manuscript of part books housed in the Bodleian Library which includes three Masses by Taverner (*Gloria tibi Trinitas*, *Corona spinea* and *O Michael*) may well date from these Oxford years.

Early in 1528, Taverner was involved in a series of incidents at Cardinal College when authorities discovered Lutheran literature in circulation. Foxe reported that Taverner was 'accused and suspected for hiding …. books under the boards in his school, yet the cardinal, for his music, excused him saying that he was but a musician: and so he escaped.'[17] It was this controversial and mysterious episode in Taverner's life which initially drew Davies to the composer and his work.

Taverner's escape was, allegedly, due to Cardinal Wolsey's intervention and his support for the composer. John Higdon, the Dean of Cardinal College, wrote to one of Wolsey's chaplains:

> As for Master Taverner I have not commit him to prison, neither Radley [one of the clerks], because the register [registrar] of the university at his being with my lord's grace…their names among other suspect sent up by the university, his grace said to him, as for Taverner and Radley, they be unlearned, and not to be regarded. As for Master Taverner, the hiding of Master Clark's books and being privy to the letter sent of Master Clark from Master Garrett after he was fled be the greatest things after my mind that can be laid to his charge.[18]

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[15] John Foxe (c.1516-87).
[16] Benham, op. cit., p.9.
[17] E.H. Fellowes (editor): *Tudor Church Music*, Vol. I (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1923-39), p.xlix.
[18] Hugh Benham, *John Taverner, his Life and Music* (Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2003), p.11.

However, Foxe's narrative does claim that, to set an example, [Taverner] had to 'walk in procession carrying a faggot, as a reminder that convicted heretics could be burned; as a sign of repentance, he was obliged to throw a book into a bonfire.'[19] According to marginalia in Foxe's account of the incident, Taverner was reported to have 'repented him very much that he had made songs to Popish ditties in the time of his blindness.'[20] Benham interprets the phrase, 'in the time of his blindness,' as reference to a 'subsequent seeing of the light through acceptance of Protestant beliefs' and that the expression 'Popish ditties' was a reference to texts associated with Catholic services.[21] Benham suggests that although it is easy to dismiss such marginalia as propaganda made by a Protestant commentator, he also speculates that these comments could have been made born out of frustration or even in 'jest.'[22] Ultimately, Taverner escaped any heresy trial after what appears to have been this passing flirtation with Protestantism and events which followed do not support the idea that the composer converted to Lutheranism in 1528.[23]

In 1529 Wolsey's power at the court of Henry VIII ended and with it a reduction in the number of choirs and choristers across the country. Subsequently, Taverner's tenure at Cardinal College ended and he returned to his Lincolnshire home in 1530. It was there, in Boston, that he became involved in music at the parish church of St Botolph where, through the support of a society called the 'Guild of St Mary,' music flourished. Benham notes that it was in the late 1530s that Taverner appears to have withdrawn from music at St Botolph's and attributes this, in part, to the declining fortunes of the Guild caused by its financial support being curtailed because of Henry VIII's split with Rome.[24] After his withdrawal from St Botolph's, Taverner does not appear to have been employed further as a musician but, seemingly, was financially sustained by way of his marriage to Rose Parrowe. It is likely that Rose was the daughter of Thomas Parrowe who was a landowner in Boston. Taverner prospered and served as an alderman until a few months prior to his death in October 1545.

[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., p.12.
[23] Ibid., p.11.
[24] Ibid., p.13.

Benham regards John Taverner as being 'one of England's most important composers, [and] was the outstanding figure between John Dunstable (c.1390-1453) and Thomas Tallis (c.1505-85).'[25] Most of Taverner's music embraced various forms of pre-Reformation church music written in sixteenth-century England including large-scale festal *cantus firmus* Masses, votive antiphons and *Magnificat* settings. Similarly, Josephson states that Taverner's 'festal Masses must be counted among the supreme musical creations of Tudor England.'[26] And, in the Preface to the score of *Taverner,* Davies himself asserts that 'these "songs" are as fine as anything written in Europe at that time and constitute some of the best music of our English inheritance.'[27] It is noteworthy that these critical assessments date from the later part of the twentieth-century. However, Davies was first drawn to the music and life of Taverner in the 1950s when the composer was still relatively unknown and his reputation less well-regarded. Davies's engagement with Taverner's work at this time is notable since the composer had received little musicological attention between the early seventeenth-century and the first quarter of the twentieth-century.[28] Josephson has reasoned that,

> Very little church music composed by Taverner and his contemporaries was copied (and none printed) in score during their lifetime. Most of the part-books in which their music was inscribed were treated carelessly and later lost or destroyed. With the rapid religious and musical developments that followed the death of Henry VIII in 1547, the compositions of these men became liturgically irrelevant on the one hand and stylistically outdated on the other.[29]

Davies's reference to the 'disputed introduction'[30] probably refers to an article which was also written in the summer of 1972 for the special edition of the journal *Tempo* to coincide with the world-première of *Taverner*. Josephson's article, entitled 'In Search of the Historical Taverner', was critical of Fellowes's interpretation of Taverner's life.[31] He regarded the account as 'drastic' and that the biographical information relating to the years 1526-30 and

[25] Benham, op. cit., p.13.
[26] Josephson, op. cit., p.49.
[27] *Taverner,* Full score, Preface (London, Boosey and Hawkes, 1972).
[28] Benham, op. cit., p.11.
[29] Josephson, op. cit., pp.40-52.
[30] Peter Maxwell Davies, '*Taverner,* Synopsis and Documentation', *Tempo* (No. 101), *Taverner* (1972), p.4.
[31] Writing in the *San Francisco Chronicle* on 20 August 1972, Joseph Kerman noted, 'Just when *Taverner* was being premiered in London, in New York a graduate student, David Josephson was coming up for his PhD oral. His subject was musicology, his topic the historical John Taverner and the accepted doctrine about his giving up music and persecuting monks – the basis for Davies's highly-coloured essay in myth-making. Josephson simply couldn't find evidence that any of it had taken place. The good professors scrutinized his thesis from all sides and pronounced it fine. Dr Josephson rushed into print via the British new-music magazine 'Tempo,' whereupon everybody started saying that historical fact was irrelevant to artistic interpretation.'

1537-40 as: 'ambiguous to the point of being misleading.'[32] Accordingly, Josephson dismisses much of the 1923 biography by Fellowes which Davies had studied and stimulated his interest in Taverner.

At the time of the opera's first performance, Taverner's reputation as a ruthless persecutor was in question. Also, Benham contended that,

> E.H. Fellowes wrongly assumed that the composer had converted to Lutheranism at Cardinal College, renounced his musical career as a result, and then actively persecuted those who adhered to the traditional faith. It is less likely that Taverner was Cromwell's 'agent' than that he volunteered information, hoping for favours in return, largely on behalf of people for whom he was concerned.[33]

Additionally, Josephson argued that much of Fellowes's interpretation of events was based on the writings of John Foxe, the origins of which can be traced back to the first printed edition of his *Acts and Monuments of Matters Special and Memorable Happening in the Church* (1563). As discussed above, Josephson also noted that Taverner's remark concerning his writing of 'Popish ditties' was marginalia and 'supported by no statement in the body of Foxe's text.'[34] Clearly, given Taverner's stature as a Catholic composer, this held good propaganda value for the Protestant Martyrologist. Further, apparently Foxe did not actually *know* Taverner and he received the information second or third-hand 'more than thirty years after the event.'[35] Foxe's account of Taverner's life became authoritative and through repeated telling and, in the absence of any other definitive texts, it became the accepted truth. Consequently, at the time of the first performance of *Taverner* in 1972, Josephson raised a series of questions.

> The pieces of Fellowes' reconstruction do not mesh convincingly. What was Taverner doing in Tattershall in the mid-1520s? If he were still obscure in 1526, why was he chosen to lead the chapel at Wolsey's college? If the reason for Taverner's departure from Oxford was a religious one, why did – or his superiors at the university – allow two years to pass between his conversion and his leaving? How do we reconcile the composer's Protestantism in the 1530s with his membership in a traditional guild during these years? Finally, why did he so utterly renounce music at the height of his fame and creative powers?[36]

[32] Josephson, op. cit., p.41.
[33] Benham, op. cit., p.13.
[34] Josephson, op. cit., p.41.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., p.42.

Josephson's interrogation is valid. However, arguably, this questioning further sustained the sense of mystery surrounding Taverner's life and increased the composer's personal mythology which had attracted Davies to his subject in the first place.

Josephson also claimed that Fellowes's arguments were based on 'mis-readings of the sources' and a 'misinterpretation of an admittedly clumsy passage in Foxe, and the idea of Taverner as a persecutor of the religious on a misunderstanding of the language of one of Taverner's letters.'[37] In summary, Josephson presented an historical account of Taverner's life which was not based upon accounts by either Fellowes or Foxe, but from the records of the era including, crucially, the composer's correspondence with Thomas Cromwell.[38]

Taverner wrote three letters to Thomas Cromwell. The first of these demonstrates how, given certain interpretation, Taverner's reputation as a persecutor had come to be formed. The letter was written at a time when Henry VIII's government was acting against what it considered to be idolatrous activities. Taverner had, apparently, been entrusted to supervise the destruction of the rood screen in Boston Parish Church in 1538.
On 11 September 1538, Taverner wrote,

> According to your lordship's commandment, the rood was burned the 7 day of this month being also the market day, and [there was] a sermon of the black friar at the burning of him, who did express the cause of his burning and idolatry committed by him, which sermon hath done much good and hath turned many men's hearts from it.[39]

This letter to Cromwell has been understood by many, including Davies, that Taverner was responsible for the destruction of the rood screen and the burning of the 'black friar.' However, Benham's interpretation of the text suggests that there is no indication that Taverner played an active role in the burning. He contests that 'it has been possible to misinterpret this passage as meaning that the friar, not the rood was burned and that Taverner was a cruel and bigoted fanatic, because on two occasions out of three the rood is referred to as "him" instead of "it".[40] Benham does not seek unconditionally to defend

[37] Ibid.
[38] Thomas Cromwell (1485-1540), King Henry VIII's Chief Minister (1532-40).
[39] Benham, op. cit., p.14.
[40] Ibid.

Taverner's position, but neither does he condemn him as a zealot. He does, however, view Taverner's willingness as to 'risk involvement in the suspect activities of his colleagues at Cardinal College at the very least consenting to conceal materials that might have incriminated them.'[41] Also, Benham maintains that through continued correspondence with Cromwell, Taverner continued to be a member of the Guild of Corpus Christi which 'was entirely traditionalist with its cult of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.'[42]

This presents a more balanced and nuanced biographical account of this episode in Taverner's life and, of course, one that was not available to Davies in the 1950s. Benham also notes that Fellowes's references to 'the musician's sensitive temperament in a man of such strong character' and to Taverner's 'fanaticism' are based on a misreading of the evidence and founded on the supposition that a sixteenth-century composer was an 'artist' in the Romantic sense of the word.[43] In conclusion, Benham emphasises Taverner's pragmatism:

> This is not to condemn him as insincere or unprincipled, but to suggest that, like the majority of Englishmen, he preferred to remain alive and at liberty rather than risk the severe penalties inflicted on those who expressed unseasonable views.[44]

This view is supported further by Josephson's assertion that Fellowes's interpretation, or rather misinterpretation, of Taverner's life was based upon unreliable and likely partisan writings of the Protestant Martyrologist, John Foxe. Hence, it was not until the 1960s and 1970s through the scholarship of editors and scholars such as Benham,[45] Josephson,[46] and Colin Hand,[47] that Taverner's life was to become more accurately documented, his music performed and recorded more extensively, and, better understood.[48]

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[41] Benham, op. cit. p.18.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., p.17.
[44] Ibid., p.18.
[45] Ibid.
[46] David Josephson, *John Taverner, Tudor Composer* (Michigan, UMI Research Press, 1979).
[47] Colin Hand, *John Taverner: his Life and Music* (London, Eulenburg, 1978).
[48] In the first two decades of the twenty-first century, the composer's discography has increased significantly. Multiple recordings exist of Taverner's key works, particularly the *Missa Gloria Tibi Trinitas,* the *Missa Corona Spinea* and the *Western Wynde Mass.*

Even though Davies based his opera's libretto on versions of Taverner's life which have since been discredited, he was ultimately drawn to the subject because of the universal and symbolic themes which it represented. Josephson stresses,

> We are confronted here by the fundamental problem of man's relationship to his God and by the personal crisis of conviction, through which Taverner emerges as a symbol of the host of complex institutional and religious transformations which marked the English Reformation. The great composer has become a gripping figure whose proportions seem larger than life.[49]

These 'larger than life' proportions, combined with the ambiguity and mystery which surrounded certain aspects of Taverner's life, first enticed the young composer to his subject. Eric Guest described 'Taverner, a composer of considerable talents, but also a somewhat shady character [who] lived in Max's imagination, as something of an obsession, from when he was about eighteen....'[50] The composer stated that,

> The historical Taverner was probably just a peg to hang the thing on: I don't know because I don't know very much about him. But I love to do this, to take a figure who has got a touch of reality, or a situation which is based on reality, and then let fantasy work.[51]

For Davies it was not the 'historical Taverner' which appealed. Rather, it was the rich drama and contradiction of the composer's life. The chronicling of one biographical episode was an important 'peg' out of which grew a drama of the personal and public, the political and religious upon which Davies lets his fantasy free. Taverner, the man and his music, was the initial inspiration, but, essentially, it was the spirit of the time in which he lived which provided the backdrop for this morality opera. Taverner is both subject and metaphor. The protagonist is an individual in a state of transformation, a theme to which Davies would return in future dramatic works and for which *Taverner* was the blueprint.[52]

John Taverner's *In Nomine* was the composer's musical signature. This melody may once have been regarded as little more than a popular sixteenth-century instrumental tune or ditty, but for Davies it was a paradigm. Externally, the chant represented technical accomplishment and aesthetic beauty, but internally it held a deeper meaning for the

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[49] Josephson, op. cit., p.41.
[50] Mike Seabrook, *Max. The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (London, Gollancz, 1994), p.39.
[51] Davies, in conversation with Paul Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies* (London, Robson Books, 1982), p.106.
[52] David Beard in Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (co-editors), *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.79.

composer carrying with it implicitly 'the statement of its text, and so to edit and distort such a melody must be to explore religious truth.'[53] For Davies, Taverner's plainchant melody synthesised the internal and the external in a perfectly distilled form. Similarly, as Griffiths has stated, *Taverner* the opera may be viewed as the 'biggest *In Nomine* of them all.'[54]

[53] Griffiths, op. cit., p.29.
[54] Griffiths, op. cit., p.44.

Chapter 2

Creation and reception

I regarded it [*Taverner*] as a student work, an apprentice thing I had to do. It's still a favourite because so much other music came out of it...[1]

As Davies notes in the quotation above, *Taverner* spawned many works. This chapter offers a chronological account of its creation and considers the opera's position in a network of related compositions. It submits that the 'other music [that] came out of it' included not only works composed in parallel with *Taverner*, such as the *First Fantasia on an 'In Nomine' of John Taverner* (Op. 19), the *Second Fantasia on an 'In Nomine' of John Taverner* (Op. 23) and the *Seven In Nomine* (Op. 28), but also pieces post-dating its completion. This amounts to a constellation of works at the centre of which lies, exerting its gravitational pull, *Taverner*.

Davies was prolific. He had a compositional fluency which has been widely documented. His musical legacy spans a vast body of work which includes symphonies, music theatre pieces, string quartets, concerti and operas.[2] In total, Davies wrote over 600 pieces in a creative career of some 66 years. Stephen Pruslin claimed that Davies had the ability to compose into full score at speed. He recalled that the cantata *From Stone to Thorn* (Op. 47) was completed in just three days with no prior sketching.[3] However, other commentators have been more sceptical. Peter Owens has said that the 'work could not have been written without pre-compositional sketches as I and other writers would understand them.'[4] This provides a window into Davies's compositional workshop; such facility enabled a fluency which, in turn, resulted in the constant production and development of musical material. Whilst one work was being created it often coincided with the development of another,

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[1] Peter Maxwell Davies, 'One-man musical reformation', *The Sunday Times,* 26 June 1983.

[2] Including chamber operas, community operas and operas written for children, Davies's complete operatic output consists of: *Taverner* (Op.45), *Der Heisse Ofen* (WoO 125), *The Martyrdom of St Magnus* (Op. 72), *The Lighthouse* (Op. 86), *Cinderella* (Op. 87), *Resurrection* (Op. 129), *The Doctor of Myddfai* (Op. 175), *Kommilitonen!* (Op. 306) and *The Hogboon* (Op. 335).

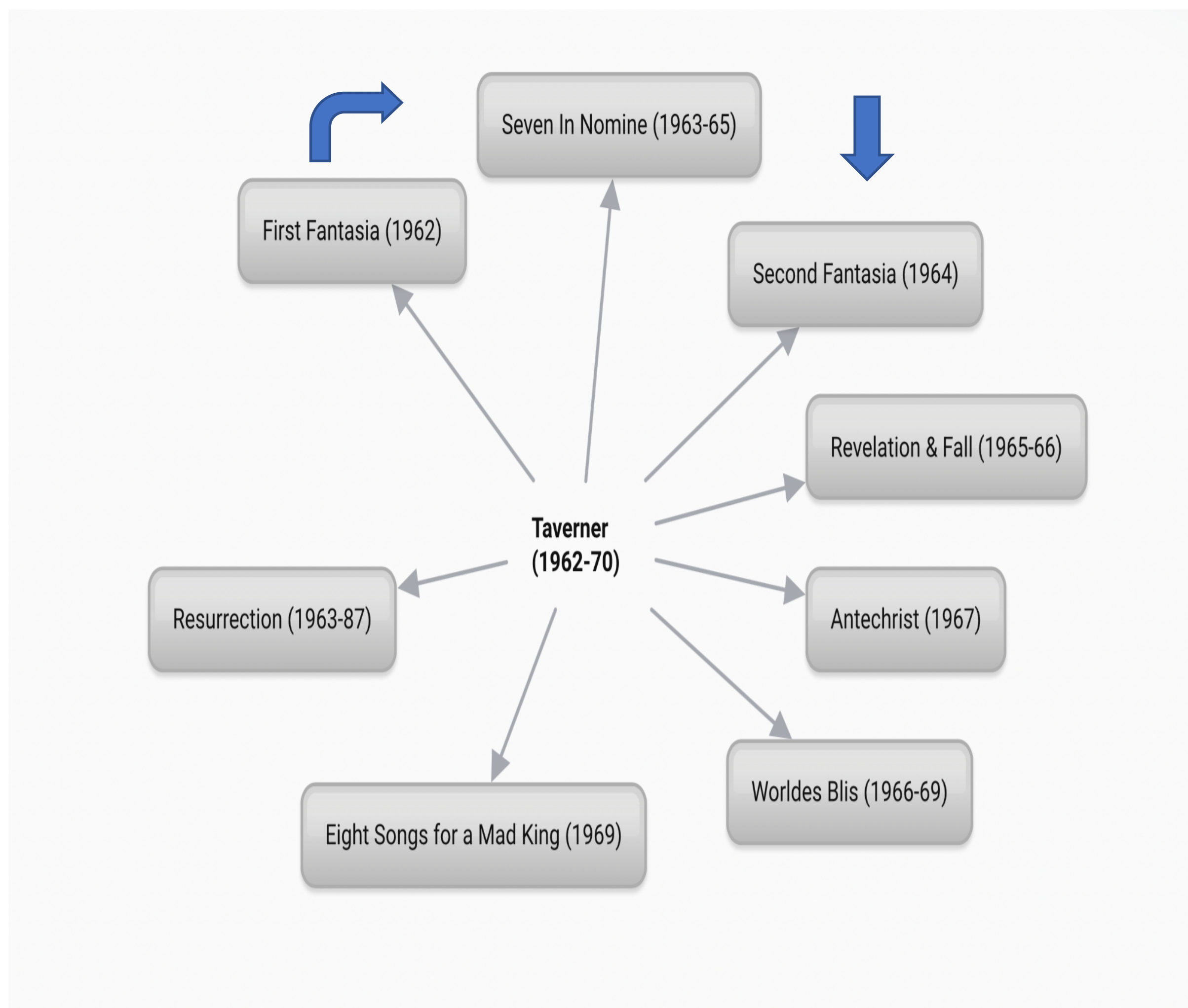
[3] Stephen Pruslin, 'Nel mezzo del cammin – In mid-flight', Peter Maxwell Davies: Studies from Two Decades' *Tempo Booklet No. 2.,* (London, Boosey and Hawkes, 1979), p.2.

[4] Peter Owens, 'Worldes Blis and its satellites', *Perspectives on Peter Maxwell Davies* Richard McGregor, ed.) (Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2000), p.27.

thus allowing Davies to construct multiple pieces simultaneously.[5] This resulted in a non-linear creative process throughout which, works intersect. In turn, this presents a significant challenge in charting an accurate chronology of *Taverner*'s evolution and other associated works.

By way of introduction, Figure 2.1 offers an initial diagram of key works spawned by the opera composed between 1962 and 1987 and presented in chronological order.[6]

FIGURE 2.1 – Selected key works in chronological order generated by *Taverner*



[5] Ibid.
[6] Figure 2.2 below expands upon this.

2.1 Creation

According to the composer the 'starting point'[7] for the creation of *Taverner* was during his time as a student at both the University of Manchester and the Royal Manchester College of Music in 1956.[8] Eric Guest, a long-time childhood friend from Leigh Grammar School, remembered that Davies continued to take a deep interest in 'very early music and particularly that of John Taverner' at this time.[9] This passion was, in part, fuelled by a reaction to the dogmatic views held by his then composition teacher, Humphrey Procter-Gregg. Procter-Gregg's doctrinaire attitude backfired. Davies recalled that 'it was while at college and university in Manchester that I became interested in medieval music – our professor of composition advised his students to avoid all music before 1550 and after 1900 (except Delius), so it was only natural that these regions of music be most avidly explored.'[10] Davies recalled that,

> The Henry Watson Music Library – now part of Manchester Central Library – had plenty of books of and on medieval and Renaissance music, which I devoured: I remember particularly taking home huge volumes of Tudor church music – Byrd, Taverner and so on – and playing this from the old clefs as well as I could on the piano. I listened to this music as much as possible, stopping off most days at Manchester Cathedral to hear Evensong, with Allan Wicks and his choir, catching some on the Third Programme of the BBC, and attending whatever performances were available.[11]

Paul Griffiths has suggested that Davies 'must have felt himself very much alone in interesting himself in such names as those of Machaut, Dufay, Josquin – and Taverner.'[12] Indeed, John Taverner and his Tudor contemporaries, including William Byrd (c.1540-1623), Robert Fayrfax (1464-1521) and Nicholas Ludford (c.1485-c.1557) had only emerged as important figures in the history of English music at the start of the twentieth century.[13] The

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[7] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), '*Taverner*', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.116.

[8] Now the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, UK.

[9] Seabrook, op. cit., p.39.

[10] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'A Composer's Point of View (III): On Religion', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.227.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Paul Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies* (London, Robson Books, 1981), p.15. Notably, Davies's curiosity in Renaissance music pre-dates the emergence of the early music movement and subsequent development of historically informed performance practice during the 1960s and 1970s.

[13] For example, an essay about John Taverner by W.H. Grattan Flood in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 'John Taverner,' vol. XIV, p.466, The Encyclopedia Press, New York (1913); also Henry Davey's account concerning

publication of the *Tudor Church Music* (TCM) edition in the 1920s resulted in articles being written by one of its editors, E.H. Fellowes, which led to a revival of interest in Taverner's music.[14] Writing in 1972, Davies acknowledged that his source 'for Taverner's biography was the now disputed introduction by Fellowes to the musical works in the *Tudor Church Music* series.'[15]

The first sketches for *Taverner* and a formal outline of the opera's scenes date from 1956.[16]

> ….together with Fellowes's now disputed introduction, and the idea of Taverner's becoming a Protestant fanatic after writing this extraordinary beautiful Catholic church music appealed to me quite apart from the music itself, which I still find very attractive indeed. I got to know the music and gradually I had the idea of doing an opera, not so much based upon his life, about which precious little is known, but using him as a central figure upon which to project some of my own ideas about the nature of betrayal, making a text which is rather a collage of contemporary sources, heresy trials, witch trials and religious pamphlets – anything to do with the period which had a fairly direct bearing on Taverner's case. I used all these sources and made, as early as 1956, some sketches of a text for this opera. But I was still at university then and hadn't the musical technique to cope, and it was only when I went to America in 1962 that I felt that I had the necessary technique and also the time.[17]

The composer's libretto for *Taverner* will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6. It is a complex, arguably over-ambitious, 'collage of contemporary sources' which Davies melded into the opera's text. Its invention was fundamental to the creation of *Taverner.* Indeed, the composer has stated that the opera was 'firmly established by the text'.[18] This provided a framework and, as Davies developed his 'necessary technique'[19] through study in Italy and the USA, the music's 'basic images' followed. He remarked that 'one worked out the syntax and the grammar very carefully, but the musical images behind – if you can distinguish those from what comes on the page – were intuitive.'[20]

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sources of Taverner's music in Leslie Stephen & Sidney Lee (editors), *Dictionary of National Biography*, 'John Taverner', vol. XIX, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1917), pp.392-93.

[14] P.C. Buck, E.H. Fellowes, A. Ramsbotham, R.R. Terry & S.T. Warner (editors), *Tudor Church Music*, vol. I: 'John Taverner,' (London, Oxford University Press, 1923-29).

[15] Peter Maxwell Davies: '*Taverner*: Synopsis and Documentation', *Tempo* No.101 (Spring 1972), p.4.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Peter Maxwell Davies in conversation with Stephen Walsh, 'Taverner', *The Musical Times,* Vol.113, No. 1153 (July 1972), p.653.

[18] Griffiths, op. cit., p.108.

[19] Peter Maxwell Davies, 'Studying with Petrassi', *Tempo* No. 225 (July 2003), pp.7-8.

[20] Griffiths, op. cit., p.108.

The composer also acknowledged that the opera's musical imagery had a far-reaching influence across many related works.

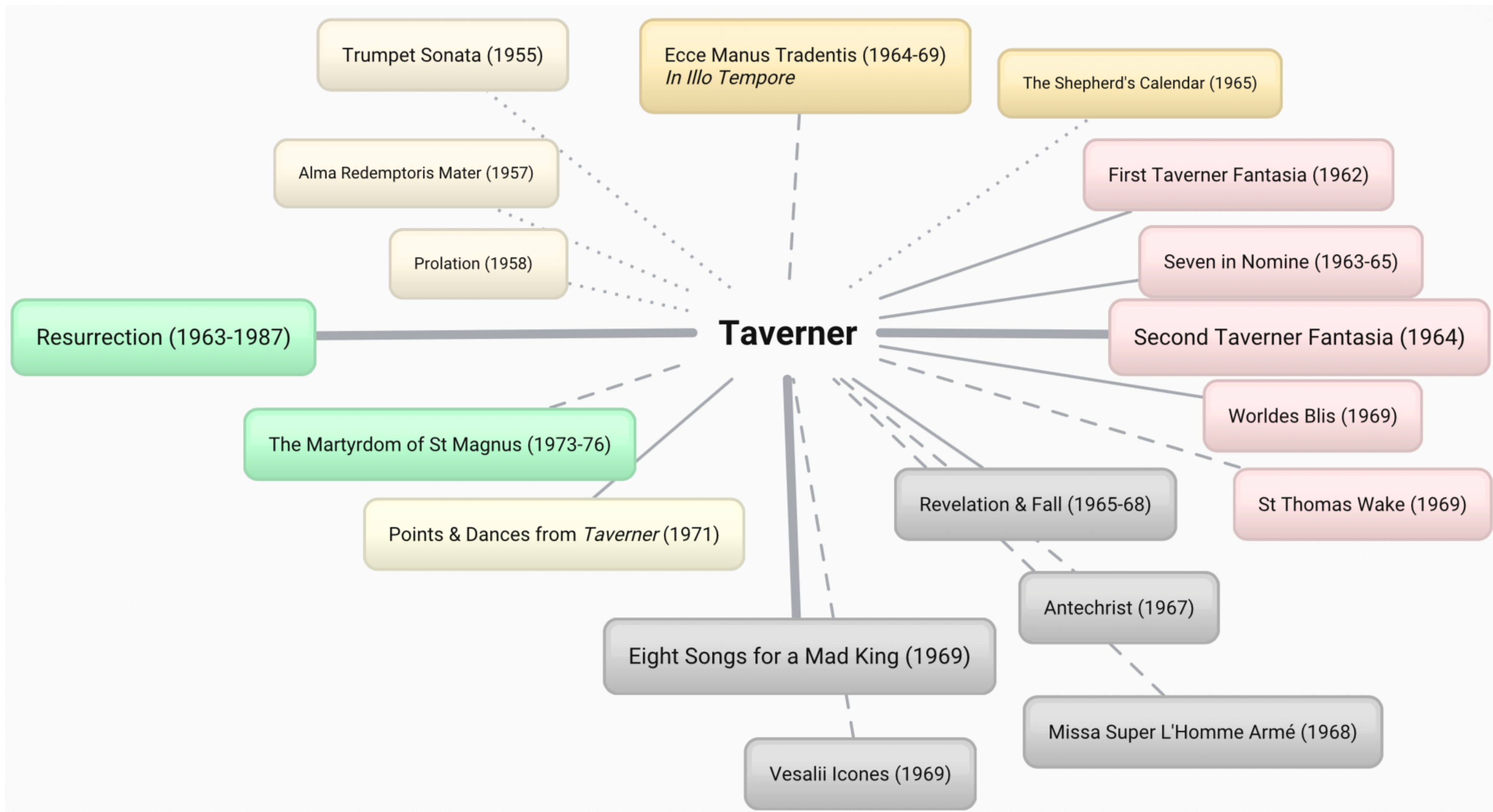
> The opera has a lot of imagery in it which has recurred unconsciously in all sorts of things I have written since. I noticed the other day, when I was proof-reading *Taverner*, an almost note-for-note quote in *St Thomas Wake*. Of the theatrical imagery there is naturally a lot which has recurred. The false resurrection image, for example, I realised recently doing the text for *Blind Man's Buff,* has been haunting me ever since in every one of these music-theatre works. In *Eight Songs,* after 'The King is dead,' the King makes his final 'sane' speech and goes completely mad. In *Vesalii Icones* there is the resurrection of Anti-Christ at the end of the Passion sequence. In *Blind Man's Buff* there is the resurrection of the ghost of the Boy King, who – via the words of a well know nursery rhyme – prophesises doom, very jokily of course. This is true for a lot of the imagery in the opera, that has recurred many, many times.[21]

This extensive recurrence of imagery, albeit conscious or unconscious, creates a cycle of compositions. *Taverner* and those works which surround it, relate to each other in varying degrees of intensity through shared musical material (including intertextual references to plainsong, quasi-leitmotif, or, to adopt Davies's preferred nomenclature, the use of 'symbols')[22] and extra-musical ideas (such as themes of false-resurrection, betrayal etc.). As noted, given Davies's fluency and prolific output, this non-linear creative process defined his praxis.

Figure 2.2 below shows the *Taverner* constellation of works as interpreted hierarchically. The chart displays related works. The font sizes and broken or solid lines linking compositions represent a hierarchy of connectivity. The colour-coded boxes differentiate between genres and styles. The white boxes contain early, but influential, pre-*Taverner* works. The sequence of orchestral pieces, composed in parallel with the opera, are shaded in pink whilst the expressionistic music-theatre works of the late 1960s are coloured grey. The composition dates show that some works were written prior to the opera, some concurrently and some following its completion. Those works coloured green, post-date *Taverner.*

[21] Davies interviewed by Tom Sutcliffe, 'A question of identity: *Blind Man's Buff* and *Taverner*', *Music and Musicians,* Vol. 20, June 1972, p.27.
[22] For an explanation of 'symbols' in Davies's music, see his letter to Gerard McBurney quoted in Nicholas Jones and Richard McGregor, *The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2020), p.31.

FIGURE 2.2 – The *Taverner* constellation & hierarchical connectivity



Legend

Primary connection

Secondary connection

Associate connection

Sub-associate connection

As is illustrated in Figure 2.2, *Taverner* functions as a hub which connects the abstract Renaissance-inspired works of the 1950s to the expressionistic music-theatre pieces of the late 1960s.[23] The opera is a compositional nexus. It is possible to submit that there exists a *Taverner* tetralogy which consists of the opera itself, the *Second Taverner Fantasia* (Op. 23) *Eight Songs for a Mad King* (Op. 39) and, the sequel to *Taverner, Resurrection* (Op. 129).[24]

As the composer stated above, many pieces are linked by recurrent 'theatrical imagery.' Similarly, recurrent musical gestures connect works, including the use of symbols notably the so-called 'Death Chord,'[25] and a constant integration of plainsong. When Davies was studying in Rome between 1957-1958,[26] his love of plainsong flowered to become 'the best music I'd ever heard in my life.'[27] In 1959 he returned to the UK and became the Director of Music at Cirencester Grammar School from 1959-1962. At this time, Davies's engagement with *Taverner* found expression through the composition of the *First Fantasia on an 'In Nomine' of John Taverner*. The *Fantasia* was the composer's first commission from the BBC and offered him an opportunity to focus on the opera which he had been contemplating since 1956.[28] As Figure 2.2. shows, the opera and the fantasia have a secondary connection in that Davies considered the earlier work to be a study for the opera. The *Fantasia* is linked through its inclusion of pre-existing music by Taverner and the Death Chord has a prominent harmonic function in the opening recitative.[29]

[23] *Alma Redemptoris Mater* and *Prolation* are not works obviously related to the opera. However, *Alma Redemptoris Mater* has strong symbolic connections (see Chapter 7, pp.225-228) whilst the design of *Prolation* informs the opera's architecture (see Chapter 5, pp.120-121).

[24] In addition to the selected works under discussion there are many other pieces which are related to the opera. For example, *Veni Sancte Spritus* (completed in Princeton in September 1963) shares some of *Taverner's* harmonic features, uses the pitch D-natural as an axis and employs texts from the Vulgate Pentecostal narrative.

[25] The Death Chord is a symbol which is prevalent throughout Davies's work. It consists of a pair of interlocking major thirds, D-natural and F-sharp/E-natural and G-sharp (see Chapter 7, pp.216-229).

[26] Elliott Carter (1908-2012) recommended that Davies study composition with Goffredo Petrassi (1904-2003) Davies won an Italian Government Scholarship Grant. He studied in Rome for eighteen months privately with Petrassi during which time he composed *St Michael – Sonata for Seventeen Wind Instruments* and *Prolation*.

[27] Davies, quoted in Jones and McGregor, *The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2020), p.23.

[28] Ibid., p.26.

[29] Ibid., p.31.

During his years as a music teacher at Cirencester Grammar School, Davies's work on the opera was marginalised, but it did remain in development. For example, the four carols *O Magnum Mysterium,* which he composed in 1960 for the school orchestra and choir, were first performed in the Parish Church of St John the Baptist in Cirencester.[30] This may have encouraged work on *Taverner* since, as Paul Griffiths has noted, the church nave, dating from 1515-1530, was contemporary with Taverner's music.[31] At the end of July 1962, Davies left his teaching post. He conducted the first performance of the *First Taverner Fantasia* in September at the BBC Proms[32] and then sailed to the USA in the Autumn. Davies had been awarded a Harkness Fellowship to study composition for two years in the Music Department of the Graduate School University at Princeton.[33] His teachers at Princeton were Roger Sessions, Earl Kim and Milton Babbitt. Work on *Taverner* accelerated. Davies was determined to get 'the back of this major work broken....'[34] He recalled that 'when I went to Princeton I went straight into composition of the text of the opera, then straight away the music, then along with that came the little sets of *In Nomines* and the *Second Taverner Fantasia*.'[35] The *Seven In Nomine* began life as a composition exercise for Earl Kim's composition class but, as Davies noted, they were 'an experiment with the basic material for the orchestral piece.'[36] Along with the *First Taverner Fantasia*, the three works are 'studies towards the opera [...] but they were also precursors of it and contained the musical elements which would drive the thematic, harmonic and expressive thrust of the opera.'[37]

Whilst at Princeton, Davies's work on *Taverner* coincided with Roger Sessions's completion of his opera *Montezuma* (1964). Davies recalled that the two composers had a lot in common and that Sessions was 'very helpful, very sympathetic' as they discussed their

[30] First performance, 8 December 1960.
[31] Griffiths, op. cit., p.43.
[32] First performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra on 15 September 1962 conducted by the composer. For an analysis of the *First Taverner Fantasia* see Philip Rupprecht, 'Thematic Drama in early Peter Maxwell Davies: from Op.1 to the *First Taverner Fantasia', Peter Maxwell Studies*, Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.68-78.
[33] Davies's study at Princeton University was suggested by Aaron Copland (1900-1990) whose classes the composer attended at Dartington Summer School in 1957. Copland, Benjamin Britten and Howard Hartog all acted as referees for Davies in support of his application for the Harkness Fellowship.
[34] Mike Seabrook, *Max, the Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, (London, Gollancz, 1994), p.70.
[35] Davies in conversation with Stephen Walsh, op. cit., p.653.
[36] Davies quoted in Jones, op. cit., p.70.
[37] Jones and McGregor, op. cit., p.62.

'respective [compositional] problems.'[38] Similar to *Taverner, Montezuma* had a long gestation. The work had occupied Sessions since the 1930s and it was finally completed in 1962. At its world première at the *Deutsche Oper* in West Berlin in 1964, Davies reviewed the performance for the *New York Times* and described it as a 'masterpiece.'[39] Sessions's opera, like Davies's, is concerned with the psycho-dramatic and, structurally, it was described by Patrick Smith as 'tableau-oratorio.' As with *Taverner,* the writer also made comparisons to *Lulu* and *Wozzeck* by Alban Berg.[40] These parallels, allied to Davies's positive critique of the work, suggest that his interactions with Sessions had a significant bearing upon the creation of the opera.[41]

Whilst in the USA, Davies was provided with an opportunity to focus primarily on the composition of *Taverner*. Reportedly, he 'sat in his apartment, now satisfactorily telephone-free, and concentrated on John Taverner. […] Now he settled down to serious work on the opera that he had wanted, and planned, for years to write about his brother composer.'[42] A significant amount of the detailed work on the opera's text was done in the university's Firestone Library. Here, Davies had access to extensive source material with which to develop and assemble the libretto. Griffiths has noted that it was curious that Davies travelled to the USA to work on what was, essentially, a singularly English subject. Yet, the composer later remarked that 'they had all the material and, if they hadn't actually got it, they got it on microfilm. So there was no problem.'[43]

Early in his tenure at Princeton, Davies corresponded with Donald Mitchell. He wrote: 'I finished the text of the opera …. I already set most of the 1st scene (in full score!) – this is the most intense and exciting thing I ever did, and has cost so much energy…. It burns my fingers!' By this point, Davies noted that there were '49 pages of very closely written full score of *Taverner.*'[44] Seemingly, the opera's gestation, over approximately twelve years,

[38] Davies in a conversation with Bruce Duffie, WNIB Radio, Chicago, USA (1985); http://www.bruceduffie.com/pmd.html
[39] Peter Maxwell Davies, 'Montezuma creates a stir in Berlin', *New York Times,* 03 May 1964.
[40] Patrick Smith, 'Montezuma', *High Fidelity/Musical America 26,* July 1976.
[41] Davies dedicated *A Mirror of Whitening Light* (1976-1977) to Roger Sessions for his eightieth birthday.
[42] Davies quoted in Mike Seabrook, *Max, the Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, (London, Gollancz, 1994), p.71.
[43] Griffiths, op. cit., p.106.
[44] Seabrook, op. cit., p.74.

was an extended one, yet, as is demonstrated here, there were periods of concentrated, visceral creativity.

The composer also stated that,

> I remember doing the text of *Taverner* in Princeton, and, it was presenting itself to my mind quite literally as pictorial images [….]. They were just flashing into my mind, and I had to put them down as quickly as I could catch them. I think a lot of it was coming out of some source which I can only recognize when it happened.[45]

Davies's description of a creative process which included images 'flashing into my mind' and a Promethean-like energy which 'burns my fingers' subscribes to the archetypal image of a romantic artist in full inspirational flight.[46] It reveals him as an instinctive composer, a view supported by Gabriel Josipovici who believed Davies's spiritual and stylistic roots lay 'deep in Romanticism and German music.'[47]

Work on *Taverner* advanced, but, in February 1963 Davies expressed a growing uneasiness about the opera and its future.

> I'm already into the music for scene 3, and it's by far the most ambitious and by a very long chalk the *best* music I've made…. I'll be quite honest here – composing *Taverner* is the most shattering musical experience I had, and despite difficulties with the authorities (the established church) I would like it to be available.[48]

In spite of these concerns, Davies's desire for the opera 'to be available' suggests a change of heart. As the composer noted in 1983, the work was 'an apprentice thing I had to do' and, originally, he had 'no thought of it being performed.'[49] *Taverner* was born out of an inner compulsion, and, since there was no formal commission by an opera house, at this stage, no performances were planned.

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[45] Davies, quoted in Paul Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies* (London, Robson Books, 1982), p.107.
[46] This image of the romantic artist is in stark contrast to Davies's environment at Princeton University where he was being guided by mathematician and serialist, Milton Babbitt.
[47] Gabriel Josipovici, '*Taverner*: Thoughts on the Libretto', *Tempo* No. 101 (1972), p.19. For further discussion of Davies's aesthetic see Arnold Whittall, 'A dark voice from within: Davies and modern times' in Gloag and Jones, op. cit., pp.1-20.
[48] Seabrook, op. cit., p.77.
[49] Peter Maxwell Davies interviewed by Michael Ratcliffe, 'One-man musical reformation', *The Sunday Times,* 26 June 1983.

In a letter to Eric Guest of March 1963, Davies claimed to have completed the first three scenes of Act I.[50] In June 1963 he returned to the UK for a holiday but continued to work on the opera. In another letter to Mitchell he said that the 'ideas are too hot.'[51] Davies returned to Princeton, completed Act I of the opera on 20 September 1963[52] and immersed himself in the composition of the *Second Taverner Fantasia*.

> The work grew out of the completed first act of *Taverner*, during the writing of which I had felt that many ideas were capable of a more symphonic development than was possible in the confines of the dramatic context.[53]

As Figure 2.2 shows, the *Second Taverner Fantasia* may be viewed as having a primary connection with the opera and is cited as one work in the *Taverner* tetralogy. Composed soon after the *First Fantasia* and the *Seven In Nomine,* this was the next major instalment in the series. Such is its proximity to the opera, the *Second Fantasia* has been described as a '*Taverner* symphony.'[54] It was completed at Princeton in April 1964 and received its world première in London on 30 April 1965.[55] The Fantasia's key relationship with the opera, in terms of its musical, structural and metaphorical connections, is discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Davies's time at Princeton was drawing to a close. Writing in 1968, he reflected that,

> …I was impressed by the standard not only of the staff but of the students. […] The one great influence behind the high standard at Princeton, Harvard, Yale, Berkeley and Oberlin is that of Arnold Schoenberg and those pupils of his who left Germany and Austria during the Nazi regime to settle in America.[56]

Schoenberg was a major influence upon Davies and, whilst at Princeton, he was taught by Earl Kim who had studied with Arnold Schoenberg at the University of California, Los Angeles between 1939 and 1940.[57] Davies observed that Kim had 'an instinctively oriental

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[50] Seabrook, op. cit., p.71.
[51] Ibid., p.80.
[52] Full score of Act I in pencil, dated "Princeton, 20 September 1963", Manuscript, British Library, London. Add. Mss.71259-71261, Vols. VIII-X.
[53] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), '*Second Fantasia on John Taverner's* '*In Nomine', Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.67.
[54] Griffiths, op. cit., p.45.
[55] First performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by John Pritchard at the Royal Festival Hall, London.
[56] Davies, 'The Young Composer in America', *Tempo* No. 72 (Spring 1965), pp.2-6.
[57] Earl Kim (1920-98), Korean-American composer. He taught at Princeton University from 1952-1967. Davies dedicated *Worldes Blis* (1966-1969) to Earl Kim.

way of understanding musical phenomena [which] encompassed Schoenberg's way of understanding.' He also noted that Kim's workmanship reflected an 'extraordinary resultant perfectionism, legendary among his Princeton students.'[58] The aim to achieve such 'extraordinary resultant perfection' would have resonated with Davies's own views about the importance of compositional craft as his work continued on *Taverner*. However, as he consolidated his technique, Davies mused on another preoccupation: the role of the modern composer in society. He reflected that: 'the easiest thing for a composer to do in America is to 'sell out.' To do this he need only jump on the most fashionable bandwagon (at the moment that of Cage – the Babbitt one is harder, because of the intellectual discipline of the musical style and the perspicacity of Babbitt) and produce 'avant-garde' works of acceptable meaninglessness…'[59] Davies continued, stating that it 'actively demonstrates the lack of function and uselessness of the composer in society. This sort of betrayal is becoming fashionable in Europe, particularly in Germany….'[60] The theme of betrayal is ubiquitous throughout Davies's work and, whilst he was in the USA and, coincidentally, immersed in *Taverner*, the subject continued to pre-occupy him. A few years later, the composer would suffer his own aesthetic crisis as he attempted 'to reconcile the demands of a new orthodoxy (the avant-garde)' with his own expressive needs.[61]

On 15 April 1964 after approximately eighteen months in the USA, Davies returned to the UK. He wrote: 'I was away from England and Europe long enough.'[62] That summer, Davies and his colleagues Harrison Birtwistle and Alexander Goehr organised the first of two Summer Schools at Wardour Castle in Wiltshire.[63] He rented a cottage in Tollard Royal in Wiltshire and continued to work on *Taverner*, *In Illo Tempore* and the second part of *Ecce Manus Tredentis*. *In Illo Tempore* is Davies's first text-based work in which the theme of betrayal 'underpins the musical ideas' and where the 'principal focus is the double betrayal

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[58] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'The Young Composer in America', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.61.
[59] Ibid., p.65.
[60] Ibid. Davies attended the Darmstadt International Summer School in 1956 and 1957.
[61] John Warnaby, 'The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies based on the writings of George Mackay Brown' (PhD thesis, The Open University, 1991), p.vii.
[62] Seabrook, op. cit., p.83.
[63] For further detail on the Wardour Summer Schools of 1964-1965, see Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp.252-255.

of Jesus – by Judas and by Peter.'[64] The Latin text is taken from the Gospel of St Luke; it is also parodied in *Taverner*[65] and, as with the *First Fantasia,* the Death Chord performs a significant harmonic function. These shared themes, images and musical processes are noteworthy, yet, as Figure 2.2 shows, in hierarchical terms, and when compared to other related pieces, *In Illo Tempore* may be regarded as an associate work in relation to the opera. Another work dating from this period was *The Shepherd's Calendar* which was commissioned by UNESCO for a conference on music education in Australia and New Zealand in May 1965. As shown in Figure 2.2, this 'Cantata for young singers' is categorised as a sub-associate work. Links to the opera are to be found in its use of a religious text, inclusion of plainsong (notably, the antiphon *Veniet Dominus* from the *Liber Usualis*)*,* and the function of the pitch D-natural as a tone centre.

According to Seabrook, Davies found the trip to Australia and New Zealand 'provincial and depressing'[66] but it did result in him being offered the position of Composer in Residence at the Elder Conservatorium of Music in the University of Adelaide. Davies returned to the UK and through the summer of 1965 was, once again, involved at the Wardour Castle Summer School at which he conducted the first performances of *In Illo Tempore* (from the motet *Ecce Manus Tredentis*)[67] and four movements of his *Seven In Nomine.*[68] There was also a concert given by the *Melos Ensemble* which included Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* featuring the American soprano, Bethany Beardslee. This highly theatrical performance proved to be highly inspirational for Davies which, in turn, led to the creation of the *Pierrot Players.* This ensemble, later transformed into the *Fires of London,* would become the vehicle for the first performances of Davies's music-theatre works during the late 1960s.

[64] Jones and McGregor, op. cit., p.235.

[65] Full score, Act I, scene iv, bb.479-502, the Chorus of Demons sings 'Behold his body in every place…'

[66] Seabrook, op. cit., p.92.

[67]Performed by the *Melos Ensemble* and the Wardour Summer School Choir. Bethany Beardslee was the soprano soloist.

[68] Commissioned by the *Melos Ensemble*. Davies began work on the *Seven In Nomine* in Earl Kim's composition class at Princeton University in 1962; its first complete performance was in December 1965 conducted by Lawrence Foster. The work was later revised in 1967-68 and received its first performance in January 1969 conducted by David Atherton.

Another related work from this period which, as Figure 2.2 shows, has a secondary, arguably primary connection to *Taverner*, was *Revelation and Fall*. Jonathan Rees has stated that,

> The dates of composition of the opera are a little confusing in relation to the works that feed off it; Davies worked on it between 1962 and 1968, although the first act of the opera was completed by the time that the Second Taverner Fantasia was written in 1964, so we can definitely take Act I of *Taverner* to be a 'prequel' to *Revelation and Fall*, even if some of Act II (largely an ironic reworking of Act I) was not completed by before the composition of *Revelation and Fall* in 1965-66.[69]

Strictly speaking, the completion of *Taverner* in late 1968 postdates the composition of *Revelation and Fall.* However, Rees is correct to argue that Act I of the opera, which was completed in 1963, may be regarded as its 'prequel.' This notion is supported by Davies's comment that Act I, scene iv pre-figured the 'first expression' of an aesthetic upheaval which would be articulated in *Revelation and Fall*.[70] In terms of connectivity, the two works have much in common through their shared psycho-dramatic themes, the introduction of extended vocalisation, and expressionist imagery.

In December 1965, Davies moved to a cottage in Barter's Town near Shaftesbury in Dorset and then departed the UK in January 1966 to begin a new role as Composer in Residence at the Elder Conservatorium of Music, University of Adelaide. During his short time in South Australia, Davies taught and influenced a generation of Australian composers including Ross Edwards, Richard Meale, Grahame Dudley and Graham Hair.[71] Davies remembered that, 'during my six months' tenure as composer-in-residence there, I dealt almost exclusively with the composers, but gave a series of four lectures on basic analytical principles to all Mus. Bac. Undergraduates […] who thanks to a scholarship scheme, came from all over Australia. I had been warned that Australian students are lazy and apathetic, so, as with the Cirencester children, I gave them no chance to be like that; I gather most of them worked till the small hours every night to complete work set. I was most encouraged by the result…'[72]

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[69] Rees, op. cit., p.80.
[70] Griffiths, op. cit., p.110.
[71] Ross Edwards (b.1943) went on to study with Davies privately in London in 1970. He composed *Laikan* (1979) specifically for Davies and the *Fires of London* who gave its world-première at the Perth Festival in 1980. The opera *Voss* (1986) by Richard Meale (1932-2009) is regarded by many as a watershed in the evolution of Australian opera. It was first performed at the Adelaide Festival of the Arts in March 1986 conducted by Stuart Challender.
[72] Davies, quoted in Nicolas Jones (ed.), 'Where Our Colleges Fail', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.75.

Clearly, Davies's preconceptions that his students would be 'lazy and apathetic' were proved wrong and his informant's warnings incorrect. In addition to his teaching duties, Davies continued to compose *Taverner*, completed the first version of *Revelation and Fall* and began work on *Worldes Blis,* pieces which are both intimately connected to the opera.[73]

In early 1967, Davies returned to the UK via Sydney.[74] That year he composed *Antechrist*[75] for the *Pierrot Players.*[76] As shown in Figure 2.2, this overture forms part of the *Taverner* constellation and may be considered to have a connection to the opera by association. However, its title does not refer to the Antichrist as it appears in Act I, scene iv of the opera. Griffiths proposes that in *Antechrist,* Davies is more 'concerned with a figure from medieval sub-Christian mythology, a spiritual Antichrist who is barely distinguishable from the real Christ and yet who embodies a total reversal of Christian precepts.'[77] As will be discussed, the concept of inversion is explored compositionally and symbolically in *Taverner* and other related works. In the opera, John Taverner's *In Nomine* undergoes multiple transformations and, similarly, in *Antechrist*, the thirteenth-century motet, *Deo Confitemini Domino* is metamorphosised and, ultimately, negated. Both works include parodic devices which are introduced for satirical purposes and, once again, the Death Chord informs harmonic structure.

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[73] Davies has acknowledged the influence of Aboriginal music upon the composition of *Worldes Blis*. Whilst Composer-in-Residence at the Elder Conservatorium of Music he met the ethnomusicologist Catherine Ellis (1935-96). Ellis co-founded the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music at the University of Adelaide. In 1966, Ellis introduced Davies to her field recordings. He stated that: 'I was particularly impressed by two features of the many tapes she had collected in the course of her research: first, the gradual change of contour in the repeats of the sung line focussed my attention through a huge span of time; and second, the nature of the relationship between the notes of the (changing!) mode to a pivotal note – particularly, sometimes in the absence of any sense of 'return' at the octave.' It was the combination of these two processes which led Davies to develop processes that would 'generate harmonic tension over a large time-span.' He noted that, 'at that time I was working on a large orchestral piece, *Worldes Blis,* and the practical result of this direct Australian influence was so alien to an unprepared British audience in 1969 that a sizeable part of it walked out of the Royal Albert Hall, London, in protest.' Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'Influence of Aboriginal Music', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.177.

[74] Seabrook, op. cit., p. 99. Significantly, in Sydney Davies met up with Randolph Stow (who would write the libretto for *Eight Songs for a Mad King*) and the two sailed back to the UK via various ports including Singapore, Bangkok, Calcutta, Istanbul and Athens.

[75] First performed by the *Pierrot Players* conducted by the composer on 30 May 1967 at the Purcell Room, London, UK.

[76] Co-founded with Harrison Birtwistle and Stephen Pruslin in 1967.

[77] Griffiths, op. cit., p.55. For an analysis of the work see D.B. Borwick, 'Peter Maxwell Davies' *Antechrist:* an analysis,' PhD thesis (Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester, 1979).

According to Paul Griffiths, in late 1968, after the formation of the *Pierrot Players* and following the completion of *Taverner*, Davies experienced the release of 'a torrent of creative energy.'[78] And, between 1966 and 1969 the composer recognised that: ' …my hitherto consciously integrated and balanced style of composition was shattered by the eruption into musical consciousness of a sequence of violent and dramatic works, whose explosive urgency necessitated a coming-to-terms, through musical means.'[79] This 'eruption into musical consciousness' was manifested in a trilogy of neo-expressionistic music-theatre works: *Missa Super l'homme Armé, Eight Songs for a Mad King* and *Vesalii Icones.* As with the composition of Act I of Taverner in 1963, for Davies, it was a highly intense, seismic creative process.

As illustrated in Figure 2.2, each of these pieces has a synergy with *Taverner*. *Missa Super l'homme Armé* uses a biblical text which tells of Judas's betrayal of Christ and treats the recurrent image of false resurrection parodically. Griffiths has said that 'the questions it raises are those of discerning and communicating religious truth, and in particular of distinguishing what is true and from its precise opposite…'[80] Equally, *Vesalii Icones* employs plainsong, examines religious issues and features an appearance of the Antichrist. Further, in the work's programme note, Davies recalls St Augustine's maxim: 'Fides est virtus qua credentur quae non videntur….' Its message concerning the need to distinguish the true from the false is, as found in *Missa Super l'homme Armé*, is a central tenet of the opera. Indeed, St Augustine's text is stated in *Taverner*.[81] *Missa Super l'homme Armé* and *Vesalii Icones* may be regarded as being related to the opera by association.

Figure 2.2 shows that *Eight Songs for a Mad King* is considered to have a primary connection with *Taverner*. This was Davies's first piece of music-theatre. Its composition may post-date the opera but, hierarchically, it is possible to interpret it as forming part of the *Taverner* tetralogy. *Eight Songs* presents myriad connections with the opera through an abundance of common extra-musical themes including the plight of an individual *in extremis*,

[78] Griffiths, op. cit., p.62.
[79] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), '*Worldes Blis', Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.67.
[80] Griffiths, op. cit., p.64.
[81] St Augustine's text is stated in *Taverner*. Full score, Act I, scene i, bb.381-390.

psychodrama, madness, loss of voice and a neo-expressionistic sound-world which is pre-figured in Act I, scene iv of the opera. As will be discussed below, it is possible to argue that *Taverner* is a blueprint for *Eight Songs* although, as Majel Connery has observed 'the critical difference between *Eight Songs* and *Taverner* is that while *Eight Songs* begins and ends in the same world, *Taverner* begins in one world and ends in another.' Also, Connery has suggested that 'if *Eight Songs* was *Taverner*'s missing aria, *Resurrection* is a *Taverner* with no Taverner in it.'[82] Indeed, in *Taverner*, the protagonist literally loses his voice and it is the White Abbot who sings the final aria, and, in *Resurrection*, the sequel to *Taverner*, the role of the hero is mute: 'a silent character who is indoctrinated by […] figures of authority.'[83]

Davies's creative deluge post-*Taverner* also included the composition of a pair of major orchestral works, *St Thomas Wake*[84] and *Worldes Blis.*[85] The composer believed that there were compositional ideas in the opera requiring further symphonic development; this was realised in the two *Fantasias* and in *Worldes Blis*. The latter work is regarded as having a secondary connection to the opera by way of the *Second Taverner Fantasia* to the extent that it has been referred to as a 'Third Taverner Fantasia.' Pruslin reads it as a 'homecoming to the spiritual territory that had been left behind in the *Second Taverner Fantasia* and replaced by a head-on confrontation with Expressionism.'[86] However, although *Worldes Blis* may represent a return to the spiritual world of the *Second Fantasia*, the composer actually associated it with the year (1969) in which he wrote *Eight Songs* and *Vesalii Icones* and, reportedly, 'felt scattered and thoroughly disintegrated.'[87] Yet, the *Second Fantasia* and *Worldes Blis* are inextricably linked by Davies's integration of pre-existing music. In the *Second Fantasia,* it is Taverner's *In Nomine* and in *Worldes Blis,* it is, according to Davies, a piece of thirteenth-century English monody.[88] However, Davies approaches the

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[82] Majel Connery, 'Peter Maxwell Davies's Worst Nightmare: Staging the Unsacred in the Operas *Taverner* and *Resurrection', Opera Quarterly*, Vol.25, No 3-4 (2010) pp.257-258.
[83] Davies, quoted in Jones and McGregor, *The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies,* op. cit., p.230.
[84] First performed, 02 June 1969 in Dortmund.
[85] BBC commission. First performed, 28 August 1969 at the BBC Proms, Royal Albert Hall, London. Composition commenced in 1966 in Adelaide, South Australia; the work was completed in 1969 in Dorset.
[86] Stephen Pruslin, 'Returns and Departures: Recent Maxwell Davies', *Tempo,* No. 113 (June 1975), p.23
[87] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'Indivisible Parameters and Spirit-Stirring Amalgams,' *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.304.
[88] Jo Wilhem Siebert has cast doubt on Davies's assertion that *Worldes Blis* is derived from this monody. For further discussion see Jones and McGregor, *The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (Woodbridge, The Boydell

compositional process from opposite ends. Whilst in the *Second Fantasia* the *In Nomine* generates material, in *Worldes Blis,* Davies describes the musical narrative as a 'quest.'[89] During this metaphorical and musical search for a grail, the material 'is in a state of constant but very gradual transformation' from the monody's 'far removed' initial statement in the harp duo to its final announcement played on handbells as the 'monody is achieved.'[90] Given its abstraction and location and *Worldes Blis* may at first appear to be a distant planet in the *Taverner* constellation, yet, as will be discussed in Chapter 7, it has much in common with the opera.

The composition of *Worldes Blis* marked the end of an intensely creative period for Davies. During this time, he made 'a conscious attempt to reintegrate the shattered and scattered fragments of my creative persona…'[91] This confrontation, which followed the completion of *Taverner*, manifest itself in the sequence of neo-expressionist works which 'necessitated a coming-to-terms through musical means.' According to the composer's programme note he was 'exploring unashamedly […] the acceptance and integration into my continuing creation of the Antichrist which had confronted me within my own self.'[92] As with the opera's protagonist, Davies was, himself, dealing with a crisis of personal and creative identity.

Davies completed *Taverner* in late 1968. He had sent most of the opera to his publisher, *Boosey and Hawkes* with the exception of Act II, scenes iii and iv which remained in manuscript. In the Autumn of 1969, there was a fire at Barter's Town and the manuscripts of these scenes were destroyed. Davies later reconstructed the scenes and the opera was finally completed in London on 24 November 1970.[93] Earlier in the year, Davies had visited the Orkney Islands in the far north of Scotland for the first time. He recalled that 'towards the end of 1969 my house burned, and with it the incomplete manuscript of *Vesalii Icones* and the last part of the opera *Taverner.* (I started the *Vesalii* afresh, and completed *Taverner*

Press, 2020), p.301 and Siebert, '*Worldes Blis*: a Title and its Implications', conference paper, *New Perspectives on the Music of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies,* Canterbury Christ Church University, 12 May 2018.

[89] Davies, quoted in Griffiths, op. cit., p.151.

[90] Ibid., p.152.

[91] Ibid., p.150.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Full score of Act II in pencil dated "London, 24 November 1970", Manuscript, British Library, London. Add. Mss.71259-71261, Vols. VIII-X.

two years later). In 1970 I stayed in Hoy, Orkney, for the first time. Both experiences were cathartic, leading to big decisions.'[94] In January 1971, Davies relocated to the island of Hoy permanently. In 2015 he reflected that he had moved to the Orkneys to find himself: '1969 had been the year of *Eight Songs, St Thomas Wake, Vesalii Icones* and *Worldes Blis*, and I felt scattered and thoroughly disintegrated, knowing that if I were to survive on any level whatsoever, thought, language and living had to be re-integrated.'[95]

Undoubtedly, 1969 was one critical year in Davies's life. However, *Taverner* had occupied the composer for over a decade. In combination with the aesthetic crisis he suffered, the opera's completion was also, no doubt, cathartic. It marked the end of one chapter and the beginning of the next. *Taverner* was also a catalyst as Davies re-integrated his 'thought, language and living' and drawn to the remote North of Scotland where, as Arnold Whittall has understood, the Antichrist would be 'masked by Saint Magnus.'[96]

2.2 Reception

The world-première of *Taverner* on 12 July 1972 at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden in London was a major event in the UK's cultural calendar.[97] Originally, the opera was to have been produced by Ken Russell for whom, during the early 1970s, Davies had composed music for the films, *The Devils* and *The Boyfriend*. These collaborations were successful and the intention was that Russell would not only direct *Taverner* but also support it financially. Minutes from the Royal Opera House Board of Directors Meeting in April 1970 report:

> <u>Item 5 (b)</u>
> Ken Russell had now agreed to produce PMD's opera on the life of John Taverner in place of *Julietta* in 1971/72, but still hoped to produce *Julietta* on some later occasion.[98]

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[94] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.) 'A Composer's Point of View (II): On Parody, References and Meaning', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.220.
[95] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'Indivisible Parameters and Spirit-Stirring Amalgams', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.304.
[96] Whittall in Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (co-editors), 'A dark voice from within': Davies and modern times,' *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, CUP, 2009), p.10.
[97] The first performance of *Taverner* was highly anticipated and represented an important moment in the development of twentieth-century British opera. During the writing of this thesis, I have encountered many colleagues who attended one of the first performances including composers Judith Weir (who succeeded Davies as the Master of the Queen's Music) and Richard Mills to name but two.
[98] Minutes of the Royal Opera House Board of Directors Meeting, Tuesday 28 April 1970 at 4pm, 45 Floral Street, London WC2.

Davies and Russell had also agreed that they would request that Derek Jarman design the production, an idea which was met with concern.[99]

> Item 5 c
> Taverner (Minute 3 c)
> Some misgivings were expressed about the proposal that Jarman should be asked to design the sets for Taverner. This would need very careful handling, in view of the nature of the libretto.[100]

This reference to 'the nature of the libretto' referred to the content of Davies's text which, given the controversy surrounding Ken Russell's work including *The Devils* and Davies's music-theatre works, would have made the Royal Opera House Board sensitive to the composer's views on religion; Jarman had worked as the Production Designer on *The Devils*.[101]

However, in early January 1972, John Tooley,[102] then General Administrator of the Royal Opera House, reported Ken Russell's withdrawal from the production 'as he could not come to terms with the music.' The minutes from a meeting of the Opera Sub-Committee also note that: 'so far no other producer has been found. Lindsay Anderson, Tony Richardson and Stanley Kubrick were among the names suggested to replace Russell.'[103] According to Davies, after hearing a reduction of the opera for a single voice and piano, Russell withdrew from the project.[104] Following this, as reported in the Minutes for Royal Opera House Board of Directors' Meeting, there was urgent discussion to find a replacement director for *Taverner*.

> Item 5
> (a) Taverner (Minute 2)
> Mr Tooley said that following Ken Russell's withdrawal, he was in touch with Terry Hands who had expressed an interest in producing the opera. It was suggested that

[99] Derek Jarman (1942-1994), British director, stage designer, artist and writer.
[100] Minutes of the Royal Opera House Board of Directors Meeting, Tuesday 23 March 1971 at 4pm, 45 Floral Street, London WC2. Courtesy of ROH Collection.
[101] This did not eventuate, the production was designed by Ralph Koltai (1924-2018).
[102] John Tooley (1924-2020), music administrator. Tooley became the General Director of the Royal Opera House from 1980-1988.
[103] Minutes of the Royal Opera House, Opera Sub-Committee Meeting, Wednesday, 19 January 1972 at 1.30pm. Courtesy of The Royal Opera House Collection.
[104] Seabrook, op. cit., pp.133-134.

> Sam Wanamaker might also be interested. The Board noted that, unless a producer were found within the next fortnight, another work would have to be substituted.[105]

The following month, it was reported that Michael Geliot had agreed to produce the opera.[106] The development of the production was further complicated by the fact that Georg Solti, Music Director of the Royal Opera House (1961-71) had little interest in new British opera. Davies recalled that he and Stephen Pruslin visited Solti's house in St John's Wood, London where they played the piano reduction of the opera. Davies recalls that 'Solti didn't like it, and that was that.'[107] Colin Davis took over from Solti in 1971 and was more sympathetic and agreed to programme the opera but only if Edward Downes agreed to conduct.

Given the above, it is possible to suggest that the birth of *Taverner* was compromised and the polarised critical reception which met the opera reflects this. Writing in the *Times*, William Mann considered *Taverner* to be 'a disturbing and thought-provoking piece [….]. The score is rich and brilliant but yields its splendours only gradually, even to those who knew other music by the composer, and even though it is impressively performed by a skilfully picked cast and an imposing orchestral array magisterially conducted by Edward Downes. In the theatre it provides an exciting experience. The production has immense style and vitality, boldly matched to the composer's libretto and music.'[108] Whilst *The Daily Telegraph*'s Martin Cooper found the opera to be 'lacking in deeper meaning' and found 'a distressing emptiness […] a combination of a mostly colourless, congested and rhythm-less orchestral background with widely spaced often grotesque vocal lines is only relieved by stretches of choral chanting or purely instrumental transitions. The inaudibility of the stage bands again threw the spectator back on the conundrums of the text and the solemn buffooneries of the spectacle.'[109] Apparently, Davies was not satisfied with the first season

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[105] Minutes of the Royal Opera House Board of Directors Meeting, Tuesday 25 January 1972 at 4pm, 45 Floral Street, London WC2. Courtesy of ROH Collection.
[106] Minutes of the Royal Opera House Board of Directors Meeting, Tuesday 22 Feb. 1972 at 4pm, 45 Floral Street, London WC2. Courtesy of ROH Collection. Michael Geliot (1933-2012), he became Director of Production at Welsh National Opera in 1969.
[107] Seabrook, op. cit., p.134.
[108] William Mann, 'Tragedy of religious zeal', *The Times*, 13 July 1972.
[109] Martin Cooper, '*Taverner* lacking in deeper meaning', *The Daily Telegraph,* 13 July 1972. As reported by Cooper, there were practical problems with the reductive, modernist staging and issues of audibility relating to the on-stage period instrument ensemble. Such matters were probably beyond the composer's control.

of *Taverner* at the Royal House and Seabrook has stated that, 'certain details were awry as a result of decision being taken over his head. As the most flagrant example, the band of on-stage musicians was off-stage instead, in order to make room for the enormous set; but the effect was to destroy the contrast intended in those scenes in which Taverner himself is absent.'[110]

To further understand these conflicting opinions, it is valuable to locate work in the context of other operas and pieces of music theatre receiving their world-premières in London during the late 1960s and early 1970s. At this time, Harrison Birtwistle's game-changing *Punch and Judy* (1966) and Michael Tippett's then radical exploration of sexual identity in *The Knot Garden* (1970), were challenging and redefining operatic form in the same decade as *Taverner* was presented in London; other new operas premiered at the Royal House, all conducted by Edward Downes, also included *Hamlet* (1968) by Humphrey Searle and *Victory* (1970) by Richard Rodney Bennett.

Further, because of its long genesis and Davies's simultaneous composition of other works, *Taverner* came to be heard three or more years following the composer's pioneering, genre-busting music theatre works of the late 1960s. Compared to these pieces, stylistically at least, for some commentators, *Taverner* hailed from an earlier world. Ostensibly, Davies had produced an anachronistic work, a grand opera, inspired by a historical subject, supported by a dry, overcomplicated libretto and performed in London's most establishment of theatres, the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Although over the next decade the company would give the first performances of John Tavener's *Thérèse* (1973), Hans Werner Henze's *We Come to the River* (1976) and Michael Tippett's *The Ice Break* (1977), Davies himself still regarded the institution as 'a kind of museum of nineteenth-century opera' whilst stating: 'I'm very grateful that they decide to do anything like *Taverner*.'[111]

[110] Seabrook, op. cit., p.142.
[111] Peter Maxwell Davies, 'The conscience of the composer: Patrick O'Connor talks to Peter Maxwell Davies about *Taverner*', *Harper's and Queen,* July 1983. Royal Opera House Collection, Covent Garden, London, UK.

It is arguable that the mixed critical response to the opera in 1972 was exacerbated by preconceptions about the work. Allied to its chronological position in Davies's output, it may be that *Taverner* could never satisfy the critical expectations of the day which had been raised, perhaps unrealistically, by Davies's earlier neo-expressionistic music-theatre works. In turn, this reception may have damaged the opera's reputation and, in part, contributed to a perceived lack of confidence in the work which, subsequently, has led to a lack of performances.

During an interview with the composer for the BBC Radio 3 broadcast of the opera in 2009, Davies was asked what it was like to return to *Taverner* thirty-seven years following its first performance and more than fifty years after he began to compose it.

> It's like looking into the mirror and looking back at you from the mirror is yourself in your late twenties [sic] and it's very disconcerting. I keep listening to the rehearsal and find that I know this piece very well but I had completely forgotten it. And now I really do find that I know the words off by heart and an awful lot of the music although I wrote it all that time ago and hadn't thought about it. And I suppose the reason that I hadn't thought about it was that it made no impression when it was first done, everybody loved the set but the music was more or less dismissed. Then it was done in Stockholm and I will never forget seeing Japanese Samurai running around on stage and wondering what that had to do with opera I'd written set in sixteenth-century England. And then I saw it in Boston in America and it sounded like mud. And since then I've more or less put the opera completely out of my mind and never thought that anybody would want to be bothered with it again…[112]

It is perfectly understandable that the composer had moved on, since at the time of the opera's first performances he believed his music to have been 'more or less dismissed' in favour of the production. However, this assertion, does not ring wholly true for the reception which met the opera's revival in 1983. David Cairns stated that although the staging was striking *Taverner* could create 'an equally powerful effect in a totally different, much still, less overtly parodistic production.'[113] Also, Rodney Milnes wrote that the set was more 'inspired by the words than the music' and that 'the mechanical complexities look suspiciously like a substitute for purposeful direction and the general fussiness distracts

[112] Peter Maxwell Davies in conversation with Tom Service, *Opera on 3*, BBC Radio 3, broadcast 28 November 2009.
[113] David Cairns, 'The artist who lost his soul,' *The Sunday Times,* 3 July 1983.

attention from crucial dialogues.'[114] Eleven years after its first performance, *Taverner* made more of an impression and Milnes was not alone when he wrote that there glowed 'the spark of genius.'[115] Paul Driver went one step further, describing it as 'perhaps the most original opera ever penned by an Englishman, and, beyond that, arguably one of the great operas of the world.'[116]

[114] Rodney Milnes, 'Grace and disfavour,' *The Spectator*, 16 July 1983.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Paul Driver, 'Mesmeric intensity', *The Listener,* 30 June 1983.

Chapter 3

Evolution, influences and parallels

...what an abortive neologism the word modernism is! What does it mean?[1]

Igor Stravinsky's rhetoric about modernism betrays an aversion to stylistic typology and affirms the composer's reputation as a 'magpie consumer and purveyor of musical styles.'[2] He believed that it was through style that a composer 'organises his conceptions and speaks the language of his craft.'[3] Like Stravinsky, Peter Maxwell Davies was also a compositional shape-shifter. Throughout his creative life, Davies engaged with a profusion of styles yet he was still subject to the reductionist branding of a 'modernist modern.'[4] Several parallels may be drawn between the two artists. Amongst other things, both composers evade easy categorization, Stravinsky's modernist innovations resonate with many of Davies's creations and each favoured the re-interpretation of ancient musical material. Because of this it may be possible to argue that an appreciation of Stravinsky's stylistic legacy may lead to a better understanding of Davies's aesthetic.

The disparities of Davies's compositional style may be at least as great as those of Stravinsky and can be observed throughout his prodigious oeuvre, ranging from the early modernist Trumpet Sonata (Op. 1) to the late modern-classicism of the Tenth Symphony *Alla ricara di Borromini* (Op. 327). Davies may have regarded, perhaps not entirely seriously, *Taverner* to be one of his 'apprentice pieces,'[5] yet, its extended genesis and proximity to other key works of the 1960s, situates the work at a formative point in the composer's stylistic evolution. To understand how Davies's language advanced through the composition of *Taverner*, the chapter begins by locating the composer in the narrative of twentieth-century musical modernism. It

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[1] Igor Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1947), p. 81.
[2] Anthony Pople in Jonathan Cross (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Stravinsky* (Cambridge, CUP, 2003), p.58.
[3] Stravinsky, op. cit., p.70.
[4] Colin Mason, 'Manchester musicians in London: modernist moderns', *Manchester Guardian* (January 10, 1956).
[5] Paul Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies* (Robson Books, London 1982), p.109.

examines the *Zeitgeist* which prevailed in new art music in post-World War Two Europe and particularly in Britain. The chapter also explains how expressionism, neo-expressionism and, specifically, Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*, influenced and contributed to the development of Davies's aesthetic. Additionally, it proposes that concepts relating to the 'epic theatre' of Berthold Brecht, if applied to the work, may be beneficial in furthering our understanding of the opera.

Stravinsky's impact upon music of the twentieth-century was widespread. In post-1945 Britain, many composers, including Davies, acknowledged his influence. Tippett once claimed himself to be 'a disciple of Jung and a lover of Stravinsky.'[6] Stravinsky's remark at the start of this chapter is typically aphoristic but contains a whiff of irony since musical historiography has long depicted his most iconic of scores, *Le sacre du printemps* (1913), as a seminal modernist work.[7] It is certainly possible to identify multiple brands of modernism dating from the early twentieth-century including the primitivist, the symbolist and the expressionist. For Alex Ross, the primitivism of *Le sacre* epitomised 'the "second avant-garde" in classical composition, the post-Debussy strain that sought to drag the art out of Faustian "novel spheres" and into the physical world.'[8] And, prior to 1913, it was Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1894) which represented a symbolist modernism that Boulez famously described as 'the flute of the faun [which] brought new breath to the art of music.'[9] For Pierre Boulez, Debussy's symphonic poem opened a door onto new musical worlds of possibility, whereas for Davies, the expressionist modernism of Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* (1912) represented one of the 'major new bridges in the creation of music to the expression of whole new regions of experience

[6] Michael Tippett, *Moving into Aquarius* (St. Albans, Paladin, 1974), p.85.
[7] Jonathan Cross has observed that 'most histories of early musical modernism have concerned themselves with the same canonical list of works, among the most significant of which usually number Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune,* Schoenberg's Five Orchestral Pieces and *Erwartung* and Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*.' See Jonathan Cross, *The Stravinsky Legacy* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.3.
[8] Alex Ross, *The Rest is Noise* (Harper Collins, London, 2009), p.83.
[9] Pierre Boulez, *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, (Oxford, OUP, 1991), p.259. Just as *modernité* took root in the work of Charles Pierre Baudelaire (1821-1867) and influenced a generation of poets such as Paul Verlaine, Stéphane Mallarmé, Arthur Rimbaud et al, so modernism in music was awakened by Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune.*

which had not been attempted in music – and even in late Romantic music – before at that level.'[10]

Another new region of experience for Davies came about through his reading and re-reading of the works of James Joyce. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, Joyce was a notable influence. A close friend remembered the composer reading *Ulysses* when he was about sixteen years old: 'it instantly established itself as his personal *vade mecum*, and it has remained so ever since…. Joyce and *Ulysses* have always been supreme.'[11] Philosophically and aesthetically, the writer and composer have much in common. Like Davies, Joyce possessed a powerful allegiance to the past and was influenced by writers including Cardinal Newman, Ben Johnson, Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle.[12] Joyce's respect for past writers and literature is mirrored by Davies's love and knowledge of ancient music. Also, just as Davies is known to have read Thomas Aquinas, so Joyce adored the music of John Dowland. It has been suggested that Joyce's 'extraordinary fidelity to past time thus means that the *ideas* he presents in his books are not those of the modernist avant-garde. It is through his style that modernism is implied.'[13] Equally, this could apply to Davies in that the *ideas* presented in *Taverner*, given his allegiance with the past, are not aligned to those of the radical avant-garde as advanced by composers such as John Cage et al.

It is not within the scope of this project to provide a comprehensive survey of the development of twentieth-century modernism. However, to gain a more nuanced appreciation of Davies's aesthetic and to understand why in 1956 he was described as a 'modernist modern,' it is beneficial to provide some context.[14]

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[10] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'Schoenberg: *Pierrot Lunaire', Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.91.
[11] Seabrook, op. cit., p. 24. Davies appeared on the BBC Radio 4 programme *Desert Island Discs* on 25 June 1983 and *Ulysses* was the book that the composer chose to take with him along with his eight selected records.
[12] Christopher Butler in Derek Attridge (editor)*, Cambridge Companion to James Joyce* (Cambridge, CUP, 2004), p.72.
[13] Butler in Attridge, op. cit., p.72.
[14] For further discussion of Davies's aesthetic as it relates to modernism, see Arnold Whittall 'A dark voice from within': Davies and modern times' in Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (co-editors), *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, CUP, 2009), pp.1-20.

3.1 The modernist modern

Twentieth-century classical music may, crudely, be divided into different phases of modernism: early (pre-World War One), middle (post-World War One) late (post-World War Two) and post-modernism (from the 1980s). At the time of *Taverner*'s creation, a form of late modernism had emerged in Europe which 'stressed the commonality of composers' aesthetic ambitions'[15] and shared 'aims and to some degree similar methods.'[16] For many composers including Davies, the Darmstadt International Summer School (*Darmstadt Internationale Ferienkurse fur neue Musik*) represented a post-war spirit of positivism and an opportunity for creative re-alignment. Davies attended Darmstadt in 1956 and 1957 and it was there that his Clarinet Sonata (Op. 4) received its world-première. Nearly forty years later, in a lecture for the British Library Stefan Zweig Series, Davies recalled that:

> …when I was studying at the University and College in Manchester, I went to Darmstadt and there were composers there who were second generation after Stravinsky and Hindemith. Darmstadt in the 1950s was a wonderful place to be. There was real ferment, and Luigi Nono, Bruno Maderna, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Pierre Boulez and Olivier Messiaen, and a whole host of stars in the firmament of a young composer like I was then. One could discuss with them, sit at their feet, go to their lectures, and one learnt a great amount and there was a huge feeling of optimism: here we were, forging the language of the future![17]

However, despite this initial optimism, Davies soon had reservations about the apparent 'revolution' which was taking place in Darmstadt: 'the revolution as it were, was becoming official and there was a new hard line in the German radio stations particularly: if you were not avant-garde, you were not going to get played.'[18]

During the mid-1950s, Alexander Goehr and several other composers of his generation headed to Paris to study with Olivier Messiaen. However in 1957, and perhaps in a bid to distance himself from the Darmstadt environment, Davies elected to study composition at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome with Goffredo Petrassi (1904-2003). Davies did

[15] Cross, op. cit., p.3.
[16] Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music: the Avant Garde since 1945* (London, Dent, 1981), p.294.
[17] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (editor), 'Remembering Darmstadt', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.172.
[18] Ibid., p.173.

attend some of Messiaen's classes between 1955 and 1957 as an *auditeur*[19] but he would later reflect that 'Petrassi was prepared to give me more time and individual attention, whereas with Messiaen it was a question of going to a class.'[20] As an outlier, Davies's independent study in Rome, allied to the inertia which he had perceived in Darmstadt, led him to develop a compositional language which, evolving in *Taverner* and other works, was characterised by a highly personal, distinctive form of polystylism.

Reflecting in 2008, Davies stated that, 'I realised that there was another establishment, and that was the 'Mafiosi' of new music. And anything that didn't conform to their standards was just as dangerous as anything that didn't conform to the standards of the British musical establishment. And what they [the new music establishment] called the 'new' even in 1956 was dated.'[21] For Davies, this was aggravated when, in 1955, the British critic Ernest Newman stated that: 'the more "advanced" composers of today seem to many people to be concentrating on writing music which the malcontents describe as "cerebral."'[22] Fifty-years later, Rupprecht asserted that Newman equated 'advanced music with non-British sources' and, for example, regarded the work of Schoenberg as a triumph of 'theoretical brilliance over his artistic endeavour.'

> Newman's dismissal of 'new values' exemplifies one particularly conservative strain of British discourse around musical modernism – a discourse freighted with assertions of national identity and the anxious call for a music that is somehow distinctively British, even while it must evade any whiff of overt ideological display.[23]

The debate on modernism was once again ignited when Ernest Gold[24] argued that,

> During the past few years… a remarkable phenomenon has made its appearance. There seems to be a growing predilection among young composers to minimize the part played by intuition and the human element in the creation of a musical work, and to

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[19] See Nicholas Jones in Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (co-editors), 'Peter Maxwell Davies's writings of the 1950s', *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, CUP, 2009), p.32.
[20] Davies, quoted in Griffiths, op. cit., p.104.
[21] Peter Maxwell Davies and Nicholas Jones, 'Peter Maxwell Davies in the 1950s: A conversation with the composer', *Tempo*, Vol. 64, No. 254 (October 2010), p.15.
[22] Ernest Newman, 'Theory and Practice', *The Sunday Times*, 11 September 1955, p.11.
[23] Philip Rupprecht: 'Something slightly indecent: British Composers, the European Avant-garde, and National Stereotypes in the 1950s', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 91. No. 3/4 (Fall-Winter, 2008), p.275.
[24] Ernest Gold, Austrian-born American composer (1921-1999), best-known for his work in film.

reduce or eliminate the dynamic properties inherent in the anatomy of the tone. Thus bereft of spontaneity and unwilling to heed the promptings of the tonal material itself, these composers have turned to various more or less arbitrary systems of compositions as a solution to their problem. Schoenberg's 12-note technique is, of course, one of the oldest of these.[25]

In 1955, Davies publicly rebutted Gold's statement which alleged that a scientific approach to composition was resulting in new work which lacked integrity. Davies asserted that 'the challenge to the young British composer is the same as it always has been since Handel. He must study music and treat it seriously.'[26] A close associate, the pianist, Stephen Pruslin,[27] remembered that during classes at Dartington Summer School, Davies reiterated the importance of compositional craft. Apparently, Davies possessed a 'virtuoso compositional technique' which allowed him to write at speed and directly into full score.[28] Pruslin noted that,

> Technique enables Davies to fulfil his role as a transmitter of images in several ways. First, it helps him to bring more quickly to the surface the pieces he has inside him. Here, speed is the point, because for him the sheer urgency to write is the heart of the matter. Second, it results in the pieces being the fullest sense of the word *composed*. Davies's entire output attests to his belief that music must be written, articulated, wrought. Third, it allows him to control the complexity of his music. Davies doesn't strive for complexity – his need to communicate is far too urgent for that – but his technique enables any given idea to be as complex (or as simple) as it need to be.[29]

However, Davies harboured concerns about a lack of expert technique being taught in Britain. He also expressed disquiet about the dogmatic attitude of composers who:

> …reject all recent developments and produce music which is often a pale imitation of some revered idol. This mentality still flourishes in Britain and is largely responsible for the teaching of composition…Their taste is based exclusively on conditioning and prejudice, and they normally dote on one of the better English composers – or

[25] Ernest Gold, 'The New Challenge', *The Score,* 14, December 1955, pp.36-40.
[26] Peter Maxwell Davies, 'The Young British Composer', *The Score*, 15, March 1956, pp.84-85.
[27] Stephen Pruslin (b.1940) American pianist and founding member of *The Pierrot Players* and *The Fires of London*. Pruslin studied the piano with Eduard Steurmann (1892-1964) who was the pianist for Arnold Schoenberg's *Society for Private Musical Performances* founded in 1918 in Vienna. Steurmann was the pianist in the first performance of *Pierrot lunaire*.
[28] Pruslin recalls Davies writing *From Stone to Thorn* directly into full score without prior sketching in three days. See Pruslin, 'Nel mezzo del cammin – In mid flight', 'Peter Maxwell Davies: studies from two decades', Stephen Pruslin (ed.) *Tempo Booklet No. 2* (1979), p.2.
[29] Ibid.

> occasionally one of the worst – who lived earlier in the century, admonishing their students to write in a similar style, therefore continuing some 'tradition.'[30]

Davies's perception of bigotry and his identification of 'conditioning and prejudice' in post-war musical Britain coincided with an anxious call which, as is supported by Rupprecht's comment, was being made for the composition of a distinctly British style of music. In 1959, Davies called for a resistance to the 'imitation of gestures of the new 'Holy Trinity' of European music: Stockhausen, Boulez and Nono'[31] advocating for a style of composition which embraced a spontaneity with 'the natural expression of English composers solving problems in an unselfconscious way.'[32] Yet, Davies never disregarded the musical continuum. He respected the Austro-German tradition which was represented by *la grande ligne* of Berg, Webern and Schoenberg and believed that 'the lessons' of Berg and Schoenberg had not been learned in Britain. He argued that, 'without taking the work of these masters into account, one cannot write music of any value today.'[33] This resonated with Alexander Goehr's belief that Davies and others were 'the first in England to take the ethos of Schoenberg and Webern (and Messiaen, when he arrived) dead seriously.'[34]

The integration of style and synthesis of disparate musical sources are central to Davies's aesthetic.[35] Whittall has observed that:

> …the presence of the unrefined vernacular alongside the elevated sophistication thought proper to high art was a fundamental feature of that Mahlerian fracturing of late-romantic organicism that had been central to musical modernism since early in the twentieth century. It is therefore not surprising that two British composers who owe much to Mahler – Britten and Davies – should have demonstrated such resourcefulness

[30] Peter Maxwell Davies, 'The Young British Composer', *The Score*, 15, March 1956, pp.84-85.
[31] Peter Maxwell Davies, 'Problems of a British Composer Today', *The Listener*, Vol. 62, (08 Oct. 1959), pp.563-564.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Cited in Phillip Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 9. Alexander Goehr (b. 1932) composer and academic. Son of Walter Goehr (1903-1960), conductor, composer and student of Arnold Schoenberg. Alexander Goehr was the de facto leader of the Manchester Group of composers of which Davies was a member. The other members were John Ogdon, Harrison Birtwistle, Elgar Howarth and John Dow.
[35] For further discussion of these disparate styles in Davies output see the letter to Gerard McBurney in which he considers the 'different types of music' citing the influence of the 'medieval concept of '"divine" and "mundane" music.' Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones and Richard McGregor, *The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2020), p.28.

> in exploring another important twentieth-century stylistic continuum, the high (or cultivated) and low (or popular).[36]

He has also acknowledged that a tradition of critical commentary in which affinities have been perceived between the work of Mahler and Davies dates back to the 1960s. Further, Pruslin noted that with the composition of the *Second Taverner Fantasia* the relationship between these two composers becomes 'ever more apparent'[37] and that 'the mentalities of Mahler and Davies are both ultimately concerned with irony – not in its modern misuse as 'cynicism' but in its original meaning of a sense of contradiction which is implicitly tragic.[38] Resonances may also be found in the music of Berg, and, in particular, *Lulu* (1937) with its 'topics of courage and cowardice, the role of acts of betrayal and resistance in cultures that are in essence decadent.[39]

Davies first witnessed *Lulu* at a performance in Hamburg in 1963. In a retrospective diary entry dating from 2016, the composer recalled that his exploration of German expressionism 'in all art forms' was motivated by the experience.[40] As Whittall notes above, there are extra-musical thematic equivalencies recognisable in both *Taverner* and in *Lulu*. Equally, there are musical influences: there is frequent use of palindromes and structural symmetry, the utilization of on-stage bands, the pairing of singing roles, double aspects and the orchestra is regularly used to comment on the operatic drama. Whittall believes that,

> Hearing Berg as well as Mahler at the end of *Taverner* gives the compassion embodied in the voice of the orchestra a darker, more ambivalent tone than would otherwise possess: this darkness and ambivalence could seem even more salient if we believe that a musical style able to evoke love, sexual obsession, and all the complex resonances of personal feeling, is being used in a situation where feelings are primarily driven by matters of religion and politics.[41]

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[36] Whittall in Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (co-editors), *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.2.
[37] Stephen Pruslin, 'Second Taverner Fantasia', *Tempo* No 73, (Summer 1965), p.2.
[38] Pruslin, op. cit., p.3.
[39] Whittall in Gloag and Jones, op. cit., p.10.
[40] Jones and McGregor, op. cit., p, 27 n.52.
[41] Whittall in Gloag and Jones, op cit., p.10.

This interpretation echoes that of Gabriel Josipovici who believed Davies's antecedents to be rooted in Romantic German music. However, Whittall does recognise that to sense the influences of both Berg and Mahler heightens the work's ambivalence. In *Taverner* although, thematically, religion and politics upstage Romantic staples such as love and humanity, there remains at its heart a singularly Romantic and post-Romantic obsession: the dilemma of the individual. John Taverner's plight is similar to that of Joseph K in Franz Kafka's *The Trial* and to Adrian Leverkühn's circumstances in Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*. Davies's roots are deeply buried in the Romantic German tradition where, according to Josipovici, 'the focus is on one figure and one figure only – double of the artist if you like, but of the spectator too. In the libretto of *Taverner* I think one finds the traces of the struggle to reach that degree of direct expression…'[42] As to whether Davies's opera, and more specifically, the libretto, achieves that 'degree of direct expression' will be considered in Chapter 6.

The Manchester Group gained recognition following a concert of chamber music in London in January 1956 in a programme which included the London premières of Davies's Trumpet Sonata (Op. 1) and Goehr's *Three Fantasies for Clarinet and Piano* (Op. 3).[43] In a press review, the Group was referred to as Britain's 'modernist moderns,'[44] although, as Rupprecht has asserted,

> In an era of ideological suspicion and escalating existential anxiety – tests of a British nuclear deterrent advanced throughout the Fifties – the Manchester group's self-conscious modernity was simply a matter of its perceived formalism.[45]

Goehr recalled that 'in the 1950s I believed I was witnessing, even participating in the creation of a new musical language'[46] yet some commentators there believed that the so-called 'modernist moderns' were not avant-garde enough. Andrew Porter described their mutual fondness for traditional chamber and orchestral groupings as 'very conservative' when

[42] Gabriel Josipovici, '*Taverner*: Thoughts on the Libretto', *Tempo* no.101 (Spring 1972), p.19.
[43] One in a series of Institute of Contemporary Arts concerts organised by William Glock at the Arts Council Drawing Room, 4 St James Square, Pall Mall, London. The performers included fellow members of the Manchester Group, John Ogdon (piano), Elgar Howarth (trumpet) and Harrison Birtwistle (clarinet).
[44] Colin Mason, 'Manchester musicians in London: modernist moderns,' *Manchester Guardian* (January 10, 1956).
[45] Phillip Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015), p.8.
[46] Alexander Goehr quoted in Rupprecht, op. cit., p.117.

compared to music being written by European and American avant-gardists.[47] Indeed, the fact that Goehr, Birtwistle and Davies all turned to operatic projects during the 1960s gives credence to Porter's comment.[48] Yet although Davies accepted that there was an understandable reluctance from some British musicians to 'face the problem posed by the last century,' (that of tonality) he continued to urge for a 'new grammar – a grammar which must be based on the roots of the old language, but which has to be suitable, at the same time to the expressive requirements of a new situation.'[49] In respect of *la grande ligne*, it was Schoenberg and, one particular work, *Pierrot lunaire,* which had a lasting influence. The monodrama held Davies in such thrall that the ensemble which he co-founded with Birtwistle in 1965 was called the *Pierrot Players.* The ensemble was originally formed to perform Schoenberg's score and contemporary works with the same, or similar, instrumentation and gave the first performances of works including *Revelation and Fall, Antechrist* and *Eight Songs for a Mad King.*[50] Given the work's ubiquity, it is of value to consider the influence of *Pierrot* upon Davies's aesthetic and, briefly, how it manifests in *Taverner*.

3.2 *Pierrot lunaire*

Famously, Stravinsky described *Pierrot lunaire* as the 'solar plexus' of twentieth-century music.[51] Along with *Le sacre*, Schoenberg's monodrama has become one of the 'most highly-prized totems of musical modernism.'[52] It is a setting of twenty-one poems by the Belgian symbolist poet, Albert Giraud (1860-1939) translated into German by Otto Erich Hartleben (1864-1905). Giraud's cycle of fifty poems written in 1884 is based upon characters from the

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[47] Andrew Porter, 'Some new British composers', *Contemporary Music in Europe*, p.21.
[48] Alexander Goehr: *Arden Must Die* (1967) and Harrison Birtwistle: *Punch and Judy* (1968).
[49] Davies, 'Problems of a British Composer Today', *The Listener,* 62 (8 October 1959), pp.563-564.
[50] Rupprecht notes that the *Pierrot Players* was 'apparently, Harrison Birtwistle's idea, along with Alan Hacker and Stephen Pruslin, and Davies joined in 1965 following his return from Australia (see Rupprecht, op. cit., p.252, n3). The *Pierrot Players* made its debut in a concert in the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London on 30 May 1967. The programme included Peter Maxwell Davies's *Antechrist* and Harrison Birtwistle's *Monodrama*; each composer conducted his own work. In 1970 the *Pierrot Players* was disbanded and immediately re-formed by Davies as *The Fires of London;* the name of the new group was suggested by Stephen Pruslin. For further discussion of the *Pierrot Players* and the influence of *Pierrot lunaire,* see Christopher Dromey (ed. Christopher Wintle), *The Pierrot Ensembles*, *Chronicle and Catalogue (1912-2012)* (London, Plumbago, 2012).
[51] Quoted in Jonathan Dunsby, *Schoenberg: Pierrot lunaire* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992) p.1.
[52] Ibid.

commedia dell'Arte. The *Rondels bergamasgue* embraces themes which dominated the fin-de-siècle, including degeneration, sexuality and the psychological; the poetry is characterised by black humour, parody and brutal, graphic imagery. In *Madonna*, 'blood pours forth from withered bosom where the cruel sword of has pierced it.' In *Enthauptung* ('Beheading') Pierrot imagines the moon transformed into a 'shining Turkish sword' which he imagines 'whistling down upon his sinful, guilty neck.' And in *Gemeinheit* ('Mean Trick!') Pierrot bores open Cassander's cranium to smoke a bowl of tobacco: 'at his ease he puffs away, puffs on his genuine Turkish tobacco in the gleaming skull of Cassander!'[53] In *Taverner* and its surrounding works, similar expressionistic imagery is used to convey extreme emotional or psychological states.

In the first half of the twentieth-century, the shadow of *Pierrot* cast itself over Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* (1918), whilst post-1945, Pierre Boulez's *Le Marteau sans mâitre* (1953-55) was directly inspired by *Pierrot*. During the 1960s, a new genre of British music theatre drew upon *Pierrot* including Birtwistle's dramatic pastoral *Down by the Greenwood Side* (1969) and Goehr's *Naboth's Vineyard* (1968), the first in a triptych of music theatre works. Davies acknowledged that,

> *Pierrot lunaire* was one of the great revelations when I was still at school. I was absolutely taken by the extension of the expression of musical experience. This *so* tied in with the reading I was doing of Freud and Jung that I was very, very fascinated, not only in the music, but the way that Schoenberg had *found* the possibility of finding a music to equate the nightmare world which was expressed in the texts of *Pierrot lunaire*. This, I think, and when one bears in mind its date, 1912 – was one of those major new bridges in the creation of music to the expression of whole new regions of experience which had not been attempted in music – and even in late Romantic music – before at that level.[54]

When Davies studied composition at the University of Princeton between 1962-64, it is likely that his fascination with the music of Schoenberg was further intensified through close contact

[53] Translated by Andrew Porter, quoted in Dunsby, op. cit.
[54] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed), 'Schoenberg: *Pierrot Lunaire*', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.91.

with Earl Kim, a former student of Schoenberg.[55] Bayan Northcott recalls that upon his return from the UK, Davies analysed and performed *Pierrot* as part of a composition summer school held at Wardour Castle in 1965.[56] Cross has suggested that *Pierrot* offered to Davies a model of 'latent theatricality, flexible ensemble, formal organisation and expressionistic directness.'[57] In a 'torrent of creative energy'[58] these elements combined, matured and found expression in a *Taverner* constellation of pieces: *Revelation and Fall*, *Eight Songs for a Mad King* and *Vesalii Icones*. *Vesalii Icones* shares *Pierrot*'s structure where its fourteen movements take as their starting point the 'superimposition of Vesalius's drawings of the human body on the fourteen Stations of the Cross.'[59] *Revelation and Fall*, like *Pierrot,* is a setting of poetry[60] and, honorifically, is also described by Davies as a monodrama; similar to *Pierrot* it is also scored for solo soprano and ensemble.

Correspondingly, in *Taverner,* there is imagery and material aplenty which recalls *Pierrot.* The Monks' alchemy in Act I, scene iv and the appearance of the Antichrist reminds of *Rote Messe* ('Red Mass'). Dunsby has noted that 'given the topics of extreme, ritualistic violence and punishment that imbue the seven poems that Schoenberg selected for Part II, sacrilege is an inevitable component of *Pierrot*.'[61] In *Rote Messe*:

> He makes the sign of the cross
> blessing the trembling, trembling people,
> with trickling crimson wafer:
> his heart in bloody fingers
> at gruesome grim communion.[62]

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[55] Philip Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015), p.320.
[56] Ibid. There were two composition summer schools established by the Manchester-Group held at Wardour Castle in Wiltshire, UK (1964 and 1965) of which Harrison Birtwistle (then a teacher at Cranbourne Chase girl's school) was the Director. Other tutors included Alexander Goehr, Hugh Wood and Davies. Rupprecht has described the two Wardour summer schools of composition as 'an incubator for many developments in the music of British modernists throughout the Sixties and since.' Rupprecht, op. cit., p.255.
[57] Jonathan Cross, *The Stravinsky Legacy* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.144.
[58] Paul Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davie*s (London, Robson Books, 1982), p.62.
[59] Cross, op. cit., p.147.
[60] By the Austrian expressionist poet, Georg Trakl (1887-1914).
[61] Dunsby, op. cit., p.44.
[62] Giraud quoted in Dunsby, op. cit., p.53.

In Act II, scene iii of *Taverner* the Captain's spiling of the communion wine is sacrilegious. Pierrot's demise also mirrors that of Taverner's when, in Part Two he becomes increasingly depraved and undergoes crucifixion in *Die Kreuze* ('The Crosses'):

> Holy crosses are the verses
> whereon poets bleed in silence,
> blinded by a flock of vultures
> fluttering around in spectral swarms.[63]

There are other temperamental similarities. The parodic Street Passion Play of Act I, scene iv is a discrete melodrama, a satirical burlesque characterised by gallows humour evoking 1900s Berlin cabaret, which infuses *Pierrot*.[64] Also, Schoenberg's integration of ancient compositional devices such as canon in *Pierrot* influenced Davies. The eighth song of the monodrama, *Nacht*, has the subtitle, *Passacaglia*. Charles Rosen has stated that Schoenberg's method 'is an old one, going back to Bach and even to the late-fifteenth century Netherlandish composers.'[65] Dunsby has argued that it is in the sixth song of the cycle, *Madonna*, replete with religious parody, which truly launches the narrative of *Pierrot* out of the 'relatively subdued imagery of the first five poems.'[66] It is this song which ignites the monodrama's expressionistic character through parody cultivated by 'the musical gestures of a Baroque religioso.' However, Schoenberg demonstrates his 'contrapuntal cunning'[67] in *The Moonfleck* which Rosen has described as being built upon 'one of the most elaborate canons worked out since the end of the fifteenth century.'[68] In *The Moonfleck*, there is 'internal musical evidence […] that Schoenberg was responding procedurally to the inherent duality of the poem.'[69] The retrograde canon may be interpreted as a metaphor for night as it describes Pierrot turning around to remove the moonfleck from his back. He fails to do so until dawn comes, and, as the sun comes up, the retrograde canon reaches its conclusion.

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[63] Ibid., p.58.
[64] In December 1901 Schoenberg was appointed as Musical Director of the *Überbrettl Kabarett* in Berlin.
[65] Charles Rosen, *Schoenberg* (Glasgow, Fontana, 1976), p.60.
[66] Dunsby, op. cit., p.44.
[67] Ibid., p.67.
[68] Rosen, op. cit., p.63.
[69] Dunsby, op. cit., p.67.

Davies demonstrates his contrapuntal cunning as post-Schoenbergian modernism is fused with medieval compositional processes including canon, imitation and *cancrizans*. In Act I, scene ii of *Taverner* a proportional canon is introduced.[70] Parodically, the scene opens with the Monks singing John Taverner's own *In Nomine.* As the polyphonic texture thickens, the voices accumulate and 'the Monks begin to address the audience concerning John Taverner's *future* doings, in particular his implication in the burning of the White Abbot.'[71] This increasingly complex canon reflects Taverner's growing religious conviction. In this instance, similar to Schoenberg, Davies uses an ancient compositional device not only as a homage but also metaphorically.

As shown in *Pierrot*, the 'scent of commedia was strong in the air of symbolist and expressionist art and literature.'[72] It is possible to suggest that the antecedents of the dual role of the Jester/Death in *Taverner* lie in the *commedia del'arte* stock characters which inspired Giraud's poem.[73] The central role of Pierrot was probably a conflation but identifiable as one the 'Zanni' character types, a forefather of Harlequin. The etymological roots of the name Harlequin are from Hellequin, a popular 'stage devil' found in religious medieval theatre. It is believed that the role derived from a 'satanic underworld leader.'[74]

In *Alcools* (1913) by Guillaume Apollinaire[75] Harlequin makes his only appearance in the poem *Crépuscule*. This has been interpreted as a metaphor for the poet's protean self, he is 'a *persona,* a mask assumed by the poet to hide his identity and at the same time to reveal the self.'[76] Harlequin is not only the 'star of the show…. but practically the only actor in it' where

[70] Full score, pp.67-79, from bar 10.
[71] Stephen Arnold, 'The Music of *Taverner*', *Tempo* No. 101 (1972), p.24.
[72] Dunsby, op. cit., p.7.
[73] In the *commedia dell'arte* there were four principal masked characters which included two old men or 'vecchi' (Pantalone and Il Dottore) and two servants or 'zanni' (Brighella and Arlecchino). For further study see: Allardyce Nicoll, *The World of Harlequin, A Critical Study of the Commedia dell'Arte* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1963).
[74] M.A. Katritzky, 'Harlequin in Renaissance pictures', *Renaissance Studies* (Vol. 11, No.4), December 1997, p.382
[75] Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918), French poet, playwright and novelist.
[76] Richard Howard Stamelman, *The Drama of Self in Guillaume Apollinaire's* 'Alcools', University of North Carolina Press, Department of Romance Studies. p.105.

‘disguises, masks and magic enable him to perform what amounts to almost a one-man harlequinade’[77] in which he impersonates a ‘magical juggler of stars’ and looks into the future. Although the extent of Davies’s knowledge of Apollinaire’s writings is subject to mere speculation, there are several striking similarities between the character and the function of the Jester/Death in *Taverner* and that of Harlequin in *Alcools*. Most notably, in Act II, scene i where Death, although still dressed as the Jester, albeit unmasked, is like an astrological juggler spinning the Wheel of Fortune and demonstrating his omnipotence.[78]

Pierrot revealed a new world of expressive possibilities for Davies. He described it as ‘music on a knife-edge’ which combined the old with the new to extend musical language and experience.[79] When Davies discovered *Pierrot* in 1949 the work was a revelation and it remained a constant influence throughout his life right up to his final work, the Quartet Fragment of 2016, through which both symbolically and compositionally, moon and moonlight permeate its fabric.[80] Correspondingly, as *Pierrot* had opened new worlds of possibility for Davies, so, in the first decade of the twentieth-century Schoenberg’s music had an equally profound effect upon Wassily Kandinsky.

3.3 Expressionism and neo-expressionism

The painter and poet, Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), was one of the first creators of abstract art. He co-founded *Der Blaue Reiter* (‘The Blue Rider’), a movement fundamental to the development of the expressionist movement.[81] In 1910, Kandinsky wrote to Schoenberg that ‘….music leads us into a realm where musical experience is a matter not of the ear but of the

[77] Ibid., p.108.
[78] This resonates with Davies’s love of masks and mask-play. See the composer’s letter to Gerard McBurney quoted in Nicholas Jones and Richard McGregor, *The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2020), p.64.
[79] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed), ‘Schoenberg: *Pierrot Lunaire*’, *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.91.
[80] For further discussion, see Jones and McGregor, op. cit., pp.309-311.
[81] A group of artists in Munich active between 1911-14 including Vassily Kandinsky, Alexej von Jawlensky, Marianne von Werefkin, Franz Marc, August Macke and Gabriele Münter.

soul alone, and at this point the music of the future begins.'[82] This articulates one of the central tenets of an aesthetic philosophy in which directness of expression, 'the soul alone', should take precedence over external representation. Schoenberg aligned himself with the expressionist style as promoted by *Der Blaue Reiter* and was, according to Kandinsky's maxim, composing music of the future. Fifty years later, it was Schoenberg's music which would influence the development of a compositional style in which Davies would reinvent expressionism as his own brand of neo-expressionism, a style which reached maturation in the iconic music-theatre pieces of the 1960s but which is embryonic in *Taverner*.

Kandinsky admired Schoenberg as a composer and held him in equally high regard as a painter. Indeed, Schoenberg was an accomplished artist who once stated that painting held the same value to him as did composition.[83] During a creative outpouring between 1908-1912, which included the composition of *Pierrot,* Schoenberg produced seventy-six oil paintings, exhibited works at three exhibitions and contributed an article to *Der Blaue Reiter Almanach* ('The Blue Rider Almanac').[84] The majority of Schoenberg's works from this period are self-portraits and include a series entitled 'visions and gazes.'[85] *Red Gaze* and *Tears* focus on an inner world which is realised in grotesque, disfigured portraiture. Significantly, Davies once wrote that,

> The extreme grotesqueness of the instrumental writing [in *Pierrot lunaire*] reminds me very much of the medieval gargoyles – which I'm very keen on and are part of my sort of passion and I collect the things – and the expression in this music immediately struck a chord at that very early age which related it to perhaps the doom-laden feeling of the late fifteenth century.[86]

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[82] Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, (1910), transl. Michael Sadler (1914), (New York, Dover Publications, 1977), p.12.
[83] Halsey Stevens, 'A Conversation with Schoenberg about Painting', *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute*, Vol. II, No. 3 (June 1978), p.179.
[84] Courtney S. Adams, 'Parallels between Arnold Schoenberg's Music and Painting (1908-1912)', *College Music Symposium,* Vol. 35 (1995), p.6. n 2. Schoenberg prized his paintings so highly that he placed a greater monetary value upon some of them than the autograph score of *Pierrot lunaire*.
[85] Courtney Adams notes that self-portraiture accounts for over one-quarter of Schoenberg's total output of paintings. Adams, op. cit., p.8.
[86] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'Schoenberg: *Pierrot Lunaire', Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.92.

Inevitably, as noted above, given Schoenberg's influence upon Davies, parallels are frequently drawn with *Pierrot lunaire*[87] and his other expressionist works including *Erwartung* (1909) and the *Five Orchestral Pieces* (1909). Also, like Schoenberg, Davies produced visual works of art.[88] As if affirming his identification with earlier expressionist principles, there exists a self-portrait in crayon in a compositional sketch for *Revelation and Fall* (1966), the work which marked the arrival of Davies's neo-expressionist style.[89] This was realised in the post-*Taverner* series of works, *Revelation and Fall*, *Missa Super L'Homme Armé*, *Vesalii Icones* and *Eight Songs for a Mad King* which, as Nicholas Jones notes, all share expressionistic surfaces 'riven with heterogeneity and discontinuity and characterised by disjunction and fragmentation in their most extreme forms.'[90] In relation to *Revelation and Fall* the composer once acknowledged the influence of 'not only the gargoyles and so in medieval art but also things like Ensor and Grosz and Bacon.'[91]

Francis Bacon (1909-1992) produced works whose subjects of 'distorted and cage figures perpetuated an iconography of mental and physical pain, and a sustained reflection of the common wartime experience of devastation, confinement and dread.' Bacon's caged figures recall the imprisoned king in *Eight Songs* and his crucifixion imagery, Joking Jesus's mock crucifixion in *Taverner.* Also, Bacon has been claimed as a predecessor to a strand of postmodernism which emerged in Germany in the late 1960s known as neo-expressionism. Perhaps coincidentally, the emergence of Davies' own neo-expressionistic style corresponded with its development. It is not the intention of this study to provide a detailed examination of the thematic and stylistic intersections which are identifiable between these two artists. However, to contextualize fully and to understand Davies's evolving aesthetic, it is beneficial to

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[87] Jonathan Cross, *The Stravinsky Legacy* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.144. As will be discussed in Chapter 6 of this thesis, *Pierrot* held a fascination for Davies which was fuelled by a performance in 1965 at Wardour Castle Summer School by the American soprano Bethany Beardslee.

[88] Davies's mother, Hilda, was a talented amateur painter. For further discussion of the composer's visual works of art, see Jones and McGregor, op. cit., pp.17-18 and pp.270-272.

[89] See Davies's self-portrait held in the British Library, Add. MS.71253 fol.91r.

[90] Nicholas Jones in Jones and McGregor, *The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2020), p. 27.

[91] Griffiths, op. cit., p.111.

reflect briefly upon shared themes and ideas which were preoccupying artists contemporary to Davies in Cold War Europe.

German neo-expressionism was led by the iconoclastic artist, Georg Baselitz (b.1938).[92] Although Baselitz has consistently rejected any link between his own work and expressionism, its style is characterised by a departure from minimalism and conceptualism and favours overtly expressive means.[93] His work often focuses upon raw, brutal and personal subjects which mirror many of Davies's extra-musical concerns. Throughout the 1960s, Baselitz was increasingly interested in anamorphic imagery. His painting *Der Nackte Mann* ('The Naked Man') brings to mind Davies's fascination with the grotesque. *P.D. Zeichnung* (1963) by Baselitz is an ink drawing depicting knotted forms and bulbous, putrefying shapes relating to the artist's writings about schizophrenia and paranoia in his two *Pandemonium* manifestos of 1961-62.[94] Both Davies and Baselitz were intrigued by the notion of inversion. It has been suggested that the Martyrdom of St Peter and his inverted crucifixion may have inspired Baselitz's practice of inversion, first seen in 1969 in his painting, *Der Wald auf dem Kopf* ('The Wood on its Head').[95] Davies's *Antechrist* pre-dates *Der Wald auf dem Kopf,* yet the concept of inversion is also central to the work. In the programme note, the composer wrote that,

> …the piece starts with a straightforward rendering of the thirteenth-century motet, *Deo Confitemini – Domino,* which is then broken up and superimposed upon related plainsong fragments which, both musically and with regard to their implied texts, turns the sense of the motet inside out.[96]

As Griffiths has shown, this turning of the motet 'inside out' is achieved through multiple processes of retrogradation and inversion.[97] Davies acknowledges that it is the 'medieval

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[92] Georg Baselitz, whose real name was Hans Georg Kern, was born in the village of Deutschbaselitz near Dresden in Saxony. Baselitz adopted the name of his birthplace as his surname. Like Davies, Baselitz grew up during the World War Two; he witnessed the bombing of Dresden in 1945, the allied occupation and the partition of Germany.
[93] In the 1970s and 1980s, the school of neo-expressionism led by Georg Baselitz became known as *Neuen Wilden* (the new Fauvists).
[94] Baselitz's second manifesto is an hômage to Antonin Artaud.
[95] See Richard Calvocoressi, 'A Source for the Inverted Imagery in Georg Baselitz's Painting', *The Burlington Magazine*, Dec. 1985, Vol.127, No. 993, pp.894-899.
[96] Davies, quoted in Griffiths, op. cit. p.144.
[97] For an analysis of *Antechrist* see Griffiths, op. cit., pp.55-61.

Antichrist concept rather than the more literal familiar figure under that name in 1 John II and 2 John VII' that plays a significant part.[98] In *Taverner,* musically and dramatically, the concept of inversion is variously presented the opera: the protagonist's role is inverted as he turns from persecuted to persecutor, from creator to destroyer; in Act I there is a false execution, in Act II, it is real; the Antichrist stands for the inversion of Christian principles; in Act II, scene iii Davies inverts Taverner's musical fingerprint, his *In Nomine* to symbolize his betrayal.[99] Also, writing in 1968, Davies noted that pitch-class sets or series were treated to 'perpetual transformation, so that given musical identities, such as 'straight' or 'inverted' set-forms, are only gradually established and disintegrated.'[100] In *Taverner* this disintegration alludes to Taverner's own transformation where a given pitch-class set loses its original intervallic identity only to gain the personality of its inversion: Taverner 'loses his identity and acquires another that is the inversion of all that he implicitly stood for by being a creative artist.'[101]

Further, Kerman has argued that, 'the first of the climactic scenes (Act I, scene iv) is an inversion of the second (Act II, scene iv)' and that 'in the deepest sense the dramatic rhythm of the two scenes is inverted, too. The first moves away from a more human plane to inhumanity, the second moves the other way.'[102] As noted in Chapter 4 of this thesis, Act II, scene i is 'the 'anti' or 'shadow' of Act I, scene i[103] and, similarly, the two inner scenes featuring the King, invert religious meaning as the Cardinal is transformed into the Archbishop. The notion of inversion was also central to medieval European 'Fool literature' in which moral and social values are turned upside down in the *Mundus inversus*. A popular festival called the *Festum Fatuorum* ('Feast of Fools') were burlesques of morality and worship which included parodies of the Mass in which high and low officials would have their roles inverted. In *Taverner*, these ideas resonate with Act I, scene iv where, following the appearance of the Antichrist, a street passion

[98] Davies, quoted in Griffiths, op. cit., p.144
[99] Griffiths, op. cit., p.52.
[100] Davies, 'Sets or series', *The Listener*, 79, 22 February (1968) p.250.
[101] Stephen Arnold, 'Peter Maxwell Davies', *British Music Now: a Guide to the work of younger composers,* Lewis Foreman (editor), (London, Paul Elek, 1975), p.83.
[102] Kerman, op. cit., p.21.
[103] Davies, 'Taverner', *Tempo* No.101 (1972), p.5.

mystery play is performed. 'Obviously acting a role,'[104] the Jester becomes the crucified Joking Jesus, the drunken, bungling Priest of Act I, scene i parodies God the Father whilst 'Rose takes up the station of Mary and Richard that of John.'

Another major exponent of neo-expressionism and contemporary to Baselitz was Anselm Kiefer (b.1945). Kiefer is referred to as a 'history painter' since his subject material frequently draws upon German history and myth. Recurring themes include the interrogation of national and personal identity, Norse legend and the Holocaust. A series of photographic self-portraits entitled *Occupations* (1969) includes an image in which Kiefer is dressed in his father's military uniform pictured on a deserted beach gazing out to sea giving the *Hitlergruss* salute. Yet, Kiefer's salute adopts a Romantic posture which was widely employed by the nineteenth-century German artist Caspar David Friedrich.[105] Further parallels may be drawn with Davies's aesthetic: it is autobiographical, focuses on the plight of an individual *in extremis* and connects with past styles whilst providing socio-political commentary. Further, Kiefer's embracing of archetypal romantic gestures and models resonates with Josipovici's view that Davies's aesthetic roots lie in romantic German music.[106] Certainly, the composer's attraction to a generic archetype such as grand opera appears to affirm that connection with the musical past. Also, at the centre of *Taverner* is the typical romantic hero or anti-hero in the mould of Don Giovanni, Lohengrin or Wozzeck. Taverner is the blueprint for the solitary figure which would be recast in his neo-expressionist Schoenberg-inspired works of the late 1960s. Josipovici has stated that,

> It seems clear in retrospect that he would sooner rather than later write *Revelation and Fall*, *Songs for a Mad King* and *Vesalii Icones.* But in all these later works the focus is on one figure and one figure only – double of the artist if you like, but of the spectator too. In the libretto of *Taverner* I think one finds the traces of the struggle to reach that degree of direct expression of the animal scream of the heart without the immediate disintegration of the music.[107]

[104] Full score, p.192.
[105] Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840), Romantic German landscape artist. The inspiration behind Kiefer's adopted posture may be found in Friedrich's *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818).
[106] Josipovici, op. cit., p.19.
[107] Ibid.

The 'traces of the struggle' to reach that 'degree of direct expression' are most obviously to be found in Act I, scene iv of *Taverner* the creation of which, as the composer has acknowledged, was a pivotal moment in his creative evolution.[108]

Revelation and Fall is widely recognised as Davies's first neo-expressionistic work, yet it is possible to argue that the development of this style is inchoate in *Taverner*.[109] The post-*Taverner* works, including *Revelation and Fall*, all share materials and structures which are closely linked to the opera.[110] As will be discussed in more detail below, Act I, scene iv and Act II, scene i of *Taverner* contain themes, imagery and techniques which refer back to Schoenbergian expressionism and look forward to Davies's reinvention of the style; they are blueprints for the music-theatre works of the 1960s.

In *Revelation and Fall*, a nun appears in a red blood-drenched habit and in *Eight Songs*, a deranged king rants and raves at caged musicians and destroys a violin. Act I, scene iv of *Taverner* also contains material which is prophetic of this style. Richard McGregor has suggested that Davies's use of graphic extremist imagery recalls that of the Royal Shakespeare Company's *Theatre of Cruelty* productions of the mid-1960s which were inspired by Antonin Artaud (1896-1948).[111] McGregor notes that Davies's compositions 'could be viewed as a musical extension of that, although there is no specific indication in his writings that he was directly influenced.'[112]

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[108] Davies referred to the composition of Act I, scene iv as one of 'the seminal events' in his creative life. See Paul Griffiths' programme note for the original production at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London, 12 July 1972.
[109] Stephen Pruslin makes reference to neo-expressionism in the context of Davies's music-theatre works including *Revelation and Fall*. 'An Anatomy of Betrayal', *Music and Musicians*, July 1972.
[110] Roberts, op. cit., p. 291. For example, Roberts shows that many of the pitch-class materials used in *Revelation and Fall* are borrowed from *Taverner*.
[111] Inspired by Antonin Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty*, the Royal Shakespeare Company's season in 1964 included Peter Brook's landmark production of Peter Weiss's play The *Persecution and Assassination of Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade*.
[112] Richard McGregor in Jones and McGregor, op. cit., p.237.

3.4 Berthold Brecht's 'epic theatre'

Along with Artaud, the other twentieth-century revolutionary dramatist who challenged and reinvented theatrical concepts was Berthold Brecht. Just as Artaud's 'theatre of cruelty' resisted realistic narrative, Brecht's genre of 'epic theatre' aimed at alienation.[113] John Warnaby has suggested that Brechtian principles inform Davies's output and, in particular, cites the sequel of *Taverner*, the opera *Resurrection*.[114] He has stated that Davies has 'followed Brecht in uncompromisingly rejecting the nineteenth-century notion of the misunderstood artist working in isolation, so that *Resurrection* is openly, rather than tacitly, subversive.'[115] *Taverner* may be less openly subversive than *Resurrection* but, nonetheless, Brechtian concepts are also observable even if their inclusion was, as with Artaud's influence, unconscious.

Brecht co-founded the *Berliner Ensemble* in East Berlin in the German Democratic Republic in 1949 to serve as a vehicle for his own work and practice of epic theatre.[116] This was Brecht's concept of theatre, which opposed to dramatic theatre, discouraged the audience's emotional involvement in the action on stage. In 1956 and 1965, the *Berliner Ensemble* appeared in a series of performances in London which influenced the future development of British dramaturgy. Margaret Eddershaw has observed that,

> Ideas in British theatre were on the move; the arts in the 1960s were in a time of change and expansion. Then the 'politicisation' of theatre in the post-1968 period, which led to the development of the 'fringe' theatre scene, provided a perfect context for the rehabilitation of Brecht. His plays – including their politics at this time – were ideal material for that rather un-British event, the construction of an 'alternative' theatre discourse.[117]

Although there is no evidence to support it, it is possible that Davies may have been aware of the 'alternative discourse' which occupied British theatre whilst he was working on *Taverner*.

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[113] Brecht was part of the post-expressionist movement in Germany known as *Neue Sachlichkeit* ('New Objectivity'); notably, Brecht admired the work of two cabaret performers, Karl Valentin and, significantly, the writer of *Lulu,* Frank Wedekind.

[114] For further discussion see John Warnaby, *The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies Based on the Writings of George Mackay Brown,* PhD thesis (Open University, 1990).

[115] John Warnaby, 'Maxwell Davies's *Resurrection*: Origins, Themes, Symbolism', *Tempo* No. 191 (December 1994), p.8.

[116] The company was co-founded with Brecht's wife, Helene Wiegel.

[117] Margaret Eddershaw, *Performing Brecht, Forty Years of British Performances* (London, Routledge, 1996), p.5.

The producer of the world-première of *Taverner*, Michael Geliot, directed the UK première of Brecht's *Happy End* in 1964, so it is likely that he would have introduced Davies to Brechtian techniques during the opera's production process. Also, Geliot has acknowledged that a 'turning point' in his career was his attendance of a performance of the *Caucasian Chalk Circle* given by the *Berliner Ensemble* which, for him, opened up a 'new dimension of theatre.'[118]

The influential theatre director William Gaskill[119] recalled that, 'for me the visit in '56 was the most striking and influential theatrical experience I shall ever have. *Courage* really shattered me, it was extraordinary. Everything suddenly clarified and came into focus….[120] One component of Brecht's epic theatre, as practised in *Mother Courage*, included *Verfremdungseffert* ('the Estrangement Effect'), a technique which Brecht once famously described as 'acting in quotation marks'. *Verfremdungseffert* has been mistranslated into English as the 'distancing effect.' Eddershaw offers a more nuanced definition.

> Even translating the term as 'distancing effect' promotes the notion that Brecht meant the audience to be detached from their feelings during a performance. However, the real point which he strives to make clear is not that an audience should not feel, but that he intends them to feel *different* emotions from those being experienced by the characters on the stage. If, for example, a character expresses sadness, the audience might experience anger at the social causes of that sadness. Perhaps it is, in the end, largely a matter of degree. Sympathy is acceptable in Brecht's theatre but not empathy. The former is legitimate because it stops short of total identification.[121]

In Brecht's epic theatre, and to discourage 'total identification,' characters also receive archetypal names. In *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* the cast includes 'The Singer', 'The Governor' and 'The Grand Duke' et al. Frank Wedekind adopts a similar approach in his cycle of *Lulu* plays, where, in addition to the named roles, there are also those of 'The Banker', 'A Clown,' 'The

[118] Michael Geliot, 'Michael Geliot and the mind-benders', *The Times,* 06 July 1972.
[119] William Gaskill (1930-2016), British theatre director; Artistic Director of the Royal Court Theatre, 1965-72. Recognised as introducing the work of Berthold Brecht to British audiences including productions of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (Royal Shakespeare Company, 1962) and *Mother Courage and her Children* (National Theatre, 1965).
[120] Eddershaw, op. cit., p.58.
[121] Eddershaw, op. cit., p.16.

Animal Trainer' et al.[122] The defamiliarization of characters is also evident in *Taverner* where, although, according to the composer, the character of the Cardinal is based upon Cardinal Wolsey and that of the King, King Henry VIII, neither are named, and, so, in the tradition of epic theatre, they are depersonalised. Interpretatively, this depersonalisation can render a character to be one-dimensional which goes some way to explain Joseph Kerman's belief that there was too little development of character in the opera. Indeed, Kerman's description of Taverner as a 'straw man, a caricature out of a counter-reformation tract'[123] aligns with Davies's comment that he did not intend the characters to be heroes or heroines in the traditional sense: 'They're all either cardboard figures, in that they state the dogma of the church or represent a cut-and-dried viewpoint; or they are complicated beings who state at one time one side of the problem and at another time the other side.'[124]

Brecht also challenged the audience to reassess traditional dramatic and musical processes through the use of fractured narrative and detached storytelling. In *Taverner,* Davies's manipulation of dramatic and historical time combined with non-linear narrative also seeks to challenge conventions.[125] Another Brechtian technique required cast members to play multiple roles to subvert illusion, emphasise realism, and discourage audience identification. Similarly, in *Lulu* the audience does not become emotionally involved with the characters until the opera's final scene and only then compelled through 'the intensity and power of the music, to feel pity for and to identify not only with Lulu and Geschwitz… but with all the characters.'[126] This recalls Donald Mitchell's view that Berg unconsciously promoted a large-scale dramatic confusion since 'what goes on in the orchestra pit and on the stage fail to match.'[127] However, it has been argued that this dichotomy represented Berg's conscious exploitation of the musical

[122] By association, Frank Wedekind, who wrote the *Lulu* cycle of plays (*Earth Spirit* & *Pandora's Box*) upon which Berg's opera is based, was influential in the development of epic theatre. Berthold Brecht idolised Frank Wedekind. As discussed above, Berg's opera also had a significant influence upon Davies.
[123] Joseph Kerman, 'Popish Ditties', *Tempo* No. 102 (Summer 1972), p.23.
[124] Davies in conversation with Stephen Walsh, '*Taverner', The Musical Times,* Vol. 113, No. 1553, (July 1972), p. 653.
[125] For example, the two scenes set in the Throne Room (Act I, scene iii and Act II, scene ii) during which the machinations of court are observed from a distance are, temporally, remote from the rest of the opera's drama.
[126] Jarman, op. cit., pp.97-98.
[127] Donald Mitchell, 'The Character of *Lulu*', *Music Review* 15, November 1954, p.268.

conventions of grand opera to subvert Brecht's theatrical ideology by eliciting an emotional response to engage with moral argument through music.[128]

In *Taverner*, Davies makes a similar case. Notably, it is also at the end of the opera. Kerman has stated that,

> The White Abbot moves into centre stage (and up) to sing a long, impressive aria. The chorus moans for him, splendidly, instead of launching into lengthy detached commentaries or uttering Stravinskian aphorisms, as they have been doing most of the time. At last a character is allowed to develop and the static 'drama of ideas' yields to drama of personality.[129]

In this valedictory aria in Act II, scene iv, a 'drama of personality' does emerge. It is the most extended 'aria' in the whole opera. However, it is not the White Abbot who projects the 'drama of personality.' The vocal style is mostly syllabic, which dominates throughout the opera, and there are few expressive or dynamic directions in the score. Accompanying the White Abbot, the music of emotional intensity is found in the pit as the orchestra perform the final Lento from the *Second Taverner Fantasia*. In comparison to the vocal line, the orchestral parts are riven with detailed dynamic and expressive indications and the scoring for strings and harp evokes the hyper-expressivity of Mahler and Berg.[130] This resonates with Davies's comment that he composed the *Fantasia* because 'many ideas where capable of a more symphonic development than was possible in the confines of the dramatic context.'[131] Although this statement may be read primarily as referring to compositional concerns it may also apply to extra-musical ones. It recalls Josipovici's comment that Davies is unable to depend upon distancing techniques to address 'dramatic problems' because his 'roots are deep in Romanticism and in German music, which is only another way of saying that his problem has

[128] Jarman, op. cit., pp.97-98.
[129] Kerman, op. cit., p.22.
[130] The *Second Taverner Fantasia* was composed after the completion of Act I of the opera.
[131] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed), '*Second Fantasia on John Taverner's 'In Nomine'*, *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.67.

always been to render the *cry* articulate, rather than to transmute it into a more formal scheme.'[132] In the opera's closing moments, the epic yields to the dramatic.

Kerman's reference to a 'drama of ideas' brings to mind Stravinsky's *Oedipus rex* where the conceptual is placed in the foreground and personalities are pushed into the background, or, in Brechtian parlance, estranged. In Davies's drama of ideas, the characters are figurative as Taverner represents betrayal, the Cardinal/Archbishop signifies religion, and Rose Parrowe is a metaphor for 'Music Incarnate.'[133]

Another Brechtian distancing technique is *Spass.*[134] It is used to ease tension and, through irony, to discourage identification with the characters on stage. In *Revelation and Fall*, a Nun dressed in a blood red habit and screaming into a megaphone is on stage; at this most disturbing moment in the work Davies introduces an 'ironic distance from his subject and ensuring that this audience does the same, through an unlikely use of humour.'[135] Similarly, examples of *Spass* may be identified in *Taverner:* the Street Passion Play and Mock Crucifixion (Act I, scene iv), the parodying of the King (Act I, scene iii and Act II, scene iii) and the comedic role of the Priest-Confessor (Act I, scene i).

In Brecht's brand of epic theatre, the singular role of narrator is largely dispensed with, since the narrative process is integral to the style of acting. However, characters do occasionally step out of their role to narrate; for example Peachum (the controller of London's beggars) addresses the audience at the end of Act III in *The Threepenny Opera* as he reminds the audience that they have been merely watching a play. In *Taverner*, Davies has referred to the characters as puppets controlled by a master-puppeteer who is the opera's central and detached character, Death. He has a similar function to the roles of the Narrator in the *Soldier's*

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[132] Josipovici, op. cit., p.19. David Beard offers a different interpretation of Josipovici's view, see Beard in Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (co-eds.), '*Taverner:* an interpretation', *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, CUP, 2009) p.103.
[133] Peter Maxwell Davies, '*Taverner:* Synopsis and Documentation', *Tempo* No 101 (1972), p.5.
[134] Literally translated meaning 'fun'.
[135] Rees, op. cit., p.180.

Tale and the Chorus in *Oedipus rex* and where, as in Brecht's genre of theatre, the dual role is part of the action, simultaneously controlling and commenting upon it. In another Brechtian conceit, the Jester/Death breaks the Fourth Wall. At the end of Act I, scene iii, (bars 345-355) the character is on stage 'alone, still lying on his side, his head propped on his elbow…' Dispensing with theatrical illusion, he removes his Jester's mask, reveals himself as Death and addresses the audience: 'When the Lion knows his strength, hard it is to rule him. The cords of hell encompass us about, and the floods of ungodliness make me afraid.'[136]

Epic theatre favoured historicization rather than melodrama to provide comment on contemporary political and/or social issues.[137] In *Taverner*, sixteenth-century Reformation England is the lens through which Davies critiqued themes such as betrayal, prejudice, religious persecution and hypocrisy as observed in post-World War Two Europe and during the Cold War. Even if it was unconscious on the composer's part, through historicization, estrangement techniques, satire and fractured narrative, parallels may be drawn with Brechtian dramaturgy.[138] And, as Warnaby has shown in his discussion of *Resurrection*, the identification and interpretation of these ideas advances our understanding of Davies's aesthetic.

Ultimately, Davies's endgame may not wholly subscribe to Kandinsky's stated desire for musical experience to be a matter 'for the soul alone,' but stylistically, there is much in *Taverner* which has antecedents in Schoenbergian expressionism. The *Pierrot Players* first performances of Davies's music-theatre works went about transforming the concert hall into a 'theatre of extreme emotion and spiritual questing.'[139] The composer's comment about *Pierrot* representing a new 'bridge' to 'whole new regions of experience' could equally apply to

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[136] Full score, Act I, scene iii, pp.129-131.
[137] For example, Brecht's *The Good Person of Szchewan* is a parable play written in 1943 set in pre-war China; *The Threepenny Opera* composed in Weimar Berlin in 1928 is a socialist critique on capitalism set in Victorian England.
[138] It is also possible to identify thematic connections including religious dogma, oppression and betrayal. For example, Brecht's *Life of Galileo* (1937-39) concerns a scientist's search for truth after battling Catholic orthodoxy. Galileo is put on trial by the Roman Catholic Church for promulgating his scientific beliefs after which he abdicates responsibility.
[139] Griffiths, op. cit., p.18.

Taverner and, just as *Pierrot* was a defining moment in the advancement of Schoenberg's oeuvre, so *Taverner* was a bridge into neoteric worlds for Davies.

In all expressionist iconography it is Edvard Munch's *The Scream* (1893) and its 'embodiment of Expressionist angst'[140] which speaks to the most overtly expressionistic moment of the opera as Death falsely beatifies Taverner. Significantly, it was a woodcut of Munch's iconic painting which featured on the cover of the published score of *Revelation and Fall*. And, although it is this work which is most commonly identified as the 'first full flowering of Davies's neo-expressionism,'[141] the seeds were surely sown in *Taverner*.

[140] Rupprecht, op, cit., p.327.
[141] Rees, op. cit., p.157.

PART B: Critique

Chapter 4

Themes

It really is an opera with a capital O, perhaps the only one I'll ever write…[1]

Taverner was not the only opera which Peter Maxwell Davies wrote but, as he suggests, it is the only one with a 'capital O.' A grand opera. It is possible to argue that the operas which followed *Taverner,* including *Resurrection, The Martyrdom of St Magnus* and *The Lighthouse* are less traditional operas. Davies also once remarked that *Taverner*'s main influences were 'probably Mozart, in *Don Giovanni*; *Boris Godunov* and possibly the *Incoronazione di Poppea* of Monteverdi.'[2] These are operas with capital Os: they interrogate grand themes, have heroes and anti-heroes at their centres and, like *Taverner*, both *Boris Godunov* and *L'incoronazione di Poppea* are historical pieces set during turbulent times of change. They are operas of scale, dominated by large personalities embroiled in timeless dilemmas concerning morality, religion and politics, church and state, the public and the private.

Paul Griffiths has stated that 'opera is by its nature made for such big characters and the conflicts they generate, since the singers of opera, like the princes, prelates and politicians of the sixteenth century, must stride their world as stars.'[3] Yet, in Davies's grand opera the 'big character' who generates the conflict is not a prince, prelate nor a politician. Ostensibly, the star is 'but a poor musician,'[4] an enigmatic English Renaissance composer, the eponymous John Taverner. It may be Taverner who ignites the drama yet his stardom is subverted and it is the dual role of the Jester/Death who usurps him as the opera's central character. Death is Taverner's alter-ego whilst his double, the Jester, is the real power behind the King's throne. Taverner and the King are mere puppets. It is the Jester/Death who pulls the strings and sets a thematic agenda dominated by one subject: betrayal.

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[1] Peter Maxwell Davies, 'The conscience of the composer: Patrick O'Connor talks to Peter Maxwell Davies about *Taverner*', *Harper's and Queen*, July 1983.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Paul Griffiths, *Taverner*, programme note, op. cit.
[4] Act I, scene iv, full score, p.133.

4.1 Betrayal

Davies said that *Taverner* ‘projects onto the life and mind of the sixteenth-century English composer John Taverner certain perennial preoccupations of my own, notably with the nature of betrayal at the deepest levels.’[5] Throughout time, the ‘nature of betrayal’ has been an enduring and central theme throughout mythology, religion, literature and the performing arts. Stephen Pruslin has observed that,

> Despite the individual differences between their situations, Prometheus, Orpheus, Judas, Faust and Taverner are all at a similar point in their interior development: the point at which they make a painful decision to leave behind a whole set of values for the sake of expressing the individual, Dionysian part of themselves which has been restricted by a previous bond or commitment. Tragedy enters the picture when the result turns out not to have justified the step.[6]

In this reading, Prometheus betrays the Gods to bring fire to mankind and pays for it; Orpheus breaks his promise to Pluto by comforting Eurydice even though the cost is his losing her, whilst Taverner betrays his music, religion and loses his own identity. Such outcomes may be considered as negative endgames yet *Taverner* is not a wholly pessimistic work. On the contrary, Pruslin believes it to be affirmative and that ‘by living through the spectacle of [Taverner’s] spiritual struggle and failure, we derive strength.’[7] For the composer, the creation of the opera was a ritual and an affirmation that ‘Taverner’s betrayal would never be his own.’[8] As will be discussed below, this supports the notion that the creation of the opera was cathartic and has autobiographical significance. Indeed, when questioned about the personal aspect of the work, Davies stated: ‘I suppose there’s a grain of truth in that […], I was projecting myself onto Taverner but I think it was bigger than me….’[9]

The subject of betrayal finds expression at myriad levels throughout Davies’s oeuvre from *In Illo Tempore* (Op. 24) through the neo-expressionistic music theatre works of the 1960s. In later works, The *Antarctic Symphony* (Symphony no 8) explores betrayal of the environment Op. 215) whilst *Kommilitonen! (Young Blood!)* (Op. 306) examines the themes of freedom of

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[5] Davies, ‘*Taverner*: Synopsis and documentation’, *Tempo* No.101 (Spring 1972), p.4.
[6] Pruslin, op. cit.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Davies, quoted in Griffiths, op. cit., pp. 106-107.

expression and betrayal.[10] In earlier works, the focus tends to be on personal and, notably, religious betrayal. Majel Connery has commented that,

> Christianity in Davies's hands is a curiosity. It is never a priori but instead is on trial….. He is mounting an inquiry into a type of transcendent Christianity that offers its adherents the assurance of a settled orientation and thus relief from the prosaic concerns of every day [and] that Davies presents a view of Christianity as deeply corrupt and two-faced – his stage works are full of betrayal, last minute reversals and metamorphoses. The figure of Antichrist, Christ's evil double, appears frequently.[11]

In *Taverner,* two churches, the Church of Rome and English Protestantism, are on trial. The corruption and dogma of Catholicism is pitted against Henry VIII's manipulation of Protestantism for selfish purposes. At the centre of the opera is John Taverner who, following his metamorphosis, betrays himself. In later output the scope of the nature of betrayal is expanded. In *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot* (Op. 60) and *The Lighthouse* (Op. 86), betrayal of the mind is examined and in *Black Pentecost* (Op. 82), the subject is betrayal of the environment.

Davies's 'perennial pre-occupation' with betrayal was part of a moral code which probably developed during his formative years. By the end of the 1950s, Britain would emerge as an affluent, more liberal society but in the first part of the decade, when Davies was a teenager he was living in a country suffering from post-war austerity, political bureaucracy and part of a society defined by conservatism and prejudice. Abortion was illegal, racism endemic, attitudes to marriage and sex, conservative, and homosexuality was a criminal offence.[12] Apparently, Davies's acceptance of his own homosexuality caused him 'remarkably little trouble'[13] although he did reflect that 'it is worth emphasizing that, at the age of fourteen, when I realised my nature, at a time when homosexuality was taboo, one had to be very careful, looking over one's shoulder constantly and trusting no-one, all too aware of what could happen if the truth were suspected – psychiatric treatment, including electric shock 'therapy', sterilization, lobotomy and ultimately confinement in a mental hospital or prison,

[10] For further discussion of betrayal throughout Davies's output, see Nicholas Jones and Richard McGregor, *The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2020), pp.234-244.
[11] Majel Connery, 'Staging the Unsacred in the Operas Taverner and Resurrection: Peter Maxwell Davies's Worst Nightmare', *Opera Quarterly*, Vol.25, No 3-4, 2010, p.249.
[12] Male homosexuality was decriminalized in England in the Sexual Offences Act, 1967.
[13] Seabrook, op. cit., p.31.

along with total rejection by family and friends.'[14] No doubt Davies, and countless others including Aaron Copland, Benjamin Britten et al, would have been sensitive to the severe punishments being handed out for 'homosexual acts' in several high-profile cases in the UK and the USA.[15] Davies once wrote that 'the official attitude to gay people of all three main religions [Jewish, Christian and Muslim] is not encouraging; at best one would be tolerated, at worst, actively persecuted. The Vulgate's translation of 'toevah' as 'abominatio' is possibly questionable, and must have led to unimaginable persecutions and wickedness.'[16]

It is likely that living through this climate of repression in the 1950s galvanised Davies's ethical position and contributed to his reputation as a man of 'fearless integrity' who had passionate views about 'almost everything.'[17] He once said that 'I think I have an attitude to authority which is basically debunking anyway'[18] and it was a stance he often adopted. In 1993 the Hoffmann Report[19] recommended that, to make financial savings, two of London's orchestras be closed down. Davies placed himself at the forefront of a public campaign of protest.[20] Following the British government's invasion of Iraq in 2003, the composer joined the 'Stop the War Coalition' and, in another confrontation made a speech to the British Academy of Composers and Songwriters in 2008, stating that: 'could there be warnings for our profession here? Moreover, the claims to be bringing democracy to invaded Muslim countries, with Abu-Ghraib, Guantanamo, mass bombardment and massive corruptions do politicians no favours, as our own freedoms are limited and infringed by the so-called "war on terror."'[21] Davies's objections to the Iraq War found expression in the Third Naxos String

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[14] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (editor), 'Indivisible Parameters and Spirit-Stirring Amalgams', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings,* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.305.
[15] For example, the 'Lavender Scare' and the 'Second Red Scare' in the USA which led to senator Joseph McCarthy's anti-communist campaign during the late 1940s and 1950s which accused, without evidence, individuals of being communists and infiltrating US Federal Government. In the UK, Alan Turing was prosecuted in 1952 for homosexual acts and chemically castrated. He committed suicide in 1954. Also, the Montagu Trial of 1954 which resulted in Lord Montagu, Peter Wildeblood and Michael Pitt-Rivers receiving criminal sentences; this scandal divided public opinion and led to the Wolfenden Report which resulted in the decriminalization of homosexuality in England in 1967.
[16] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (editor), 'A Composer's Point of View (III): On Religion', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings,* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.228.
[17] Seabrook, op. cit., pp. 31-32.
[18] Interview with Alison Hennegan, 'Safer Out Than In', *Gay News,* 168, May-June 1979.
[19] Arts Council committee of enquiry chaired by Lord Justice Hoffmann, December 1993.
[20] Peter Maxwell Davies, letter to *The Times*, 9 August 1993, cited in Jones op. cit., p.169.
[21] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (editor), 'A Disorientating Ruckus', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings,* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.272.

Quartet in which Taverner's *In Nomine* is distorted and composed out to spell an 'not-In-Nomine,' the anti-war slogan 'Not In My Name.'[22]

He also publicly denounced the monopolisation of 'mega-banks and mega-businesses' in which 'serious political debate could not even question the sustainability of a global market and financial system dedicated only to ever more massive profit.'[23] Late twentieth-century systemic corruption finds its corollary in sixteenth-century Reformation England when, in Act I, scene iii of *Taverner*, the venality at work between church and state is made plain as during a discourse upon the 'King's Great Matter' the Cardinal proclaims that: 'England is our storehouse of delights, a very inexhaustible well, where much abounds, and much can be extracted from many.'[24] Davies was exposed to the ultimate betrayal in 2009 when his former manager, Michael Arnold, was found to have stolen over £500,000 from him to fund a gambling habit. Arnold was sentenced to eighteen months in prison.[25]

Arguably, *Taverner* is Davies's first work in which betrayal is comprehensively interrogated from musical and non-musical perspectives including the personal, the creative, the political and the spiritual. Pruslin has described *Taverner* as: 'a searching examination of the anatomy and consequences of betrayal [which] contains layer upon layer of double-edged perceptions on the subject. In this respect it is the descendent of works such as *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*, which in their different ways, deal with the complex and dualistic nature of betrayal.'[26] In exploring the duality of betrayal, *Don Giovanni* and *Così* also consider the art of contradiction. *Taverner* is a similar proposition: the King wishes to challenge the corruption of the Church of Rome yet wishes to file for a divorce which will enable him to profit in power and wealth; Taverner holds a deep religious faith but it is his zealotry which is his undoing.[27] It recalls George Orwell's notion of 'Doublethink' which, in the novel *1984,* published in 1949, is the power to hold 'two contradictory beliefs in one's

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[22] Rodney Lister, 'Peter Maxwell Davies's 'Naxos' Quartets', *Tempo* No.232 (April 2005), p.11.
[23] Davies, quoted in Jones, op. cit. p.272.
[24] Full score, Act I, scene ii, bb. 80-91, p.108.
[25] Michael Arnold was sentenced on 2 November 2009 which coincided with rehearsals beginning for the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra's concert performance of *Taverner* in Glasgow.
[26] Stephen Pruslin, 'An Anatomy of Betrayal', *Music and Musicians,* July 1972.
[27] Ibid.

mind simultaneously and accepting both of them.'[28] This play of binaries is a central theme of the opera and it is expressed in various ways where, for example, dramatically, Taverner's actions are presented as being hypocritical; structurally, the opera's design is in two halves (where Act II is the polar opposite of Act I), and, compositionally, where serial techniques are set in opposition to, or juxtaposed with, tonal processes.

Davies resolutely never adopted an absolute position on the rights or wrongs of betrayal and maintained a view which was founded 'on the grounds of the freedom of individual conscience and an ambivalence reinforced by his distrust of formal Christianity.'[29] The composer was an atheist. Davies once stated that 'religion is a dirty word and I don't want to be associated with that'[30] and yet he regarded it as 'a wonderful work of art.'[31]

> I have never been a member of a religious community. My fascination as a student in Manchester with plainsong and with medieval and Renaissance church music led to one with art and architecture, and most significantly, with literature. However, I read Augustine and Aquinas from the outside, as literature, not as dogma, just as most of us now read Dante, and I see the text of the Mass as a wonderful poem, concerning things better expressed in pure music, rather than through word which encourage the illusion that we can even 'understand.'[32]

Davies dismissed organized religion and, as he perceived it, its inherent dogma. Yet, in another play of binaries and, perhaps ironically, the composer's output betrays an obsession with religion which finds expression in a significant number of his works.[33] Although Davies regarded himself as irreligious, he still deeply admired its synthesis of art, architecture, literature and music through which, as he notes above, encouraged 'the illusion that we can

[28] George Orwell, *1984* (Penguin, 2011).
[29] Tom Sutcliffe, 'Artist betrayed', *The Guardian,* 01 July 1983.
[30] Mike Seabrook, *Max, the Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (London, Victor Gollancz, 1994), p.104
[31] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (editor), 'Will Serious Music Become Extinct?' *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings,* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.267.
[32] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (editor), 'Indivisible Parameters and Spirit-Stirring Amalgams,' *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings,* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp.304-305.
[33] Davies's oeuvre includes music inspired by the sacred, works which parody religion and those composed for liturgical purposes. At one extreme is Davies's parody of the Latin Mass in his *Missa Super l'Homme Armé* and *Vesalii Icones.* At the other, are 'sacred works' which include the *St Michael Sonata*, *O Magnum Mysterium*, *Missa Parvula*, the choral miniatures *Veni Creator Spiritus*, *Reliqui domum meum* and a full-length *Mass* commissioned by Westminster Cathedral. Also see Davies's comments about religion in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'Master of the Queen's Music', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings,* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.250.

even *understand*.' Seemingly, Davies was attracted to the aesthetics of worship but repelled by its dogma. The composer constantly probes into religious meaning.

The 'illusion' of religion and the need to distinguish the true from the false is a recurring theme throughout his output. Seabrook has stated that Davies was always 'deeply and perennially interested in matters of truth, both as a musician and as a deeply thinking man' and that he is,

> …concerned about the communication of truth, and about communication in general – he is a communicator himself, and he worries greatly about the methods of communicating used by individuals, institutions, governments today. Since for many people religion is as profound a truth as it is a profound nonsense for others, he is *de facto* interested in its methods of communicating; and if he finds them corrupt, as in *Taverner*, he regards it as a very serious matter.[34]

Communication, perception and the manipulation of meaning are recurrent themes. In a programme note for *Vesalii Icones* (Op. 42), Davies explained that,

> In the last dance, 'The Resurrection', the Christ story is modified. It is the Antichrist – the dark 'double' of Christ of medieval legend, indistinguishable from the real Christ – who emerges from the tomb and puts his curse on Christendom for all eternity. Some may consider such an interpretation sacrilegious, but the point I am trying to make is a moral one: it is a matter of distinguishing the false from the real; that one should not be taken in by appearances. *Fides est virtus qua credentur quae non videntur. Nos quidquid illud significat faciamus, et quam sit verum, non laboremus.*[35]

In Act I, scene i of *Taverner,* the protagonist is on trial for heresy. A bribed Priest accuses Taverner of being a 'blasphemous corruptor of youth' who 'had blasphemous thoughts the Pope is antichrist.' The Council states, 'Fides est virtus qua credentur quae non videntur. Nos quidquid illud significat faciamus, et quam sit verum, non laboremus.' ('Faith is a means by which those things that are not seen may be believed. We may believe whatever it signifies to us, not troubling us as to how true such things might be').[36] Here and elsewhere in his output, Davies quotes the theological founding father of the Protestant Reformation, St Augustine and, although the communication of truth is explored in many works it is, perhaps, never more apparent than in *Taverner.*

[34] Seabrook, op. cit., p.104.

[35] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (editor), '*Vesalii Icones*', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings,* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.103.

[36] Full score, Act I, scene i, bb.381-390, pp.35-36.

As discussed in Chapter 1, it is now moot whether, during Reformation England, Taverner was as an agent of Thomas Cromwell. However the fact remains that he lived at a 'nodal point' in history when a 'web of guilt, suppressed violence, and dark ritual' permeated English religion and society.[37] Five hundred years later, Davies wrote *Taverner* at a parallel nodal point, when, during the Cold War era, spy-rings, double-agents, brainwashing and psychological torture were pervasive.

As Death/Jester spins his Wheel of Fortune in Act II, scene ii and shrieks in Latin, 'Rotam volubili orber versamus; infimasummis….' there are, again, shades of George Orwell's *1984*. Published ten years before Davies began work on *Taverner,* Orwell's satirical novel is a vision of a dystopia ruled by 'doublethink' and 'newspeak.' There is an uncomfortable contiguity between the Jester's Wheel of Fortune and the Party's circular slogan: 'Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past.'[38] Orwell's point, and that of Davies, is that all of human history is a subjective narrative written by those who are empowered to write it.

4.2 Church and state

The genre of historical opera has frequently examined the timeless tension between church and state as a point of departure thematically. In Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov,* a political and religious crisis provides a backdrop against which the drama is played out.[39] Donizetti composed three tragic operas inspired by a trio of Tudor queens, each facing political and religious challenges: *Maria Stuarda* (1835)*, Anna Bolena* (1830) and *Il castello di Kenilworth* (1829); Rossini chose Queen Elizabeth I as the subject for *Elisabetta* (1815). During the second half of the twentieth-century, there was a resurgence of interest in Saxon, Tudor and Elizabethan history, for example *Assassinio nella cattedrale* by Ildebrando Pizzetti (1958), Ralph Vaughan Williams's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1951) and Thea Musgrave's *Mary, Queen of Scots* (1977). Similarly, but off the operatic stage, British dramatists and film-makers of the 1960s turned to Tudor and Plantagenet history as a source of inspiration. Hal

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[37] John Harbison, 'Peter Maxwell Davies's *Taverner', Perspectives of New Music* (Fall/Winter 1972), p.239.
[38] George Orwell, *1984* (Penguin 2011).
[39] 'The Time of Troubles', 1598-1613.

Wallis produced the film *Becket*,[40] an adaptation of the play *Becket or the Honour of God* by Jean Anouilh.[41] Anouilh's play and Wallis's film focus on a protagonist seeking 'a moral path in a world of corruption and manipulation.'[42] It examined the conflict between church and the monarchy, between Thomas à Becket and King Henry II of England, which, ultimately, led to Becket's destruction. Correspondingly, John Taverner, even though he may be misguided, also searches for a 'moral path' in a world he regards as corrupt which leads, metaphorically, to his self-destruction.

Another film produced by Hal Wallis was *Anne of the Thousand Days*[43] which recounted King Henry VIII's love affair with Anne Boleyn and the annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. This was 'the King's Great Matter' which, following his dispute with Pope Clement VII, led to the dissolution of the monasteries, Henry's excommunication from the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant Reformation and, finally, his self-appointment as Supreme Head of the Church of England.[44] In a similar vein, and also inspired by Henrician times, was Robert Bolt's play and, later a film, *A Man for all Seasons.*[45] This work dramatized the life and times of Sir Thomas More (1478-1535) who was King Henry VIII's Lord Chancellor from 1529-1532. More was opposed to the king's repudiation of the Pope and to the Protestant Reformation; he refused to acknowledge Henry as Supreme Head of the Church of England and would not accept the annulment of his marriage. More was convicted of treason and beheaded at the Tower of London in 1535.

At first, *Taverner* appears to inhabit the historical worlds of *Anne of the Thousand Days* and *A Man for all Seasons.* In the Preface to the score, Davies notes:

> I have not only drawn on the few facts known of Taverner, but combed State papers, letters, contemporary sermons, biographies, diaries, poetry, plays, records of heresy trials etc. to give the record of John Taverner as wide an application and meaning as

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[40] *Becket* was released in 1964 starring Richard Burton (Thomas Becket) and Peter O'Toole (King Henry II).
[41] Jean Marie Lucien Pierre Anouilh, French dramatist, 1910-1987. Anouilh's play is known as a *pieces costumes* or a 'costume drama.'
[42] Marvin Carlson, "Jean Anouilh" in *Reference Guide to World Literature* (New York, St. James Press, 1995).
[43] Released in 1969 and starring Richard Burton (King Henry VIII) and Genevieve Bujold (Anne Boleyn).
[44] Act of Supremacy, 1534.
[45] Robert Bolt (1924-95), English playwright and screenwriter *A Man for All Seasons* was first performed at The Globe Theatre, London, 1960. A film version was produced in 1966 directed by Fred Zinnemann starring Paul Scofield as Sir Thomas More.

> possible. The text, therefore, consists of quotations, applied and ordered to suit the sense and circumstances.

However, its point of difference lies in the fact that the opera focuses on the themes which emerge from historical events rather than the actual events themselves and 'to give the record of John Taverner as wide an application and meaning as possible.' Consequently, *Taverner* may be viewed as more allegorical than these cinematographic or theatrical dramas. In Bolt's play historical characters are named as such, whereas in the opera, neither the King nor the Cardinal are ever specifically identified as King Henry VIII or Cardinal Wolsey. Davies affirms that 'the King is obviously based on Henry VIII' yet was 'not to be given the stage-appearance of any specific king. Likewise, the Cardinal is based on Wolsey.' The characters of Henry VIII and Thomas Wolsey are accurately drawn, yet Davies insists that neither 'time nor place are treated realistically' and that the characters, including Taverner himself, are 'as marionettes.'[46] They are manipulated by the Jester, the 'master-puppeteer' who, as noted above, is the real power behind the Protestant Reformation.[47]

In the wake of the Second World War, the prevalence of British historical subjects on stage, on film and in the opera house may be read as a collective desire to re-build personal, cultural and national identities through sustained re-engagement with the past. Further, it is perhaps significant that, during the 1960s, all of the Manchester School of composers pursued operatic projects with British historical subjects. Alexander Goehr composed *Arden Must Die* (1967), Harrison Birtwistle wrote *Punch and Judy* (1968), and, in 1968, Davies completed *Taverner.* Philip Rupprecht has suggested that this represented a 'renewed concern for the theatrical' which was 'in keeping with a 1960s *zeitgeist*' and a 'reinvestment in evocatively British subjects – the seaside Punch, Arden of Faversham, the Taverner myth in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*.'[48] Also, Josephson has stated that,

> Taverner is endowed not only with genius but also a 'sensitive temperament' and 'strong character', which compelled him 'to abandon music under pressure of religious conviction' (Fellowes' words). We are confronted here by the fundamental problem of man's relationship to his God and the personal crisis of conversion, through which Taverner emerges as a symbol of the host of complex institutional

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[46] Davies, '*Taverner*: Synopsis and Documentation', *Tempo* No.101 (1972), p.5.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Rupprecht, op. cit., p.257.

> and religious transformations which marked the English Reformation. The great composer has become a gripping figure whose proportions seem larger than life.[49]

Davies's embracing of an 'evocatively' British figure who was 'larger than life' was on trend whilst its historicization resulted in a richly allegorical work which, as will be discussed in the context of *Künstleropern* (artist-operas), captured the zeitgeist of the turbulent era in which it was written.

As discussed in Chapter 3, historicization, as opposed to melodramatization, was a Brechtian principle developed to provide purposeful comment upon contemporary political and social issues.[50] Through historicization, *Taverner* critiques not only matters of church and state but also some of the ideologies which defined the Renaissance. In his programme note for the world-première of *Taverner*, Griffiths wrote:

> It is not just that the Tudors lived their lives in operatic magnificence and display; they also, as creatures of the renaissance, shared a conviction in the power of the individual, the right of the great man or woman to stand against the persuasions of morality and tradition.[51]

In the opera, Taverner refers to himself as a 'poor musician.' This self-effacing attitude might suggest that the man, a mere composer, possessed little power or influence. Yet, similar to Henry VIII, Mary Stuart, Thomas More and others, Davies's Taverner was also a creature of the Renaissance. He encapsulates its essential spirit: the individual's right to self-determination. Self-determination, a central tenet of the Renaissance, was rooted in the philosophical principles of ancient Greece. The sophist Protagoras (c.490-420 BC) stated that 'man is the measure of all things.'[52] Plato (c.428-348 BC) interpreted this as meaning that there could be never be absolute truth, an approach prescient of twentieth-century existential relativist philosophy. As such, truth could only be defined by the individual. It is in this tradition that Taverner, similar to Thomas More and Thomas à Becket, pursues truth, or the truth as he believes it, at any cost. More's continued support for Roman Catholicism may represent the antithesis of Taverner's advocacy for Protestantism, but it is not a

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[49] David Josephson, 'In Search of the Historical Taverner', *Tempo* No. 101 (1972), p.41.
[50] For example, Brecht's *The Good Person of Szechwan* is a parable play written in 1943, set in pre-war China which explores how a country's morality is affected by its economic systems.
[51] Paul Griffiths, op. cit., programme note for *Taverner.* Courtesy of the Royal Opera House Collection.
[52] See the *Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* (Third Edition), (Oxford, OUP, 2011).

religious faith which is interrogated here, rather an individual's moral conscience. Writing in 1520, Robert Whittington described Thomas More as,

> …a man of an angel's wit and singular learning. I know not his fellow. For where is the man of that gentleness, lowliness and affability? And, as time requireth, a man of marvelous mirth and pastimes, and sometime of as sad gravity. A man for all seasons.[53]

In Robert Bolt's play, More represents the lone voice in a crowd, he is an outlier. Also, *A Man for all Seasons* introduces the concept of 'The Common Man.' This character plays all the other minor or 'common' roles in the play: he is More's Steward, the Boatman, the Jailer et al. The Common Man is the character with whom all readers can identify. He is neither King nor Saint. Bolt's 'Common Man' could, perhaps, just as readily, be Davies's 'poor composer.' In Act I of *A Man for all Seasons* the Common Man states:

> It is perverse! To start a play made up of Kings and Cardinals in speaking costumes and intellectuals with embroidered mouths, with me. If a King or a Cardinal had done the prologue he'd have the right materials. And if an intellectual would have shown enough majestic meanings, coloured propositions, and closely woven liturgical stuff to dress the House of Lords! But this! Is this a costume? Does this say anything? It barely covers one man's nakedness? A bit of black material to reduce Old Adam to Common Man. Oh, if they'd let me come on naked, I could have shown you something of my own…The Sixteenth Century is the Century of the Common Man. Like all other centuries. And that's my proposition.[54]

As in *Taverner*, Bolt's drama also discusses issues of identity, persecution, corruption and truth. More remarks to the Duke of Norfolk that, 'What matters is not that it's true, but that I believe it; or no, not that I *believe* it, but that *I* believe it.' Similarly, in Davies's opera, when, in Act I, scene i, Taverner resists the power of the Catholic church and rejects its hypocrisy as he perceives it, he does so only because of the strength of his *own* belief. Taverner sings: 'I must be saved by my own faith and, not by that of others.'[55]

Griffiths has argued that,

> [Taverner's] problem is that of deciding between private and public loyalties, between what he perceives to be the dictates of his conscience and what he judges to be the injunctions of his society – but of course he gets it terribly wrong. Living at a time when the old order of medieval Christendom had disintegrated – and we still

[53] English grammarian, c.1480–c.1553.
[54] Robert Bolt, *A Man for All Seasons,* Act I.
[55] Full score, Act I, scene i, bb.457-462, pp.43-44.

> live in that time – he finds no reason but to put his moral trust in any but himself. He might echo Luther's words 'Here I stand; I can no other.'[56]

Tradition holds that Martin Luther (1483-1546) delivered these words to the Diet of Worms in 1521.[57] At this meeting, Luther was summoned by the Emperor Charles V (1500-1558) to either renounce or to affirm religious beliefs which were to underpin the Protestant Reformation. Luther ended his interrogation in Worms stating that:

> Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the Pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen.[58]

Following Taverner's interrogation these words find an analogue with Davies's text in Act I, scene ii as the protagonist reflects upon his position. The chorus of Monks intone Taverner's *In Nomine* and chant 'Hoc opus est Johanni Taverni in regione Lindi nati, viri arte musica singularis', until Taverner interrupts them.

> If I follow their lying vanities, I shall forsake my own mercy. Their mercurial stone returns gold to dross. This is the vigil. Waiting, shall I arm against their justice, to purge us, to break our idols in our image, cut out our counterfeited hearts? Or is this the Devil's work? I created meaning, now exiled, I must look it out afresh, a new reality, by scorching reason. God is my strength.[59]

As with Luther, Taverner's own self-belief and his sense of a 'new reality' is total even if such conviction is misguided and contradictory. In the passage quoted above, Taverner remarks that the Monks' 'mercurial stone returns gold to dross' but, in the final analysis, it is Taverner's 'gold' or rather his soul, that is transformed to dross as he betrays not only his music, but also his wife, his beliefs and himself. Taverner's reference to 'the vigil' is to the

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[56] Paul Griffiths, op. cit., programme note for *Taverner.* Courtesy of the Royal Opera House Collection.

[57] Gabriel Josipovici has argued that Martin Luther's creed has exercised a profound and lasting universal influence on humanity which can be seen as mediated through writings and works of art. For example, in Thomas Mann's novel *Doktor Faustus* he contends that the fictional composer, Adrian Leverkühn represents Arnold Schoenberg who 'stands behind' Friedrich Nietszche who, in turn, stands in the shadow of Martin Luther. He asserts that although the birth of Lutheranism marked the beginning of the end of all things authoritarian (be it religion, politics etc.), it did not begin in Luther's Protestant Germany but rather in Reformation England. It was through the Henrician revolution and the rejection of Rome that marked the true start of the subsequent disintegration of religion. See, Josipovici, op. cit., p.13.

[58] Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1985), p.460.

[59] Full score, Act I, scene ii, bb.33-124, pp.69-72.

Mount of Olives, where, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus.[60] Stephen Pruslin asserts that it is Judas and not Jesus, who Taverner emulates. He argues that, 'Judas throws light on Taverner's situation not only because he stands for the arch-betrayer, but also because he demonstrates the double-meaning of betrayal itself.'[61]

At the start of the opera, Taverner makes his spiritual position clear. He is no longer able to accept the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation through which bread and wine are miraculously transformed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Taverner sings:

> …of one body of Christ is made two bodies, one natural, which is in heaven, the other, in the sacrament, needs to be unnatural, to enter the mouth in the form of bread, and be disposed of therewith. What comfort can be to any Christian to receive for a space Christ's unnatural body?[62]

At this early point, Taverner's rejection of Rome appears logical. Further, his stance is given credibility through the parodic characterization of a Catholic Priest who is called to give evidence against Taverner. The stage directions describe his entrance as 'fat and bungling, stumbles forward with leather wine bottle'. The stuttering Priest, whose voice is, symbolically, *falsetto*, is then openly bribed by a Monk and makes his accusation:

> ….a whoreson corruptor of youth, he had blasphemous thoughts the Pope as Antichrist, he refused payments for pardons of kissing saints' relics. He ate meat on Friday.[63]

When confronted with such an inebriated and prejudiced witness symbolising all that is corrupt about the Catholic church, Taverner's defence of his rights is rational and rings true with More's conscionable approach. However, this is the moment which marks the beginning of the end for Taverner and his irrationality. Josipovici has argued that 'although he [Taverner] seems to be so much in the right, the seeds of personal disaster lie in that rejection.'[64] At the climax of Act I, following his confession and conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism, Taverner has an epiphany.

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[60] Judas's betrayal of Jesus is also examined in *Missa Super l'Homme Armé* and further developed in *Vesalii Icones.*
[61] Stephen Pruslin, 'An Anatomy of Betrayal', *Music and Musicians* (July 1972).
[62] Full score, Act I, scene i, bb.62-88, pp. 6-7.
[63] Full score, Act I, scene i, bb.361-378, pp.31-34.
[64] Josipovici, 'Thoughts on the Libretto', *Tempo* no. 101 (1972), p.14.

> There shone about me a great light from heaven, and I fell down upon the earth, and heard the voice of Christ, saying, 'Put off thy blindness.' I am as reborn, His spirit is upon me. I defend Christ's truth with the sword and the fire, for love of Him. In the name of God, the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.[65]

Ultimately, Taverner's self-determination is misguided. He believes that he has been 'reborn' and, to reflect his increasing irrationality these words are delivered: 'shouting, wild, increasingly hysterical.'[66] Taverner has become a zealot, and, it is at this moment that Death (the Jester, the master-puppeteer) seizes his opportunity and takes control. Simultaneously, the two monks present Taverner's soul as a 'coal black raven' which is consumed in flames. Death places his Jester's cap on Taverner's head, presents him with his jingling johnny and 'shakes Taverner's hand violently causing jingling johnny to rattle.'[67] He covers his face with a grinning mask. Taverner has been brainwashed.

As discussed, *Taverner* is based upon historical facts, however Davies's true creative ambition was to achieve as 'wide an application and meaning as possible' through his flexible treatment of the texts and the manipulation of time. Davies states that 'despite constant references to sixteenth-century sources (mostly English), neither time nor place are treated realistically' and most of the opera's action actually happens in Taverner's mind.[68]

[65] Full score, Act I, scene iv, bb.712-746, pp. 208-213.
[66] Full score, Act I, scene iv, b.744, p. 212.
[67] Full score, Act I, scene iv, b.747, p. 213.
[68] Davies, '*Taverner*: Synopsis and Documentation', *Tempo* no 101 (1972), p.4.

4.3 Psycho-opera

Davies once described *Taverner* as a 'fantasy'[69] in which,

> …the whole thing really is a projection from Taverner's mind, a working out of his own philosophical, aesthetic, musical and religious problems, and the characters in the opera are really incarnations of departments of his own mind or soul or psyche, or what have you.[70]

Similar to Arnold Schoenberg's *Erwartung* (1909), Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* (1925) and *Peter Grimes* (1945) by Benjamin Britten, *Taverner* is theatre of the mind. This is psycho-opera.[71] Josipovici has suggested that 'there is actual pressure from within the work for the entire action to take place *inside* Taverner's mind' and that 'part of it pulls dramatically in the direction of *Wozzeck* or *Erwartun*g: that is towards the presentation in theatrical terms of what is essentially a private internal crisis.'[72] Josipovici also points out that, similarly, Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* and Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* are also works which articulate a 'hero's failure, despair, and disintegration' and reveal 'the ultimate triumph of art, of the human over the inanimate, of ego over id.'[73] Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Devils* is also a psychological drama. Similar to *Taverner*, it is an allegorical work, a study in nihilism, demagoguery and the power of incendiary rhetoric. Dostoevsky's combatant*,* Pyotr Verkhovensky mirrors the character of Taverner as he instigates a revolution through which an old order is replaced by a new one. Somewhat inevitably, both novel and opera end with catastrophic consequences; the thematic parallels are striking.

For Schoenberg it was a personal crisis which precipitated the composition of *Erwartung* but, significantly, its creation coincided with the emergence of psychoanalysis.[74] *The Interpretation of Dreams* by Sigmund Freud was published in 1899 and Carl Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious* was published in 1912, the year in which Schoenberg wrote

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[69] Davies in conversation with Stephen Walsh, *Musical Times* (July 1972), p.653.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Other twentieth-century works which may be considered to be psycho-operas include *Duke Blue Beard's Castle* by Bela Bartók, *Salome* and *Elektra* by Richard Strauss, *Vanessa* by Samuel Barber and, by Leoš Janacek, *Kát'a Kabanová* and *From the House of the Dead.*

[72] Josipovici, op. cit., p.18.

[73] Ibid., p.17.

[74] Coincidentally, Schoenberg and Davies suffered crises when in their mid-thirties. For Schoenberg it was precipitated by a failing marriage whilst for Davies, it may have been a crisis of self-confidence as he sought to rebuild his creative self. But the parallel remain in that just as 1908 represented a watershed year for Schoenberg, the year 1968, was a creative deluge for Davies, post-*Taverner*.

Pierrot lunaire. It was Schoenberg's treatment of the cycle of symbolist poems by the Belgian poet Albert Giraud (1860-1929), in the German translation by Otto Erich Hartleben, which first drew Davies to the writings of Freud and Jung and, in turn, to their theories relating to the interpretation of dreams and Jung's theory of the collective unconscious.[75] Davies admired how Schoenberg had '*found* the possibility of finding a music to equate with the nightmare world'[76] expressed by Giraud's poetry.

Davies's comments about the relationships between certain characters in *Taverner* suggests an awareness of Jungian theory. He stated that,

> Like the Pope he [the King] is a father figure, and he takes over the Pope's function when he becomes head of the Church. His relationship with Taverner (they never of course meet in the opera) can only really be expressed through the Jester. At the end of the first scene with the King and the Cardinal, the Jester is clearly in control, handling the King and the Cardinal like puppets. Then immediately at the beginning of the fourth scene of the first act he's handling Taverner, too, like a puppet. The King is a father figure and Taverner reacts like a son rebelling against the father; but the only real point of contact is via the Jester as such, and his negative aspect as Death.[77]

This description of the handling of the King, Cardinal and Taverner 'like puppets' implies a loss of self-determination. Jung recognised the importance of self-determination in maintaining an individual's healthy relationship with society. However, he cited the Dark Ages as a period during which the autocratic church states replaced the role of God resulting in the suppression of the individual's freedom of expression. Jung believed that this could result in the arrested development of personality and his/her marginalisation in society. In this context, although Taverner did not live in the Dark Ages, a Jungian interpretation might suggest that his fanaticism was not necessarily atypical behaviour.

Also, Jung viewed the king and his court as the archetype of man's inner world in which the king represented the dominant power of our consciousness, individually or collectively. In

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[75] See Carl Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious* (1912) which led to Jung's theory of archetypes including that of the 'shadow.' As will be discussed in Chapter 5, Davies was also influenced by the writings of James Joyce in which nocturnal themes are often present, for example in *Finnegan's Wake.*

[76] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (editor), 'Schoenberg: *Pierrot Lunaire*', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings,* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.91.

[77] Davies in conversation with Stephen Walsh, *Musical Times* (July 1972).

Taverner, the private Throne Room scenes which focus on the 'King's Great Matter' resonate with Davies's comment that the 'characters in the opera are really incarnations of departments of his own mind or soul or psyche.'[78] The hypocrisy, lies and corruption which are exposed in these two inner scenes reflect Taverner's internal crisis. Further, the placement of the scenes within the opera's larger architecture is significant. Their positioning is literally internal, they are compartmentalised and are windows not only into the King's affairs, but also, metaphorically, windows into Taverner's mind.

Furthermore, Josipovici has observed that the fate of both the King and Taverner run in parallel and suggests that reflection upon the monarch's psychology may help to improve our understanding of Taverner's predicament:[79]

> If we look at the pattern of Taverner's experience and of Henry's, we see that that they do resemble each other very closely. First there is the righteous rejection of authority and the reliance on unaided reason or faith. But, without, some external authority, 'who shall know St Michael, who the Serpent?' Once external authority has been renounced we find no freedom but a new bondage. For we become the victims of our unconscious impulses masquerading as reason or faith. This is plain in the case of Henry, though his very awareness of the impurity of his motives makes him paradoxically less likely to fall victim in this way. But it is equally true of Taverner. Another being takes over, his double, id or superego, who rules over him.[80]

In Jungian terms, the role of the Jester/Death may be interpreted as Taverner's alter-ego. This idea is supported by David Beard's analysis of Act I, scene iv in which he suggests that the Jester/Death represents Taverner's 'inner daemon.'[81] In *The Development of the Personality,* Jung states that 'if we can succumb only in part, and, if by self-assertion the ego can save itself from being completely swallowed, then it can assimilate the voice, and we realise that the evil, was after all, only a semblance of evil, but, in reality, a bringer of healing and illumination.'[82] For Jung, the development of the personality depended upon gaining a balance where 'the daemon of the inner voice is at once our greatest danger and

[78] Ibid.
[79] Josipovici, op. cit., p.14.
[80] Ibid., p.15.
[81] David Beard, '*Taverner:* an interpretation', in Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (co-editors), *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, CUP, 2009), p.101.
[82] Carl Jung, *The Development of Personality*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954), p.185, n.319.

an indispensable help.'[83] Taverner is unable to assert his ego and succumbs entirely to the evil which is represented by his inner voice, that of Death. Just as the character of Death represents Taverner's inner daemon, so the Jester performs a similar function for the King.[84] In fact, he becomes both the 'double id' of the King and of Taverner and it is Death who ultimately rules over England and controls Taverner's soul.

The other key role which represents another 'incarnation' of Taverner's mind is that of Rose Parrowe. Rose is the only female character in the opera and, amongst other things, symbolizes the composer's creative self. In his study of the opera's pre-compositional materials Beard has shown that an early draft of the libretto reveals further influence of Jung in the sketch's marginalia.[85] He asserts that,

> In Davies's mind, Taverner's relationship with the Church is analogous to his marriage with Rose, which is in turn symbolic of Taverner's relationship to a female collective that consists of his mother, the Virgin Mary, and Wagner's Erda. This is made explicit in Act I, scene iv, during the mock crucifixion, when Rose assumes the role of Mary. Taverner's rejection of the Catholic faith is interpreted in Jungian terms as a rejection of marriage and a consequent failure to realise 'inner integration.'[86]

Beard suggests that this may have an autobiographical significance for the composer but concludes that any 'hypothetical resonance between Jung's theories and Davies's sexual identity remains open to interpretation.' However, Davies's original version of his libretto does confirm 'that his conception of Taverner's (and perhaps even his own) personality was informed by Jung's theory of arrested personal development with obsessive interests that stem from sexual conflict.'[87] This could be interpreted in Freudian terms but, notably, the composer does make reference to an essay entitled *The Significance of the Unconscious in Individual Education* in which Jung makes direct connections between religion, maternalism and homosexuality.[88]

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[83] Jung, op. cit., p.186, n.321.
[84] One of Henry VIII's closest companions and most influential fools was the Jester, Will Somer. He was introduced into the Royal Household in June 1535.
[85] Stored in the British Library, London. Ms.Add.71259 etc. For more detail, see Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (co-editors), *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, CUP, 2009), p.87.
[86] David Beard in Gloag and Jones, op. cit., p.87.
[87] Ibid., p.89.
[88] Ibid.

It is in this text which lies the source of a quotation, in Latin, delivered by the Judge in Act I, scene i as he delivers his verdict on Taverner:

> JUDGE: John Taverner, accused; in turning from disintegration, failed to realise inner integration, and destroyed his wife, immaculatum divini fontis uterum.[89]

In the left margin of the sketch book, Davies has written in parentheses:

> JUNG. MARRIAGE as a PSYCHOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIP' and 'SIGNIFICANCE of the UNCONSCIOUS in INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION.'[90]

Beard notes that the words *immaculatum divini fontis uterum* refer to a passage in which Jung discusses dream analysis as it relates to a young man who is struggling to accept his own sexual identity. In *The Development of the Personality* Jung describes the 'retarded development of character' as that which can stem from sexual conflict at an early age:

> As in all cases of this kind, he had a particularly close tie with his mother…a secret, subterranean tie which expresses itself consciously, perhaps, only in the retarded [i.e. slowed down or arrested] development of character…. Hence the enthusiasm with which his childish imagination took up the idea of the Church; for the church is, in the fullest sense, a mother. We speak not only of Mother Church, but even of the Church's womb. In the ceremony known as the *benedicto fontis*, the baptismal font is apostrophised as *immaculatis divini fontis uterus* – 'immaculate womb of the divine fount.[91]

Beard interprets Davies's reference to Jung and the 'Mother Church' as analogous to Taverner's conflicted relationship with the Catholic Church and speculates that it may also mirror Davies's own 'deeper psychological rejection of a suffocating mother figure.'[92] It is also possible to read this as relating to the composer's own conflicted beliefs about religion:

> I had read enough Carl Jung and related philosophy to understand why the Credo claimed 'Et incarnatus est de Spiritiu Sancto ex Maria Virgine' and ' Resurrexit tertia die, secundum Scripturas, et ascendit in caelum: sedet ad dexteram Patris' and to appreciate the beauty and application of such concepts; but the requirement, the compulsion to believe these things, literally, to the exclusion of any other belief, or event to contemplate them alongside other possibilities, always prevented me from claiming to be a Christian.[93]

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[89] British Library Add. Ms.71259. Fol.68.
[90] Ms. 71259, op cit.
[91] Carl Jung, 'The Significance of the Unconscious in Individual Education' in Jung, *The Development of Personality* (transl. RFC Hull), (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954), pp.157-158.
[92] David Beard in Gloag and Jones, op. cit., p.88.
[93] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (editor), 'A Composer's Point of View (III): On Religion', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings,* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.228.

Michael Tippett, another committed follower of Jung, was also a religious sceptic. During the late 1930s, he underwent a course of Jungian dream analysis in an attempt to help to come to terms with his sexuality. The experience was a watershed and, subsequently, Jungian psychological theory and, particularly, the interpretation of dreams, informed much of Tippett's work, most notably on the libretto for *The Midsummer Marriage*.

> I *saw* a stage picture (as opposed to hearing a musical sound) of a wooded hilltop with a temple, where a warm and soft young man was being rebuffed by a cold and hard young woman (to my mind a very common present situation) to such a degree that the collective, magical archetypes take charge – Jung's *anima* and *animus* – the girl inflated by the latter, rises through the stage flies to heaven, and the man, overwhelmed by the former, descends through the floor to hell.[94]

Ian Kemp hypothesises that if Jung had collaborated with Tippett on the creation of the libretto of *The Midsummer Marriage* he may have accepted the above scenario where the 'integration of personality may be achieved vicariously through witnessing a collective rite.'[95] He also suggests that *The Midsummer Marriage* represents that 'rite' which allows for an 'exemplary exploration of the unconscious.'[96] In his secular oratorio, *A Child of our Time* (1944), the Jungian integration of personality finds powerful expression when, at the climax to Part III, the solo tenor sings: 'I would know my shadow and my light, so shall I at last be whole.' Similarly, in *Taverner*, Davies described Act II, scene i as an 'anti' or a 'shadow'[97] of Act I, scene i which also suggests a 'magical archetype.' In this reading, Act II expresses an unconscious world and represents the 'shadow' of Taverner's personality. The composer's stage directions which preface Act II support this view where the actors' movements are instructed to be 'somnambulistic.'[98] Equally, the way that time is manipulated throughout the opera recalls Davies's comments about it being a 'fantasy' in which 'neither time nor place are treated realistically.' Wherever possible, continuity is dispensed with and stage time is transformed into 'internal time rather than historical time.'[99] Many years elapse between the start of Act I in pre-Reformation England and the

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[94] Ian Kemp, *Tippett, the Composer and his Music* (Oxford, OUP, 1987) p.218. It is noteworthy that Tippett's powerful vision of a 'stage picture' for *The Midsummer Marriage* compares to the strength of the imagery which inspired Davies to create *Taverner.*
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Davies, '*Taverner*: Synopsis and Documentation', *Tempo* no 101 (1972), p.5.
[98] Full score, Act II, scene i, p.217.
[99] Josipovici, op. cit., p.18.

end of Act II by which time the Reformation is well-advanced. This finds a parallel in the treatment of time in *Erwartung.* Schoenberg said that ‘the aim is to represent in slow motion everything that occurs during a single second of maximum spiritual excitement, stretching it out to half an hour.’[100] Davies does the opposite. In *Taverner,* time is contracted rather than expanded to create psycho-opera which reflects the intensity of Taverner’s internal psychological crisis. In *Philosophy of Modern Music* (1948), Theodore Adorno appears to relate Schoenberg’s *Erwartung* to Freudian psychoanalysis. He states that it is ‘a portrayal of anxiety…[that] develops the eternity of the second in four hundred bars […] Passions are no longer simulated, but rather genuine emotions of the unconscious – of shock, of trauma – are registered without disguise through the medium of music.’[101] In this context, Adorno’s unconscious is ‘clearly the Freudian unconscious.’[102]

In both *Erwartung* and *Pierrot lunaire,* this ‘portrayal of anxiety’ finds expression through music and its portrayal of a solitary figure *in extremis.* The role of ‘The Woman’ in *Erwartung* displays classic symptoms of hysteria such as amnesia and hallucinations caused by the witnessing of a traumatic event. Many notable examples exist throughout opera from *Médée* by Marc-Antoine Charpentier to *Elektra* by Richard Strauss. Davies’s music-theatre works of the 1960s also focus on the role of the dislocated individual, alienation and the fracturing of personality: a bloodied, screaming Nun in *Missa Super L’Homme Armé,* a naked dancer in *Vesalii Icones* and a psychotic king in *Eight Songs for a Mad King.* In addition to *Eight Songs, Miss Donnithorne’s Maggot* and a later work, *Caroline Mathilde,* all display the themes of mental collapse and/or the onset of insanity. Also, *Revelation and Fall*, which was written in parallel with *Taverner,* ‘documents a very real disintegration of […] personality and descent into deep dark depression and dislocation.’[103]

[100] Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, Leonard Stein (ed.), (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1984), p.105.
[101] Theodore Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music* (transl. Anne G Mitchell and Wesley V Blomster), (New York, Seabury Press, 1973), pp.38-39.
[102] Alexander Carpenter, ‘*Erwartung* and the scene of Psychoanalysis: interpreting Schoenberg’s monodrama as a Freudian case-study’, PhD thesis (Toronto, Graduate Dept. of Music, University of Toronto, 2004), p.51.
[103] Jonathan Rees, *Peter Maxwell Davies’ ‘Revelation and Fall’ - influence study and analysis*, PhD thesis (The Open University, 2010), p.166.

At the start of the twentieth-century the emergence of first Freudian and then Jungian psychoanalytical and psychological theories coincided with the development of expressionism as seen in works by Schoenberg and others. Correspondingly, in the 1960s, the publication of R.D. Laing's *The Divided Self: an Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (1960) and Thomas Szasz's *The Myth of Mental Health* (1961) coincided with the creation of *Taverner*. Laing proposed a humanistic, rational approach to the nature of madness and argued that psychosis was not a medical condition but resulted from the 'divided self' caused by tension created by these two personas which exist within us, our true private identity and our false or 'sane' outward-facing persona. Szasz's theories were more radical, controversial and have been described as anti-psychiatric. He maintained that there was no physiological foundation for the diagnosis of insanity and argued that it was a societal condition. Famously, Szasz stated that, 'If you talk to God, you are praying; if God talks to you, you have schizophrenia. If the dead talk to you, you are a spiritualist; if you talk to the dead, you are schizophrenic.'[104]

In the 1971 score of *Eight Songs for a Mad King,* Davies wrote the word *madness* in inverted commas which suggests that he possessed a 'level of consciousness' of the ongoing debate concerning psychiatric theory.[105] Also, in his programme note for the original 1969 performance of *Eight Songs*, Davies stated that 'the vocal writing calls for extremes of register and a virtuoso acting ability; my intention was, with this, and the mixture of styles in the music together with the look of cages, suggesting prison or hospital beds, to leave open the question, is the persecuted protagonist Mad George III, or somebody who he *thinks* he is George?'[106] Taverner may not be as obviously psychotic as the king in *Eight Songs* but it is arguable that he too is a 'persecuted protagonist.' Where does madness begin and where does it end? Or, to adopt the parlance of Szasz: is Taverner a spiritualist or a schizophrenic? If *Eight Songs* is to be interpreted as a study of an individual's madness or otherwise, *Taverner* examines the societal conditions, which, through persecution, ostracization and

[104] Thomas Szasz, *The Second Sin* (Michigan, Anchor Press, 1973).
[105] Alan E Williams, 'Madness in the Music Theatre Works of Peter Maxwell Davies', *Perspectives of New Music,* Vol. 38, No 1 (Winter 2000), p. 84. It may be no coincidence that the singer Roy Hart, for whom *Eight Songs* was composed, offered some expertise in the field since, prior to training as an actor, he had studied psychology at the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa.
[106] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.),'*Eight Songs for a Mad King'*, *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.100.

psychological collapse, can lead to it. This view is supported by Davies's own comment that '*Taverner* isn't mad, he's subjected to the processes – in what I think of as the night journey scene, where his conscience presents him with the alternatives and his conversion to the new Protestant faith is effected – which could well, on a less strong character, send somebody crazy.'[107]

The psychiatrist, Glòria Durà-Vilà has suggested that operas by Alban Berg and Benjamin Britten 'provide strong evidence of the important role that society – with its brutality and injustice – plays in the aetiology of mental illness.'[108] As will be discussed, Berg's *Lulu* exerted significant influence upon Davies, but, equally, Britten's opera *Peter Grimes* deeply affected the composer. He first experienced *Grimes* in 1949 and it made a '*huge* impact.' He recalled that 'it was a huge inspiration – that this was possible in Britain.'[109] For Britten, Peter Grimes represented 'the individual against the crowd.'[110] It has widely been interpreted as an allegory on homosexual oppression but one of the work's central concerns is the charting of an individual's interaction with society and his/her subsequent demise.

The opening scene of *Taverner* and the Prologue of *Grimes* both present isolated individuals under interrogation. In *Grimes,* the fisherman is under scrutiny by the Coroner during an inquest about the death of Peter Grimes' apprentice for which the attendant chorus of townsfolk of the Borough believe he is guilty. In the opening scene of *Taverner,* the composer is questioned by the White Abbot about his alleged heresy supported by partisan commentary from the Council. By the end of *Grimes*, the chorus of townsfolk has become a mob hunting down the embattled Grimes. In the closing passage of Act III, scene i the chorus shouts: 'Who hold himself apart, Lets his pride rise. Him who despises us, we'll destroy…' In the final scene of *Taverner* a 'very large crowd' of Townspeople converge on the Market Place as the White Abbot who, at the behest of Taverner, is about to be executed. The crowd preaches, dogmatically: 'This is the work of John Taverner, musician,

[107] Davies quoted in 'The conscience of the composer: Patrick O'Connor talks to Peter Maxwell Davies about *Taverner*', *Music and Musicians,* July 1983, p.86.
[108] Glòria Durà-Vilà & D Bentley, 'Opera and madness: Britten's *Peter Grimes* – a case study', *Journal of Medical Ethics; Medical Humanities* 35 (2009), p.107.
[109] Nicholas Jones, 'Peter Maxwell Davies in the 1950s: A conversation with the composer', *Tempo,* Vol. 64, No. 254 (October 2010), p.16.
[110] Humphrey Carpenter, *Benjamin Britten: a biography* (London, Faber and Faber, 1992), p.203.

servant of the King. Christ must reign, till he has put all his enemies under his feet, the last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death.'

Although each opera approaches it from a different angle, the message is the same: society is partly responsible for creating the social deviants which Peter Grimes and John Taverner have become. Durà-Vilà believes that 'Grimes' mind succumbs to the borough as he becomes the monster which he perceives they think himself to be, ending up accepting society's condemnation of himself.'[111] Similarly, as Davies puts it, Taverner 'brainwashes himself into giving up the thing that he really believed in […] and assumes the cloak of the worst sort of Protestant conformist.'[112] At the end of both operas, both protagonists die off-stage, one literally and the other figuratively. Captain Balstrode instructs Grimes to sail his boat out to sea and drown himself, whilst Rose Parrowe calls Taverner a 'stranger, drunk with wormwood' and he falls to the floor with the shadow of the cross from the executioner's fire on his back.

From a psychiatric perspective, Durà-Vilà observes that the character of Peter Grimes shows 'a complex combination of several personality traits belonging to different personality disorders (such as schizoid and dissocial) to an extreme of complexity that may leave many psychiatrists in wonder.'[113] It is possible to contend that in Davies's opera John Taverner is portrayed as sharing some of these disorders, particularly those of a schizophrenic. In his writing on madness in music in relation to *Eight Songs,* Alan E Williams introduces the notion of the 'anti-musical' in which Davies includes the 'musical sphere of sounds and methods of vocal production that are conventionally excluded.'[114] One such anti-musical device which he identifies is that of violence which is evident in 'its use of the voice, in its staging, and in its treatment of the text.' As with the mad king, the musical depiction of Taverner's behaviour is, in part, expressed through the use of extreme vocalisation which, as the opera progresses, is used increasingly to characterise the role.[115]

[111] Durà-Vilà, op. cit., p.107.
[112] Tom Sutcliffe, 'A question of identity', *Music and Musicians,* Vol. 20, June 1972, p.28.
[113] Durà-Vilà, op. cit., p.108.
[114] Williams, op. cit., p.81.
[115] This approach is discussed further in Chapter 7 of this thesis.

In *Eight Songs*, it is possible to understand the fragmentary character of Randolph Stow's text as reflecting the king's deteriorating mental state. Albeit on a greater scale, the multiplicity of compositional devices or styles in *Taverner* may be read as having a similar purpose where Davies's 'dialectic of styles, in which the 'true' voice of the composer is constantly confronted by 'false' styles.'[116] In *Eight Songs,* Davies described pastiche or 'false' elements as 'stage props' which differentiates them from the work's 'true' musical language. Correspondingly, in *Taverner*, there is an abundance of 'stage props' which are presented, compositionally, as pastiche including pre-existing music by Taverner, plainsong plus Renaissance dances and fantasias. Taverner's *In Nomine* appears throughout the opera in different guises; this musical fingerprint, similar to Taverner's changing vocality, is subject to transformative processes (inversion, transposition etc.) which may be read as paralleling his volatile mental condition. In Act I, scene ii an isolated Taverner is presented wrestling with his spiritual self, seeking to rationalise the dogma of the Catholic church. The passage begins with a quotation of his *In Nomine.* The libretto then juxtaposes Taverner's colloquial English to that of Ecclesiastical Latin sung by a chorus of Monks. This canonic setting presents a dense polyphonic texture which expresses Taverner's inner confusion as he struggles to discover 'a new reality, by scorching reason.' Through what is, undeniably, a complex synthesis of language and imagery, Taverner is confronted not only with spiritual confusion but also a confusion of 'true' and 'false' styles. This is the first time that we enter Taverner's mind. There is an overwhelming collision of narratives (Taverner's escalating dilemma), multiple languages (superimposed Latin and English), historical references and Biblical imagery, which express, allusively, the psychological noise and confusion from which Taverner is suffering. This reading supports the notion that in Davies's work psychological disturbance or even 'madness' is more than just a theme: 'it disseminates into the music itself.'[117] Other episodes which express the protagonist *in extremis* include the Street Passion Play (Act I, scene iv) may psychologically, may be interpreted as hallucinatory. Also,

[116] Williams, op. cit., p.83. Also, see Steve Sweeney-Turner, Resurrecting the Antichrist: Maxwell Davies and Parody – Dialectics or Deconstruction', *Tempo*, No.191 (December 1994).
[117] Ruud Welten, 'I'm Not Ill. I'm Nervous: Madness in the Music of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies', *Tempo*, No. 196 (April 1996), p.24.

in psychopathological terms, Taverner's revelatory experience (Act I, scene iv) may be regarded as 'an experiential form of an epiphany.'[118]

Jonathan Cross has cited *Eight Songs for a Mad King* as an example of 'Immediate Theatre' but this can also be applied to *Taverner* where the protagonist is suffering 'mental torment.' Similarly, in *Resurrection*, the sequel to *Taverner*, a dummy takes Taverner's place and an onstage lobotomy 'replaces his brainwashing.'[119] The moonstruck madness of Pierrot which affected Davies so deeply is a recurring theme throughout his output.

As Davies has noted, Mozart's *Don Giovanni* was an influence in his creation of *Taverner*. The eponymous Don is a disturbing character who, as psychiatrist, Durà-Vilà has observed might fit 'diagnostic criteria for dissocial personality disorder, with his callous unconcern for the feelings of others, his behaviour full of total disregard for social obligations and his incapacity to experience guilt.'[120] This description could almost apply to some of John Taverner's personality traits, although in the closing moments of the opera when he sings 'O God I call out thy name, out of the lowest dungeon, Forsake not thy faithful servant,' there is perhaps a glimmer of guilt as Taverner becomes aware of the gravity of what he has done.

As George Orwell wrote in *1984,* 'Perhaps a lunatic was simply a minority of one.'

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118 Josef Parnas and Mads Gram Henriksen, 'Mysticism and schizophrenia: A phenomenological exploration of the structure of consciousness in the schizophrenia spectrum disorders', *Consciousness and Cognition,* Vol.43 (July 2016), pp. 75-88.
119 Majel Connery, 'Peter Maxwell Davies's Worst Nightmare: Staging the Unsacred in the Operas *Taverner* and *Resurrection', Opera Quarterly,* Vol.25, No 3-4 (2010), p.248.
120 Glòria Durà-Vilà & D Bentley, 'Opera and madness: Britten's *Peter Grimes* – a case study', *Journal of Medical Ethics; Medical Humanities* 35 (2009), p.107.

4.4 Autobiography and *Künstleroper*

Davies has long acknowledged the autobiographical nature of his work. In 2000, he reflected that his whole musical output was,

> One long extended 'reference,' in that this music is distillation of – is – my real life, even including its inadequacies and mistakes. […] these creation patterns feel like a kind of cartography – a mapping out in various orders of detail of very different areas of my experience, where some coastlines, perhaps, may turn out eventually to have been hitherto uncharted, at least in minor detail, if not in large form.[121]

The comment that 'music is distillation of - is - my real life' also aligns with remarks which the composer made about his inability to 'divorce music from everything that I do and everything that I think and all that I'm about.'[122] The autobiographical manifests itself throughout Davies's music, from the works inspired by his Salford childhood to enigmatic cross-referencing of material and the use of ciphers.[123] Davies subscribed to what he described as 'total expression' where musical and non-musical issues were, for him, inseparable. He said: 'one is very conscious of being part of a total expression which involves not only the music but many other things and that these things are so closely interrelated that to try to be purist about the music or about musical abstractions, I find is just not possible for me.'[124] In *Worldes Blis,* Davies observed that there was a 'conscious attempt to reintegrate the shattered and scattered fragments of my creative persona.'[125]

Just as *Worldes Blis* was born out of an aesthetic crisis, the composer also recognised that in the creation of *Taverner* something was going to 'burst out of the style in which I was then writing.'[126] This suggests that that both the composition of *Worldes Blis* and the completion

[121] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'A Composer's Point of View (II): On Parody, References and Meaning', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.225.
[122] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'Introduction', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.6.
[123] For a discussion of the autobiographical in Davies's work, see Nicholas Jones and Richard McGregor (co-editors), *The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2020), pp.42-50. The function of the Death Chord is explored more fully in Chapter 7 of this thesis.
[124] Davies, quoted in Jones, op. cit., p.6
[125] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), '*Worldes Blis*', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.95. The rebuilding of his life would be reflected geographically when, soon after the completion of *Taverner,* the composer moved to the Orkney Islands where he lived until his death there in March 2016. His permanent move to the Orkneys opened a new chapter on Davies's personal and creative life, including the beginning of a long association with the Orcadian poet George Mackay Brown and his founding of the St. Magnus Festival in 1977.
[126] Davies, quoted in Paul Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies* (London, Robson Books, 1982), p.109.

of *Taverner* were both necessary, cathartic creative experiences. When he was asked if it was possible to interpret *Taverner* as being metaphorical of his personal situation, Davies answered,

> Quite honestly, I don't know. I suppose there's a grain of truth in that, that I was projecting myself onto Taverner, but I think that it was bigger than me. It was the situation not only of the creative artist but of anybody who believed in anything, and who could have this belief corrupted so that it started to eat into him and destroy him.[127]

The remark that there may have been a 'grain of truth' in that he was projecting himself onto Taverner does not discount the opera's personal significance, but his acknowledgement it was 'bigger' than him suggests a larger agenda. Davies also said that the opera,

> … could be seen as a dramatization of a situation which is inherent of my own. But I don't want to imply any hero proportions on my part. I think the parallel will be clear to anybody who has come to decisions about the state of his own soul, to use sixteenth-century terminology: his religious, political, artistic conscience. The parallel of somebody breaking down under social or purely commercial pressures and becoming a shadow of himself and giving up that which he really believes in, for seemingly very good reasons, of which he is entirely convinced. I think that this applies not only to myself but to many people, not just artists.[128]

The 'giving up' of one's self-belief may be read as a form of self-betrayal, a theme which permeates the opera and other works. Equally, the 'breaking down under social or purely commercial pressures' and Davies's reference to 'projecting' himself onto the opera and examining 'the state of his own soul' in religious, political and artistic contexts, suggests an autobiographical dimension. The composer's comment that *Taverner* 'could be seen as a dramatization of a situation which is inherent in my own' resonates strongly with Claire Taylor-Jay's definition of *Künstleroper*.[129] She suggests that the genre 'does not so much reflect [the composer's] life within such a work as construct it, through the persona of the fictional artist' and that in psychoanalytical terms 'the central artist-character acts as a

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[127] Davies, quoted in Griffiths, op. cit., p.106.

[128] Peter Maxwell Davies in conversation with Stephen Walsh, *The Musical Times*, Vol 113, No. 1553 (July 1972), p.654.

[129] *Künstleroper* (artist-opera) stems from the early Romantic German literary genre of *Künstlerroman* (artist-novel). It may also be significant that *Künstleroper* is Austro-German in its origin, adding more weight to the notion that Davies's aesthetic roots lie in that tradition.

projection by the composer and embodies an attempt at self-definition.'[130] If *Taverner* is viewed as an artist-opera, it could be read as a projection of Davies's aesthetic crisis during the 1960s so embodying an 'attempt at self-definition.'

The theme of the artist in opera is a common one and can be traced back to the Orpheus myth whilst the depiction of the artist as an isolated, troubled individual is to be widely found throughout Romantic art; for example, Schubert's *Winterreise,* Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini* and his *Symphonie Fantastique.* However, Taylor-Jay's definition of *Künstleroper* requires that the work exceeds the autobiographical in that it 'does not so much reflect [the composer's] life within such a work as construct it, through the persona of the fictional artist.'[131] She has also argued that a defining theme of *Künstleropern*, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries, was an 'antagonism between artist and society.'[132] Certainly, *Taverner* goes beyond autobiography and focuses on a disconnect between a composer and society.

Taylor-Jay has offered three case studies in *Künstleropern: Palestrina* (1915) by Hans Pfitzner, *Jonny spielt auf* (1926) by Ernst Krenek and Paul Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler* (1935). It is noteworthy that, like Davies, these three composers wrote their own libretti. In each opera, the artist is the central character in which each construct 'a particular relationship between the character and his social environment; the composers of these works thus contributed to the contemporary debate about the artist and society, and interrogated ideas of what it means to be an artist.' Taylor-Jay has described *Künstleropern* as an exploration of self-identity which forms 'a mirror-image of [the composer] where the fictional character's problems are solved'[133] and the work allegorises the artist's preferred position in modern society. In *Jonny spielt auf*, Krenek's utopia is of a progressive society whilst in *Palestrina*, Pfitzner dreams of a more conservative world. Correspondingly, it is possible to argue that in *Taverner*, Davies allegorises the artist's place in a dysfunctional

[130] Claire Taylor-Jay, *The Artist-Operas of Pfitzner, Krenek and Hindemith* (Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2004), p.24.
[131] Ibid., p.24.
[132] Ibid., p.26.
[133] Ibid., p.25.

society and hopes for a more tolerant world, although, it is not realised at the end of the opera, there is, according to Davies, 'a glimmer of hope.'[134]

In *Palestrina,* Pfitzner integrates Palestrina's own music into the opera. He introduces the *Missa Papae Marcelli* and, significantly, rewrites it. Taylor-Jay interprets this as Pfitzner 'writing himself' into the opera dramatically and, in so doing, constructs an 'alternative life.'[135] Pfitzner's possession of Palestrina's mass, she believes, represents 'a psychological reconciliation, a kind of wish-fulfilment'[136] and gains the recognition which Pfitzner believed he deserved as a composer. In the opera, Palestrina's achievements realise Pfitzner's dreams which Taylor-Jay regards as 'self-construction.' Correspondingly, in *Taverner,* John Taverner's own music also features extensively. His musical fingerprint, the *In Nomine* and plainsong from the *Missa Gloria Tibi Trinitas* permeates the score and generates much of the musical material. Taverner's music is reinvented and parodied by Davies and, similarly, it may be possible to suggest that Davies was also writing himself into the opera.

Taylor-Jay has also asserted that, 'artistic creation is an act of self-construction, presenting a persona not only to an audience but to oneself.'[137] She has argued that Ernst Krenek traversed many different styles, from the populism of *Jonny spielt auf* (1925) to the modernism of *Gesänge des späten Jahres* (1931). Analogously, Davies's musical persona was forever transforming. He had not a singular compositional voice but many, and, throughout his creative life embraced an abundance of styles including modernism, neo-expressionism and modern classicism. And, in discussing his approach to 'light' and 'serious' music, Davies was keen to emphasise their interconnectivity. He stated that he once 'wrote a 'serious' opera, *The Lighthouse,* in the mornings, and a 'light' children's opera, *Cinderella,* in the afternoons, and I do not believe I exhibited, any more than usual, signs of schizophrenia.'[138] Davies believed that his music, whether it was 'light' or 'serious,' for amateurs or

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[134] Peter Maxwell Davies in conversation with Tom Service, *Opera on 3, Taverner*, BBC Radio 3 broadcast, 28 November 2009.
[135] Claire Taylor-Jay, *The Artist-Operas of Pfitzner, Krenek and Hindemith* (Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2004), p.60.
[136] Ibid., p.90.
[137] Ibid., p.194.
[138] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.) 'A Composer's Point of View (IV): On the Composition of 'Light' and 'Serious' Music, *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.233.

professionals, young or old, formed ‘part of the same continuous creative quest.’[139] Like most artists, Davies was a wearer of masks, but under each mask there was one face, one ideology, and that is what remained constant. Taylor-Jay proposes that the value of ‘artist-opera’ lies in its ability to reveal the ‘process of artistic self-construction.’ Identifying Davies’s ‘self-construction’ in *Taverner* may help us to better understand the composer’s stylistic diversity. *Taverner* may not wholly satisfy all the criteria of *Künstleroper* as interpreted by Taylor-Jay. Certainly, Davies does not fulfil the wish-fulfilment as attained vicariously by Krenek in *Jonny spielt auf* or by Pfitzner in *Palestrina*. Nor, allegorically, does Davies self-destruct as does the opera’s anti-hero following his crisis of identity. Yet, by looking at the work through the genre’s filter it reveals Davies’s own beliefs about art, religion, society and the role of the composer.

His choice of a composer as its protagonist was no mere coincidence. Taverner was a consummate craftsman, a self-determined pragmatist and a conflicted individual; it is possible to identify other shared traits which exist between Davies and the opera’s protagonist: isolationism, self-determination and conflicted relationships with religion and society. Both Taverner and Davies lived through periods of political instability and social turbulence. Taverner’s life was dominated by a series of institutional and religious transformations which defined the English Reformation. Equally, for Davies, the 1960s were a time of revolution characterised by the emergence of a counterculture and global uncertainty.[140] The completion of *Taverner* in 1968 coincided with the ‘Prague Spring’ and the subsequent invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union, whilst in America the decade was defined by a series of political assassinations, including John F Kennedy in 1962, Malcolm X in 1965 and Martin Luther King in 1968.

In Act II, scene iv of *Taverner,* the burning of the White Abbot amounts to political assassination whilst in Act II, scene iii, we witness an invasion by the Cromwellian army.

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[139] Ibid.

[140] Following the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, the already confrontational relationship between the East and the West, USA and the Soviet Union was increasingly volatile.

Throughout, the Jester/Death assumes the role of a dictator, whilst Taverner represents the worst sort of ideologue. Davies once stated that,

> I think that we see parallels with Taverner all the time, with people who become party-liners and their humanity as such disappears. It doesn't matter whether they're political or religious figures: the two are very much the same, in that they can become equally fanatical, equally inhuman.[141]

In *Taverner,* one episode in Tudor history may be the opera's subject, but it is the interpretation and re-interpretation of history, religious fanaticism, truth, lies and betrayal which are its real concerns. Sixteenth-century Reformation England is the lens through which Davies views and critiques the anxieties of a post-nuclear world and it was out of these distracted times that the opera's themes emerged.

[141] Davies, quoted in Griffiths, op. cit., p.106.

Chapter 5

Structure

To disclose too much of one's inventions and achievements is one and the same thing as to give up the fruit of one's ingenuity.[1]

These are words attributed to the Italian Renaissance architect, Filippo Brunelleschi. Brunelleschi designed the dome and lantern of Florence Cathedral, the largest brick-built dome in the world.[2] Architecture was a passion for Peter Maxwell Davies and Brunelleschi's art, invention and ingenuity held a fascination for the composer. When studying composition in Rome during the 1950s, he spent formative times in Florence exploring Renaissance churches and cathedrals, including those designed by Brunelleschi.[3] During an interview with the composer in 1997, Nicholas Jones sought to make an analogy between the ingenuity of Davies's compositional processes and Brunelleschi's 'numerous complex architectural procedures.'[4] Davies concurred with Brunelleschi in stating that 'a structure that hides things is very appealing.'[5] Superficially, the structure of *Taverner* may appear to be obvious. However, just as Brunelleschi's resplendent dome does not immediately reveal its compound structure of double-shell sandstone and intricate marble brickwork, neither does the larger architecture of *Taverner* immediately expose the opera's inner machinations.

This chapter examines the structure of *Taverner*. It discusses its design, its proportions and the various historical formal models which the composer deploys throughout the work. The chapter demonstrates how Davies manipulates and subverts form for myriad musical, dramatic and symbolic purposes. It references other pre-existing musical works, specifically *Oedipus rex* (1927, rev.1948) by Igor Stravinsky and *Lulu* (1937) by Alban Berg, and considers how they may have exerted a significant influence upon Davies in shaping the final form of *Taverner*.

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[1] Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446) quoted in Kenneth Bartlett (ed), *The Civilization of the Italian Renaissance: A Sourcebook* (Second edition), (Toronto, University of Toronto Press), p.159.
[2] Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence; constructed 1296-1436.
[3] For example, the Foundling Hospital (Ospedale degli Innocenti) and the churches of Santo Spirito and San Lorenzo.
[4] Nicholas Jones (editor), *The Selected Writings of Peter Maxwell Davies* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.181.
[5] Davies in conversation with Nicholas Jones, (ed.), 'Renaissance Architecture, Symphonic Precedents and Historical Resonances', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.181.

Music and architecture have always been closely related. Medieval scholars studied the Quadrivium and held that music was a mathematical science akin to other disciplines including astronomy and geometry.[6] Nicholas Jones affirms that Davies had 'always shown a profound interest in architecture – one might even go so far as to say a consuming fixation.'[7] In an insightful article on the composer's melding of architectural principles with compositional praxis, he suggests that in Davies 'we seem to have found a natural twentieth-century successor to fifteenth-century Renaissance thought, following a 'tradition unbroken from classical times' and writing music that is 'geometry translated into sound.'[8] Jones demonstrates how Davies has applied architectural constructs such as Renaissance modular proportion and *Übergreifende Form*[9] to shape several of his compositions, particularly, as noted above, those inspired by Filippo Brunelleschi and also the seventeenth-century Roman architect, Francesco Borromini.[10]

Davies's concern with proportional detail has long been an important factor in his creative process. The composer remarked that:

> I think as a composer one can say one wants the structure to work and the way that it is held up is probably your business and fellow composer's business. Just as in those medieval cathedrals – probably the most magnificent examples of architecture ever. It was the builders' concern that the weights, torque and the centrifugal forces should operate correctly. They are not the concern of the person standing there enjoying the building. Proportions make the building possible. Not only this, the proportions of a building like Chartres Cathedral, for example, express divine proportions, proportions that you can give theological sermons about the Holy Trinity, and the duality…. in square roots of circles, whatever. I remember reading Hans Sedlemayer's *Die Entstehung der Kathedrale*[11] which first opened my mind to the connection between musical proportions and the proportions of cathedrals.[12]

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[6] Quadrivium, translated from Latin: 'four ways.' It was the study of four subjects (the mathematical sciences of Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy and Music) attributed to the sixth-century Roman philosopher, Ancius Manlius Severinus Boëthius.
[7] Nicholas Jones, 'Peter Maxwell Davies's *Submerged Cathedral*: Architectural Principles in the Third Symphony', *Music and Letters*, Vol. 81. No.3 (August 2000), p.402.
[8] Jones, op. cit., p.403.
[9] Translated from German: 'all-embracing form.' For further discussion, see Jones, op. cit., pp. 422-425
[10] Francesco Borromini (1599-1667), Italian architect. Davies's Symphony No. 10 *Alla ricerca di Borromini* (2014) and Naxos String Quartet No. 7 *Metafore sul Borromini* (2005) are examples of works inspired by Borromini.
[11] Hans Sedelmayr, *Die Entstehung der Kathedrale* 2nd edition (Graz, 1976).
[12] Davies in conversation with Richard Bolley in 'Ancient and Modern 3', *Early Music*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (October 1980), pp.3-5.

Chartres Cathedral and the architecture of Florence may have provided stimulation for the composer but his early orchestral work, *Prolation* (Op. 8), was actually written after a visit to a church in Accrington, Lancashire in the UK. Following an 'epiphany,'[13] the composer realised how the building's proportions worked 'between the tracery of a window and the shape of the whole church.'[14] Davies has also acknowledged that his Third Symphony (Op. 119) was inspired by 'architectural proportional devices – particularly the Fibonacci series used in direct imitation of Brunelleschi's renaissance church plans.'[15] Jones argues that, in comparison to Davies's earlier compositions, including the *Second Taverner Fantasia,* the Third Symphony is, texturally, a much leaner work. The composer acknowledged that,

> In a big orchestral fantasia of 1964 [Second Taverner Fantasia] …. I invented much polyphony of up to nine parts real parts, not counting harmonic supports – in the Third Symphony, there are never more than five, and more often three or four and sometimes two parts…. Commentators have suggested that this recent music is simpler than the earlier. Its surface may be simpler, but the architecture is more developed. A useful analogy concerns some differences between a medieval and a renaissance church: in the first the architecture is based on mathematical proportions which may be ultimately symbolic, but this is used as framework….the surfaces are complex and busy, and of great interest in detail; in the second, the awareness of the proportionality of perspective has led to a treatment of architecture not only as a correct means of attaining a symbolism in itself, or, of forming a framework for detailed display, but as something of aesthetic perfection.[16]

Davies's analogy is revealing and implies that the architecture of the *Second Taverner Fantasia* and other works in its constellation, including *Taverner*, have a closer proximity to the symbolism of mathematical proportions as they apply to Medieval architectural principles, as opposed to Renaissance ones. Accordingly, in *Taverner* and other related works, it is possible to argue that these principles find expression in Davies's compositional scheme of thematic transformation. These compositional techniques will be discussed more fully in Chapter 7, but, for now, it is enough to suggest that such processes may have influenced the creation of a 'framework' for the opera. This view is supported by Stephen Arnold.

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[13] Jones, op. cit., p.402.
[14] Peter Maxwell Davies in conversation with Richard Bolley, op. cit., pp.3-5.
[15] CD programme note, Collins Classics, CD 14162. For further discussion of architectural connections relating to Davies's Third Symphony see Jones: 'Peter Maxwell Davies's *Submerged Cathedral*: Architectural Principles in the Third Symphony', *Music and Letters*, Vol. 81. No.3 (August 2000), pp.402-432.
[16] Davies, quoted in Jones, op. cit., p.412.

> While the resulting proliferation of thematic elements might seem compositionally unwieldy, the process itself is a most apt means of conveying in musical terms the idea of the scene where it is first used, namely Act I scene 4: John Taverner's gradual and reluctant confession that the compositions of 'popish ditties' is no longer in accord with his own religious persuasions, and his 'conversion' from being a composer to a government agent – from creator to persecutor.[17]

And, whilst Davies's compositional techniques such as self-transposing goal-directed transformations trace Taverner's personal transmutation, they also mirror the transformation and fragmentation of religion during Reformation England. For example, following Taverner's conversion in Act I, scene iv, his transformation by the Jester, as Death, is completed in Act II, scene i which includes an extended episode featuring a Wheel of Fortune. This wheel, replete with religious imagery, is revolved in a clockwise direction by the Jester as he demonstrates his absolute control over John Taverner, the King, and, by association, the church.[18] Davies manipulates a series of pitch-class sets which describe, chromatically, the wheel's revolutions whilst symbolising the passage of time. Proportionally, this musical, visual and dramatic conceit occurs at a critically important point: it is two-thirds of the way through the opera. Its strategic placement supports the notion that there are compositional devices at work inspired by Medieval architectural constructs which are 'ultimately symbolic', underpinning the opera's structure.

Writing at the time of the first performance of *Taverner*, Joseph Kerman was critical of the opera's dramatic structure. He also commented on the work's generic ambiguity and speculated that Igor Stravinsky might have referred to it as an 'opera-oratorio.' *Taverner* polarised critical opinion. In part, this may have been because of its chronological position in Davies's output as the opera's composition predates the modernist music-theatre works of the late 1960s through which Davies gained his reputation as an avant-gardist.[19] This led some commentators to believe that the composer's embracing of historical generic archetypes such as opera or oratorio to be retrograde. The completion of his First

[17] Stephen Arnold, 'The Music of Taverner', *Tempo* No.101, (1972), p.22.
[18] David Beard in *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies,* Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (co-editors), (Cambridge, CUP, 2009), p.94.
[19] For example, including *Revelation and Fall* and *Eight Songs for a Mad King* etc.

Symphony (Op. 71) in 1976, later provoked a similar response as this progressive composer embraced that seemingly most traditional of forms.[20]

5.1 Generic archetypes and historical forms

In his writings about genre, John Frow has noted that:

> Genre, we might say, is a set of conventional and highly organised constraints in the production and interpretation of meaning.[21]

Even though Frow's interpretation is from a literary perspective, it can still inform our understanding of generic identities in music. Kenneth Gloag has acknowledged that,

> On this account, a text, which, from the perspective of this discussion, can be transferred into the context of music, not only enters into its generic category but also, in some way, forms a relationship to a set of conventions that have to be met, or at least reflected, for the presence of a genre to be recognised.[22]

Davies does adhere to such a 'set of conventions' in *Taverner* which, in turn, confirms the recognition of a genre, that of opera. Yet, through various means (of which parody is one and intertextuality another), the composer, typically, proceeds to challenge these conventions. For Davies, some rules are there to be broken and it is this approach which resonates with Frow's definition. Ostensibly, although Frow places emphasis on 'constraint', he qualifies it, stating that:

> In using the word 'constraint' I don't mean to say that genre is simply a restriction. Rather, its structuring effects are productive of meaning; they shape and guide, in the way that a builder's form gives shape to a pour of concrete, or a sculptor's mould shapes and give structure to its materials.[23]

Frow's approach propounds that genres are dynamic processes, they are not stationary, stable structures. This theory can be illuminated by considering a seminal moment in Davies's creative life. As Gloag observes below, the composition of his First Symphony supports Frow's notion.

> An image had been formed of Davies as a composer and that image was of a radical, avant-garde composer of challenging modernist music, which included the development of music-theatre as a genre throughout the 1960s and projected an

[20] Hans Keller found fault in a lack of contrasting stability and development in the symphony's first movement. See Keller, 'The State of the Symphony: Not Only Maxwell Davies's,' *Tempo* No.125 (1978), pp.6-11.
[21] John Frow, *Genre (The New Critical Idiom)*, (London, Routledge, 2005), p.10.
[22] Kenneth Gloag, 'Form and genre in Davies's *First Symphony*', Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (co-editors), *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, CUP, 2009), p.131.
[23] Frow, op. cit., p.10.

> aesthetic position that seemed hostile towards the existing, traditional genres of music.[24]

As Gloag understands, such perceived 'hostility' was misrepresentative of Davies's aesthetic position. He argues that prior to the composer's explicit embracing of symphonic form in 1973, although his 'relationship to historical, generic models was concealed and perhaps at times marginal,'[25] traditional affiliations remained clearly identifiable in earlier works including the Trumpet Sonata (Op. 1) the cantata *Leopardi Fragments* (Op. 18), the *Sinfonia* (Op. 20) and, of course, *Taverner*. Additionally, the first movement of the First Symphony has been described by Davies as possessing 'a ghost of a sonata form somewhere behind it.'[26] And, as Rodney Lister has stated, the 'first movement' of the *Second Taverner Fantasia* 'conforms to the template of the post-Beethovenian sonata form' albeit with some significant differences.[27]

There is longevity in Davies's affection for established genres and historical forms. Also, as Griffiths has argued, he had also introduced symphonic qualities into his motet for orchestra, *Worldes Blis* (Op. 38) and the *Second Taverner Fantasia* (Op. 23).[28] Later in his creative life, Davies would continue to turn to historical forms and genres as demonstrated by the composition of his ten symphonies, the Strathclyde Concertos and the ten Naxos String Quartets. The composer's life-long dialogue with these models was neither retrograde nor anomalous, but an organic part of a creative evolution of which *Taverner* was an essential element.

The 'opera-oratorio' to which Kerman referred was Stravinsky's *Oedipus rex*.[29] However, as Stephen Walsh has argued, it is unlikely that Stravinsky would have been familiar with the

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[24] Gloag and Jones, op. cit., pp.129-130. Kenneth Gloag cites Davies's 'music theatre' works as *Notre Dame des Fleurs*, *Missa Super l'Homme Armé* and *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot* which, he suggests, 'helped define music theatre as a distinct genre. Gloag also notes that Davies's 'image' was and that of his music was largely shaped by *Eight Songs for a Mad King* and was 'a work that situated music theatre within the context of the avant-garde aspirations of the period.'

[25] Gloag and Jones, op. cit., p.130.

[26] Davies quoted in Paul Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies* (London, Robson Books, 1982), p.159.

[27] Rodney Lister, 'Sonata form in the music of Peter Maxwell Davies', Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (co-eds.), *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, CUP, 2009), p.111.

[28] Griffiths, op. cit., p.89.

[29] In addition to the bipartite design of both works, further similarities include the use of Latin text, universal themes, orchestration and the inclusion of the single female role (a mezzo soprano in both works) in casts which are dominated by male characters.

dramatic oratorio as modelled by Handel and notes that the design of *Oedipus rex* bears no resemblance to such baroque oratorios. Yet he does recognize that Stravinsky's and Handel's works both share classical subject matter and are dramatic works but intended for 'statuesque presentation' in the concert hall.[30] This echoes Kerman's view that in *Taverner* 'dramatic form is essentially static and schematic, calculated to place ideas in relief and push personalities into the background.'[31] In relation to *Oedipus rex,* Stravinsky claimed that,

> I consider [this] static representation a more vital way to focus the tragedy not on Oedipus himself and the other individuals, but on the 'fatal development' that for me, is the meaning of the play… My audience is not indifferent to the fate of the person, but I think it far more concerned with the person of the fate and the delineation of it which can be achieved uniquely in music … the portrait of the individual as the victim of circumstances is made far more starkly effective by this static presentation.[32]

As with King Oedipus, it is Taverner's 'fatal development' which, to borrow from Stravinsky, holds the true 'meaning' of Davies's opera. Walsh proposes that it may be beneficial to interpret *Oedipus rex* as a 'complex set of symbolic allusions contrasted on a number of different levels.'[33] Equally, it is valuable to approach the structure of *Taverner* in a similar way.

Kerman's opinion that the dramatic form of *Taverner* was 'static and schematic' and calculated to 'push personalities into the background' recalls 'framing' techniques developed by Jean Cocteau.[34] These techniques were adopted by Stravinsky in stage works such as *Petrushka* (1911, rev. 1947). In this work, Walsh asserts that 'the nominal action is literally, boxed up in the showman's booth, while the ballet spends more time describing the motley crowd going about its business and pleasure quite unaware of the miniature tragedy unfolding in its midst.'[35] *Petrushka* may have been inspired by the theatrical creations of the Russian actor and producer Vsevolod Meyerhold whose work featured

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[30] Stephen Walsh, *Stravinsky: Oedipus rex* (Cambridge, CUP, 1993), p.28.
[31] Joseph Kerman, 'Popish Ditties', *Tempo* No.102, (1972), p.21.
[32] Igor Stravinsky in Walsh, op. cit., p.15.
[33] Ibid., p.8.
[34] Jean Cocteau (1889-1963), French playwright, poet, novelist and filmmaker.
[35] Walsh, op. cit., p.13.

circus acts, mime and masks.[36] Indeed, it can be no coincidence that Stravinsky and Meyerhold were both lovers of puppet theatre, 'a medium in which facile realism is ruled out by the nature of the puppet itself.'[37]

Significantly, in *Taverner*, Davies refers to the characters in the opera, including Taverner himself, as 'marionettes' all of whom are controlled by the master-puppeteer, the Jester who later becomes the character of Death.[38] He describes Taverner's conversion as 'effected by puppet-like characters conjured up by the Jester' who, in Act I, scene iv, also controls the enactment of a Street Passion Mystery Play, a ritualized play within a play or, perhaps, even another 'miniature tragedy.'

Oedipus rex and *Taverner* are bedfellows in their resistance in conforming to a single generic stereotype such as opera, oratorio or music-theatre.[39] This resonates with Josipovici's belief that the most successful operas of the twentieth-century were not, in the conventional sense, operas at all. Josipovici considered Benjamin Britten's *Curlew River* (1964) to be a 'mixture of miracle and Noh plays', Harrison Birtwistle's *Punch and Judy* (1968) an 'ancient Greek drama in the guise of popular puppetry' and *Oedipus rex* a 'dramatic oratorio.' He also argued that the success of these works came about through a 'total rethinking of the genre' combined with an 'assurance with which the stylization is handled, the elegance with which the new rules are defined.'[40] This 'assurance' came naturally to Stravinsky who 'scored more theatrical successes than all other modern composers put together.'[41]
It remains moot as to whether *Taverner* was or is a 'theatrical success,' but what is clear is that Davies, similar to Stravinsky, was seeking to reinvent the genre.

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[36] Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874-1940), Russian actor, theatre director and producer. Walsh suggests that Stravinsky may have seen a play called *Balaganchik* ('The Fairground Booth') produced by Meyerhold in St Petersburg which featured characters from the *commedia dell'arte.* Stravinsky's *Renard* (1916) and *The Soldiers Tale* (1918) were inspired by the *commedia dell'arte* and use similar theatrical devices. Notably, *Pierrot* is also a character from the *commedia dell'arte*.
[37] Walsh, op. cit., p.14.
[38] Peter Maxwell Davies, '*Taverner*, Synopsis and Documentation', *Tempo,* No.101 (1972), p.5.
[39] As Walsh notes, the 'grandest example of ritualised theatre that has come down to us is the Greek drama of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides,' hence Stravinsky's motivation to compose *Oedipus rex*.
[40] Gabriel Josipovici, '*Taverner*, Thoughts on the Libretto', *Tempo* No.101 (1972), p.19.
[41] Ibid. p.19.

In *Taverner,* the historical meets the allegorical and, at times, it comes at a cost. Davies's insistence that 'neither time nor place are treated realistically' suggests that the fantastical should take precedence over the factual.[42] However, there are prolonged episodes during which historical narrative outweighs dramatic development and creates a structural imbalance. Act I, scene iii is an over-extended discourse on the 'King's Great Matter.' At length, the King makes his case to the Cardinal:

> …and that our marriage to the Queen, which appears contrary to God's law, as she was once Our brother's wife, which we fear illegal. To this sin we attribute the death of all our male children and dread the heavy wrath of God, if we persist. We are resolved to apply for a remedy to Rome, trusting that, for our services to the Church this scruple may be removed from our mind, and a method discovered to take another wife, and God willing, ensure the succession.[43]

The mirroring scene of Act II, scene ii is of similar design. Kerman did not admire Davies's efforts at reinvention and considered the hybrid 'unlovely' claiming that 'ultimately it does Davies in.'[44] However, in spite of its flaws Kerman did find merit in the work's overall design and described its construction as being in 'large blocks, a good many of them choral, others orchestral; the four large blocks in each act are rigidly symmetrical. But in its own terms the layout of the opera is ingenious and powerful.'[45]

Table A shows the format of the opera. It locates each scene, provides approximate durations, total number of bars, synopsis and lists the characters featured.

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[42] Davies, op. cit., p.5.
[43] Act I, scene iii, full score, pp.111-114.
[44] Joseph Kerman, 'Popish Ditties', *Tempo* No.102 (1972), p.21.
[45] Kerman's allusion to 'block' form recalls Stravinsky's use of this technique which Richard Taruskin describes as 'immobility, stasis; as applied to form, the quality of being nonteleleogical, nondevelopmental.' See, Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*: *a Biography of the works throug*h '*Mavra'* (Oxford, OUP, 1996), p.1678.

TABLE A: the format of *Taverner*

	ACT I (c.70’)				ACT II (c.50’)			
Scene	SCENE 1	SCENE 2	SCENE 3	SCENE 4	SCENE 1	SCENE 2	SCENE 3	SCENE 4
Location	A Courtroom	The Chapel	The Throne Room	The Throne Room	The Courtroom	The Throne Room	The Chapel	The Market Place
Approx. duration	20’	10’	15’	25’	10’	10’	10’	20’
Number of bars	683	259	355	759 Act I = 2,056	296	291	204	314 + *niente* Act II = 1, 105
Plot	Trial: John Taverner (Defendant), White Abbot (Prosecutor)	Taverner monologue with Monks in attendance	King in dialogue with Cardinal	Street Passion Play, mock crucifixion & Taverner’s conversion	Trial: White Abbot (Defendant), John Taverner (Prosecutor)	King in dialogue with Archbishop	White Abbot at prayer with Monks	Execution of the White Abbot
Characters	John Taverner, White Abbot, Richard Taverner, Rose Parrowe, Priest, Boy, Cardinal and Council	John Taverner alone with Monks	King, Jester and Cardinal	Death, John Taverner, Monks, Richard Taverner, Antichrist, Rose Parrowe, God the Father et al	White Abbot, John Taverner, Richard Taverner, Rose Parrowe, Priest, Boy, Death and Council	King, Archbishop (Cardinal) and Jester	White Abbot, John Taverner, Monks & Captain	Townspeople, White Abbot, John Taverner & Rose Parrowe

PRE-REFORMATION ENGLAND ---> **1534 (Act of Supremacy)** ---------------------------> **REFORMATION ENGLAND**

Table A is colour coded. The two acts open with public trial scenes and close with public scenes of comparable duration and similar musical and dramatic weight. These scenes are shaded in blue. To create dramatic balance, the opera's pair of closing scenes contain executions, one of which is false and one is real.[46] These scenes are also shaded blue. Each act includes a pair of inner private scenes set in the Chapel and the Throne Room which are shaded green.

5.2 Symmetrical and asymmetrical design

As noted above, the opera's larger architecture is balanced, but it is not, as Kerman suggests, strictly symmetrical. Symmetrical rigidity would demand that Act I, scene ii, set in the Chapel would correspond to Act II, scene ii which is actually set in the Throne Room. There may be dramatic and symbolic reasons for this asymmetrical design. Dramaturgically, the positioning of John Taverner's monologue at heart of Act I, scene ii immediately after his trial scene (Act I, scene i) sustains the dramatic pace and places Taverner and his ensuing dilemma centre stage.

Symbolic and hierarchical reasons may also exist for the ordering of these scenes. If, as Davies has indicated, Act I is set in Pre-Reformation England, then the placement of the Chapel scene (Act I, scene ii) before the Thone Room scene (Act I, scene iii) may symbolise the increased status of the Roman Catholic Church in England at that time. Conversely, Act II is set in Reformation England. The scene order has been reversed and the Throne Room scene (Act II, scene ii) is positioned before the Chapel scene (Act II, scene iii).[47] The balance of power has now shifted and, metaphorically, it is echoed in the opera's architecture.

As discussed, church architecture provided inspiration for Davies. Writing about the structure of *Prolation* Davies stated:

> Perhaps it is not too fanciful to make a comparison between the present musical structure and the *Übergreifende Form* of the arches of Gothic architecture, where the form is common to the nave, the windows, and in every instance where an arch

[46] In Act I, scene iv (The Throne Room), Joking Jesus undergoes a mock crucifixion during the Street Passion Play, and in Act II, scene iv (The Market Place), the White Abbot is burned at the stake.
[47] As in Act I, there may also be dramaturgical reasons for this layout in Act II: II/iii segues into II/iv, in which the White Abbot is executed. This is prefaced directly by the Chapel scene (II/iii) in which the action focuses on the White Abbot's celebration of Mass, its disruption as Taverner watches on which then segues into II/iv.

> can be used down, to most minor decoration. Here the proportion between a big arch and smaller arches contained therein is not always exact – indeed it is the variation which is so fascinating. […] It must be further remembered that Gothic arches are not entities in themselves but are meant to contain things.[48]

Arch-forms not only fascinated Davies, but also Alban Berg. Similar to Davies, Berg had great affection for symmetrical structures (particularly arch-forms) and the 'possibility of imposing such a shape may well have been one of the things that attracted him [Berg] to *Lulu* in the first place.'[49] Significantly, Davies was once asked about theatrical experiences which had made a strong impression upon him and he specifically identified performances in Hamburg of *Lulu.*[50] This is corroborated by one of Davies's diary entries which refers to his attendance at an incomplete performance of *Lulu* in 1963.[51] Furthermore, writing in 2015, the composer recalled that:

> While studying with Petrassi in Rome in 1957-58 […] I was encouraged to read not only Schoenberg's writings, but also in particular Luigi Rognoni's *Espressionismo e dodecafonia,* with its analysis and schemata of Berg's *Wozzeck* and *Lulu* which profoundly influenced my understanding of form and architecture forever.[52]

It is possible to suggest that Davies's study of *Lulu* and his subsequent exposure to the opera in Hamburg must, to do some degree, have influenced the shaping and structure of *Taverner*.[53] Notable parallels include a similar approach in the creation of libretti and the use of double-aspect characters; in *Lulu,* the three husbands in the first half of the opera become the prostitute's three clients in the second; in *Taverner*, the Jester is doubled as Death, Rose Parrowe with the Virgin Mary, Richard Taverner doubles St John, and the Cardinal with the Archbishop. Further, Berg and Davies deploy leitmotivs tor symbols to articulate significant moments, both structural and otherwise, and Berg's 'fate rhythm'

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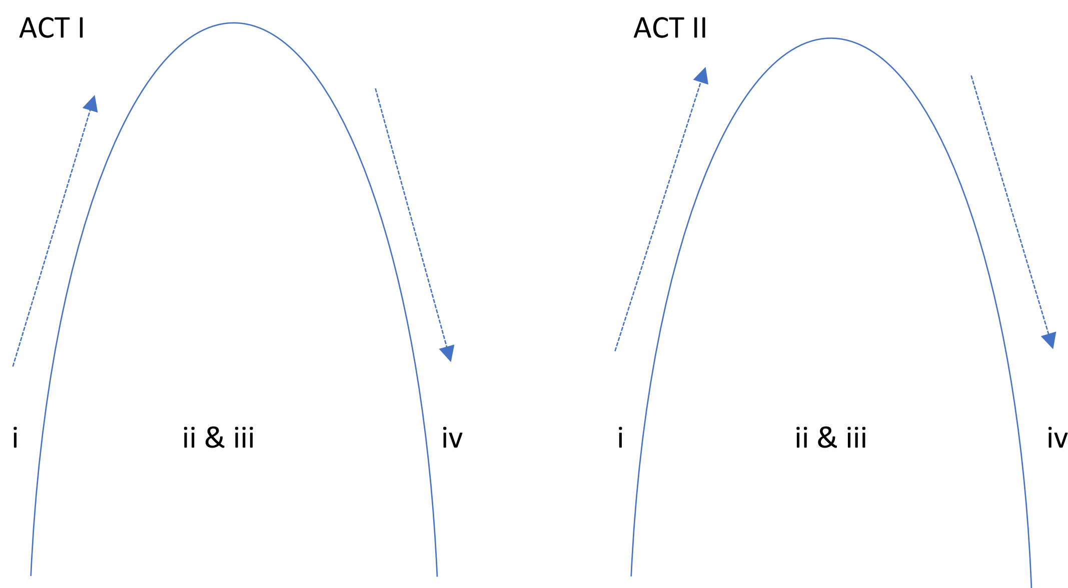
[48] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'Realizing the 'Aural Vision' of *Prolation*', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.45.
[49] Douglas Jarman, *Alban Berg: Lulu* (Cambridge, CUP, 1991), p.56.
[50] Davies in conversation with Richard Bolley, op. cit., p.5
[51] Nicholas Jones and Richard McGregor (co-editors), *The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2020), p.27 n.52.
[52] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'Indivisible Parameters and Spirit-Stirring Amalgams', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.301.
[53] It is interesting that the composition of *Lulu* occupied Berg for much of the second half of his life whilst Davies spent the first half of his composing *Taverner*. It is also noteworthy that Davies was drawn to the work of Georg Büchner, the author of *Wozzeck*. Davies adapted the final scene of Büchner's *Leonce und Lena* in *Blind Man's Buff.*

could be regarded as analogous to Davies's so-called 'Death Chord.'[54] In both operas, on-stage bands feature prominently where, as discussed above, in the two Throne Room scenes Davies writes for lute, viols, shawms and cornetts etc., and in Berg's opera ragtime is played by a jazz band of clarinets, saxophones, trumpets and sousaphone whilst Lulu prepares for her cabaret performance in Act I, scene iii. It is beyond the scope of this study to explore further similarities, but, for the purposes of this discussion, it is beneficial to examine some structural equivalents.

As Davies has acknowledged, arch-forms influenced the structure of *Prolation*. This work was composed in 1957 and, given its close proximity to *Taverner* it is not 'too fanciful' to suggest that arch-forms may also have influenced the construction of the opera.[55]

Figure 5.1 interprets the dramatic shape of *Taverner* as a pair of arch-forms.

FIGURE 5.1: The dramatic shape of *Taverner*



[54] The provenance and function of this leitmotif or cipher will be explored more fully in Chapter 7 (see pp.216-229) but for now it is enough to describe it as a whole-tone tetrachord consisting of a pair of interlocking major thirds (D-natural/F-sharp and E-natural/G-sharp.

[55] In regard to structure and the use of temporal control in Davies's music, it is important to be cognisant of one of his comments in relation to the Third Symphony: 'I must emphasise that the music is not intended as some kind of representation of any church – it borrows renaissance spatial concepts and proportions, and reworks these, abstractly, in time.' Davies quoted in Jones, 'Peter Maxwell Davies's 'Submerged Cathedral': Architectural Principles in the Third Symphony', *Music and Letters*, Vol. 81, No. 3 (August 2000), pp.421-422.

The opera's opening public scenes (Act I, scene i and Act II, scene i) are represented by the left side of each arch and, correspondingly the two closing public scenes (Act I, scene iv and Act II, scene iv) are represented by the right side. Each arch encloses each act's inner private scenes (scenes ii and iii, respectively) which may be viewed as interludes. This interpretation supports Davies's assertion that 'arches are not entities in themselves but are meant to contain things.' If this idea is extended further, the two arches may also be viewed as windows through which the affairs of church and state may be observed.

The trial scenes of Act I, scene i and Act II, scene i are characterised by argument in which statement and counterstatement propels the drama forwards. As Figure 5.1 shows, the arrows trace the ascending dramatic trajectories of each scene. Also, Stephen Pruslin has observed that,

> The first scene of each Act (….) represents a trial, on which some light is cast by a trenchant perception of Donald Francis Tovey (quoted in John Burk's classic book *The Life and Works of Beethoven*). In discussing the fugue that forms the development section in the Finale of Beethoven's Piano Sonata no 28 in A major, op.101, Burk writes: 'Tovey once aptly remarked that the fugue style and the sonata style are as different as a court trial and a stage scene… But a highly charged trial scene placed within a play, and cunningly set off, becomes its crux.'[56]

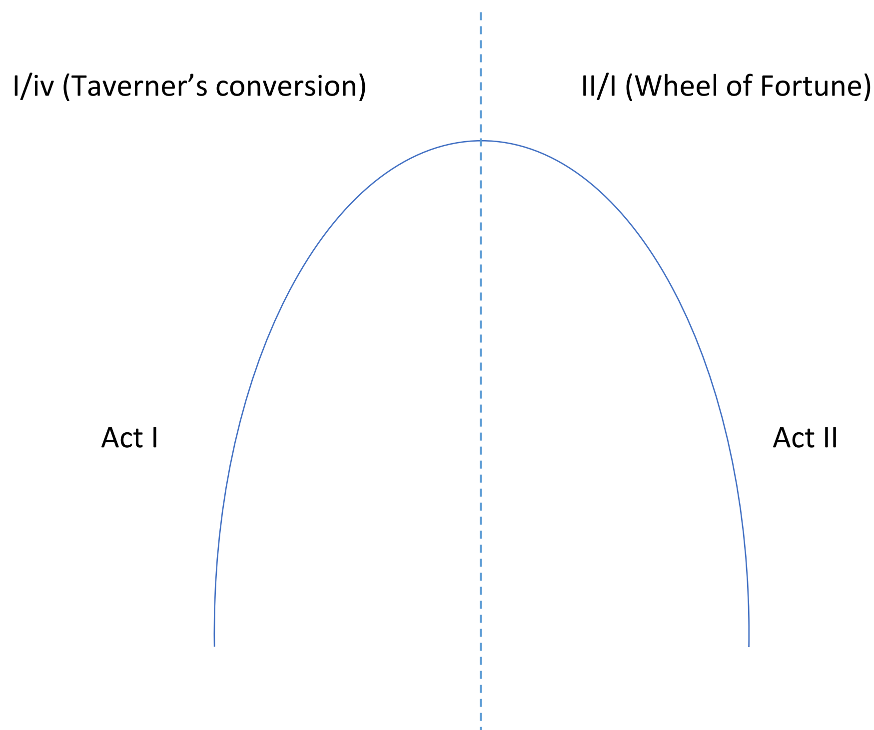
As Pruslin notes, Tovey's remark as quoted by Burk in relation to Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 28, where 'fugue style and the sonata style are as different as a court trial and a stage scene' resonates with the design of the two trial scenes in *Taverner*. Indeed, in Act I, scene i, the statements of the prosecution followed by each defendant's answer may be interpreted as resembling the subject and answer in the exposition of a fugue. Also, Tovey's notion that a 'highly charged trial scene placed within a play, becomes it crux' recalls Act IV, scene i of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* upon which the whole drama pivots. As Pruslin suggests, a similar interpretation does shed light upon the two trial scenes in *Taverner,* which are fundamental to igniting proceedings and generating much of the work's musical and extra-musical material. However, as will be discussed further below, the real 'crux' of the opera is in Act I, scene iv.

[56] Stephen Pruslin, NMC CD D157 (2009), CD sleeve note, p.8.

Conversely, the opposite sides of the two arches, (Act I, scene iv and Act II, scene iv) represent descents. Act I, scene iv features a mock crucifixion which is followed by Taverner's conversion and his self-betrayal. At the close of Act I, scene iv, stage directions describe Taverner as 'rising to a pious kneeling position' (bar 703). In Act II, scene iv there is a real execution followed by Rose Parrowe's expression of Taverner's betrayal and the opera ends with Taverner kneeling in prayer before he falls 'prostrate before the pyre' (bar 293). As noted, the two inner private scenes (scenes ii and iii) of each act (in the Chapel and Throne Room) are enclosed within each arch.

Figure 5.2 rationalises the structure of *Taverner*. It shows how the two acts may be interpreted as opposite sides of a single arch-form. The apex of the arch is marked by Taverner's conversion at the end of Act I, scene iv. A line of symmetry bisects the arch.

FIGURE 5.2 The structure of the opera



At the climax of Act I, scene iv, Taverner undergoes his conversion and in Act II, scene i, his transformation is completed as the Jester/Death spins the Wheel of Fortune and so begins Taverner's demise.

Further parallels may be drawn to the design of Berg's *Lulu.* Jarman has stated that its crux is in the Film Music at the centre of the work placed in Act II between scenes i and ii. This interlude is palindromic and, symbolically, represents the turning point not only for Lulu, but for the whole opera. Analogously, as shown in Figure 5.2, in *Taverner* the point of no return and the beginning of a similar reversal is located at the apex of the arch when, in Act I, scene iv Taverner undergoes his conversion (bar 660) and false beatification by the Jester/Death (bar 747).

This palindromic design is illustrated in Table B. Davies's stage directions at the start of Act II, scene i note that, from this point on, the characters are to move with 'somnambulistic, jerky movements,' perhaps, coincidentally, in the manner of a silent film. Similarly, in *Lulu*, following the palindromic interlude, much of the music heard in Act II, scene ii repeats that of Act II, scene i which Berg indicates is also to be in slow motion.

Further, Berg and Davies both integrate historical genres and forms into their operas. In the pair of Throne Room scenes of *Taverner*, pavanes, galliards and marches are featured and, correspondingly in *Lulu*, Berg introduces canon, chorale variations, canzonetta, arias and arioso. Also, both composers utilize abstract forms. In *Lulu,* Berg employs sonata form explicitly. Jarman has stated that:

> Interpenetrating this sequence of vocal numbers are three larger musical structures (one in each act of the opera) based on the 'absolute' forms of instrumental music. Each of the three acts of the opera is thus dominated by one of these large-scale 'abstract' forms, a form which embodies the main dramatic idea of the act and the constituent parts of which appear at dramatically appropriate points.[57]

Act I of *Lulu* is dominated by a sonata form which Berg manipulates to articulate drama. In *Taverner* its presence is more implicit, although in the opera's final scene 'abstract' form is also introduced at a dramatically appropriate point.[58]

Rodney Lister has noted that sonata form has meant different things at different times to different composers although a constant concern has been to articulate 'contrast, conflict

[57] Jarman, op. cit., p.59.
[58] The notion of 'dramatic sonata form' is also used as a structuring device in *Mr Emmet Takes a Walk* (Op. 207). See Richard McGregor, 'Genre', Nicholas Jones and Richard McGregor, *The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2020), pp.117-118.

and resolution.'[59] Davies has acknowledged that 'a ghost of sonata form' may be detected in the first movement of the First Symphony[60] and its presence is also identifiable in the *Second Fantasia*, a work closely linked to the opera.[61] In Act II, scene iv, the final section of the *Second Fantasia* dominates the closing episode of *Taverner*. In a transformed state, the White Abbot's vocal line and choral interjections are superimposed upon the *Fantasia*. Davies described this final section of the *Fantasia* as a 'closing extended slow movement'[62] and noted that some of its music 'refers back to the opening' of the *Second Fantasia* where 'sections 1 to 6 make roughly a sonata-form movement.'[63] Whereas in the First Symphony there is an implication of sonata-form, in Act II, scene iv of *Taverner* it is more explicit.

Similar to Berg's approach in *Lulu*, Davies integrates this large-scale abstract instrumental form to articulate structure and embody drama. This view resonates with Josipovici's comment about the final scene of *Taverner*.

> The White Abbot moves into centre stage (and up) to sing a long, impressive aria. The chorus moans for him, splendidly, instead of launching into lengthy detached commentaries or uttering Stravinskian aphorisms, as they have been doing most of the time. At last a character is allowed to develop and the static 'drama of ideas' yields to drama of personality.[64]

This supports the notion that the integration of the *Second Fantasia*, although Josipovici does not identify it as such, elevates the 'drama of personality' which, for him, has been lacking. This abstract music describes the execution of the White Abbot which Davies referred to as Taverner's 'final projective act of destruction, of destroying, that is, his own spiritual nature.'[65] Structurally, dramatically and musically, this is a defining moment in the opera, and, to articulate it, the full chorus is introduced for the first and only time. The Townspeople sing: 'This is the work of John Taverner, musician, servant of the King. Christ must reign, till he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death' (Act II, scene iv, bars 13-25). Structurally, this chorus entry mirrors that

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[59] Rodney Lister, 'Sonata form in the music of Peter Maxwell Davies', Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (co-eds.), *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, CUP, 2009), p.108.
[60] Griffiths, op. cit., pp.159-160.
[61] Ibid., p.141.
[62] Ibid., p.142.
[63] Ibid., p.144.
[64] Kerman, op. cit., p.22.
[65] Peter Maxwell Davies, '*Taverner':* Synopsis and Documentation,' *Tempo* No.101 (1972), p.6.

of the chorus of Monks in Act I, scene ii as they deliver the same text, except in Latin: 'Hoc opus est Joharni Taverni, viri arte musica singularis….' (Act I, scene ii, bars 1-32). The language is transformed, the Monks have become Townspeople and the Chapel is a Market Place. In Act I, scene ii, the text is set to Taverner's original *In Nomine* and revolves around D-natural as its axis, whereas in Act II, scene iv, symbolically, the tone centre moves up a tritone to A-flat. Although Kerman's remark concerning the rigid symmetry of *Taverner* is inaccurate, Davies does, as shown here, promote balance in the opera's bigger architecture as choral statements virtually bookend the work.

5.3 Articulation of structure

Even if the opera is not strictly symmetrical schematically, symmetry may be identified through orchestration, the placement of pivotal pitches, tone centres[66] and the employment of historical formal models and pre-existing music.

Table B shows how these elements combine to introduce balance and contrast whilst articulating the architecture of the work.

[66] See p.143 n.73 of this thesis.

TABLE B: architecture of *Taverner* as articulated by orchestration, historical models, pre-existing music and pivotal tone centres

	ACT I				ACT II			
Scene	Scene 1	Scene 2	Scene 3	Scene 4	Scene 1	Scene 2	Scene 3	Scene 4
Location	A Courtroom	The Chapel	The Throne Room	The Thone Room	The Courtroom	The Throne Room	The Chapel	The Market Place
Orchestration	Full orchestra	Brass & winds	Stage band: viols & lute	Full orchestra	Full orchestra	Stage band: shawms, serpent & sackbuts	Brass & winds then full orchestra	Full orchestra
Historical models	In Nomine	Motet, prolation canons (John Taverner)	Fanfare Pavane Galliard	O Magnum Mysterium	In Nomine (parodied)	Intrada Pavane Galliard	Benedictus, *Missa Tibi Trinitas* (John Taverner)	In Nomine
Tone Centres	8 x note set (In Nomine) + D-natural	D-natural/B-flat	Pastiche - Plainsong fragments + embedded Death Chord	Death chord + 12-note chord	8 x note set (parodied) + Death Chord (Wheel of Fortune)	Pastiche – Plainsong Fragments + embedded Death Chord	B-flat/D-natural	Death chord + 12-note chord + In Nomine (D-natural)

In writing about *Revelation and Fall*, Rees has stated that the 'hint of tonality becomes like the opening of an old wound – the presence of tonal expectation makes the dissonance and atonality more uncomfortable.'[67] Table B shows that, allied to 'hints of tonality', plainsong and other 'found' objects such as the Renaissance dances and fantasias of Act I, scene iii and Act II, scene ii are also introduced and integrated to articulate structure. Yet, at times, Davies deliberately seeks to subvert a balanced structure. Table A reveals that the total duration of Act I is approximately seventy minutes and constructed of 2,056 bars, whereas the duration of Act II is approximately fifty minutes and consists of 1,105 bars. This disproportionality is manifested most obviously in the different durations of each act's opening trial scenes where Act II, scene i is a compressed version of Act I, scene i.

In Act I, scene i, the White Abbott is the Defendant, whilst in Act II, scene i, the roles are reversed and Taverner becomes the Defendant. Davies has described this scene as 'the 'anti' or 'shadow' presentation of Act I, scene i.[68] Both scenes take place in Courtrooms, although, and perhaps significantly, Davies describes in the score the courtroom of Act I, scene i as '*A* Courtroom,' whereas in Act II, scene i it is '*The* Courtroom.' It is possible to conjecture that 'A Courtroom' is one of abstraction, whereas '*The* Courtroom' is that which exists in Taverner's mind. As noted, the roles of Prosecutor and Defendant are reversed but both scenes employ virtually identical cast members except, when in Act II, scene i the Cardinal is transformed into a Priest and the character of Death is added; the allegation of heresy is central to both scenes. Yet, in terms of duration and the total number of bars, Act II, scene i is nearly half the length of Act I, scene i.

Table C describes this compression of time and reveals the disproportionate length of episodes within each scene as calculated by the number of bars. The table shows show how each episode is articulated by the introduction of a new character; it also notes each one's dramatic purpose.

[67] Rees, op. cit., p.181.
[68] Davies, op. cit., p.5.

TABLE C: comparison of Act I, scene i and Act II, scene i by episode, number of bars, cast and dramatic purpose

Act I, scene i				Act II, scene i			
EPISODE	BARS	CAST	DRAMATIC PURPOSE	EPISODE	BARS	CAST	DRAMATIC PURPOSE
Prologue	00 → 16	Orchestra		Prologue	00 → 21	Orchestra	
1	17 → 53	White Abbot John Taverner	WA calls JT, accuses JT	1	22	John Taverner	JT accuses WA
2	54 → 107	John Taverner	JT defends self	2	23 → 48	White Abbot	WA defends self
3	108 → 159	White Abbot John Taverner	WA accuses JT	3	49 → 64	John Taverner	JT calls Richard Taverner
4	160 → 243	Richard Taverner	RT defends JT	4	65 → 91	Richard Taverner	RT accuses WA
5	244 → 260	White Abbott	WA calls Rose Parrowe	5	92 → 99	John Taverner	JT calls Rose Parrowe
6	261 → 310	Rose Parrowe	RP defends RT	6	100 → 138	Rose Parrowe	RP accuses WA
7	311 → 344	White Abbot, Council	Accuse JT	7	139 → 148	Council	Accuses WA
8	345 → 397	Priest, Council	Accuse JT	8	149 → 150	John Taverner	JT calls Priest
9	398 → 409	White Abbot	WA calls Boy	9	151 → 160	Priest	Priest accuses WA
10	410 → 482	Boy, Council	Accuse JT	10	161 → 165	Council	Council comments
11	483 → 512	White Abbot	WA condemns JT	11	166 → 185	Boy	Boy accuses WA
12	513 → 540	Orchestra	Fanfare	12	186 → 194	Council	Council comments
13	541 → 620	Cardinal	Pardons JT	13	195 → 225	John Taverner	JT condemns WA
Epilogue	621 → 683	Orchestra	*Second Fantasia*	Epilogue	287 → 296	Orchestra	*Second Fantasia*

As shown in Table C, each scene is framed by a prologue and an epilogue. Each of the two epilogues integrate music from Davies's *Second Taverner Fantasia.* Each scene may be divided into thirteen episodes in which different character witnesses are presented to the court; this resonates with Pruslin's comment noted above about the fugal design of Act I, scene i. Both scenes contain interpolations by the chorus (the Council). As the table shows, in Act II, scene i, the evidence arias of Richard Taverner, Rose Parrowe, the Priest and the Boy are compressed. Stephen Arnold has observed that 'the Abbot hears himself condemned in almost the same words and music as he used against Taverner in the first trial. But whereas Taverner was sentenced at crotchet = 66, over thirty bars, 'justice' is dispensed to the White Abbot at crotchet = 104, over twenty bars.[69] Both trials are hurried, prejudiced affairs but the speed at which the White Abbot is condemned in Taverner's kangaroo court is ironic as the disproportionate structure emphasises, symbolically, the injustice at work.

The pair of inner scenes of each act feature extensive use of parody and pastiche to articulate structure. As Figure 5.1 shows, they are set in the Chapel and in the Throne Room and, if considered architecturally, may be located within the arches which represent each act. As shown in Table B, these pairs of scenes mirror one another. This notion is supported by a comment made by Davies about Act II, scene ii in that '[It] reflects and distorts the earlier conference of the King and Cardinal. On this occasion the accompaniment is provided by a small chamber organ and regal, and by a group of Renaissance wind instruments and percussion which describe a history of sixteenth century English organ and dance music, seen through a hallucinatory distorting mirror.'[70] The structure of the pair of scenes set in the Throne Room is articulated by two instrumental sequences which mirror one another and feature Renaissance dances and sixteenth-century keyboard fantasias. In both scenes, the orchestra falls silent (until the closing moments of Act II, scene iii) and the cast is accompanied by two on-stage bands which perform on period instruments.

[69] Stephen Arnold, 'The Music of *Taverner*', *Tempo* No.101 (1972), p.24.
[70] Davies, op. cit., p.6.

Table D reveals the symmetrical design of the two Throne Room scenes (Act I, scene iii and Act II, scene ii). It identifies and compares the parodied historical models and lists the instrumental forces of the on-stage bands. The two on-stage bands are contrasted by instrument group: in Act I, scene iii the band consists of strings: lute and an ensemble of viols; in Act II, scene ii it features the wind and brass: sopranino recorder, cornett, soprano and bass shawms, sackbut and nakers.

TABLE D: identification of historical models and comparison of instrumentation in Act I, scene iii and Act II, scene ii

Act I, scene iii, The Throne Room				**Act II, scene ii, The Throne Room**			
Form	Bars	Cast	Instrumentation	Form	Bars	Cast	Instrumentation
Fanfare	00 – 11	King enters	Brass	Intrada	00 – 11	King discovered	Stage band 2
Pavana	16 – 59	King	Stage band 1	Pavan	13 – 29		Stage band 2
Alla gagliarda	65 – 149	King, Jester & Cardinal	Stage band 1	Galliard	47 – 139	King	Stage band 2
Alla marcia	150 – 193	King	Stage band 1	Dumpe	140 – 153	King	Stage band 2
Fanfare	322 - 326	King exits	Brass	Couranto	202 – 224	King exits	Stage band 2

<u>Stage Band 1</u>
Lute
Tenor viols 1 & 2
Bass viols 1 & 2
Bass viols 3 & 4
Violone

<u>Stage Band 2</u>
Sopranino Recorder
Cornett
Bass Shawm
Soprano Shawm
Alto Trombone
Nakers

Table E below shows how each of the two scenes set in the Chapel broadly divide into three subject groups (A, B and C). Act I, scene ii opens with a chorus of Monks singing Taverner's original *In Nomine* plainsong in canon; the passage is interpolated by John Taverner's arioso. The scene ends with an orchestral transition which features material integrated from the *Second Taverner Fantasi*a and functions as an extended upbeat into Act I, scene iii. Act II, scene iii also opens with a chorus of Monks although on this occasion they are singing the Mass. Davies describes it as 'a combination of the proper for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.'[71] As in Act I, scene ii choral polyphony is interpolated by a duet sung by the White Abbot and Taverner which mirrors his earlier arioso. The Sanctus follows and the military enter to enforce the monastery's dissolution. The scene ends with the Benedictus heard, ironically, in John Taverner's setting from his parody mass, *Missa Gloria Tibi Trinitas*.[72] As with Act I, scene ii, this scene also concludes with an orchestral transition which leads directly into Act II, scene iv. Two 'tone centres' articulate the symmetrical design of these scenes.[73]

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[71] Davies, op. cit., p.6.

[72] Stephen Arnold, 'The Music of *Taverner*', *Tempo* No.101 (1972), p.24.

[73] Ibid. Stephen Arnold's use of the term 'tone centre' resonates with a remark which Davies made in 2000 about tonality: 'I have never thought of any of my music as other than modal or tonal' [quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'A Composer's Point of View (I): 'On Music, Mathematics and Magic Squares', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.213]. However, terms including 'tone centre', 'tonic' and 'dominant' have, in Davies's music, do have specific meaning. Richard McGregor has noted that 'Davies's uses of modal (and later tonal) sources as the basis of a composition undoubtedly contributed to his conceptualisation of a given pitch or pitches as tonal centres for a work – as focus pitches' [McGregor in Jones and McGregor, 'Tonality and Texture', *The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2020), p.181]. Also, Peter Owens has observed that the composer revealed that his 'first use (presumably meaning his first conscious use) of a tonality or pitch centre as an actual reference occurred in *Revelation and Fall* (Op. 31)*,* written in 1966, but at that time, he did not know how to articulate the idea in terms of 'tonics and dominants', referring to this early manifestation and based on a 'major pivot and a subsidiary pivot.' [Owens, quoted in Jones and McGregor, op. cit., p.182]. In his programme note for the First Symphony (Op. 71), written between 1973-76, the composer remarked upon his introduction of a 'pivotal tonal centre of F, with a 'dominant' of D-flat – remembering that the musical structure is related to medieval techniques, where a modal 'dominant' is not necessarily a fourth or fifth away from the 'tonic'. [Davies, quoted in Paul Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies* (London, Robson Books, 1982], p.160. Further, in a programme note for the Second Symphony (Op. 91), written in 1980, he alludes to the notion of a 'basic unifying hypothesis' in which 'tonality is surely not merely a matter of using a major or minor triad on the music's surface – it is a system of organisation, through every aspect of a work which enunciates it as a coherent whole, governing not only melody and harmony, but rhythm and architecture.' Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones, 'Peter Maxwell Davies's Basic Unifying Hypothesis: Dominant Logic', *The Musical Times,* Spring 2002, Vol.143, No. 1878, p.38]. Nicholas Jones has suggested that this 'specific concept of tonality' became the composer's 'template' 'from which the major works since the early 1980s have been constructed' (Jones, op. cit., p.38); this 'concept of tonality was 'anything but "traditional", and should not therefore be understood as being created within a diatonic and unqualified hierarchical framework.' (Jones, op. cit., p.38). In this context, it is possible to argue that, in *Taverner,* Davies's 'system of organisation' through the manipulation of pivotal pitches and 'tone centres' anticipates the 'basic unifying hypothesis' of his later works.

TABLE E: identification and comparison of subject groups, forms and tone centres in Act I, scene ii and Act II, scene iii

Act I, scene ii, The Chapel					**Act II, scene iii, The Chapel**				
SUBJECT GROUP	BARS	CAST	FORM	TONE CENTRE	SUBJECT GROUP	BARS	CAST	FORM	TONE CENTRE
A	00 → 32	Monks	(In Nomine) + Canon[1]	D + B-flat ↓	A	00 → 22	White Abbot	Arioso	B-flat ↓
B	33 → 47	John Taverner	Arioso[1]		B	23 → 57	Monks	Mass	
A^1	48 → 60	Monks	Canon[2]		A^1	58 → 106	White Abbot John Taverner	Duet	
B^1	61 → 67	John Taverner	Arioso[2]		B^1	107 → 128	Monks	Sanctus	
A^1 B^1	68 → 125	Monks John Taverner	Canon		A^2	129 → 133	Captain	Recitative	
A^2	126 → 145	Monks	Chant (Psalm 31)	D	A^1 B^2	134 → 160	White Abbot Monks	Benedictus	D
C	146 → 259	Orchestra	Transition (2nd Fantasia)	B-flat	C	161 → 204	Orchestra	Transition	

Act I, scene iv and Act II, scene iv are also coupled scenes. These outer, public scenes have extended durations and, dramatically, they mirror one another. Act I, scene iv is the longest scene in the opera. It has an approximate duration of 25’ and is constructed of 759 bars. Following the Jester’s revelation of himself as Death at the end of Act I, scene iii, there is appropriately extensive use of the Death Chord throughout Act I, scene iv. As in the codettas of Act I, scene iii and Act II, scene iii, its strategic use also articulates the structure of Act I, scene iv and Act II, scene iv. As Table F shows, the use of pivotal tone centres underpins the architecture of Act I, scene ii and Act II, scene iii. In Act I, scene iv the Death Chord has a similar function.

Table F shows that Act I, scene iv and Act II, scene iv each divide into four sections. Each section may be interpreted as a scene within a scene which is defined by the drama, cast, related tone centres and/or strategic placement of the Death Chord.

TABLE F: identification and comparison of cast, drama, the Death Chord and tone centres in Act I, scene iv and Act II, scene iv

ACT I, scene iv					ACT II, scene iv				
SECTION	BARS	CAST	DRAMA	DEATH CHORD/TONE CENTRE	SECTION	BARS	CAST	DRAMA	DEATH CHORD/TONE CENTRE
A	00 – 264	John Taverner Jester Antichrist Monks	Extraction of Taverner's confession	D-natural Death Chord i [15-17 & 40-41] Death Chord ii [216-119 & 243-247]	A	00 - 57	Townspeople Choirboys	Procession with White Abbot	F/A-flat D/F
B	265 – 466	Richard Taverner, Rose Parrowe John Taverner	Taverner betrays Rose Parrowe & Richard Taverner		B	58 – 100	Townspeople John Taverner	Taverner writes letter about White Abbot's idolatry	A/C E-flat/C
C	467 – 647	Demons God Michael Gabriel Jester John Taverner	Street Mystery Passion Play and mock crucifixion	D-natural *O Magnum Mysterium* [479-502] *Ecce filius bastardus* (In Nomine) [503-508]	C	101 - 246	John Taverner White Abbot	Taverner signs executioners Soliloquy	(D) + Death Chord [155-158] A
D	648 – 759	John Taverner Jester	Taverner's confession, conversion and beatification	Death Chord iii [648] Death Chord iv [757-759] + 12-note chord	D CODA	247 – 280 281 - end	Townspeople & Rose Parrowe John Taverner	White Abbot's execution	D Death Chord [247-258] (F/A-flat) (A/E-flat) 12-note chord + Plainsong & In Nomine

Table F shows that in Act I, scene iv, the Death Chord is predominant in the outer sections A and D which are primarily concerned with Taverner's confession, conversion and mock beatification by the Jester/Death. As such, the Death Chord articulates the structure of these sections which frame the inner ones, B and C.

Section C features the Mock Mystery Street Passion Play during which the pitch D-natural is introduced as a pivotal pitch. As the table shows, prior to the mock crucifixion a chorus of Demons sing a parody of a Medieval carol: 'Behold his body in every place….' (bars 479-502). Its axis is the pitch D-natural and the carol's melodic contour is derived from Taverner's *In Nomine*. When God the Father sings: 'Ecce fillius bastardus meus' (bar 503), it also revolves around D-natural which, as Arnold suggests, may stem from the same melodic origin.[74] The Death Chord articulates the start (bar 648) and close (bar 759) of section D; Act I closes with the Death Chord absorbed into a twelve-note chord.

The corresponding scene (Act II, scene iv) has been described by Arnold as 'remarkable for the large-scale articulation of tone centres.'[75] Table F shows that four primary 'tone centres' under-pin the scene's design whilst those in parentheses (in sections C and D) indicate a secondary function. Similar to Act I, scene iv, the opera's final scene may also be divided into four sections but with an additional coda. Section A focuses on the 'tone centre' of F/A-flat which is associated with the chorus of Townspeople; in section B this shifts to A/C which contrasts with Taverner's music which revolves around an axis of E-flat/C. In section C, the White Abbot's soliloquy has a tone centre of A. An extended statement of the Death Chord (bars 247-258) signals the beginning of section D which leads to a re-statement of the twelve-note chord (bar 264) which mirrors its iteration at the end of Act I, scene iv. However, unlike that scene, Act II, scene iv also has a coda which concludes with a quotation of Taverner's *In Nomine* which has D-natural as its pivot.

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[74] Arnold, op. cit., p.26. Stephen Arnold also suggests that the Demons' chorus recalls Davies's own four-part carol 'Haylle, comely and clene' from *O Magnum in Mysterium*.
[75] Ibid., p.28.

5.4 Integration of the *Second Taverner Fantasia*

As mentioned above, the Lento section of the *Second Taverner Fantasia* is present in sections C and D.[76] Superimposed upon the orchestral material is the White Abbot's final aria, choral passages, a cello solo and the coda, the final quotation of Taverner's *In Nomine* performed by a quartet of recorders. Clearly, the presence of the *Second Taverner Fantasia* is, structurally, significant not only in Act II, scene iv but also in other sections of the opera, notably the orchestral transitions.

The *Second Taverner Fantasia* and *Taverner* have been described by John Harbison as 'strange bedfellows.'[77] Davies acknowledged that:

> [composition of the *Fantasia*]….grew out of the completed first act of *Taverner*, during the writing of which I felt that many of the ideas were capable of more symphonic development than was possible within the confines of the dramatic context. Some parts of the *Fantasia* occur in an identical, or almost identical form – for instance, Section 1 forms the first orchestral lead into the first confrontation between the King and the Cardinal, who enter on the fanfare; the climactic sixth section accompanies a tableau in Act II where the Jester, as Death, is seen at the centre of a huge Wheel of Fortune, which he revolves, controlling all men's destinies; and Sections 12 and 13 form the orchestral material for the final burning of the White Abbot at the stake by Taverner, for his religious convictions.[78]

Davies's analysis of the *Second Taverner Fantasia* has revealed that the work consists of thirteen sections.[79] The composer commented that his 'main compositional concern' in it was 'to explore the possibilities of continuous thematic transformation, so that the material is in a constant state of flux – the intervallic and rhythmic contours of one of the three main melodic figures become, for instance, its own inversion or one of the other figures.'[80] The composer expanded upon this during a conversation with Stephen Walsh.

> In the *Second Fantasia* I had taken my contrapuntal skill, if I may call it that, to limits which I had not taken it before […] transformations themselves were subject to compositional planning and they determined the shape and size of the phrase and even the total structure of the work…[81]

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[76] Full score, bar 1022 to the end of the *Second Taverner Fantasia*.

[77] John Harbison, 'Peter Maxwell Davies's *Taverner,*' *Perspectives of New Music,* Fall/Winter, 1972; 11:1, p.235.

[78] Davies, quoted in Paul Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies* (London, Robson Books, 1982), p.141.

[79] As Table C shows, perhaps it is mere coincidence that the form of Act I of the opera may be divided into thirteen episodes.

[80] Davies, quoted in Griffiths, op. cit., p.141.

[81] Davies in conversation with Stephen Walsh in Nicholas Jones (ed.), '*Revelation and Fall*', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.111.

Given that the *Fantasia* 'grew out of' Act I of the opera, Davies's comment that the compositional process of transformation which 'determined the shape and size of the phrase and even the total structure of the work' also inform the design of the opera. Lister believed the *Second Taverner Fantasia* to be 'intimately connected to the long gestation' of the opera and where 'much of the music is very close, if not identical.'[82] It has also been suggested that the *Fantasia* may be regarded as a '*Taverner* symphony'[83] and whilst the *Second Taverner Fantasia* spawned material in Act II of the opera, Act I of *Taverner* generated music for the orchestral work.

Table G locates identical material found in the opera and the *Second Taverner Fantasia*.

TABLE G: identification of material common to *Taverner* and the *Second Taverner Fantasia*

	ACT I				ACT II			
	Scene i	Scene ii	Scene iii	Scene iv	Scene i	Scene ii	Scene iii	Scene iv
Section in *Taverner*		147 → 259	00 → 11		287 → 296			95 → 294
Equivalent section in *Second Fantasia*		00 → 13 (compressed) 14 → 116	117 → 127		539 → 546			1009 → 1215

The tableau in Act II, scene i which features the Wheel of Fortune, integrates material from the orchestral work. Also, as discussed above, the White Abbot's final aria of Act II, scene iv is accompanied by the *Fantasia*'s final lento section; and the orchestral transition which closes Act I, scene ii is present in the *Fantasia* albeit in a more compressed form. Rees has argued that this Transition may relate to the construction of Taverner's own *Missa Gloria Tibi Trinitas* where 'each movement [….] has a clear tripartite structure, emphasised by the alternating vocal groups and changing time signatures with the cantus firmus 'appearing in triple measure in the first section, in duple in the second, and in diminution of the duple of the final one' (Hand 1978, 46). This creates a sense of progression and acceleration towards

[82] Rodney Lister in Gloag and Jones, op. cit., p.110.
[83] Griffiths, op. cit., p.45.

its final cadence, strengthened by a gradual shortening of note values throughout the movement, especially in the last few bars.'[84] This view supports the interpretation that this orchestral transition serves as an extended upbeat into Act I, scene iii.

Why Davies chose to integrate material from the *Second Fantasia,* and to such an extent in Act II, scene iv of the opera, may, in part, be explained by the composer's obsession with the music of Beethoven and his approach to structure. Lister has noted that Beethoven's Piano Sonata in A-flat, Op. 110 often featured in Davies's teaching.[85] Apparently, a particular appeal lay in the fact that its form extended over whole sonata in which individual movements are, ostensibly, self-contained forms: sonata (compressed), scherzo, recitative, aria 1, fugue 1, aria 2, fugue 2 and coda. Lister suggests that 'the *Second Taverner Fantasia* applies this principle in a parodistic, ironic manner but Davies has also used it without irony as a means of structuring larger works.'[86] If, as Lister says, this principle of extended form, is applied to *Taverner* the integration of material from the *Second Fantasia* in a non-ironic way may be read as informing the opera's larger musico-dramatic structure and, as will be discussed in Chapter 7, its psychological course.[87]

The concept of 'form' as extending 'over the whole span of the piece' recalls Davies's comments at the start of this chapter about Renaissance architecture and the impact of *Übergreifende Form* in the shaping of his work. Recalling his time in Italy in the 1950s, Davies stated,

> …visiting the various churches there and watching very carefully the way the whole *value* of what you saw changed as you walked and certain things became visible. And I found this very stimulating in that it doesn't apply in the same way when you're walking through a landscape with virtually nothing in it. You do notice in these Renaissance churches, that because they're devoid of clutter and decoration things change very gradually as you move, and it's in the gradual transformation over a period – if only you turn your head – that you notice something.[88]

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[84] Rees, op. cit., p.101.

[85] Charles Bodman Rae recalls having a lengthy conversation with Davies about the third movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata no 28 at Dartington Summer School in 1980. Davies mentioned that he had played the work in his youth and remained fascinated by its musico-dramatic shape and psychological trajectory.

[86] Rodney Lister in Gloag and Jones, op. cit., p.112.

[87] Sketches for the *Second Fantasia* have revealed a narrative structure which appears to relate to that of the opera.

[88] Davies in conversation with Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'Renaissance Architecture, Symphonic Precedents and Historical Resonances', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.180.

Whether it was through the architecture of a Renaissance church or the form of a late piano sonata by Beethoven, Davies understood how structure functioned at multiple levels in myriad ways, visible and invisible. Ostensibly, *Taverner* is an opera in two acts with four scenes but, as discussed, it is underpinned by concealed structural and sub-structural elements. The promotion and subversion of symmetrical devices, proportionality, the manipulation of implied tonalities, the use of leitmotif and architectural concepts combine in shaping the opera and all are fundamental to its expression.

Composers, architects, writers and painters have often looked to the past for inspiration. However, it is notable that whilst Davies and Brunelleschi both respected the ideas and theories that they inherited from their ancestors, both men shared an irresistible urge to innovate or a 'building of old on new.'[89] Brunelleschi's reconstructions of the churches of San Lorenzo and Santo Spirito in Florence have been interpreted as 'modern' versions of medieval ecclesiastical buildings.[90] And, just as a Renaissance Florentine architect provided comment upon medieval churches, similarly, it is possible to suggest that a British modernist composer reinterpreted and made comment upon grand opera.

[89] Nicholas Jones, 'Peter Maxwell Davies's *Submerged Cathedral*: Architectural Principles in the Third Symphony', *Music and Letters*, Vol. 81. No.3 (August 2000), p.421.
[90] Giovanni Fanelli, 'Brunelleschi', trans. Helene Cassin (Florence, 1980), p.69.

Chapter 6

Libretto

All a poet can do today is warn. That is why the true poet must be truthful.[1]

This epigraph is borrowed from the Preface to Wilfred Owen's collection of war poetry and was written just before the poet was killed on the Western Front in November 1918.[2] It represents an appeal for truth which resonates strongly with Peter Maxwell Davies's own moral stance and artistic creed.

Davies set his poem *Spring Offensive* as part of *The Jacobite Rising* (Op. 187) and, over three decades earlier, in his *War Requiem* (1962), Benjamin Britten juxtaposed Owen's poetry with the Latin Mass for the Dead. Owen's early writing was in the tradition of romantic British poets such as John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley. However, it was the horror of war, which Owen experienced in the trenches of Flanders, that compelled him to create a new aesthetic realism diametrically opposed to the patriotic sonnets of contemporary poets, most notably those of Rupert Brooke.[3]

Significantly, Owen's insistence that 'the true poet must be truthful' has a proximity to the words of St Augustine which Davies quotes in Act I, scene i of *Taverner*: 'faith is a means by which those things that are not seen may be believed. We may believe whatever it signifies to us, not troubling us as to how true such things might be.' Although St Augustine's mantra was written over 1,500 years ago, it too resounds with Davies's remark that, as a composer, he claimed not to answer problems but 'only to pose them.'[4] Unquestionably, in *Taverner*, Davies's dialectical ingenuity is to be found in his innovative combination of words, music and drama. However, to comprehend fully the opera's meaning it is necessary to unearth roots which are buried deep in the poetry of the libretto by Davies.

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[1] Wilfred Owen (1893-1918), draft Preface for a collection of war poems that the author intended to publish in 1918. Quoted in *The Poems of Wilfred Owen,* John Stallworthy (ed.) (London, Hogarth Press, 1989), p.192.
[2] Published posthumously by Siegfried Sassoon, *Owen's Collected Poems* (C. Day Lewis, ed.), 1964.
[3] For example, Rupert Brooke, *The Soldier* (1914).
[4] Michael Ratcliffe, 'One-man musical reformation', *The Sunday Times*, 26 June 1983.

Many years after the composition of *Taverner*, Davies observed that the work's provenance was 'very firmly established by the text, and it didn't change once I'd done that. It already had the sort of noise that I wanted it to have in my mind, obviously.'[5] This comment by the composer indicates that although the 'noise' or the style of the opera's musical language appeared to pre-exist in Davies's mind, its basic design was determined by the text. This chapter explores how and why Davies created his own libretto for *Taverner*. It examines its sources, its multi-faceted content, the text's relationship to the opera's other component parts, and assesses its expressive power.

Davies wrote the libretti for three of his other operas: *Resurrection* (Op. 129), *The Martyrdom of St Magnus* (Op. 72) and *The Lighthouse* (Op. 86), which indicates that the composer attached a fundamental importance to the creation of his own texts.[6] In an interview with Paul Griffiths, Davies reflected on the creation of Act I, scene iv of *Taverner*.

> …that very scene: a first expression of it which then became – I'm talking about just the text now - the kernel out of which not only texts but musical ideas grew. It was one of the seminal events, the composition of first the text and then the music; it became very important.[7]

Self-authorship of opera libretti is no innovation. It was an approach taken by Richard Wagner, Hector Berlioz and, contemporary to Davies, Michael Tippett. Undoubtedly, given Davies's extensive knowledge of musical history, he would have been cognisant of the benefits and risks associated with the creation of opera libretti, either self-penned or with a collaborator. The artistic merits which have resulted from the successful synthesis of words and music are numerous. The craft, wit and humanity which Lorenzo Da Ponte brought to three of Mozart's greatest comic operas[8] and Hugh von Hofmannsthal's[9] poetic contributions to six of Richard Strauss's creations for the stage are exemplars.[10] But, many less successful collaborative ventures between librettists and composers have, at best, ended in compromise and, at worst, in failure. The libretto for Puccini's *Edgar* (1889) has an

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[5] Paul Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies* (London, Robson Books, 1982), p.108.
[6] The libretto for *The Martyrdom of St Magnus* is based upon the book *Magnus* by George Mackay Brown.
[7] Griffiths, op. cit., p.110.
[8] *Don Giovanni* (1787), *Le nozze di Figaro* (1787) and *Così fan tutte* (1789).
[9] Austrian novelist, librettist, poet, dramatist and essayist, 1874-1929.
[10] *Elektra* (1909), *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911), *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1912, rev.1916), *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (1919), *Die ägyptische Helena* (1928) and *Arabella* (1933).

undistinguished text written by Ferdinand Fontana[11] where, in its original version, Act IV of the opera is virtually incomprehensible. Even after Puccini had revised and completely cut the final act, the composer still believed the work to be irredeemable because of its flawed libretto. Puccini wrote,

> It was an organism defective from the dramatic point of view. Its success was ephemeral. Although I knew that I wrote some pages which do me credit, that is not enough - as an opera it does not exist. The basis of an opera is the subject and its treatment. In setting the libretto of *Edgar* I have, with all respect to the memory of my friend Fontana, made a blunder. It was more my fault than his.[12]

Puccini was gracious in his acceptance of blame regarding the work's failure. However, even though he deemed some of his music to be creditable, it was not enough to salvage it since the 'basis of an opera is the subject' and this work was 'defective from the dramatic point of view.' Similar to Davies, Puccini, recognised the essential importance of the text. Another opera compromised by a weak libretto was Georges Bizet's *The Pearlfishers* (1863). The libretto was co-written by Eugène Corum and Michel Carré and has been described as 'the most appallingly inept of its kind.'[13] Similar criticism was levelled at Carl Maria von Weber's opera *Euryanthe* (1823) and, although acknowledged to be one of Weber's most significant works, it is little seen on stage because of a substandard libretto by Helmina von Chézy.[14] And Beethoven's *Fidelio*, although conceived as early as 1803,[15] did not receive its first performance in Vienna until 1814, because it required multiple revisions to its unsatisfactory libretto.[16] *Fidelio* survived a challenging birth and is a stalwart in opera houses all over the world. However, in spite of what are relatively well-crafted scores, the other three operas cited above are infrequently performed, primarily because of their flawed texts; such is the difference that a libretto can make in the creation of great opera.

In order to circumvent compromise and escape falling foul of Puccini's 'blunder', several nineteenth-century composers including Modest Mussorgsky and Richard Wagner elected to write their own opera libretti, aspiring to create what Philip Heseltine regarded as 'a

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[11] Italian journalist, dramatist and poet, 1850-1919.
[12] Mosco Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography* (New York City, Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), p.53.
[13] Donal Henahan, *New York Times*, 17 July 1986.
[14] German journalist, poet and playwright, 1783-1856.
[15] Following discussion between Beethoven and the impresario and librettist, Emanuel Schikaneder.
[16] The libretto to Beethoven's *Fidelio* was written and re-written by Joseph Sonnleithner (1766-1835), truncated by Stephan von Breuning (1774-1827) and finally edited by Georg Friedrich Treitschke (1776-1842).

compound work of art […]. Opera is not merely a play with music, super-imposed. That which the drama can adequately express of itself requires no musical embellishment, and that which belongs to the sphere of music requires no mimetic commentary.'[17]

In the construction of his libretto for *Les Troyens* after the epic poem by Virgil, the *Aeneid*, Hector Berlioz sought to create such a 'compound work of art.' As Julian Rushton has understood, it allowed Berlioz 'to be fully in control of the design and poetic substance… [and] will have contributed to the flow of fresh musical ideas.'[18] Modest Mussorgsky also penned his own libretto to the opera *Khovanshchina* (first performed posthumously in 1886) which, similar to *Taverner,* employs a text based upon historical sources concerning rebellion and reform, albeit in seventeenth-century Russia as opposed to political and religious transformation in sixteenth-century England.[19] But it was the *Gesamtkünstwerk* ('total work of art')[20] as developed by Richard Wagner which would redefine the operatic libretto. Harold Child believed that,

> ….it was from Wagner that the opera libretto first received full and due consideration; and Wagner, as everyone knows, approached opera from the dramatic side. At two points in his achievement he reached the all but perfect union in *Tristan und Isolde* and in *Die Meistersinger*. It seemed everything to have found, as it were, the Campion of opera, the man who was both poet enough and musician enough to make his own words and his own music. Doubtless, the musician in Wagner bore it off in the end against the poet.[21]

Davies disliked the nature of the 'musical statements'[22] of certain composers including Richard Strauss, Franz Liszt and, particularly, those of Richard Wagner. However, if, stylistically, Davies recoiled from what he considered to be the excessive musical gestures associated with Wagnerian opera, there still exists, and notably in *Taverner*, an aesthetic proximity where the two men do share roles of poet and musician in their quest to achieve Child's 'perfect union.'[23]

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[17] Philip Heseltine (Peter Warlock), *Music and Letters,* June 1921, p.250.
[18] Julian Rushton, *The Music of Berlioz* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001), p.64.
[19] Various parallels may be drawn here, but according to Stephen Pruslin it represents Davies's 'deep absorption' with Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina* and Stravinsky's *Threni*. NMC CD D157 (2009) CD sleeve note p. 9.
[20] *Gesamtkünstwerk* was an idea developed by the German writer and philosopher Karl Friedrich Eusebius Trahndorff (1782-1863).
[21] Harold Child, 'Some Thoughts on Opera Libretto'*, Music and Letters,* Vol.2, No. 3 (July 1921), p.248.
[22] Mike Seabrook, *Max, the Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (London, Gollancz, 1994), p.241.
[23] Richard H. Bell has examined Richard Wagner's personal copy of the New Testament in its Lutheran translation. His studies have revealed extensive marginalia by the composer some of which relate to a prose

For Arnold Schoenberg, the text had a defining structural function in the creation of his expressionist works which were composed between 1908-1912. This included *Pierrot lunaire*, a work which was to have a significant influence upon Davies. Schoenberg stated that: 'I discovered how to construct larger forms by following a text or poem. The differences in the size and shape of its parts and the change in character and mood were mirrored in the size and shape of the composition, in its dynamics and tempo, figuration and accentuation, instrumentation and orchestration. Thus the parts were differentiated as clearly as they had formerly been by the tonal and structural functions of harmony.'[24] And, in *Style and Idea* Schoenberg defied convention when he introduced the notion of 'parallelism on a higher level' which placed music at the service of text.[25] Given that the libretto and much of the imagery for *Taverner* crystalized in Davies's mind before the music, it is possible to suggest that Schoenberg's theory of parallelism can be applied to the opera where, arguably, the text has equal value to the music.

Another major influence upon Davies, and particularly in regard to the development of his libretto, was Alban Berg; specifically, his opera *Lulu*. *Lulu* is based upon the two *Lulu* plays by Frank Wedekind.[26] Berg refashioned Wedekind's text to create 'an intimate relationship between the demands of 'absolute' musical structure and those of dramatic action.'[27] Douglas Jarman has asserted that this was only made possible by Berg acting as his own librettist.

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draft for an early opera, *Jesus von Nazareth* (1849). This contained music and ideas which would later resurface in *Parsifal*. As noted, Davies also quotes extensively from the Bible. Both composers have, albeit indirectly, also drawn upon Medieval Norse mythology for inspiration and as a textual source. As noted, *The Martyrdom of St Magnus* (Op. 72) was inspired by and based upon George Mackay Brown's novel *Magnus* (1973) which re-tells the life of Magnus as told in the *Orkneyingsaga*. These twelfth-century legends form a genre known as the *King's Sagas* which are a series of Norwegian and Icelandic narratives. Similarly, Wagner's tetralogy *Der Ring des Nibelungen* is based upon Norse saga which includes adaptation from the thirteenth-century *Volsungasaga*.

[24] Jonathan Rees, op. cit., p.163.

[25] Jonathan Dunsby, *Schoenberg: Pierrot lunaire* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.4.

[26] German actor and playwright, 1864-1918.

[27] Douglas Jarman, *Alban Berg: Lulu* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.56.

Davies's approach was not dissimilar to that of Berg. When questioned as to why he chose to write his own libretto for *Taverner*, he responded that,

> Even now I'm told so often that I shouldn't write my own texts, that this is dangerous, because look at the mess composers make of their work. Well, some don't. I'm quite prepared to stand by what I do, and if it's dangerous, then we live by danger. Of course, you are sticking your neck out – much more than in just writing music, because you're taking the whole responsibility. But it does become necessary when the images are so strong that nobody else could write them.[28]

So, although Davies acknowledged that there was an inherent 'danger' when working as both librettist and composer, this statement demonstrates that, in the context of *Taverner*, the synthesis of words and music was a mandatory creative enterprise.[29] Davies's recognition that the potency of the 'images' conjured up by his subject appears to affirm that to have collaborated with a third party on the libretto for *Taverner* was inconceivable. In Davies's mind, the creation of text and music were inextricably linked from the work's inception and he had little or no choice but to take the 'whole responsibility' for its creation. This was a process which would be both extended and scholarly. In assembling the libretto, Davies stated that,

> [the text] draws not only on a multitude of contemporary sources – state papers, heresy and witch trials, individual studies of Tudor statesmen and clergymen, letters, sermons, religious pamphlets – but also on a background of late medieval lore – saints' lives, devotional poetry, mystery plays, and imagery from religious art.[30]

[28] Davies, quoted in Paul Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies* (London, Robson Books, 1982), p.107.
[29] It is noteworthy that in non-operatic texted works composed subsequent to *Taverner* the composer did employ libretti written by others. For example, *Eight Songs for a Mad King* is to a text by Randolph Stow*;* *Revelation and Fall* is after a poem by Georg Trakl.
[30] Davies, quoted in Griffiths, op. cit., p.4

6.1 Reception

This disparate assortment of eclectic sources combined with passages from the Catholic liturgy, often delivered in ecclesiastical Latin, made it for some commentators impenetrable. In reviewing the first performance of *Taverner* for the *Daily Telegraph*, Martin Cooper observed that,

> The subject has perhaps been chosen as much for its spectacular possibilities as for its intellectual interest, and the unprepared spectator may well be as puzzled by the prolonged pageantry of Church dignitaries and their masked anti-types as by the text. In this, two fairly technical heresy trials presented as the obverse and reverse of a single process are interlarded with much Latin praying and anti-praying, scenes of grotesque mumbo-jumbo only intelligible to the very well read and an occasional whiff of witchcraft. If this charade is indeed a parable of a genuine personal conflict between authority and freedom only music can make this deeper meaning clear. But instead of communicating the metaphysical despair caused in Taverner's mind by the discovery of the invertibility of all 'truths' this opera presents the surface of history and leaves its inner meaning unexpressed except in words.[31]

Cooper's dismissal of Davies's libretto as 'grotesque mumbo-jumbo' and a 'prolonged pageantry' suggests a superficial understanding of the composer's aesthetic. The two heresy trial scenes (Act I, scene i and Act II, scene i) to which Cooper refers do include some 'prolonged pageantry.' However, to suggest that the opera presents only the 'surface of history' and leaves its 'inner meaning unexpressed except in words,' misses the point since the prolonged pageantry, the praying and anti-praying are introduced for parodic purposes. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7, the formidable complexity of Davies's text, mirrors an eclectic compositional style which also operates at multiple levels. The opera's 'deeper meaning' is to be found beneath its historical surface and, like the music, finds expression through the composer's extensive engagement with allusive and parodic devices which, in turn, function to subvert and promote meaning.

[31] Martin Cooper, '*Taverner* lacking in deeper meaning', *The Daily Telegraph*, 13 July 1972.

Cooper was not alone in his complaint. In reviewing *Taverner* for *The Musical Times*, Winton Dean wrote,

> The libretto by the composer consists largely of a collage of documents, public and personal, in English and Latin, some of them knotty and obscure. There is no reason why such indigestible matter should not serve its purpose, provided the music turns it into a compelling musical statement.[32]

Whether the music did transform Davies's 'indigestible' text into 'a compelling musical statement' remained, for Dean, questionable. And, at the opera's revival in 1983, and, with the added benefit of greater familiarity, Rodney Milnes, although more specific in his criticism, also found Davies's libretto to be problematic.

> The composer has boldly written the text in semi-olde-worlde English. There is certainly no tushery, but a sentence like 'and yet his wrath did often burn against those he loved most, and also the things, and the precepts, for that he could not have them enough, or was denied some part, by the will of others, or by his own insufficiency' is hard enough to sort out without ever its being sung, and there is more obscure usage than is strictly necessary. Good opera libretti are crystal clear.[33]

As Music Example 6.1 shows, the words to which Milnes refers above are delivered by Richard Taverner in Act I, scene i.

[32] Winton Dean, 'Taverner'*, The Musical Times,* September 1972.
[33] Rodney Milnes, *The Spectator*, 24 July 1983.

Music Example 6.1: Richard Taverner; Act I, scene i, bb. 187-202

As illustrated above, Richard Taverner's vocal line is angular in its design, characterised by a melodic contour dominated by intervals of minor and major sevenths, multiple changes of time-signature and accompanied by energetic counterpoint in the orchestra instructed to be performed at a tempo indicated: 'più mosso' (mm. crotchet = 100). In this particular case, as Milnes observed, it was a challenge to comprehend much narrative sense. Equally, it presented multiple practical challenges for the performer. However, although Milnes complained of excessive 'obscure usage', he did recognise some merit in Davies's libretto.

> Refusal to compromise is seen in the composer's own highly literate Mock Tudor libretto, which is not always easily understood when set to angular vocal lines – but then neither are the literary convulsions of *Tristan*. This I admire – why should we be handed it all on a plate?[34]

Milnes commended the composer for his 'highly literate' text and singular intent, but, on balance, it did not fulfil his stated criteria which required good opera libretti to be 'crystal clear.' This desire for textual clarity was shared by Michael Tippett. In 1962 Davies consulted with Tippett about the libretto that he was writing for *Taverner*. The senior composer is reported to have advised the younger man that it should be possible to write an opera's plot 'on the back of a postcard.'[35] Davies may have recognised some irony in Tippett's comment, since, at the first performance of his opera *The Midsummer Marriage,*[36] its libretto was also criticised as being overly complicated. Ian Kemp observed that,

> The mixture of derision, bewilderment, admiration which greeted this première has become legendary. Coming in the middle of an arduous opera season, which had already seen the premières of three other British operas (Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*, Berkeley's *Nelson* and Walton's *Troilus and Cressida*) it was perhaps not surprising that the judgement of most critics was hasty, for certainly the libretto is exceedingly complex and it was against the libretto that most of the criticism was levelled.[37]

Seventeen years following the world-première of *The Midsummer Marriage*, Davies's libretto was also subject to similar complaints about a lack of intelligibility and unclear dramatic purpose. Another commentator remarked that,

> Like Tippett's *Midsummer Marriage*, *Taverner* is a work to which all manner of objections can be raised. Here are details that seem more relevant to the composer's private obsessions than to the dramatic issues at stake, and, as a result, the libretto fails to project these with sufficient clarity. What, for instance, are we to make of the White Abbot, in the first scene an agent of Catholic persecution, subsequently a noble upholder of the faith? These unresolved tensions reflect, I suspect, a basic schizophrenia in the composer's own attitude to the Church of Rome. In the first act he mocks the rituals with shrill fervour. Yet, the sustained thread of string tone at the moment the Captain seizes the Abbot's chalice and slowly tips the consecrated wine on to the ground suggests intense horror at this sacrilege.[38]

[34] Rodney Milnes, *The Spectator*, 16 July 1983.
[35] Christopher Ford, 'The Musician as Heretic', *The Guardian*, 20 February 1971.
[36] 27 January 1955 at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London, United Kingdom.
[37] Ian Kemp, *Tippett, the Composer and his Music* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987), p.53.
[38] Anonymous, *The Observer*, 1 October 1972.

Davies's 'private obsessions' dominate this opera and much of his music; it is part and parcel of what he called 'total expression' in which musical abstraction was not an option.[39] Yet, it is possible to identify compromises in the dramatic structure of the opera which are, arguably, heightened by the libretto's failings discussed above.

Following the opera's first performance, Joseph Kerman described *Taverner* as being 'a rather marvellous score, but rather less marvellous as a theatre piece' and having 'errors in dramaturgy.'[40] The two long dialogue, textually dry scenes between the King and Cardinal/Archbishop in Act I, scene iii and its mirroring episode in Act II, scene ii, have been viewed as overextended, peripheral to the narrative and failing to amplify the schism between artist and state.[41] And, Kerman believed that the role of John Taverner never came to life, lacked little dramatic development and that the dialogue between Taverner and Rose Parrowe had little 'emotional conviction.'[42] This may be because the libretto is, at times, a series of quotations that have been 'cut out of Tudor documents and arranged so as to stimulate dialogue.'[43] Indeed, such an approach tends to favour the prosaic at the expense of the poetic.

Up to a point, the criticism levelled by Kerman and others is valid. However, some of it is anachronistic and betrays an expectation founded upon formulaic practices used in operatic models of the past. Once again, a perception that Davies's libretto 'fails to project' the 'dramatic issues at stake [with] sufficient clarity' suggests a superficial understanding of his aesthetic. To understand more deeply, it is necessary to recognise and understand the integration of parody, metaphor and the manipulation of time to gain a comprehensive appreciation of the text's design and its true meaning. To borrow from the literary theorist Julia Kristeva, it may be beneficial to consider Davies's aesthetic as being 'polyphonic' - meaning that neither the text nor the drama nor the music exist in isolation.[44] As Milnes asked, why should we be handed it all on a plate?

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[39] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.6.
[40] Joseph Kerman, 'Popish Ditties', *Tempo*. No 102 (1972), p.20.
[41] Winton Dean, 'Taverner', *The Musical Times*, September 1972.
[42] Kerman, op. cit., p.22.
[43] Ibid.
[44] See Julia Kristeva, *Desire in language: a semiotic approach to literature and art* [trans. L.S.Roudiez], (Oxford, Blackwell, 1980).

In Act II, scene iii, as the converted (now Protestant) Taverner watches the Captain spill the (Catholic) White Abbot's consecrated wine, Davies quotes music composed to celebrate the Catholic liturgy. The 'sustained thread of string tone' described by the writer above is the Benedictus from John Taverner's *Missa Gloria Tibi Trinitas*. Significantly, it is heard as Taverner tacitly observes the Protestant Captain perform his sacrilegious act. However, Davies is not, as this commentator suggests, expressing personal 'intense horror' at the Captain's sacrilege. On the contrary, through the quotation of Taverner's own music, Davies acknowledges the irony of the situation and highlights Taverner's hypocrisy as he watches and tacitly supports the Captain's action.

At times, the libretto may fail to achieve an immediacy of understanding and this can undermine the opera's drama and frustrate the listener. However, and to recall Heseltine, 'opera is not merely a play with music, super-imposed.' Davies's text may be flawed but the intent is admirable in his bid to create, in a conventional sense, a total work of art whilst simultaneously seeking to innovate.

Stylistically, Davies's libretto was influenced by the writing of James Joyce and, in particular, by *Ulysses,* a work which, famously, handed very little on a plate to its readers. At its time of publication in 1922, the watershed novel was regarded by some as representing a 'mere cult of unintelligibility'[45] and by others as the 'most faithful X-ray ever taken of the ordinary human consciousness.'[46] Innovative and challenging literary techniques which Joyce employed in *Ulysses* included allusion, metaphor, non-linear narrative, stream-of-consciousness, intertextuality and parody also permeate the libretto for *Taverner*.

Gabriel Josipovici argued that,

> Here is a world which springs out of the torment of having to live out an impossible paradox: the refusal to recognize any authority, and the recognition of the suicidal nature of such a refusal. How can such a paradox be contained? The answer takes us to the heart of this libretto and Maxwell Davies's world, and it can be given in one word: *parody*.[47]

[45] Attributed to Max Eastman, quoted in Derek Attridge (editor), *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce,* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.78.
[46] Attributed to Edmund Wilson, quoted in Attridge, op. cit., p.78.
[47] Gabriel Josipovici, 'Thoughts on the Libretto', *Tempo* no.101 (Spring 1972), p.17.

Davies's approach to parody in the opera, both in terms of words and music, will be discussed more fully in Chapter 7. However, its central function seems to support the notion that *Taverner* is, itself, a critique of Grand Opera through the composer's 'contempt for the linear and realistic conventions of nineteenth century art, of which Grand Opera – all plot and clappable arias – is the apotheosis.'[48]

In reviewing the world-première of *Taverner* for *The Times*, the critic William Mann suggested, perceptively, that 'prospective audiences should read the libretto first, more than two hours before curtain up: they will enjoy *Taverner* more at once, and, I can promise, much more the second or third time.'[49] This was a view endorsed by the director of the opera's original production, Michael Geliot, who hoped that as many people as possible would 'do their homework and read the libretto first.'[50]

At the world-premières of both *Taverner* and *The Midsummer Marriage*, Davies's and Tippett's libretti received negative critical responses. Also, both men shared the dilemma that their subjects were so personal to them that to have collaborated with a third party as a librettist would have resulted in compromise.[51] As discussed above, the 'images' which had lived with Davies since 1956 and inspired *Taverner*, demanded a unilateral approach.

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[48] Ibid., p.18.
[49] William Mann, 'Tragedy of religious zeal', *The Times*, 13 July 1972.
[50] John Higgins, 'Michael Geliot and the mind-benders', *The Times,* 06 July 1972.
[51] Kemp, op. cit., p.213.

6.2 Textual sources

To coincide with the world-première of *Taverner* in July 1972, the journal *Tempo* published a special edition which featured a collection of essays focusing on the opera. One of the articles, entitled *Taverner, Synopsis and Documentation*, was written by Davies:

> During my preparatory work on the libretto, I filled several sketchbooks with source material. Although most of these sketchbooks were destroyed in a fire some-time after the compilation of the opera…[52]

It is regrettable that these sketches for the libretto of *Taverner* did not survive the fire at the cottage in Dorset in the autumn of 1969. Since Davies's construction of the text was fundamental to the opera's creation, these sketches would have provided valuable insight into the composer's sources, their development and the final shape of the work. Fortunately, Davies did rescue some of the pre-compositional materials for *Taverner* from the conflagration and these are stored in the British Library in London. Notably, they include an early draft of the libretto which dates from October 1957. Selected textual sources for Davies's libretto for *Taverner* are listed in Table H.

[52] Davies, '*Taverner':* Synopsis and Documentation, *Tempo* No.101, *Taverner* (1972), p.6.

TABLE H: selected textual sources for the libretto

ACT I, scene i COURTROOM	Scene ii CHAPEL	Scene iii THRONE ROOM	Scene iv THRONE ROOM
John Taverner's heresy trial	Taverner struggles with his beliefs	The King instructs the Cardinal to seek a divorce	Taverner's confession and his conversion
Carl Jung: *The Significance of the Unconscious in Individual Education* Matthew 27, v.45 St.Augustine: Confessions; Letters & historical documents as cited by the composer[53]	Ecclesiastical & Classical Latin; Psalm 70; Martin Luther Interior monologue (John Taverner)	Letters and state papers as cited by the composer[54]; & see Appendix for tabular representation.	Foxe's *Book of Martyrs.* Taverner's repentance 'for making songs to Popish ditties in the time of his blindness.'
ACT II, scene i COURTROOM	Scene ii THRONE ROOM	Scene iii CHAPEL	Scene iv MARKET PLACE
White Abbot on trial	The King instructs the Cardinal (then Archbishop) to break with Rome	Monks at prayer and entry of soldiers. Dissolution.	Burning of the White Abbot
Similar source materials as per I/i		Latin Mass Interior monologue (John Taverner)	John Taverner's letter to Thomas Cromwell (1538)[55] Psalm 70:1 Interior monologue (White Abbott)

[53] Davies, op. cit., pp.7-11. Reproduced in Appendix 1 of this thesis.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.

6.3 James Joyce and *Ulysses*

As illustrated above, Davies draws upon multiple sources. David Beard has observed that the libretto of *Taverner* is a 'patchwork of citations lifted from the Bible, sixteenth-century sources, Joyce's *Ulysses*, and texts by Carl Jung.'[56] This approach is mirrored in Davies's integration of musical material borrowed from medieval and renaissance sources; it is a constant throughout his output. In the Preface to the score of the opera, Davies acknowledged that,

> In the text, I have not only drawn on the few facts known of Taverner, but combed State papers, letters, contemporary sermons, biographies, diaries, poetry, plays, records of heresy trials etc. to give the record of John Taverner as wide an application and meaning as possible. The text, therefore, consists of quotations, applied and ordered to suite the sense and circumstances.[57]

In an insightful commentary, Beard has analysed the sketches of the opera's draft libretto which survived the fire at Davies's home.[58] Although later discarded, this early draft[59] includes marginalia which shows that some of the text of Act I, scene i was inspired by the writings of Carl Jung.[60] Beard has suggested that this led Davies to write in a style which was 'oddly impersonal.'[61] Later, the composer re-wrote the text in what was to become, in Beard's opinion, a more 'natural manner.' As such, in the opera's opening court scene, colloquial English is dominant throughout as the principal characters deliver their opening statements.[62]

As noted, the writings of James Joyce exerted a powerful influence upon Davies and this influence finds expression in the libretto. As noted in Chapter 3, Joyce and, specifically his novel *Ulysses*, had obsessed Davies from an early age. Jennifer Levine has noted that Joyce's earlier writing is 'very much a part of the intertextual network that *Ulysses* draws upon.'[63]

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[56] David Beard in Gloag and Jones, *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.87.
[57] Full score, Preface.
[58] Beard in Gloag and Jones, op. cit., pp.79-105.
[59] Ms. Add. 71259; MS Mus.1400; Add.Ms.71259, fol. 64v.
[60] C.G. Jung, 'The Significance of the Unconscious in Individual Education', in C.G. Jung, *The Development of Personality*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954).
[61] Beard in Gloag and Jones, op. cit., p.87.
[62] Structurally, this exposition may be considered as a cycle of mini-recitatives, or, as Stephen Pruslin has interpreted it, a series of fugues where each subject represents a character. NMC CD D157 sleeve note (2009)
[63] Jennifer Levine in Derek Attridge (editor) *Ulysses; Cambridge Companion to James Joyce* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.125.

Similarly, throughout his oeuvre Davies deploys recurrent references to John Taverner's *In Nomine,* integrates Foxtrots and re-introduces the Antichrist and the Jester. This approach resonates with Joyce's intertextual network. The composer's references to Joyce's work may be more implicit in *Taverner*, but in *Missa Super l'Homme Armé* the writer's influence is explicit. Davies wrote:

> In form the work is similar to my *Hymnos* for clarinet and piano – there are three sections, each divided into three subsections, corresponding to the three subsections of the original Agnus Dei of the mass. The eventual treatment stems from the chapter in the *Ulysses* of James Joyce corresponding to the Cyclops chapter in Homer. In the Joyce, a conversation in a tavern is interrupted by insertions which seize upon a small, passing idea in the main narrative and amplify this, often out of all proportion, in a style which bears no relationship to the style of the germinal idea which sparked off the insertion. The insertion is often itself a parody – of a newspaper account of a fashionable wedding, or of the Anglican Creed, for instance.[64]

Missa Super l'Homme Armé and *Hymnos* may have structural similarities, but it is shared thematic material across works (including spiritual betrayal and the interrogation of religious truth) which provides a continuity, a bigger narrative. Paul Griffiths has suggested that *Missa Super L'Homme Armé* represents an '*Antechrist*-like inversion of meaning'[65] and raises questions that are subsequently examined in *Taverner*. It is significant that these thematic connections function similarly to those in the Joycean universe of intertextuality where characters, themes and ideas from various novels re-surface. Readers who approach *Ulysses* having already read *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Dubliners* are at a 'considerable advantage.'[66] Levine has stated that,

> When Bloom steps into the carriage at the very beginning of 'Hades' they too will recognize and acknowledge his fellow-mourners: Martin Cunningham and Arthur Power from the short story 'Grace' and Simon Dedalus, still on the long slide down begun in *A Portrait*.[67]

[64] Davies, quoted in Griffiths, op. cit., pp.145-146.
[65] Griffiths, op. cit., p.64.
[66] Levine in Attridge, op. cit., p.125.
[67] Ibid.

Davies deeply admired such Joycean practices and adapted them to suit his own purposes.

> I am constantly making reference not only to musical processes, techniques and actual examples of music which are familiar to me, but one is also, not just referring to them and presupposing all the time that the listener has got some sort of intuitive familiarity with the background one is working on. I think in literature the supreme example of this sort of mind, which I can immediately think of, is James Joyce who uses, for instance, in the chapter of *Ulysses* where the baby is being produced upstairs and downstairs in this hospital the medical students and Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus are carousing – Bloom incidentally not so much! – and he [Joyce] goes through pretty much, the history of literature, making reference to all sorts of authors in that particular chapter. And it's a marvellous game of hide and seek trying to find out just what he is referring to. But he knows his literature extremely well and creates something which is so new out of that material that one is perpetually astonished by the sheer originality of that.[68]

Davies refers to Episode 14 of *Ulysses* which is known as *The Oxen of the Sun.* According to Levine, in this extended and well-known passage, Joyce creates a sequence of events which simultaneously reveal and hide 'a series of narrative disguises that mimic English Literary History.'[69] She interprets this episode as a form of 'subversive parody' in which 'Joyce, now a reader of the literary tradition, is playing at writing: doing and being Shakespeare, Milton, Pepys, Swift, Carlyle, Newman. At the same time, by overdoing them, he is in effect undoing them.'[70] Similarly, throughout *Taverner*, Davies, plays with and manipulates manifold texts to create something novel. As Davies observes above, in *The Oxen of the Sun* Joyce 'goes through pretty much, the history of literature.' Correspondingly, in Act II, scene iii of *Taverner*, Davies achieves a similar feat in which an ensemble of Renaissance instruments describes a 'history of sixteenth-century English organ music and dance music, seen through a hallucinatory distorting mirror.'[71] At one level, the composer rejoices in Joyce's 'marvellous game of hide and seek', whilst at another, he recognizes the novelist's superlative frame of literary reference and virtuosic technique. Devices such as parody, pastiche, metaphor and imitation, all practised and perfected by Joyce with his 'master-mimic's touch,'[72] are also to be found in abundance throughout *Taverner,* expertly adapted and recast by Davies.

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[68] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'Musical Innovation', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.79.
[69] Levine in Attridge, op. cit., p.139.
[70] Ibid., p.138.
[71] Davies, '*Taverner':* Synopsis and Documentation, *Tempo* No.101, *Taverner* (1972), p.6.
[72] Levine in Attridge, op. cit., p.141.

The treatment of time in *Taverner* resonates with the way that Joyce approaches temporality. In both *Ulysses* and *Taverner*, time is perceived not as objective, but as subjective. Analogously, much of what happens, or does not happen, in *Ulysses* occurs in the mind of Stephen Dedalus. Davies adopts a similar approach to time in *Taverner* when, like Joyce, he manipulates 'historical time' and transforms it into 'internal time.' The modulation from pre-Reformation to Reformation England is symbolised by the transformation of the Catholic Cardinal, who in Act II, is re-robed by the Jester, and morphs into an Anglican Archbishop. Similarly, Act II, scene i is an accelerated version of Act I, scene i; it is this presentation of internal rather than historical time and how it is perceived which underpins the work. Insight into Davies's fascination with time may also be found in a comment he made about the composition of *Stedman Doubles* (Op. 3b).[73]

> The great challenge in composing this [*Stedman Doubles*], and other works of this period specifically influenced by Indian music, was the manipulation of the time-scale of music: for I had realised that the rate of the unfolding of events, and the whole concept of form in Indian music, is not a sequence of closed – or *enclosed* – events or periods.[74]

Although this remark relates specifically to compositional technique, it reveals how Davies was intrigued by the concept of the unfolding of time and how it is perceived.

In Joycean terms, it may be possible to interpret Taverner's two soliloquies, both of which occur in the opera's Chapel scenes, as interior monologues.[75] Davies adopts and adapts a technique called 'simultaneous vision' which Joyce used to present narrative from multiple perspectives. In *Ulysses,* he set himself the task 'of writing a book from eighteen different points of view and in as many styles, all apparently unknown or undiscovered by my fellow tradesmen.'[76] These multiple narratives are presented in *Ulysses* to allow the reader to view events through various lenses, each providing a different perspective, although none is definitive. In *Taverner*, Davies applies a similar technique in Act I, scene iii when the King interrogates the Cardinal and in Act II, scene ii during which the King and Archbishop are in conference. Naturally, Taverner is unaware of such matters of state. The unfolding of

[73] *Stedman Doubles* was inspired by the tradition of English church-bell ringing, hence the work's title.
[74] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'Time, Manipulation and Immoral Realizations', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.88.
[75] Full score, Act I, scene ii, bb.37-125 and Act II, scene iii, bb.60-101.
[76] Derek Attridge, op. cit., p. 69.

calamitous events, which are currently transforming the lives of Taverner and others are presented, somewhat clinically, from the perspective of the King and his Cardinal.

Other connections are also apparent. For example, the complex filial relationships which are explored in Homer's *Odyssey* and in Joyce's *Ulysses* also find expression in *Taverner*.[77] The King's (Henry VIII) refutation of the Church of Rome has been interpreted in Freudian terms where 'Henry has finally rejected the power and authority of the Father, and decided to become, in a sense, his own father.'[78] Also, the search for personal identity and the ontological are subjects explored both in *Taverner* and in *Ulysses.* Levine has noted that Leopold Bloom represents the 'odd man out in Dublin' and 'is a Jew (and doubly alien for his Jewishness, for he has chosen to become both Catholic and Protestant).'[79] Obvious parallels may be drawn with John Taverner's dilemma. Just as Stephen Dedalus has been viewed as James Joyce's alter-ego, it is possible to contend that, for Davies, the character of John Taverner fulfils a similar purpose or even has an autobiographical dimension.

The fabrication of fantastical worlds and the invention of new languages were key motivators for both Joyce and Davies. Andrew Porter has noted that,

> When he was a little boy, Max Davies staked out for himself a 'kingdom' beside the Manchester-Liverpool road, invented a private language, and insisted that it should be learnt and spoken by the other little boys who came to pay court to him there.[80]

Joyce's creation and re-creation of language reached its zenith in the polyglot language of *Finnegans Wake* (1939). Davies may have been obsessed by *Ulysses*, but the influence of Joyce's later novel also seems to loom large over *Taverner.* As with *Ulysses*, intertextual references are ubiquitous throughout the *Wake* and include extensive references to comic Irish songs of the 1850s, the plays of William Shakespeare, and the Bible. Also, Margot Norris has understood that the *Wake* is characterized by a sense of 'indeterminacy' created, in part, by relentless interrogation where 'nearly every major chapter…. is organised around

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[77] Levine in Attridge, op. cit., p.123. Jennifer Levine suggests that, 'we do not need the *Odyssey* to tell us that Stephen is a young man troubled by the fact that he is a son, and has a father, not that Bloom is haunted by memories of the son who never really was – his second child, Rudy, having died only days after his birth. But it sharpens our sense of the potentially filial relationship between them to see them also as Telemachus and Odysseus.'

[78] Josipovici, op. cit., p.15.

[79] Levine, op. cit., p.123.

[80] Andrew Porter, 'Taverner 2,' *The Financial Times*, 14 July 1972.

an investigation, a trial, a quiz, a riddle, an inquisition.'[81] The similarities with *Taverner* are conspicuous where the opera's two trial scenes are dominated by interrogation and self-examination.

Common to both Joyce and Davies, is the influence of Jungian dream psychology. In Act II, Taverner experiences his worst nightmare. Analogously, in *Finnegans Wake,* Norris has suggested that Joyce created,

> … an oneiric verisimilitude, an illusion that the text, is, as it were, dreamt and that Joyce has himself absorbed and dissolved experience into the unconscious linguistic plenitude of his mind and, in a sense, 'dreamt' *Finnegans Wake.*[82]

This is supported by Joyce's own statement that, in the *Wake*, he was trying to 'reconstruct the nocturnal life.'[83] In a letter to Harriet Weaver, the author stated that it was an experiment in interpreting 'the dark night of the soul.'[84] In Act II, Taverner undergoes his own dark night during which the transmutation of his soul becomes a metaphor for the disintegration of religion in Reformation England. As discussed above, at the end of Act II, scene iii, Taverner's tacit endorsement of the Captain's sacrilege is accompanied by the original Benedictus from Taverner's *Missa Gloria Tibi Trinitas*. Judas-like, Taverner has not only betrayed the White Abbot, but he has also betrayed his own music and, by association, himself. This is a defining moment in the opera as the intertextual and metaphorical collide. It resonates with the poetic model as found in *Ulysses* which has been described as a 'vast symbolic project whose logic is metaphorical and allusive rather than narrative.'[85] It is a logic which may be applied to Davies's libretto and to his vision for the whole opera.

Joyce and Davies consistently employ Biblical references throughout their work for multiple expressive purposes. At the announcement of a faux apocalypse in the closing paragraph of *The Oxen of the Sun* in *Ulysses,* Levine notes,

> The hot-gospelling diatribe that follows pulls out all the stops, invoking the prophetic entrance of Elijah (Matthew 17:9-11), the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14 and 5:6-8) and the final gathering of sinners that marks the Day of Judgement.[86]

[81] Norris in Attridge, op. cit., p.150.
[82] Ibid., p.156.
[83] Jacques Mercanton quoted in Attridge, op. cit., p.233.
[84] Letter to Harriet Weaver, quoted in Ellmann, op. cit. (1983).
[85] Levine, op. cit., p.129.
[86] Ibid., p.143.

In marginalia of the draft sketches of the original libretto for Act I, scene i, Davies quotes from the Books of Genesis, the Gospels of Luke and John, and the Book of Jeremiah. However, the composer does not pull out all 'the stops' until the opera's climax in Act II, scene iv when Taverner instructs the executioners to prepare to burn the White Abbot for adhering to his Catholic faith. The White Abbot sings: 'I am fell into the hands of those, who, preaching free thought do burn me for opposing it….'[87] The Chorus then sings the first verse of Psalm 70 (in the King James version): 'Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O Lord.' It is a sardonic moment, since, given this psalm's customary function in Catholic, Anglican, Jewish and Protestant liturgies, it has a religious universality. Ironically, this hymn of tolerance is sung as Taverner's religious zealotry reaches its climax.

Significantly, Psalm 70:1 (*Deus in adjutorium meum intende* – 'O God come to my assistance') also opens Claudio Monteverdi's *Vespro della Beata Vergine* ('Vespers for the Blessed Virgin') (1610). Given Davies's detailed study of Monteverdi's *Vespers* relating to his composition of his cantata *Leopardi Fragments* (Op. 18) and the *Sinfonia* (Op. 20),[88] it is likely that he would have known that Monteverdi dedicated the *Vespers* to Pope Paul IV: *ac Beatiss[imo] Paulo V. Pont[ifex] Max[imus] consecrate.* As noted above, Davies introduces this psalm at a pivotal moment in the opera. Its strategic placement appears to mirror the final paragraph of *The Oxen of the Sun* in *Ulysses* where Joyce also draws on Biblical material to herald an imminent catastrophic endgame. Superficially, Psalm 70 proclaims the ecumenical but here, in the opera's closing moment, its calculated placement promotes a denominational message. As the White Abbot is consumed by flames, the chorus sings a hymn of forgiveness, but it does not ring true. To adopt Levine's parlance, Davies is 'undoing' all of psalmody.

[87] Full score, Act I, scene iv, bb.163-170, p.359.
[88] See Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'Echoes of the Past in the Present', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.53.

6.4 The Bible: imagery and language

Levine has observed that 'when T.S. Eliot wrote about Joyce's work [*Ulysses*] soon after its publication in 1922 he argued that its use of the *Odyssey* as both subtext and pretext 'made the modern world possible for art.'[89] She suggests that the Homeric parallels in *Ulysses* act as an 'enabling function' for the reader. Likewise, Davies's engagement with, and his manipulation of, myriad textual sources, musical and literary, fulfil a comparable function in providing the listener with navigational points throughout the opera. Davies's placement of Psalm 70 in Act II, scene iv is one example of this. Another occurs in Act II, scene iii when, prior to the singing of a setting of the Latin Mass, the chorus of Monks tells of Judas's betrayal. Davies's stage directions state that as the chorus delivers the words 'traditorus est,' Taverner makes his entrance. The composer has noted that the Monks are celebrating a Mass, which is 'a combination of the proper for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday […] with its several references to Judas. The Abbot identifies Taverner with Judas, and vice versa.'[90]

Act I, scene iv is, dramatically speaking, the heart of the opera. Davies once referred to its composition as one of 'the seminal events' in his creative life.[91] The scene concerns Taverner's spiritual crisis and subsequent conversion and, appropriately, the libretto is peppered with Biblical references. A key episode opens the scene as the Jester reveals himself to be Death. Taverner recognises his dilemma and utters the words: 'Death! A thief!' The libretto is engineered with ingenuity. The reference is to Thessalonians: 'for yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.'[92] The composer indicates that Taverner's words are to be 'spoken, breathy, almost a whisper.' It is delivered as Sprechstimme and heightened by the stage direction that Taverner is to be 'surprised, opening his eyes….' Such is his shock that, for the first time in the opera, he is unable to sing. Taverner has physically and metaphorically lost his voice. The reference to a 'Thief in the night!' is a colloquialism but, significantly, it refers to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ: a thief may catch a household by surprise, but He (Jesus Christ) too will capture an unbelieving world by surprise as He returns in judgement. In a meta-narrative, the libretto

[89] Levine, in Attridge, op. cit., p.122.
[90] Davies, '*Taverner':* Synopsis and Documentation, *Tempo* No.101, *Taverner* (1972), p.6.
[91] Davies quoted in Paul Griffiths's programme note for the original production at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, op. cit.
[92] King James Bible, Thessalonians 5:2 and Matthew 24:43.

amplifies Taverner's predicament, expresses his horror, and, using Biblical references, alludes to the consequences that he will have to face on Judgement Day.

Later in Act I, scene iv, a chorus of Demons sings: 'Behold his body in every place, how it is dight and all to rent man for his plight…' This parodies an episode from the Gospel of St Luke when Jesus Christ appears to his disciples and tells them to 'Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.'[93] This text is introduced as the chorus of Demons introduces a Street Passion Mystery Play since it is during this 'play within a play' when, ironically, Taverner is duped.[94] Deliberate and latent intertextuality permeate both the music and the libretto. At the appearance of God the Father Davies quotes himself and parodies his own *O Magnum Mysterium* as, in the scene's mock mystery play, God announces 'Ecce Filius bastardus meus.'[95] And, as the chorus of Demons open the Passion Play, so they close it singing Psalm 23: 'Attolite portas, principes, vestras, et elevamini portae aeternales, et introibit, Rex Gloriae.' (Lift up your gates, O ye princes and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates: and the King of Glory shall enter). Another example of deliberate intertextuality is present prior to the Antichrist's (the Pope's) Apostolic Benediction (bar 194), 'Urbi et orbi!' ('To the city [Rome] and to the world!'); he screeches hysterically (bar 201): 'The murder of a heretic is not only permitted but rewarded….'

As seen in the sketches for the draft libretto, Davies references text from the Gospel of Matthew 27:45 and the Book of Isaiah 1: 5.[96] The closing moments of scene iv represent the climactic point of Act I. As Taverner collapses and prostrates himself in readiness for conversion, Davies gives the Jester (Death) words drawn directly from Matthew 22, v. 43-45: 'But the unclean spirit, When he is gone out of a man….' (Bar 661). This is followed by further quotation, modified, again from Matthew (4:16) and Taverner sings *cominciando somnabulisticamente*: 'There shone about me a great light from heaven, and I fell down upon the earth and hear the voice of Christ saying, 'Put off thy blindness.' Act I, scene iv

[93] King James Bible, Luke, 24:39.
[94] As modelled on Shakespearean examples such as in *Hamlet* Act III, scene ii *The Murder of Gonzago* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Act V, scene i, *A Tedious Brief Scene of Young Pyramus and His Love Thisbe.*
[95] Michael Chanan, op. cit. p.12. Chanan notes that this is the first appearance of parody in Davies's music.
[96] British Library; Add.Ms.71259, fols. 66 & 68.

closes with a coup de theatre as the Jester mock beatifies Taverner shrieking in Latin (bar 747): 'Salvatus! Beatus Vir! Resurrectus! Osanna!'

The composer also integrated tracts of Ecclesiastical Latin including part of the Requiem Mass for the Dead, subsequently removed in favour of plain English, to achieve greater comprehensibility in Act I, scene i. Although many Biblical references from the original draft were probably deleted in favour of comprehension, some quotations were retained in Latin, the official language of the Church of Rome. Its integration into the libretto not only introduces an authenticity to the opera, but also, symbolically, exposes and emphasises the contradictions at play. At the end of Act I, scene i, the Council sings: *Fides est virtus qua credentur quae videntur. Nos quidquid illud significat faciamus, et quam sit verum, non laboremus.* ('Faith is a means by which those things that are not seen may be believed. We may believe whatever it signifies to us, not troubling us as to how true such things might be'). As mentioned earlier, this is a quotation from the writings of St Augustine.[97] Ironically, the founders of the Protestant Reformation were influenced by St Augustine's deterministic teachings. His writings also examine the struggle for one's individual identity in the presence of a powerful God; it represents a direct parallel with Taverner's growing dilemma.

In Act I, scene ii, Latin is also introduced by a chorus of Monks which sings John Taverner's *In Nomine* from his *Missa Gloria Tibi Trinitas.* Whilst the Council had earlier questioned the efficacy of faith, the Monks now sing about religious conviction and recount the life of the protagonist: *Hoc opus est Johanni Taverni in regione Lindi nati, viri arte musica singularis….* ('This is the work of John Taverner, who was suspected and accused of having heretical books at Cardinal College. However, because of his music he escaped and became the King's servant to attack the Catholic faith….'). Both statements share a common language, yet each one represents an opposing view. Further, Latin is, in this context used to disguise meaning. As discussed further below, Davies has also noted that both the White Abbot and Taverner appear not to understand that everything is ordained and 'it's almost saying that

[97] St Augustine of Hippo, early Christian theologian and philosopher.

this is like a Greek play where everything is in the hands of the Gods but we find out that it's the Jester, the Death figure, who is actually in control.'[98]

This episode also demonstrates how the libretto serves a greater structural purpose. It is not until Act II, scene iv when, at a key moment, the full chorus is heard for the first and only time echoing the words of the Monks which were first heard in Act I, scene ii: 'This is the work of John Taverner, musician, servant of the King. Christ must reign, till he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death.'[99] However, in opposition to the earlier statement in Latin, at the end of the opera, the words are delivered in plain English. The Greek chorus still provides comment, but here, in the closing moments of the opera, its message is no longer disguised. Just as the Monks have been transformed into Townspeople, so Latin is translated into plain English in an allusion to Thomas Cranmer's introduction of the Book of Common Prayer following the Reformation.[100]

As will be discussed in Chapter 7, transformation and deformation dominate Davies's compositional methods and, equally, these processes find expression in the libretto. As shown above, language is transformed and characters are morphed; correspondingly, time and place are converted as pre-Reformation England becomes post-Reformation England. Davies described these processes as being akin to the 'literary techniques employed by Hoffmann in, say, *Meister Floh*, where certain people, spirits and plants are show to be, within the context of an elaborate 'plot', manifestations of the same character-principle – as is made clear by a line of connection (not a process of development!) that is sometimes semantic.'[101]

The Monks open Act I, scene ii singing, in Latin, John Taverner's *In Nomine*. Taverner is discovered alone struggling with his spiritual beliefs. Above the Monks' voices, the protagonist soliloquises in English:

[98] Peter Maxwell Davies in conversation with Tom Service, *Opera on 3, Taverner*, BBC Radio 3 broadcast, 28 November 2009.
[99] Full score, Act II, scene iv, bb.13-25.
[100] The *Exhortation and Litany* (1544) composed by Thomas Cranmer was the first official vernacular service published in English.
[101] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), '*Second Fantasia on John Taverner's 'In Nomine', Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.67.

> If I follow their lying vanities, I shall forsake my own mercy. Their mercurial stone returns gold to dross. This is the vigil. Waiting, shall I arm against their justice, to purge us, to break our idols in our image, cut out our counterfeited hearts? Or is this the Devil's work? I created meaning, now exiled, I must look it out afresh, a new reality, by scorching reason. God is my strength.[102]

This synthesis of the Monks' archaic Latin with Taverner's plain English emphasises the play of the binary, a central theme of the opera. And whilst the libretto describes and projects Taverner's inner conflict in the present, the Monks' words also predict his future. Davies has stated that,

> The text in Latin [...] outlines Taverner's future history. Taverner is present but he is unaware of what they are singing; he has still got that tragedy to go through. The use of Latin in that case is to state what is going to happen but at the same time to hide it from Taverner himself, while he, sung over the Latin, states in English the first doubts about this faith.[103]

Davies's reference to 'future history' also resonates with Joyce's approach to the manipulation of time and, as the composer has suggested, confirms the notion that, in this context, everything is predetermined. In this passage, Taverner's immediate internal crisis is intensified by the libretto's inclusion of Biblical references and religious imagery. In his soliloquy Taverner refers to the 'vigil', a reference to the Mount of Olives, where, Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus. As noted above, his words resonate with those of Martin Luther when, at the Diet of Worms in 1521, Luther was interrogated about his religious beliefs. As the scene reaches its climax, Taverner repeatedly states that 'God is my strength…' and then, following this statement, once again in Ecclesiastical Latin, the Monks intone part of the Seventh Psalm asserting their confidence in their God. It is delivered emphatically in unison as if to confirm religious solidarity: *In te, Domine speravi, non confundar in aeternam. In justitia tua libera me* ('In You, Lord, I have trusted, let me not be confounded in eternity; liberate me in Your justice').[104]

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[102] Full score, Act I, scene ii, bb.37-120.
[103] Davies in conversation with Stephen Walsh, 'Taverner', *The Musical Times,* Vol. 113, No. 1553 (July 1972), p. 654.
[104] Psalm 07:1-3a (Vulgate).

6.5 Metaphor and parody

As shown, the opera's libretto is assembled from an eclectic range of sources and includes a dense assortment of language, references and imagery. Winton Dean regarded the extensive use of Latin drawn from 'obscure and knotty' sources and the synthesis of texts to form a 'collage' as 'indigestible matter.'[105] Similarly, Martin Cooper's cause for complaint lay in an over-abundance of 'Latin praying and anti-praying, scenes of grotesque mumbo-jumbo […] only intelligible to the very well read'.[106] However, given Taverner's predicament it is possible to argue that throughout this discourse it is Davies's intention, using the libretto as a vehicle, to present that which is unintelligible. An impenetrable textual polyphony is used to express Taverner's inner confusion as he struggles to discover 'a new reality, by scorching reason.' Through what is, undeniably, a complex synthesis of language and imagery, the libretto functions as an independent expressive device challenging its conventional definition. Crucially, this episode is also the first time that we enter Taverner's mind and, in Joycean terms, it is possible to interpret the passage as being entirely metaphorical. Davies engineers a collision of narratives (Taverner's escalating dilemma), multiple languages (superimposed Latin and English), historical references and Biblical imagery to express, allusively, the psychological noise and confusion from which Taverner is suffering.

Whereas in Act I, scene ii, the design of Davies's libretto seeks to reflect and express Taverner's inner psychological battle, in Act I, scene iii its focus shifts to the King's external political struggle although it is motivated by purely personal ambition. Josipovici notes that,

> The libretto stresses that the fate of King Henry, and therefore of England, and that of Taverner, run parallel. …. No-one has ever doubted that Henry's breach with Rome was dictated first and foremost by private interests. The libretto stresses this aspect of the situation, and also to the peculiar mixture of power and vulnerability that belongs to a King.[107]

The two mirroring court scenes have been regarded as structurally imbalanced because of the libretto's over-extended examination of venality at the court of the King. John Harbison considered that,

[105] 'Taverner,' *The Musical Times*, September 1972.
[106] Martin Cooper, *'Taverner* lacking in deeper meaning', *Daily Telegraph*, 13 July 1972.
[107] Josipovici, op. cit., p.14.

> Davies as a librettist seems extraordinarily preoccupied with the cynicism and venality of King Henry VIII and his court as a mainspring of great events. This threatens to endanger the proportions of the opera.[108]

Harbison's view that Davies's libretto is preoccupied with the 'venality' of Henry's court is not without foundation. The two scenes to which he refers, take place in the King's Throne Room. Both are prolonged encounters between the King and the Cardinal (in Act II, scene ii the Cardinal is transformed into the Archbishop), which do threaten to 'endanger the proportions of the opera.'

As mentioned above, most of Davies's sketchbooks which contained source material for the libretto of *Taverner* were destroyed in a fire in 1969. However, some material did survive, and the textual sources for Act I, scene iii have been identified by the composer.[109] Davies's respect for this source material demonstrates rigorous scholarship, but, since the libretto for this scene is drawn directly from various fifteenth-century documents, it can, at times, feel over-written in its detailed exposition of historical fact. For example, when the Jester proceeds to announce a list of the court's Royal Expenses, the source is quoted with precision from a 'Royal Expenditure List of 1528.'[110]

Also, Davies has acknowledged that the character of the King is based upon King Henry VIII and the Cardinal that of Cardinal Wolsey. Act I, scene iii charts, as Davies describes it, a 'conference'[111] during which the two men discuss the 'forthcoming Reformations, and their immediate cause (or excuse), the Royal divorce.'[112] Here, the King's protracted quasi-recitative focuses on the desired annulment of his marriage to the Queen (Catherine of Aragon) because of her previous marriage to the King's brother (Arthur); such is the King's requirement for a 'remedy' from Rome. This statement is a long-winded monologue, interrupted only by comedic interruptions from the Jester which the King seemingly ignores.

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[108] John Harbison, 'Peter Maxwell Davies's *Taverner*', *Perspectives of New Music,* Fall/Winter 1972. p.239.
[109] Davies, op. cit., p.6. See Appendix 1 of this thesis for a reproduction of Davies's tabulation of Act I, scene iii. As the basis for the first dialogue between the King and the Cardinal, Davies cited the following texts: *The Letters of Henry VIII* edited by M. St. C. Byrne; John Strype's *Memorials of Thomas Cramer*; *Chronica Majora* by Matthew Paris (edited by Luard); *Letters and Papers ….of the Reign of Henry VIII* (volumes 1-4) edited by J.S. Brewer; *The Negotiations of Thomas Wolsey, the Great Cardinall of England* by George Cavendish and *Original Letters of illustrative of English History* (volumes 1-4) by Henry Ellis.
[110] J.S. Brewer (ed): *Letters and Papers of the Reign of Henry VIII* (volumes 1-4), vol. 4, p.3874.
[111] Davies, '*Taverner':* Synopsis and Documentation, *Tempo* No.101, *Taverner* (1972), p.5.
[112] Ibid.

It may be argued that the King's extended speech is intended to parody him; it is an interminable monologue characterised by language which is, at times, impenetrable, discursive and digressive.

If, as Harbison believes, the episode presents a structural imbalance because of Davies's preoccupations, it may be because the scene's inflated length and character is intended to ridicule, albeit obliquely, the excess, corruption and isolationism which characterized the King's court. in Act I, scene iii the Cardinal sings (bar 80), 'England is our storehouse of delights, a very inexhaustible well, where much abounds, and much can be extracted from many;'[113] these words are attributed to Pope Leo X.[114] Davies notes that,

> The proceeds of the sale of indulgencies in England went to the rebuilding of St Peter's. Wolsey was in charge in England of this traffic, and successfully stood out for Henry VIII's receiving a third of the income from this.[115]

These comments not only detail the corruption of both church and state, but they also show evidence of robust scholarship throughout the libretto. An episode in Act I, scene iii, reveals Davies's craft in reshaping and refining prosaic historical text into language suitable for vocal delivery. For example, following brass fanfares, the King delivers quasi-recitative which employs material that Davies has attributed to a letter written by King Henry VIII to Cardinal Wolsey. It was published in *The Letters of Henry VIII* edited by M. St. C. Byrne in 1936.

> Mine own good cardinal, I recommend me
> unto you with all my heart, and thank you for
> the great pain and labour that you do daily take
> in my business and matters, desiring you (that
> when you have established them) to take some
> pastime and comfort, to the intent you may the
> longer endure to serve us, for always pain
> cannot be endured.[116]

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[113] John Strype, *Memorials of Thomas Cranmer*; *Chronica Majora* by Matthew Paris (edited by Luard); iv. pp. 546-547.
[114] Leo X, originally Giovanni di Medici (1475-1521); one of the leading Renaissance Popes (reigned 1513–21). Pope Leo X made Rome a cultural centre and a political power but depleted the papal treasury, and, by failing to fully understand the developing Reformation, contributed to the disintegration of religion. Leo excommunicated Martin Luther in 1521.
[115] Davies, '*Taverner':* Synopsis and Documentation, *Tempo* No.101, *Taverner* (1972), p.8.
[116] M. St. C. Byrne (ed.), *The Letters of Henry VIII*, London, 1936, p.28.

Davies has re-written King Henry VIII's letter as follows:

> Our good Lord Cardinal,
> we thank you
> with all our heart for your great labour
> sustained daily on our behalf.
>
> Which service by your kind master and
> King cannot be forgotten,
> of which fault we trust God we never be accused.[117]

Davies's version is more compressed than the original letter as quoted by Byrne, and the language has been modernised whilst retaining a whiff of Medieval majesty. Also, in an effort to support the singer to achieve improved comprehension in performance, Davies has transformed the original dense, arhythmic prose into a pair of succinct stanzas which have greater rhythmic clarity. During this monologue, the King is accompanied by an on-stage band of three viols and a lute playing a Pavane as re-imagined by Davies. This medieval courtly dance, ironically of Italian origin and often danced at weddings, has a slow duple metre (crotchet = 126) and has a structure of two eight bar phrases (a = bars 16-23, b = 24-31). Davies adds irregular 5/4 (bar 25) and 3/4 (bar 28) time-signatures deliberately to disrupt the metre of the dance and the King's text is super-imposed, asymmetrically, over the Pavane's sixteen bars. The second section (b) spans a section of twelve bars (bars 32-44). Musically, the passage is characterised by the disintegration of the Pavane which, correspondingly, reflects the libretto as the King narrates the demise of the Church of Rome: 'We, pondering, the present state of Christianity in our realm, miserably afflicted with dissension, note with regret of the See Apostolic is thereby diminished….' [118] This source material is based upon a letter which King Henry VIII wrote in 1529 upon being informed of Pope Clement VII's illness: 'His Highness, pondering and profoundly considering the present state of Christendom, miserably and piteously afflicted with the intestine wars, dissentions and disorders reigning amongst the princes of the same, and how the dignity of the See Apostolic is not thereby a little diminished, and like to come to total ruin, and remembering his great cause of matrimony committed to the Papal Court…'[119]

[117] Full score, Act I, scene iii, p.104.
[118] Full score, Act I, scene iii, p.105.
[119] Davies, op. cit., p.7.

Crucial to this scene is the first appearance in the opera of the Jester. In defence of Davies's libretto, it is possible to suggest that Harbison's reading of Act I, scene iii and also Act II, scene ii underestimates the central role that this character plays. Indeed, Davies has described the Jester as the opera's main character, and, if in the opening scene, he does not sing as much as the King, the Jester still dominates proceedings.[120] Introduced by the rattling of his jingling Johnny, the Jester sings (bar 60): 'Cardinalis Pacificus, Est enim Vir, et uno ore preadicant omnes, unus prope inter nobiles eruditus, animoque plane philosophico.' [121]These are the words attributed to the Renaissance Dutch scholar and humanist, Erasmus[122] used to describe Thomas Cranmer.[123] Cranmer was an adviser to King Henry VIII and, from 1527, assisted Cardinal Wolsey in building the case for the annulment of Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon. Davies's directions indicate that the Jester's Latin text is to be delivered: 'libero, plainsong style (leering sarcastic).' As the King's previous text was superimposed upon a Pavane, so the Jester's sarcastic intervention is now, appropriately, delivered above the Pavane's 'after-dance' as a trio of viols and a lute perform a Galliard. This dance which, like the Pavane, originates from Italy, offers another ironic musical subtext. Davies's selection and manipulation of text is ingenious. Ostensibly, the Jester showers praise upon the Catholic Cardinal, Thomas Wolsey, but in his quoting of Erasmus, he is actually describing Thomas Cranmer who was the first Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury. The decision to employ the Jester to deliver this text is carefully calculated and, once again, reveals the libretto to be multi-dimensional. At one level, there exists parody and, at another, there is allusion. Erasmus was an important force behind the Reformation and the Jester now emulates this in his function as the opera's 'master-puppeteer.' Davies affirmed that,

> … the Jester, who becomes Death and then Joking Jesus, and who emerges as the main character: the power behind the Reformation or Revolution, the master-puppeteer for whom all the other 'characters', including Taverner himself, are as marionettes.[124]

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[120] The function of the Jester recalls that of the Shakespearean fool. For example, Feste in *Twelfth Night*, Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Fool in *King Lear.*

[121] John Strype, *Memorials of Thomas Cramer*; *Chronica Majora* by Matthew Paris (edited by Luard).

[122] Desiderius Erasmus Roterodarmus first editor of the New Testament; an important figure in patristics and classical literature, c.1469-1536.

[123] Thomas Cranmer, 1489-1556 and first Anglo-Catholic Archbishop of Canterbury, 1533-56.

[124] Davies, op. cit., p.5.

There are two further key moments in the remainder of Act I, scene iii which reveal the industry of Davies's libretto. At bar 133, Davies quotes a letter from King Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn. It is sung *amoroso* by the Jester: 'I trust soon to see you again, which to me, will be more sovereign remedy than all the precious stones in the world.'[125] Once again, it is the Jester who is front and centre. After he has interrupted the King, Davies's stage directions instruct that, as the text is delivered, the Jester places on his head 'a paper crown in imitation of King and parodying him.' It is notable that the Jester's text is placed in quotation marks. Davies is emphasising the authenticity of his words whilst ridiculing the situation. Following the departure of both King and Cardinal comes the climax of the scene as the Jester reveals himself to be Death. At this crucial moment in the opera, Davies quotes words attributed to Sir Thomas More. The Jester/Death sings: 'When the Lion knows his strength, hard it is to rule him…'[126]

The first part of the Jester's/Death's final speech is, in part, a reworking of advice reportedly given to Oliver Cromwell by Thomas More in 1532 at the time of his increasing influence at the court of King Henry VIII:

> Master Cromwell, you are entered into the service of a most noble, wise and liberal prince. If you will follow my poor advice, you shall, in your counsel-giving unto his grace, ever tell him what he ought to do, but never what he is able to do…. For if a lion knew his own strength, hard were it for any man to rule him. [127]

The text of the second part of the Jester's/Death's statement is delivered just before he removes his mask to reveal himself as Death. Davies's stage directions instruct the character to speak 'standing up… gradually, an almost spoken whisper.' The composer then returns to the Bible and quotes Psalm XVIII, 4-5: 'The cords of hell encompass us about, and the floods of ungodliness make me afraid.' This passage in the libretto combines historical references with classical imagery (the King as untamed Lion) and Biblical narrative (fire, flood and brimstone) to illuminate the episode. As discussed, prior, for some listeners, such textual references may have a navigational purpose.

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[125] Byrne, op. cit., p.70.
[126] Full score, Act I, scene iii, p.129.
[127] David Head, 'If a Lion Knew His Own Strength', The image of Henry VIII and his historians, *International Social Science Review,* Vol. 72, no 3-4 (1997), p.94.

Whilst in Act I, scene iii Davies's libretto focuses on the Jester's role as largely comedic and interpolating the dialogue between King and Cardinal, conversely in Act II, scene ii, he has no text to deliver until the scene's closing moments. However, his omnipresence is articulated by stage directions at the start of the scene which imply that the Jester is in full command of the stage, and, by association, the whole drama. As the Cardinal kneels, directions instruct that the Jester, now unmasked, is to stand with 'his back to the audience, arms folded, legs apart.'[128] When the Jester makes his final announcement the King and the Archbishop are no longer present. Alone on stage, the Jester predicts the dissolution of the monasteries (bar 249): 'Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another, which shall not be thrown down.'[129] This Biblical reference is to Jesus's prophesy of the sacking of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple by the Romans in 70AD: 'Not one stone shall be left upon another; every one shall be thrown down.'[130] In this scene, although Davies's libretto appears to give prominence to the King and the Cardinal (later the Archbishop), it is the Jester's silence which, metaphorically, speaks volumes.

In summary, it is of primary importance to acknowledge that the creation of this libretto was crucial to the opera's conception. From the beginning, for Davies, the images and text came first. They were prime motivators and, inextricably, linked to the birth of the score. Davies's vision for the opera has a proximity to Wagner's aesthetic model as articulated in *Gesamtkünstwerk*. Although he displayed little enthusiasm for the work of Wagner, this synthesis of artforms also found similar expression during the Renaissance when polymaths such as Michelangelo and Filippo Brunelleschi worked across multiple disciplines including the visual arts, poetry, architecture and sculpture. Significantly, the Renaissance was a period in history which Davies closely identified with and it is possible to conjecture that its spirit inspired a holistic approach in his melding of words and music.

As discussed, the libretto for the opera was subject to adverse criticism. For performers, it presented practical demands while, for audiences, the text's dense and eclectic nature posed challenges of intelligibility. And, although Davies's text is well-crafted and rigorous in

[128] Full score, Act II, scene ii, p.266.
[129] Full score, Act II, scene ii, p.292.
[130] According to the gospels of Matthew 24:2, Mark 13:2 and Luke 21:6.

its scholarship, it is often characterized by dry, prosaic language which does not necessarily serve the drama. At worst, the text may be regarded as self-serving or, at best, an over ambitious and independent literary endeavour. Kerman believed it to be an impractical 'confusion of ideas'[131] and Beard conceded that the text's Jungian concepts, including those of assimilation and submission, were 'not easy to dramatize on the opera stage.'[132] These failings support the view that the libretto was experimental in design and, by association, give credence to the notion that *Taverner* was an apprentice piece.

Yet, equally, it is valid to recognise that its creation was a necessary step in the composer's stylistic evolution which was to lead to the subsequent texted works such as *Revelation and Fall* (Op. 31)*, Missa Super L'Homme Armé* (Op. 36a) and *Eight Songs for a Mad King* (Op. 39) although, notably, all these works use texts which were written by others.[133] Also, in the two stage works written in the 1970s, Davies continued to revise and refine his approach in the creation of libretti. Beard observes that *The Martyrdom of St Magnus* (Op. 72) and *The Lighthouse* (Op. 86) are both operas that address dramatic themes which are strikingly similar to those found in *Taverner*, yet adopt a more 'perceptual structure' in order to 'convey meaning more coherently than *Taverner*.'[134]

If, overall, Davies's libretto fails to project sufficient coherent meaning, it still remains crucial to the opera's conceptual design. Davies's achievement lies in his scholarship and innovatory approach. The text reflects the rich polystylism found in the music integrating intertextuality and symbolism for structural, dramatic and expressive purposes. It was never Davies's original intention that this libretto was written to tell a story. *Taverner* is the story of a subject or 'a drama of ideas.'[135] At worst, the libretto may be regarded as experimental. At best, it represents an audacious rethinking of the genre and sets a new paradigm.

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[131] Joseph Kerman, 'Popish Ditties', *Tempo*. No 102 (1972), p.20.
[132] David Beard in Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (co-editors), *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, CUP, 2009), p.104.
[133] As noted, the text for *Revelation and Fall* is by Georg Trakl; *Eight Songs for a Mad King* has text by Randolph Stow after King George III; *Missa Super L'Homme Armé* uses the *Agnus Dei* and the Gospel of St Luke (Ch. 22).
[134] Beard in Gloag and Jones, op. cit., p.104.
[135] Kerman, op. cit., p.20.

Chapter 7

Compositional style

In a funny way, Taverner's transformations are paralleled by the musical transformations in my own style, quite unintentionally: it just seems to have happened like that.[1]

This chapter examines the composer's evolving compositional style as it relates specifically to *Taverner*. It considers the component parts that combine to create an idiom which is iconoclastic, polystylistic, experimental, and, ultimately, personal. The opera's musical language has been described as 'a web of allusions that the ear cannot hope to untangle.'[2] *Taverner* may be instructively problematic but this chapter hopes to untangle that web of allusions by identifying compositional methods and metaphors to provide meaning.

Davies once commented that 'each work that I write relates to what I wrote before.'[3] Taking this as a point of departure, the chapter aims to demonstate how, in *Taverner*, latent and deliberate intertextuality are increasingly essential to the composer's aesthetic. It examines how plainsong is manipulated and integrated into the opera and discusses its origins and symbolic purpose. The chapter also considers the provenance and deployment of the Death Chord. As stated in relation to the aims of this thesis, it is not the intention to undertake a detailed analysis of compositional technique as it relates to post-Schoenbergian serial practices.[4] However, the chapter does, briefly, introduce Davies's idiosyncratic approach to serialism. There is also an examination of vocal expression in the opera and, finally, discussion as to how and why parody is central to the composer's style.

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[1] Peter Maxwell Davies interviewed by Stephen Walsh, 'Taverner', *The Musical Times*, Vol.113, No.1553 (July, 1972), p.653.
[2] Andrew Clements, 'Wheels with wheels', *The New Statesman*, 15 July, 1983.
[3] Peter Maxwell Davies in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'On Parody, References and Meaning', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018) p.225.
[4] For further study see David Roberts, *Techniques of Composition in the music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, PhD thesis (Department of Music, Faculty of Arts, Birmingham, 1985); Jonathan Rees, *Peter Maxwell Davies's 'Revelation and Fall' - influence study and analysis*, PhD thesis (The Open University, 2010); Richard Lister, *Steps through the Maze: Image, Reflection, Shadow and Aspects of Magic Squares in the works of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies*, Ph.D. thesis (Brandeis University, New York, 2001); Cheryl Ann Tongier, *Pre-existent music in the works of Peter Maxwell Davies,* PhD thesis (University of Kansas, Lawrence, 1983).

7.1 Intertextuality (i): Early music, plainsong: origin, integration and symbolism

Taverner and other works in its orbit share extensive reference to compositional processes founded in early music. Davies once recalled that his interest in Renaissance music was,

> …in the first place purely from the sound, from being involved in performances of plainsong, of Renaissance music particularly. On a technical level I think I was first sparked off by isorhythmic processes, and by the medieval rhythmic modes…. I'll admit that perhaps I deceive myself in thinking that my interest in old music is of primary importance and I've often thought I'm using this as a catalyst – acting rather like a catalyst in a chemical reaction.[5]

For Davies 'isorhythmic processes,' such as *talea* (rhythmic phrases) and *color* (melodic phrases) were guiding organisational principles in a compositional style founded upon transformational techniques. In the Trumpet Sonata (Op. 1) isorhythmic devices articulate the work's form. As will be discussed below, the rhythmic cell which opens the sonata serves a generative and structural function in Act I, scene i of the opera (see Music Example 7.8). Also, Davies's notion that he was 'sparked off by isorhythmic processes' through involvement in performances of plainsong is evident in its integration throughout *Taverner.*

Davies's approach to harmony was influenced by linear, polyphonic practices drawn from music of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries:

> …I modified my whole outlook on harmony (…) by thinking upwards and downwards from a 'tenor' part (here not the name of a particular voice-line between given limiting pitches, but a part, or voice, with pivotal long or rhythmic note-values, at any register or tessitura). This meant that harmony was heard and calculated not only from the bass-line upwards, but from a 'tenor' line in any register both upwards and downwards, giving to me surprising but comprehensible, fertile results. […] with a work with aforementioned orchestral fantasia (*Second Taverner Fantasia*), one could be more experimental and innovative, while maintaining an audible and ultimately architectural harmonic cohesion.[6]

The composer's remark about tenor lines and his development of a harmonic process 'not only from the bass-line upwards but from a 'tenor' line in any register both upwards and downwards' finds early expression in the divided polyphony of *Prolation* (Op. 8) and is also

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[5] Davies, in conversation with Alexander Goehr, quoted in Nichoas Jones (ed.), 'Musical Innovation', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.78.
[6] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'Indivisible Parameters and Spirit-Stirring Amalgams', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambrdige, CUP, 2018), p.303.

evident in *Taverner*.[7] At the appearance of the two monks Act I scene iv (bar 54) the distribution of the tenor line is indicated graphically, upwards and downwards, throughout the orchestra. Davies described this as a 'migrant' tenor which was 'easily relatable to medieval practice' and 'which could easily appear at any register and in any part…. The harmonic implications of not only thinking from the bass upwards, were quite radical.'[8] The composer recognised the importance of this re-styling in the context of his own musical lineage.

> I was very determined *myself* that I was going to preserve my roots and continue studying Beethoven, Mozart, William Byrd, John Dunstable, whatever, and plainsong, all of which I loved and which I saw absolutely no reason to kick out - and I didn't. As far as I could see or hear in musical history, I didn't know one composer who had not reworked something which existed before in his own terms. And perhaps one could even say in the music of the recent past one could recognize the composer's voice by how much it differed from the voices which went just before him, but there was a connection which was audible.[9]

This acknowledgement of audible connections, whether similar or dissimilar between past composers, suggests latent and deliberate intertextuality.[10] What is abundantly clear is that Davies found 'great freedom in the choice and manifestation of his influences, not bound faithfully to any, but able to learn from all.'[11] One major influence was his discovery of plainsong. Bayan Northcott considered it to be central in defining Davies's compositional idiom as it pertained to *Taverner*.

> [the young composer]…evidently sensed an affinity between the latest avant-garde techniques and the structures of early music then being rediscovered. His most pervasive procedure was accordingly to set up a plainchant-derived *cantus firmus* upon which to evolve complex canonic textures. It was an idiom peculiarly calculated to articulate dramatic themes of conversion, false seeming, betrayal and so on, through degrees of melodic transformation, distortion, inversion – and, not least, parody.[12]

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[7] This technique recalls the use of the labels *Hauptstimme* (Principal voice) and *Nebenstimme* (Secondary voice) to clarify contrapuntal voice leading in works by Schoenberg, Berg and Webern.
[8] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'A Composer's Point of View (II): On Parody, References and Meaning', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* pp.224-225.
[9] Davies quoted in Nicholas Jones, (ed.), 'Remembering Darmstadt', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.173.
[10] For a detailed discussion of intertextuality see Michael Klein, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music, Musical Meaning and Interpretation* (Indiana University Press, 2005).
[11] Rees, op. cit., p.106.
[12] Bayan Northcott, CD sleeve note, NMC CD 2009, p.4.

Although *cantus firmus* and canons are distinct compositional processes, Northcott is correct in suggesting that the composer created a musical syntax perfectly suited to convey extra-musical subjects. Davies began to integrate plainsong into his work as early as 1957, the year in which he wrote *Alma Redemptoris Mater* (Op. 5) and *St Michael: Sonata for Seventeen Wind Instruments* (Op. 6). However, it was the composition of the *First Fantasia on an 'In Nomine' of John Taverner* (Op. 19) which proved to be a watershed. Davies's reference to a sixteenth-century genre prefigures the titles of later works including the *Second Taverner Fantasia* (Op. 23), *Fantasia and Two Pavans after Henry Purcell* (WoO. 95) and *St Thomas Wake: Foxtrot for Orchestra on a Pavan by John Bull* (Op. 37). However, it was with the overt statement of Taverner's *In Nomine* in the *First Fantasia* that Davies first made explicit reference to his British musical ancestry.

The *In Nomine* functions as a key source throughout Davies's output, from its early iterations in the *First Taverner Fantasia* and the *Seven In Nomine* to an appearance, forty years later, in the Third Naxos String Quartet (Op. 236).[13] Its pivotal function in *Taverner* supports Paul Griffiths's comment that the opera was 'the biggest *In Nomine* of them all.'[14] Also, Taverner's original *In Nomine* contains personal extra-musical meaning for the composer which is associated with the 'Shadowy Other.' Richard McGregor views it as 'a conceptual frame' within which Davies's concerns about the exploitation or the betrayal of the individual are expressed and cites its distorted statement in the Third Naxos String Quartet as an example of the composer's 'profound opposition to the Iraq War.'[15]

Davies claimed that his love of plainsong sprang from his time of study in Italy.

> …when I was in Rome in the fifties I would go up to the Benedictine monastery on the Aventine with my *Liber Usualis*, and I knew exactly what they were doing that day – I'd prepared it all – and they just did their plainsong. I just sat there, enjoyed it and realised that this was the best music I'd heard in my life.[16]

[13] Rodney Lister, 'Peter Maxwell Davies's *Naxos* Quartets', *Tempo*, 232 (April 2005), p.11.
[14] Paul Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies* (London, Robson Books, 1972), p. 44.
[15] Nicholas Jones and Richard McGregor, *The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2020), p.212.
[16] Peter Maxwell Davies and Nicholas Jones, 'Peter Maxwell Davies in the 1950s: A conversation with the composer', *Tempo*, Vol. 64, No. 254 (October 2010), p.15.

As noted above, plainsong was fundamental to a pair of works dating from the time of Davies's study in Rome. *Alma Redemptoris Mater* (Op. 5) was the first work in which the composer drew upon this source. The wind sextet is based upon a ten-note set derived from the plainsong Marion antiphon that Davies sourced from the *Liber Usualis*. Its sister work, *St Michael – Sonata for Seventeen Wind Instruments* (Op. 6), also refers to the *Dies Irae*, *Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei,* both found in the *Liber Usualis*.

Richard McGregor has suggested that Davies actually built 'a personal mythology around the processes of extraction'[17] and that in addition to the *Liber Usualis*[18] he also referred to the *Historical Anthology of Music* as an important source.[19] The composer's interest in plainsong was threefold: he had a 'great affection' for the melodies themselves, was drawn to their 'inner glow' (similar to that of a religious icon) and, as will be discussed below, recognized their symbolic properties.[20]

Table I (in landscape format below) charts Davies's deployment of plainsong, including John Taverner's *In Nomine*, and describes its dramatic and allusive functions.

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[17] Richard McGregor in Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (co-editors), 'Peter Maxwell Davies's sources: reflections on origins, meanings and significance', *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, CUP, 2009), p.152.
[18] Book of Gregorian chants compiled by the monks of the Abbey of Solesmes in France.
[19] Nicholas Jones in Jones and McGregor, *The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2020), p.155.
[20] Davies, quoted in Jones and McGregor, op. cit., p.23.

TABLE I: Deployment and function of plainsong

ACT & SCENE	PLAINSONG	BAR NUMBER(S)	ORCHESTRATION/CHARACTER	FUNCTION
ACT I Scene i	In Nomine Gloria Tibi Trinitas	17 – 21 527 – 530 566 – 572 575 – 580 615 – 617	White Abbot Tuba Bassoon & contrabassoon Oboe Cardinal	Calls Taverner to trial Entrance of Cardinal Accompanies Cardinal Accompanies Cardinal Exit of Cardinal
Scene ii	In Nomine	1 - 5	Chorus of Monks	Introduces Taverner's monologue
Scene iv	O Magnum in Mysterium In Nomine	479 – 500 503 – 506 517 – 519 653 -657 663 – 670	Chorus of Demons God the Father Flute Taverner Violin	Street Passion Mystery Play 'Ecce fillius bastardus meus…' Mock crucifixion 'I repent me very much…' Taverner's conversion
ACT II Scene ii	Te per Orbem Terrarum Eterne Rex Altissime	59 – 77 154 – 163	Regal King & Regal	Accompanies King Cardinal is transformed into Archbishop
Scene iii	Melius illi erat In Nomine (inverted) Gloria Tibi Trinitas	22 – 50 83 - 90 134 - 160	Chorus of Monks Viola White Abbot & Monks	Monks sing of Judas's betrayal of Christ Tavener recalls his shame. Captain's spills communion wine & arrest of Monks
Scene iv	Victimae Paschali Laudes Gloria Tibi Trinitas In Nomine	284 – 291 292 – end of opera 291 – end of opera	Solo cello Recorder 2 Recorders 1, 3 & 4	Taverner sings ' O God I call upon thy name…' Closing episode Closing episode

Table I shows that following Taverner's conversion at the end of Act I, scene iv there is no overt statement of the *In Nomine* until it is heard in its original form at the opera's conclusion. Music Example 7.1 shows Taverner's original *In Nomine* in Recorder 1 stated in counterpoint to the *Gloria Tibi Trinitas* cantus firmus in Recorder 2.

Music Example 7.1: ***In Nomine*** **and** ***Gloria Tibi Trinitas*** **cantus firmus*;* Act II, scene iv, bb. 291-314**

independent of tempo on stage and in pit.
Recorder I
𝅗𝅥 = 66
off stage
p ma chiaro
Recorder 2
p ma chiaro
Recorder 3
p ma chiaro
Recorder 4
p ma chiaro
The recorders recede, the sound gradually fading away.
Very Slow Curtain
Vc. Solo
1
2
Rec.
3
4
Vc. Solo
niente
niente
1
2
Rec.
3
3
End of Opera
1962-1970
B.& H.20035

Symbolically, this passage (Music Example 7.1) represents a distillation of the opera's central theme: a drama of binaries 'where the true and the false, the real and the unreal, are constantly offset against each other.'[21] The duality of Taverner's personality is alluded to in the statement of his secular musical fingerprint which is literally placed in counterpoint to sacred music which he composed for the Catholic Church, music which, according to John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (1563), Taverner subsequently rejected as 'Popish ditties composed during the time of my blindness.'

Joseph Kerman has argued that the statement of Taverner's plainsong performed by recorders in its 'pristine' form symbolises Taverner's 'hope against hope for salvation, as he prays from the darkest dungeon, in a hesitant recollection of his music and through his music of his better self.'[22] This final passage in the opera does provide a rare moment of musical consonance. However, as the score indicates, Taverner's *In Nomine* is to be played 'independent of tempo on stage and in pit.' This physical distance introduces sonic separation whilst its independent tempo further emphasises its detachment; it is music from a time which Taverner is now estranged. Finally, directions instruct that 'the recorders recede, the sound gradually fading away……' to *niente.* Signficantly, there is no double-bar line, only the indication: 'End of Opera.' For Taverner, this represents oblivion.

Kerman has also suggested that Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* illuminates this concluding musical paragraph. Kerman draws parallels to Adrian Leverkühn's *Dr. Fausti Wehe-klage* and its closing music which he interprets as an 'equivocal redemption for Faust, Leverkühn, Nazi Germany, the art of music, the art of the novel, and who knows what else.'[23] Mann's *Doktor Faustus* is *Künstlerroman*, a subcategory of a literary genre known as *Bildungsroman.*[24] Kerman's interpretation resonates with the idea that *Taverner* may be regarded as an example of *Künstleroper.*

[21] Richard McGregor in Jones and MacGregor, 'Allusion, Quotation, Musical Critique', *The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2020), p.235.
[22] Joseph Kerman, 'Popish Ditties', *Tempo,* No. 102 (1972), p.23.
[23] Ibid., p.22.
[24] *Bildungsroman*. German literary genre meaning 'novel of education' or 'novel of formation' which focuses upon the psychological and moral development of the protagonist often in the stages of apprenticeships. Also known as 'coming of age' stories. Examples of the genre include *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens and *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce.

Table I (Deployment and function of plainsong) also shows that the plainsong *Gloria Tibi Trinitas* is, appropriately, given its intended liturgical purpose, mainly associated with the role of the Cardinal. As is illustrated in Music Example 7.2, in Act I, scene i the plainsong is initially presented in a statement by Tuba 2, doubled by Trombone 1 to accompany his grandiose entrance. The passage is marked *alla marcia* as the Cardinal appears 'in scarlet, his train upheld by 2 Acolytes (boys) the court is upstanding.' It is a rhetorical, exaggerated gesture.

Music Example 7.2: *Gloria Tibi Trinitas*; Cardinal's entrance, Act I, scene i, bb. 527-531

Enter through the St.Michael door 2 Priests with a large silver cross each, 2 Laymen with Symbolic pillars, 2 Soldiers with poleaxes. The Cardinal in scarlet, his train upheld by 2 Acolytes (boys) - the court is upstanding.

esitando — accel. — Andante moderato, ♩=60 alla marcia

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530

Ob. 1.

E.Hn.

Cl. 1.

B.Cl.

Bsn. 1. 2.

Hn. 1. 2.

mf fp fp fp fp mf cresc.

Tr. 1. 2.

mf p ffp f sfxp ff f

p f ffp f fp

Tbne. 1.

cresc.

Tuba 1. 2.

cresc. cresc.

530

sord.

Vl.I

mf

sim.

Vl.II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

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Later in the scene, the Cardinal pardons Taverner for his alleged sacriligeous acts and the plainsong is re-stated. In the composer's defence, the Cardinal declares that Taverner is but a 'poor musician' who is 'skilled at the playing of the organs….' This is a comedic sounding, parodic iteration of the *Gloria Tibi Trinitas* and, as will be be discussed below in the context of Davies's approach to parody, its intention is to be subversive. Music Example 7.3 shows the plainsong stated in Bassoon 1 and the Contrabassoon in imitation of an organ's pedal notes (bars 566-574). Also in this episode, the Cardinal compliments Taverner on his skill at 'the art of prick-song' and, fittingly, the *Gloria Tibi Trinitas* is transformed into a wide-ranging lyrical phrase in octave displacement performed by Oboe 1 (bars 575-578).

Musical Example 7.3: *Gloria Tibi Trinitas*; Taverner's pardon, Act I, scene i, bb.566-578

Taverner's *In Nomine* has a symbolic function. As noted, it is stated in its original form in the closing moments of Act II scene iv (Music Example 7.1). Correspondingly, the *In Nomine* is also introduced at the end of Act I, scene iv. However, in this passage the plainsong is subject to a process of disintegration (bar 661 to bar 711) and mirrors the protagonist's spiritual demise. As the Jester/Death commands that Taverner signs his confession, Taverner sings 'I repent me very much that I have made songs to Popish ditties in the time of my blindness….' Music Example 7.4 shows that this text, set to Taverner's own song, has become rhythmically displaced and is melodically disjunct. In a flashback to Act I, scene i, Trumpet 2 and trombones reprise the opera's opening trumpet call transposed, in augmentation and stated canonically.

Music Example 7.4: *In Nomine* statement, Taverner repents, Act I, scene iv, bb. 654-657

Following this initial collapse of the *In Nomine,* stage directions instruct that Taverner then physically collapses on stage (bar 660). The Jester/Death sings text from Matthew XXII (v. 43-45): ‘But the unclean spirit, when he is gone out of a man….’ As Music Example 7.5 shows, the Jester’s monologue is accompanied by fractured statements of the plainsong in the solo violin from bar 663. It begins with an open D-natural string to be played inexpressively, *senza espr. senza vib.* At bars 678-681, using octave displacement, the first three notes of the *In Nomine* are stated in augmentation and then repeated in diminution (bar 691), a shadow of the theme’s former self.

This passage is introduced by cymbal, low bell, tam-tam and an upright piano. The composer’s instructions in the score about the prepared upright piano are highlighted in Music Example 7.5 below. Perhaps in a symbolic gesture relating to Taverner’s loss of voice, the piano’s action has been removed to create a numb resonance; the instrument has been rendered inarticulate.

Music Example 7.5: *In Nomine* statement, Taverner's conversion, Act I, scene iv, bb. 661-696

* An upright, with the action removed. The deepest bass strings, stroked gently with a very soft felt-headed stick, with the damper pedal depressed, so that the strings are heard resonating, but not the attack.

** A very large, heavy coil bell, of extremely deep pitch. N.B. None of these sounds to be produced or "improved" electronically. The four instruments which combine to give the "bell sound" must be placed together.

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Cym.
Tam-t.
Piano
Bell

670

Jst.

When he is gone out of a man, pass - eth through wa - ter - less

Vl. Solo

pp sim.

Cym.
Tam-t.
Piano
Bell

Jst.

pla - ces, seek - ing rest, and find - eth it not.

Vl. Solo

pp sim.

poco più allegro, recitando ♩= 100

3+2

680

Jst.

Then he says, I will re - turn un - to my house, whence I came, and when he finds it

Vl. Solo

(sempre pp sim.)

Jst.

più pp

emp - ty, swept clean, he en - ters and dwells there with se - ven oth - er spir - its, more

Vl. Solo

rit.

690

lento molto ♩= 80

4+3

rit.

Cym.
Tam-t.
Piano
Bell

Jst.

e - vil than him - self, and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

rit.

690

lento molto ♩= 48

4+3

rit.

Vl. Solo

pp sim.

ppp

B. & H. 20095

A further example of the symbolic power of plainsong in the opera is found in Act II, scene iii when its re-statement alludes to Taverner's Judas-like betrayal of his music, religion and self.[25] At the start of the scene (bars 49-54), a Chorus of Monks sings the fourteenth-century chant: *Melius illi erat, se natus non fuisset* ('It were better for him, if that man had not been born') referring to Judas's betrayal of Christ. Arnold has observed that this recalls its setting in the *Tenebrae Responsories* by Tomás Luis de Victoria (c.1548-1611) where the text forms part of the Catholic liturgy during Holy Week. Appropriately, Davies has described this episode of the opera as a Mass in 'a combination of the proper for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.'[26] As the Monks celebrate Mass, Taverner enters and condemns the corruption of the Catholic church. As he sings: 'Here is my shame to be party to its corruption….' there is a re-statement of the *In Nomine.* Music Example 7.6 shows that the melody is stated in inversion, transposed at the tritone (bar 83) and symbolically negated. Simultaneously, a muted solo cello states the subject of the canon which the Monks had sung in the mirroring scene (Act I, scene iii, bars 10-17) as they intoned 'Opus Johanni Taverni,' is also now presented in its inversion.

[25] Griffiths, op.cit., p.52.
[26] Peter Maxwell Davies, '*Taverner*: Synopsis and Documentation', *Tempo* No. 101 (1972), p.6.

Music Example 7.6: *In Nomine* statement, Taverner's betrayal, Act II, scene iii, bb. 80-87

In Act II, scene iv there is a statement of the plainsong *Victimae Paschali Laudes* superimposed upon the *Second Taverner Fantasia*.[27] Davies associated this music with themes of Death, the Betrayal of Christ, invocation of the Creator Spirit and the Virgin Mary.[28] David Beard says that 'in Davies's mind Taverner's relationship with the Church is analogous with his marriage to Rose, which is in turn symbolic of Taverner's relationship to 'a female collective that consists of his mother, the Virgin Mary, and Wagner's Erda.'[29] As shown in Music Example 7.7, appropriately, the plainsong is played *con sord* by a solo cello, the instrument in the opera most closely associated with Rose, who, as Beard has suggested, may be connected symbolically to the Virgin Mary.

Also, given the association which *Victimae Paschali Laudes* holds for the composer, its explicit statement alludes to Taverner's self-betrayal. However, Arnold interprets its interpolation as 'a reminder of the Easter sequence celebrating the Resurrection [and] is the one, extremely restrained, hint of a resolution to the opera's inner drama.'[30] Indeed, Davies has referred to this statement of *Victimae Paschali Laudes* as representing a 'glimmer of hope.'[31] Thematically, this reading of resurrection in the work's closing moments points to the opera's companion piece and sequel, *Resurrection* (Op. 129) which has been called 'a kind of *Taverner Revisited*.'[32]

The expressive instructions in the score support the idea of an 'inner drama' where the cello's solo is muted, internalized, marked *recitando* and *dolce chiaro* providing an empathetic counterpoint to Taverner's final utterance, delivered *intense, inward* (bars 284-

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[27] Richard McGregor in Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (co-editors), 'Peter Maxwell Davies's sources: reflections on origins, meanings and significance', *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, CUP, 2009), p.155. McGregor also notes that the source of this plainsong is to be found in the *Historical Anthology of Music,* HAM1, 16b. It is heard regularly in Davies's works including *Vesalii Icones*, *Worldes Blis* and *Missa Super l'Homme Armé*.
[28] McGregor, op. cit., p.156. For further discussion of symbolism and the origins of plainsong in Davies's output see Peter Owens, 'Revelation and Fallacy, Observations on Compositional Technique in the Music of Peter Maxwell Davies,' *Music Analysis* Vol. 13, No 2/3 (1994), pp.182-185.
[29] David Beard in Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (co-editors), '*Taverner*: an interpretation', *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, CUP, 2009), p.87.
[30] Stephen Arnold, 'The Music of Taverner', *Tempo* No 101, p.29.
[31] Peter Maxwell Davies in conversation with Tom Service, *Opera on 3, Taverner*, BBC Radio 3 broadcast, 28 November 2009.
[32] Majel Connery, 'Peter Maxwell Davies's Worst Nightmare: Staging the Unsacred in the opera *Taverner* and *Resurrection*', *The Opera Quarterly,* Vol. 25, No 3-4, 2010, p.248.

291): 'O God, I call upon thy name out of the lowest dungeon. Forsake not thy faithful servant.'[33]

Music Example 7.7: *Victimae Paschali Laudes* statement; Act II, scene iv, bb. 281-291

[33] Full score, Act II, scene iv, bb.282-291, p.378.

Davies's choice of solo instrument to play the *Victimae Paschali Laudes* is instructive. The cello has an eloquent vocal quality with a tessitura close to the human voice and is often associated with meditation and religiosity.[34] Also, and maybe significantly, the instrumental soloist in *Vesalii Icones* (along with the solo dancer), is a cellist giving voice to borrowed material from *Ecce Manus Tradentis* and *Missa Super l'Homme Armé*, works which are also both concerned with the theme of betrayal.[35]

As noted above, Davies has always recognised that countless examples of borrowings exist throughout his oeuvre. It is not the aim of this chapter to provide a comprehensive survey of his appropriation and integration of plainsong, but it is of value to consider its presence and function in selected compositions written in close proximity to *Taverner*, including, most notably, Davies's motet for orchestra, *Worldes Blis* (Op. 38).[36]

Worldes Blis is, according to the composer, based upon a piece of medieval English monody called *Worldly bliss lasts no time at all*.[37] It also contains the plainsongs, *Dies Irae*, *Nobilis Humilis* and, as discussed above in the context of *Taverner*, *Victimae Pacheli Laudes*. The monody (*Worldly bliss lasts no time at all*) writes Davies, is 'discovered' played on bells at its conclusion. Stephen Pruslin has proposed that *Worldes blis* may be regarded as a third *Taverner Fantasia* in which the listener enters 'the same landscape, but many of the landmarks are in different positions.'[38] Pruslin suggests that where the *Fantasia* 'achieves closure and enclosure,' *Worldes Blis* accomplishes the opposite as these processes are 'positively eschewed'[39] and, because of this, each work's final aesthetic outcomes diverge. However, it is equally possible to claim that in the closing moments of *Worldes Blis* and the final passage of *Taverner,* the two worlds actually converge. Pruslin states that *Worldes Blis* 'questions itself as it unfolds' and, in doing so, opens up new vistas both 'literally and

[34] Examples include the Cello Suites of J.S. Bach, *Kol Nidrei* by Max Bruch and *The Protecting Veil* by John Tavener.
[35] In Bach's *St John Passion* it is a viola da gamba which accompanies the contralto's final aria *Es ist Vollbracht* ('It is finished') following Jesus's final words uttered on the cross.
[36] First performance: 28 August 1969 at the BBC Proms by the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by the composer. Subsquently withdrawn by Davies and revived in 1975.
[37] As noted in Chapter 2 of this thesis, Jo Siebert has cast doubt on the veracity of Davies's claim. See p.50 n.88.
[38] Stephen Pruslin, 'Returns and Departures: Recent Maxwell Davies', *Tempo* No. 113 (June 1975), p.23.
[39] Ibid., p.25.

musically.[40] Davies has described the work as a 'quest' for the monody which is only heard at the very end of the piece.[41] There is similar unfolding and questioning throughout *Taverner* in which, at the end of Taverner's quest, the statement of his own *In Nomine* mirrors that of the final monody in *Worldes Blis.*

Reflecting on the inclusion and manipulation of plainsong in works postdating 1968, Davies wrote,

> Until 1968 I had respectfully used plainsong and medieval/Renaissance polyphony as the basis for some of my music, most obviously in those of my works based on John Taverner's *In Nomine.* I have often been asked why felt this borrowing was necessary, and even been criticised for lack of originality: there is a pleasure almost physical in handling material that has inspired earlier composers, which has been refined and filtered through many musical imaginations over generations.[42]

The assimilation and manipulation of plainsong in *Taverner* and other related works is central to Davies's aesthetic. In relation to *Eight Songs for a Mad King,* he once remarked that the appropriation of music 'from Handel to Birtwistle' defined the work as a 'collection of musical objects borrowed from many sources, functioning as 'musical stage props.'[43] Correspondingly, the composer's creative integration of plainsong in the opera fulfils a similar purpose where its allusive and musical powers combine to illuminate, comment and suggest multiple layers of meaning.

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[40] Ibid., p.26.
[41] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), '*Worldes Blis', Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.96.
[42] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'A Composer's Point of View (II): On Parody, References and Meaning, *Peter Maxwell, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.220.
[43] Davies, quoted in Paul Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies* (London, Robson Books, 1982), p.148.

7.2 Intertextuality (ii): prequels, sequels and musical cells

Resurrection is regarded most obviously as the sequel to *Taverner* but, equally, as discussed in Chapter Two, many of Davies's other pieces may be regarded as prequels and sequels, so creating a complex web of works. Also, David Roberts has asserted that if 'an attempt to produce a coherent model of a piece, in this sense, is a sequel to another one, is likely to be frustrating and doomed to failure if that attempt is carried out in the ignorance of the fact that the piece is in fact a sequel.'[44] Indeed, Davies himself recognised the significance of this creative continuum when, reflecting in 2000, he acknowledged 'each work that I write relates to what I wrote before – there must be thousands of cross-references.'[45] It has been argued that it is possible to describe Act I of *Taverner* as a prequel to *Revelation and Fall*and that some sections of the *Second Taverner Fantasia* include compositional techniques which relate to earlier works including *St Michael – Sonata for Seventeen Wind Instruments* (Op. 6).[46] This affirms that Davies's style is organic. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this study to interrogate the 'thousands of cross-references' that doubtless exist, it is of value to identify some of those apparent in *Taverner.*

One striking cross-reference occurs in the opera's opening bars (see Music Example 7.8 below). The initial trumpet call is a direct quotation from the Trumpet Sonata (Op. 1) which was completed in 1955, the year before *Taverner* began to germinate.[47] This modernist sonata represented a departure from the earlier Bartók influenced *Quartet Movement* (WoO 29) and the Octet for Woodwind (WoO 38) and, stylistically, it heralded a new beginning.[48] The three-note cell provides the opening movement of the Trumpet Sonata with one of its fundamental harmonic elements yet, somewhat radically, it is not part of the work's set. Griffiths interpreted this gesture as 'an assertion of the composer's right to establish his own rules'[49] through which a 'personal signature [was] rescued from juvenilia

[44] David Roberts, *Techniques of Composition in the music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, PhD thesis (Department of Music, Faculty of Arts, Birmingham, 1985), p.288.
[45] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'A Composer's Point of View (II): 'On Parody, References and Meaning', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.225.
[46] Jonathan Rees, *Peter Maxwell Davies' 'Revelation and Fall' - influence study and analysis*, PhD thesis (The Open University, 2010), p.80.
[47] The Trumpet Sonata was first performed in Worthington Hall, Manchester University in Spring/Summer 1955 by Elgar Howarth (trumpet) and John Ogdon (piano). First London performance, 9 January 1956.
[48] Phillip Rupprecht in Gloag and Jones, op. cit., p.50.
[49] Paul Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies* (London, Robson Books, 1982), p.25.

[and] later to be enshrined as the first idea in the opera.'[50] Rupprecht has acknowledged that although the sonata is an early work it displayed the composer's ability to synthesise 'continental European modernism, Indian rhythmic patterns, and early English polyphony [and] its success has as much to do with sure instincts for dramatic pacing and compelling instrumental dialogue.'[51] It is this innate sense of drama, rich dialogue, rhetoric, and vivid characterization which are all developed in *Taverner* and reach maturity in the music-theatre works which follow.

The composition of the Trumpet Sonata coincided with the music of Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) becoming more widely heard by audiences in post-war Britain. Davies remembers hearing a performance of the *Turangalîla-Symphonie* on the BBC Third Programme in 1954[52] and described it as 'one of the formative musical experiences of my life.'[53] He recalled how Messiaen's compositional methods made an impression upon him, notably the use of rhythmic cells and the treatment of themes as 'signals rather than as developmental entities.'[54] Rupprecht has suggested that when Davies was studying composition at the Royal Manchester College of Music with Richard Hall he would probably have been introduced to the function of motto-like rhythmic cells as compositional devices. This technique was promoted by Messiaen in his treatise, *Technique mon language musical*[55] which, amongst other compositional theories, was taught as part of Hall's class.[56] In the late 1950s, Davies's compositional technique was developing quickly. As will be discussed below in relation to his idiosyncratic approach to serialism, Davies was growing to favour motivic development in the shaping of musical ideas as opposed to the 'chromatic saturation of Schoenbergian serial writing.'[57] These processes are employed in the Trumpet Sonata and observable in Act I, scene i of *Taverner*.

[50] Griffiths, op. cit., p.25.
[51] Philip Rupprecht in Gloag and Jones, op. cit., p.55.
[52] Conducted by Walter Goehr (Alexander Goehr's father) at the Royal Festival Hall in London, April 1954.
[53] Davies, quoted in Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones, *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, CUP 2009), p.51. Davies, comment in 'Messiaen and the Music of Our Time' discussion, broadcast on the BBC Third Programme, 12 March, 1968, BLSA tape NP454W.
[54] Rupprecht in Gloag and Jones, op. cit., p.51.
[55] Published by Alphonse Leduc (1944).
[56] Philip Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism* (Cambridge, CUP, 2015), p.13.
[57] Ibid., p.257.

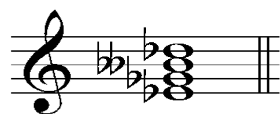
Music Example 7.8 shows the statement of the sonata's cell (y) which opens the opera and is then deployed throughout Act I, scene i and at the beginning of Act II, scene i as a signalling device. As shown below, at concert pitch, cell (y) is primarily used to articulate episodes and/or introduces new characters. It does not possess any developmental function but the cell's relevance intertextually does support the notion that Davies's output should be considered as a continuum.

Music Example 7.8: Opening trumpet call; cell (y), Act I, scene i, bb. 1-4 (score in C)

Act I, scene i opens with this fanfare which brings the Court Room to attention. As will be shown below (see Music Example 7.20), if transposed down a semitone, sieved and re-ordered cell (y) is aurally reminiscent of the cantus firmus from the *Gloria Tibi Trinitas* plainsong: D-natural, F-natural, D-natural, C-natural (so, cell (y) transposed: G-flat = F-natural; E-flat = D-natural and D-flat = C-natural).

Music Example 7.9 also shows how it is possible to interpret cell (y) harmonically as a half-diminished seventh chord with E-flat as its root.

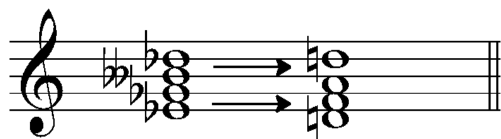
Music Example 7.9: Cell (y) as half-diminished seventh chord with E-flat as its root



In its iteration as cell (y), the B-double flat is absent from the opera's opening trumpet call (see Musical Example 7.8) but it is stated repeatedly *pizzicato* in the double basses (bars 5-9) where it is spelled as an A-natural.

As discussed in Chapter 5, Davies uses tone centres and pivotal pitches to articulate the work's architecture. The opera's pivotal pitch is D-natural, derived from the D-Aeolian mode of the *In Nomine.* Music Example 7.10 shows D-natural as the axis around which the pitches (E-flat and D-flat) of cell (y) resolve. Returning to the notion that the play of binaries is a central theme of the opera, it is possible to read that these two chromatic (black) notes mirror one another reflected through the (white) note (D-natural). The example below indicates how the half-diminished seventh chord may be viewed as dissolving or resolving into a D minor chord.

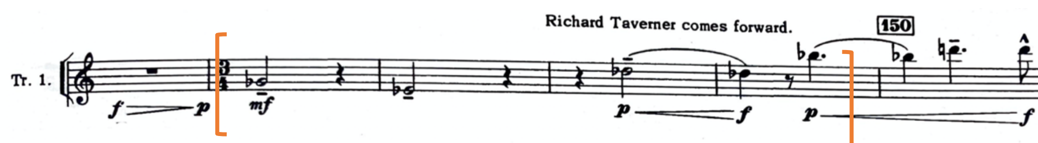
Music Example 7.10: Cell (y) as half-diminished seventh chord resolving to D minor



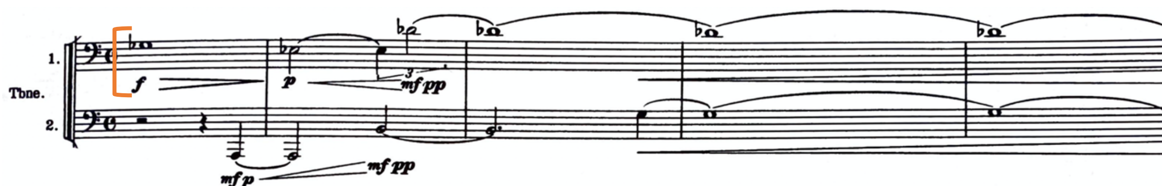
In Act I, scene i cell (y) is restated in the horns (bar 24) as the music's tempo and character changes to mark the White Abbot's prosecution of Taverner. It is then repeated twice in the trumpet as the White Abbot calls Richard Taverner to the dock (Music Examples 7.11a and 7.11b), then in the trombone (bars 244-246) to introduce Rose Parrowe (Music Example 7.11c) and, finally by the horns to announce the entrance of the Cardinal (Music Example 7.11d).

Music Example 7.11a: White Abbot calls Richard Taverner, Act I, scene i, bb. 132-135

Music Example 7.11b: White Abbot calls Richard Taverner, Act I, scene i, bb. 145-150



Music Example 7.11c: White Abbot calls Rose Parrow, Act I, scene i, bb. 244-248



Music Example, 7.11d: Entrance of the Cardinal, Act I, scene i, bb. 537-540

In Act I, scene i, Davies manipulates cell (y) through augmentation, diminution and transposition to introduce characters, and, as in the Trumpet Sonata, to generate dramatic pace. As shown in Music Example 7.12, the cell is also stated at the start of Act II. Davies notes in the score that Act II, scene is conceived as a parody of Act I, scene i. To reflect this, cell (y) is transformed, re-orchestrated in screeching piccolo, oboe, doubled in divisi first violins, accompanied by flutter-tongued horns and a cacophony of struck percussion delivered at an accelerated tempo.

Music Example 7.12: Re-statement of cell (y), Act II, scene i, bb. 1-5

As discussed above, in the context of the Trumpet Sonata, it is possible to regard cell (y) as a musical signature, not unlikeTaverner's own fingerpint, his *In Nomine*. Given the extent of cell (y)'s integration and manipulation throughout the opera could suggest that it possesses extra-musical meaning.[58] At one level, Music Example 7.12 above shows that the cell's strident re-statement emulates Taverner's own deteriorating psychological state at the start of Act II. However, at another level, it also sets the scene for some of Davies's most neo-expressionistic writing in the opera. In relation to *Pierrot lunaire,* the composer once noted that he admired 'some very grotesque moments, particularly in the wind writing' where, for

[58] Similarly, the Death Chord appears to have held autobiographical significance for Davies. See pp. 227-229 of this thesis.

example, Schoenberg makes technical demands on the instrumentalists which, when played, will inevitably make a 'grotesque noise - and this is absolutely in keeping with the style of the music and text.'[59] The extreme orchestration at the opening of Act II, scene i resonates with this remark. Further, at this time, Davies sensed that 'there was something about to happen which was going to burst out of the style in which I was then writing […]. I wasn't aware what the musical consequences of the upheaval were going to be, but I knew that I had to have enough technique to be able to withstand the shock of it.'[60] In turn, this may be read as the composer sensing the beginning of that 'upheaval' and impending aesthetic crisis through the emergence of a neo-expressionist language which, whilst nascent in *Taverner*, would consequently explode in the works which followed.

7.3 Intertextuality (iii): the Death Chord: origins and symbolism

Intertextual referencing is also evident in Davies's use of the Death Chord which functions in the opera similar to a leitmotif or, to adopt the composer's preferred description, a 'symbol.'[61] The chord is associated with the appearance of the character of Death or the idea of death, both real and/or symbolic and consists of a pair of superimposed major thirds (D-natural and F-sharp, E-natural and G-sharp) which form a whole-tone tetrachord framed by an augmented fourth, the *Diabolus in musica*.

Music Example 7.13, the Death Chord

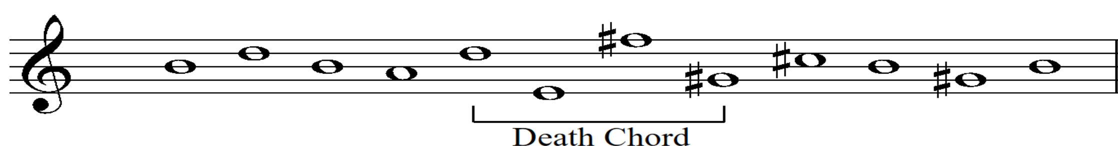
The origins of the Death Chord and its ubiquity throughout Davies's output has been comprehensively documented. Peter Owens has argued that to label this 'final sonority as a

[59] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed), 'Schoenberg: *Pierrot Lunaire', Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.92.
[60] Davies, quoted in Paul Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies* (London, Robson Books, 1982), p.109.
[61] See Chapter 2, p.38 n2 of his thesis. Also, as discussed in Chapter 6, the writings of James Joyce, in particular his novel *Ulysses*, exerted a significant influence upon Davies. Joyce also made great play of intertextual devices in *Ulysses*. In the *Sirens* episode of the novel, he introduces leitmotif where repeated phrases are associated with specific characters. 'Bronze by gold' is linked to Miss Douce and Miss Kennedy and the repetition of 'jingle, jingle, jaunted jingling…' refers to Mr Boylan and, presumably, the sound of his carriage. For a full discussion, see Zack R Bowen, 'Musical Allusions in the Work of James Joyce's, Early Poetry through *Ulysses* (Albany, SUNY Press, 1974), p 52.

"whole tone chord" may not be objectionable [but], as an analysis it is less than adequate.'[62] He explains the chord's seriation process with reference to other pieces including the *Second Taverner Fantasia*, *St Thomas Wake* and *Hymn to St Magnus* and proposes that the genesis of the Death Chord may stem from *Seven In Nomine* (Op. 28).[63] Nicholas Jones also provides a detailed account of the provenance of the Death Chord and identifies its first appearance in *Alma Redemptoris Mater*, although he acknowledges the fact that it is moot as to 'whether Davies considered the chord to be symbolic of death at the time of the work's composition.'[64]

Also, study has shown that the incipit plainsong from Taverner's *Missa Gloria Tibi Trinitas* is the source of 'sets' in the *Second Taverner Fantasia,* a work closely related to the opera. David Beard has asserted that Davies was 'clearly interested in the symmetrical properties' of one of these 'sets' and supports his reasoning with reference to sketches by Davies.[65] He shows that when duplicated pitches of a seven note collection of pitches generated by the *Gloria Tibi Trinitas* plainchant are deleted or 'sieved' and its Prime and Retrograde inversion dovetailed, this reveals a reordered version with the Death Chord at the centre. This is illustrated in Music Example 7.14.

Music Example 7.14: the Death Chord in the context of a pitch collection generated by *Gloria Tibi Trinitas* plainchant



[62] Peter Owens, 'Revelations and Fallacy: Observations on Compositional Technique in the Music of Peter Maxwell Davies', *Music Analysis*, Vol. 13. No 2/3 (1994), p.185.
[63] Owens, op.cit., p.200 n.28.
[64] Nicholas Jones in Jones and McGregor, op. cit., p.32.
[65] David Beard in Gloag and Jones, op. cit., p. 93. See sketches in the British Library: Add. Ms.71259, fol.1.

Table J shows further symmetrical properties if the Death Chord is described in terms of its interval classes.

Table J: the Death Chord as described by interval class

Pitches	Interval class
E-natural – G-sharp	4
F-sharp – E-natural	2
D-natural – F-sharp	4

And, if the chord is considered in its extended triadic formation it can be read as a hexachord which consists of three major third dyads, with a 'missing' major third, A-natural/C-sharp, at its centre. At a macro-level, A major is implied as a tone centre in Act I, scene iv and Act II, scene iv. Following the unmasking of the Jester as Death at the end of Act I, scene iii (bars 338-355) the Death Chord becomes increasingly prominent since Act I, scene iv and Act II, scene iv, both feature executions. Table K (in landscape format below) identifies the occurrence of the Death Chord in symbolic terms and shows how it articulates dramatic purpose throughout the opera.

Table K: The Death Chord, symbolic and dramatic purpose

ITERATION	ACT & SCENE	BAR NUMBER(S)	INSTRUMENTATION	CHARACTERIZATION	FUNCTION
1	**ACT I** Scene i	260	Double basses, trombones & clarinet	White Abbot & Rose Parrowe	Introduces Rose Parrowe
2	Scene iii	338 – 355	Celli, violas, violins	Jester (Death)	Jester unmasks himself as Death
3	Scene iv	15 – 17	Tubas & trombones	John Taverner	Taverner recognises Death
4	Scene iv	216 - 220	Tubas & horns	Jester (Death)	Death threatens Taverner
5	Scene iv	243 - 247	Tuba, trombone & horns	Jester (Death)	Death demands Taverner's rejection of self
6	Scene iv	590 - 593	Piccolos & clarinets	Jester (Death)	Mock crucifixion
7	Scene iv	648 – 651	Tubas & horns	Jester (Death)	Death instructs Taverner to confess
8	Scene iv	757 – 759	Tubas & trombones	Orchestra	Close of Act I
9	**ACT II** Scene i	201 – 203	Chorus	Chorus	Comments 'Judge not…'
10	Scene ii	252 – 253	Double basses & celli	Jester (Death)	Death predicts dissolution of the monasteries
11	Scene ii	263	Trombones & horns	Jester (Death)	Prefaces transition
12	Scene iii	40 – 41	Double basses, celli & violas	Chorus	Chorus sing of Judas's betrayal
13	Scene iii	93 – 94	Celli	John Taverner & White Abbot	Duet
14	Scene iv	155 & 158	Double basses & celli	Orchestra	Real execution
15	Scene iv	247 - 258	Tubas, trombones, horns & trumpets	Orchestra	White Abbot's execution

Table K above identifies fifteen statements of the Death Chord in *Taverner*. In Act I, it is heard eight times (over c. 39 bars) and in Act II, seven times (over c. 21 bars). Davies has described the role of the character of Death as 'the power behind the Reformation or Revolution, the master-puppeteer for whom all the other 'characters,' including Taverner himself are as marionettes.'[66] The Death Chord has a parallel function in that, particularly during Act I, scene iv, it directs much of the opera's macro harmonic and modal organisation.[67] Further, as illustrated in the table above, dramatically, it has a catalytic function.

Music Examples 7.15a and 7.15b (in landscape format) present the fifteen statements of the Death Chord in short score as identified in Table K.

[66] Peter Maxwell Davies, '*Taverner*: Synopsis and Documentation', *Tempo,* no.101 (1972), p.5.
[67] For further explanation, see Chapter 5, pp.145-147 of this thesis.

Music Example 7.15a: The Death Chord in short score (Act I)

Iteration 1, Act I, scene i, b. 260

Iteration 2, Act I, scene iii, bb. 338-355

Iteration 3, Act I, scene iv, bb. 15-17

Iteration 4, Act I, scene iv, bb. 216-220

Iteration 5, Act I, scene iv, bb. 243-247

Iteration 6, Act I, scene iv, bb.590-593

Iteration 7, Act I, scene iv, bb. 648-651

Iteration 8, Act I, scene iv, bb. 757-759

Music Example 7.15b: The Death Chord in short score (Act II)

T.
vla. pizz.
B.
vc. pizz.
timp.
db. pizz.
8vb

Iteration 9, Act II, scene i, bb. 201-

vc. soli
div.
db. soli
div.

Iteration 10, Act II, scene ii, bb. 252-253

hns.
tba. 1,2
tbn. 1,2
bsn.
dbsn.
8vb

Iteration 11, Act II, scene ii, b. 263

bsn.
tbn. 1,2
vla. div.
vc. div.
db. div.
tba. 1,2
dbsn.

Iteration 12, Act II, scene iii, bb. 40-41

Iteration 14, Act II, scene iv, bb. 155-158

hns.
tba. 1,2
gliss.
vc. div.

Iteration 13, Act II, scene iii, bb. 93-94

trp. 1,2,3,4
hn. 1,2,3,4
tbn. 1,2
tba. 1,2

Iteration 15. Act II. scene iv. bb. 247-258

The most obvious occurrences of the Death Chord are associated with the physical presence of the character of Death on stage: his unmasking (iteration 2), Taverner's recognition of Death (iteration 3) and Death's extraction of Taverner's confession (iteration 7). McGregor has argued that 'although it is possible to over-interpret symbolism in Davies's work, it was always his intention to create layers of meaning.'[68] With this comment in mind, there are several instances where the Death Chord is aurally less conspicuous, even embedded in the texture, but its allusive purpose remains significant.

As detailed in Table K, its first iteration is in Act I, scene i (bar 260). However, this is well in advance of the first appearance of the Jester/Death at the end of Act I, scene iii. As Music Example 7.16 shows below, in Act I, scene i the White Abbot sings: '…we would know what this was, and what he is; by your word he may suffer death' the Death Chord is clearly stated. If Taverner is found guilty, the White Abbot predicts his execution and as he utters the word 'death', the chord is sounded in double-basses, trombones and clarinet. Here, as elsewhere in the opera, it has a structural significance and marks a dramatic junction: signals the closure of the White Abbot's opening remarks to the court and, simultaneously, announces the first appearance of Rose Parrowe as she provides her testimony.

[68]Richard McGregor in Jones and McGregor, 'Compositional Technique and Process', *The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies,* (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2020), p.67.

Music Example 7.16: Death Chord (iteration 1), entrance of Rose Parrowe,

Act I, scene i, bb. 258-262 (score in C)

Following the sounding of the Death Chord, and, upon Rose's entry, the music's mood changes. The White Abbot's declamatory and disjunct vocal contour, dominated by intervals of seconds, sevenths and ninths, is replaced by a more legato line characterised by compound tertiary intervals. In the orchestra, the previously prominent trombones are silenced and harp, flute, oboe, violas and celli dominate; instruments associated with Rose.

Rose Parrowe is Taverner's mistress, and, symbolically, represents his 'source of inspiration.' Rose is his muse.[69] Later in the opera this is made explicit when, in Act I, scene iv (bars 247-264), following Taverner's rejection of the Church of Rome, the Jester/Death makes further demands: 'You must reject not only this, but that total self your father reared, even your Mistress, your Music, that you whored to Rome.' It is with the death of his muse, and by association, Taverner's betrayal of his own music, which marks the turning point in the opera. Rose appears on stage as the figure to which Davies refers as 'Music Incarnate'[70] presented with 'dulcimer and laurel wreath.'[71] She asks of Taverner: 'Will you betray us, even your Music?' (bars 279-282). Rose is the embodiment of Taverner's music and, alongside her, his father, Richard, is seen dressed in the regalia of 'full high-office of Guild of Corpus Christie.'[72]

The episode is pregnant with symbolism. Visually, Rose's costume has quasi-angelic associations whilst sonically, to align with her holding a dulcimer, she is accompanied by a celestial harp; this is subverted by the sinister-sounding, dark sonorities of the bass-clarinet and bassoon. Rose and Richard undergo further transformation during the scene's mock crucifixion as Rose 'takes up the station of Mary, Richard that of John.'[73] The couple's final metamorphosis is into 'dummies, stage props' which are then dragged lifeless, off the platform. It is a metaphor for the death of Taverner's muse, his music and his own self-betrayal. The episode closes, prior to Taverner's conversion, appropriately with a re-statement of the Death Chord (iteration 7) as shown in Music Example 7.15.

Whilst cognisant of Jones's remark about the dangers of over-interpretation, it is possible to invest a wealth of symbolic meaning into the first iteration of the Death Chord. Although Rose is Taverner's mistress and muse, her appearance at this point in the opera, curiously accompanied by the Death Chord, suggests a double-meaning. It could also be read as representative of a premonition.

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[69] Davies, op. cit., p.4.
[70] Davies, op. cit., p.5.
[71] Full score, Act I, scene iv, p.169.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Full score, Act I, scene iv, p.192.

In *Alma Redemptoris Mater,* composed prior to *Taverner*, Davies specifically referred to the chord's function as 'a cypher for the Angel of Death.'[74] This notion is supported by Roberts's observation that major thirds 'generally play an important role in the work,'[75] and, as noted above, in *Taverner*, Rose's aria also has a tertiary texture. Further, Nicholas Jones has suggested that in *Alma Redemptoris Mater* it is 'tempting to speculate that the close connection between the Virgin Mary and Davies himself, as [Richard] McGregor has noted (Peter Maxwell Davies's Sources', p.156) could be traced back to this work ('Loving Mother of the Redeemer') and by extension, to this chord.'[76]

The Death Chord is also heard in a more extreme realisation during the Street Passion Play in Act I, scene iv. Following the crucifixion of Joking Jesus the Jester/Death 'detaches the oversize joke nail, and offers his left hand to Taverner. Taverner takes it receiving a large bloodstain on his right,which he looks at dazed and fascinated.'[77] At the appearance of his stigmata, the Death Chord (iteration 6) is stated high in the orchestral texture by shrill piccolos and screeching clarinets as shown in Music Example 7.17. In this context, the Death Chord has become a grotesque, gargoyle-like caricature of itself.

Music Example 7.17: Death Chord (iteration 6), crucifixion of Joking Jesus, Act I, scene iv, bb. 590-593 (score in C)

[74] Movement 2, bar 42, *Alma Redemptoris Mater*. Davies, in a letter to Gerard McBurney quoted in Jones and McGregor, 'Biography, Stylistic Development, Autobiography', *The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2020), p.31.
[75] David Roberts quoted in Jones and McGregor, op. cit., p,32, n.72.
[76] Jones in Jones and McGregor, op. cit., p.32, n.72.
[77] Full score, Act I, scene iv, p.197.

The Death Chord has been sonically inverted as it signals an important juncture in the drama: the Jester/Death extracts Taverner's confession and performs his mock beatification. In this iteration, the chord is not only symbolic of death but also represents the ultimate deceit.

This faux execution mirrors that of a real execution, when in Act II, scene iv the White Abbot is burned at the stake. As shown in Music Example 7.18, the final Death Chord (iteration 15) is stated in its most common orchestration, that of tubas, trombones and horns.

Music Example 7.18: Death Chord (iteration 15), execution of the White Abbot, Act II, scene iv, bb. 247-258

Worldes Blis (Op. 38), was written parallel to the opera. It too includes a statement of the Death Chord at the work's conclusion. Owens has suggested that, in this context, the chord may hold greater meaning than its function in the opera may appear to suggest: 'if only this nomenclature were correct – D/F-sharp- E/G-sharp equals "Death" – then the chord's "meaning" at the end of the piece would be clear: "Worldes blis" leads to Death, and not just death in the sense of physically expiring, but the more frightening spiritually nihilistic concept personified in the opera.'[78] However, in *Worldes Blis* the Death Chord does not equate with the negative but with the positive since, in this context, for Davies, it was

[78] Owens, op. cit., pp.184-185.

symbolic of a creative rebirth or transfiguration 'into another, purged, cleaned spiritual state.'[79] In his programme note, the composer wrote that the piece was:

> A conscious attempt to re-integrate the shattered and scattered fragments of my creative persona. I felt this to have been threatened with total extinction by living through a sequence of works which I could only pen by an act of faith in my own unreasonableness. However, these experiences could not be reasoned out of existence, and, *Worldes blis* seeks to assimilate and build upon them….[80]

Given that stylistically *Taverner* anticipates *Revelation and Fall, Eight Songs for a Mad King* and the other neo-expressionistic music theatre pieces which followed it, the 'sequence of works' to which Davies refers includes the opera itself. As discussed in Chapter 3, given its autobiographical bent, *Taverner* also represents the fragmenting of the composer's 'creative persona' which is being reborn in *Worldes Blis.* And, as the composer lived through this aesthetic crisis the Death Chord remained a constant, an intertextual cipher. This notion is supported by Davies's commentary about the function of 'symbols' in his music where chords, melodic and rhythmic motives are similar to 'alchymicall elements.'[81] The composer recognized that these 'elements' could be transposed, transformed and mean different things in different contexts. Writing in 2000, Davies reflected that this intertextual device could relate to 'something more personal which should somehow, and ideally, take on a more general significance. I'm thinking, for instance of the four-part chord of two major thirds at the major ninth […], this occurs from *Alma Redemptoris* of 1956, through *Taverner*, where it underlies the Jester unmasking, at the words 'Death a thief', to Symphony No. 6 of 1996.'[82] However, he also warned, characteristically, that 'too much introspection could become magnified distortion, with 'significance' projected inappropriately, so I leave further speculation to others with suitable detachment.'[83]

Whilst maintaining a degree of suitable objectivity, it is possible to argue that the Death Chord functions as Davies's musical fingerprint in a fashion not dissimilar to that of Taverner's *In Nomine*. The chord is constantly identifiable throughout his output, from the

[79] Davies, letter to Gerard McBurney quoted in Jones and McGregor, op. cit., pp.30-31.
[80] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), '*Worldes Blis*', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.95.
[81] Davies, quoted in Jones and McGregor, op. cit., p.31.
[82] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'A Composer's Point of View: On Parody, References and Meaning', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.225.
[83] Ibid.

earlier works to later ones including the Ninth Symphony (Op. 315) and the Tenth Symphony (Op. 327). Nicholas Jones has proposed that its constancy defines a lineage in the works which revolve around the pitch-class D which Davies may have associated with the concept of death. They include the final Quartet Fragment (Op. 338) and the Tenth Symphony whilst reaching back to the two *Taverner Fantasias* and to *Taverner* itself.[84] However, by 2012, the chord's nomenclature held less validity for the composer. A diary entry from that year confirmed that, as a cipher, its meaning had been transformed from an Angel of Death to 'a welcome friend' offering 'some kind of resolution, through a door into nothingness, or into the unknown, or, or? – but no regrets, no resistance.'[85]

7.4 Serialism and sets: origin and transformation

David Roberts has shown that the compositional systems which provided the foundation of Davies's compositional technique during the 1960s were essentially serial in their design.[86] As mentioned above, Davies admired Schoenberg and studied composition with one of the notable serialists of the second half of the twentieth-century, Milton Babbitt.[87] For completeness, Babbitt's definition of serialism was:

> …a serial relation is one which induces on a collection of objects a strict, simple ordering; that is, an order relation which is irreflexive, nonsymmetric, transitive, and connected over the collection. The term 'serial' designates nothing with regard to the number of elements in the collection, to the relations among these elements or the relations among them. A musical work, then, can be described as serial with regard to, say, pitch, if the pitch content is completely and most simply characterised as fulfilling such an ordering with regard to temporal and/or spatial precedence.[88]

Davies's studies with Babbitt at Princeton combined with experiences at Darmstadt in the late 1950s allowed him to consolidate his technique and led to the development of a highly idiosyncratic approach to serial processes. As early as 1958, the composer had indicated his scepticism about the value of adhering to strict serial procedures. Writing about the formal principles relating to *Prolation* (Op. 8), he stated:

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[84] Jones and McGregor, op.cit., pp.306-307.
[85] Davies, diary entry, June 2012 (Vol. '2011-12') quoted in Jones and McGregor, pp.306-307.
[86] Roberts, op. cit., p.3.
[87] Milton Babbitt (1916-2011), American composer, theorist and teacher.
[88] Milton Babbitt, 'Remarks on the recent Stravinsky', *Perspectives of New Music*, Vol 2, No 2 (Spring-Summer, 1964), p.39.

> Myself I find the twelve tone series too difficult to work with, and at the same time to be fully aware of all that is going on. Harmony is the main difficulty – there are too many notes to be clear-headed. As I can never hear a 12t series as such anyway, but only as a resultant melody, shape, harmony, etc., I see no objection to using another number of notes to the series, or to repeating any note, provided this is characteristic for the piece, and related to the basic idea and to all resultant ideas.[89]

As is evident throughout the twentieth-century, there has never been a singular approach to serialism. For many composers, a foray into serial composition was experimental or part of a technical evolution.[90] This is particularly true of Davies's development as a composer. Rupprecht notes that,

> …the fixity of serial parametric thought was pushed to the limit in the rigorous schemes of *Prolation* (1958), with a five-element pitch and rhythmic set (not a twelve-tone row) as generating premise. After this *tour de force* of formal control, Davies moved to a more fluid technique of continuously transformed melodic lines.[91]

The composer's evolution involved experimentation in which 'continuously transformed melodic lines' led to a highly emancipated approach. His technique was so 'fluid' that, at the time of publication of the *Second Taverner Fantasia*, Davies recalled,

> …when I read the 'corrected' proofs of my *Second Fantasia on John Taverner's 'In Nomine'*, an orchestral work published by Boosey and Hawkes […] that the editor, a pupil of Webern, had changed many, many of my notes because they did not conform to a perceived series or set, my gradual transformations of linear material being understood as 'mistakes'.[92]

The composer reflected that when studying in the USA he had the 'inspiration of subverting the all-prevalent American post-Schoenbergian super-serialism' as promoted by Babbitt. Davies stated that 'by gradually changing the intervals in a line of notes so as to slowly transform a long or short sequence of pitches into another (each of which sequences should have a real and distinct identity and character) – or into its own inversion or cancrizans.'[93] Transformational processes are underpinned by ordered sets which Roberts has described as 'meta-devices' functioning to bring 'musical structures into existence.'[94] Davies's sets are

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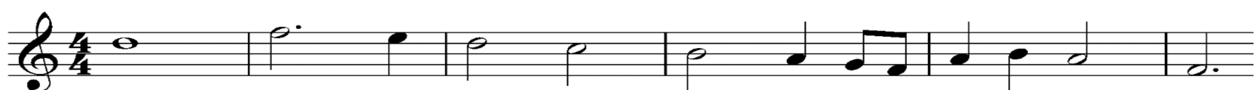
[89] Davies, 'Formal principles in *Prolation* for orchestra', quoted in Philip Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism, The Manchester Group and their Contemporaries* (Cambridge, CUP, 2015), p.257.
[90] Rupprecht, op.cit., p.114.
[91] Ibid., p.115.
[92] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'Indivisible Parameters and Spirit-Stirring Amalgams', *Peter Maxwll Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.303. The editor to whom Davies refers was Leopold Spinner (1906-80). Spinner succeeded Erwin Stein as editor at Boosey and Hawkes in 1958.
[93] Davies, quoted in Jones, op. cit. p.302.
[94] Roberts, op. cit., p.334.

frequently derived from plainsong or other pre-existent melodic material. This method was first introduced in the sextet *Alma Redemptoris Mater* (Op. 5) and although not all of Davies's material has such origins, Owens notes that 'derived' sets are of sufficient prominence throughout his work to make their study illuminating with regard to the developing range of his compositional concerns.'[95] This 'developing range of compositional concerns' was manifested in Davies's embracing of sixteenth-century English music as represented by the works of Taverner. Pruslin believed that it was this creative melding which informed 'the entire opera, wherein those two languages coexist without the slightest contradiction, because Davies has the capacity to combine them in an alchemical anagram.'[96]

This 'alchemical anagram' finds expression in Davies's treatment of sets or, to use the composer's terminology, 'rows', which are transformed through processes of inversion, retrogression and retrograde inversion in multiple transpositions and diverse registrations. Accordingly, the material used in the opera is derived from two basic groups of music by Taverner. Music Example 7.19 shows that the first group is from Taverner's *In Nomine,* the opening twenty-four bars of which are heard in their original form (see Music Example 7.1) at the close of Act II, scene iv and which Stephen Arnold has labelled T1.[97]

Music Example 7.19: T1 (Arnold)[98]



[95] Peter Owens, 'Revelation and Fallacy: Observations on Compositional Technique in the Music of Peter Maxwell Davies', *Music Analysis*, Vol. 13, No. 2/3 (July-Oct. 1994), p.164.
[96] Stephen Pruslin, Sleeve note, NMC disc NMC D157, (2009), p.8.
[97] Arnold, op. cit., p.22.
[98] Erratum in Music Example 7.19, B-natural should read B-flat.

Arnold identifies the second group, as shown in Music Example 7.20, as the cantus firmus played in the alto recorder, originating from the *Gloria Tibi Trinitas* plainsong. He labels this T2.

Music Example 7.20: T2 (Arnold)

As noted above, if this set is sieved, transposed up a semitone and re-ordered it is related to cell (y) (see Music Example 7.8). As discussed in Chapter 5, the *Second Taverner Fantasia* and the opera have much in common and primary source materials relating to sets further confirms links between the two works.[99] The source sets of the *Fantasia* are to be found in Davies's sketchbooks and, although there is no source page detailing the sets used in *Taverner*, there is one for the *Second Fantasia*.[100] Because of this, Beard has argued that 'the opera can be read more clearly through processes that crystallized in the *Fantasia.*'[101]

> It is likely that the *Second Taverner Fantasia* was composed in order to cultivate the goal-directed transformational technique that, according to Stephen Arnold, was first introduced in Act I, scene iv. It was Arnold's summary of transformations of an eight-note set at the start of Act I, scene iv that set [David] Roberts on his analytical quest.[102]

Roberts's 'analytical quest' found that, in *Taverner*, there exist approximately nine set types relating to the plainchant incipit from Taverner's *Missa Gloria Tibi Trinitas* which are also used in the *Second Fantasia*. Music Example 7.21 shows the 'termini' of the sets F0 and G0

[99] The *Second Fantasia* was written between the composition of Acts I and II of the opera. In his programme note to the *Second Fantasia* Davies wrote that 'the work grew out of the completed first act of *Taverner*', quoted in Griffiths, op. cit., p.141.
[100] British Library, MS, Mus.1401, fol.134, reproduced in David Beard,'*Taverner:* an interpretation', Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (co-eds.), *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, CUP, 2009), p.91.
[101] David Beard, '*Taverner:* an interpretation', Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (co-eds.), *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, CUP, 2009), p.91.
[102] For a comprehensive discussion of the origins and Davies's manipulation of these sets see David Beard's analysis in Gloag and Jones, op. cit., pp.90-101.

as labelled by Roberts.[103] In the following music examples, accidentals apply only to the notes which they immediately precede.

Music Example 7.21: Termini FO and GO (Roberts)

Termini F0

Termini G0

Further, Beard has recognised that these set types and sub-set types are common to other works of the period including the *Seven In Nomine* and *Revelation and Fall*. Notably, given their proximity to *Taverner*, these works also employ goal-directed transformative techniques used in the opera. Davies noted: '…Taverner's music undergoes transformation processes which the like I had been experimenting for years. There are processes like those in the big *Second Fantasia.* But there are also some of the techniques which I later used in things like *Revelation and Fall* or *L'Homme Armé*.'[104] Act I, scene iv of *Taverner* was the crucible for these procedures.

> I have for a few years been working with series or 'sets' (not necessarily 12-tone) which are in a perpetual state of transformation, so that given musical identities, such as 'straight' or 'inverted' set-forms, are only gradually established and disintegrated. Sets are thus, in the simplest instances, transformed by a given interval throughout, but more often by a series of intervals, sometimes in elaborate permutation, giving complex curves, and with the rhythmic cells subject to a parallel consistent modification, as well as the larger isorhythmic units.[105]

Several commentators have pointed out that Davies's disclosure about transformational methods led to the opera's mixed critical reception since most of the audience 'could not

[103] Roberts, op. cit., p.85.
[104] Peter Maxwell Davies and Stephen Walsh, 'Taverner', *The Musical Times*, Vol.113, No.1553 (July, 1972), p.653.
[105] Peter Maxwell Davies, 'Sets or series', *The Listener*, Vol. 79, 22 Feb. 1968, p.250.

hear such processes at work.'[106] However, Owens has argued that the manipulation of sets functions at three distinct levels: 'obscured to the maximum, allowed to be perceived and actively highlighted at strategic points.'[107] Act I, scene iv is a 'strategic point' in which processes of transformation and 'the inversion of a theme emerges as the goal of the progressive expansion and contraction of some of the constituent intervals.'[108] This may be interpreted as a musical expression of Taverner's confession and subsequent religious conversion from Catholic to Protestant, from persecuted to persecutor. Beard amplifies this idea with reference to draft material for a pre-compositional musical plot which appears to relate to both the *Second Taverner Fantasia* and to the opera.[109] The plot's outline is entitled 'Interrogation (obliteration of personality under pressure).'[110] Although no characters are named within it, Beard suggests there to be a 'conceptual link in the composer's mind between the psychological profile of Taverner and an exploration of his condition both in symphonic and serial terms.'[111] Roberts's detailed analysis supports this. Music Example 7.22 shows the sixteen-element 'set' which he has identified as undergoing transformation in Act I, scene iv.

Music Example 7.22: Sixteen-element set, Act I, scene iv, bb. 354-363

As indicated in Music Example 7.22, the set, which according to Roberts's analysis is actually a sixteen-element variant of the full nineteen-element set type, is stated in the tenor line from bars 354-363 beginning in Bassoon 1.[112] The set is constantly extended and migrates through the orchestral texture undergoing transformation until each is reduced to a single note.[113]

[106] David Beard in Gloag and Jones, op. cit., p.85.
[107] Owens, op. cit., p.180.
[108] Arnold, op. cit., p.22.
[109] British Library, Ms.Add.71259, fol. 36.
[110] David Beard in Gloag and Jones, op. cit., p.94.
[111] Ibid., p.97.
[112] Roberts, op.cit., see Vol. II, Music Example 8.22b, p.82.

Music Example 7.23: Transformation of sixteen element set, Act I, scene iv, bb.354-363

Prior to the set's transformation and distillation, Taverner sings of his love for Rose (bars 340-351): 'From your lips I drunk in courage; your body was the house of my worship.' Rose is Taverner's muse, she is a metaphor for his music. As the music undergoes transformation, Rose pleads with Taverner to consider his own conversion: 'It is not given you to understand divine nature, except it be implied in your creation, through your songs

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[113] Roberts, op. cit., Vol I, p.316.

for the church….' (bars 371-383). Taverner is conflicted and sings that 'I dare not deny you; and must acid reason follow on….' (bars 451-457). His father joins their hands and they attempt to leave. The tenor line ends, as it began, on the pitch E-flat now stated by Bass Clarinet (bar 466). Death intervenes, the Street Passion Mystery Play is enacted, Taverner is duped, he repents for making 'songs to Popish ditties in the time of my blindness' and collapses.

Arnold has interpreted this transformation of sets as being,

> …finely graded steps between (say) a prime and its inversion, so that the original set gradually loses its intervallic identity only to acquire that of its inversion, just as Taverner loses his identity and acquires another that is the inversion of all that he implicitly stood for by being a creative artist.[114]

It is also possible to suggest that, conceptually, this process which, in Act I, scene iv, leads to the set's dissolution may be analogous to the principle of perspective in architecture known as the 'vanishing point.' In his Third Symphony (Op. 119), Davies acknowledged that this theory influenced his 'thinking about the function of the musical tonic.'[115] Also, Pruslin has stated that there are passages in the Third Symphony where 'various lines of perspective converge and vanish, could have an analogue as an ''imploding tonic."'[116] Although this discussion is in the context of a particular symphony's tonal-modal progression, it is arguable that similar principles are at work in *Taverner* where transforming sets may be interpreted as 'imploding.' Metaphorically, the sonic vanishing point may be read as representing the extinction of Taverner's music, the silencing of his voice and, ultimately, his loss of identity.[117]

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[114] Stephen Arnold, 'Peter Maxwell Davies', *British Music Now* (ed. Lewis Foreman), (London, Paul Elek, 1975), p.83.
[115] Nicholas Jones,'Peter Maxwell Davies's 'Submerged Cathedral': Architectural Principles in the Third Symphony', *Music and Letters,* Vol. 81, No.3 (August 2000), p.406.
[116] Pruslin, quoted in Jones, op. cit., p.407 n16.
[117] David Roberts has acknowledged that it is also possible to draw a direct correlation to the development sections of Davies's sonata form models where similar processes may also have metaphorical purposes. See Roberts, Vol.1, op. cit., pp.334-335. Also, one is reminded of Berg's *Lulu*, where, in Act II, scene i, Dr Schön's death is represented by the series which is associated with his character being subsumed into the basic series of the opera. See, Douglas Jarman, *The Music of Alban Berg* (London, Faber & Faber, 1983), p.225.

7.5 Vocal expression and word-setting

Davies's approach to vocal expression in *Taverner* owes much to Arnold Schoenberg and his employment and advancement of *Sprechstimme* ('spoken voice') and *Sprechgesang* ('spoken singing'). Beyond *Pierrot lunaire* and throughout the twentieth-century, extended vocal techniques have been developed as the human voice has became a vehicle for sound. John Cage's *One Voice* (1958), *Solo for Voice I* (1958) Luciano Berio's *Sequenza III* (1965), and *Philomel* (1964) by Milton Babbitt are notable works in which extended vocal techniques have become known as New Vocalism.[118] Davies was familiar with Babbitt's *Philomel* and refers to the work in an article about his experiences whilst studying in the USA.[119]

Although Schoenberg exerted a significant influence, the work of his student Anton Webern also had an impact. Davies regarded Webern as a 'great composer.'[120] During his time in Rome, he recalled hearing works by Webern performed by the Filarmonica of Rome[121] and when in Darmstadt, Davies would have doubtless heard Webern's music. Whilst studying at Princeton University with Milton Babbitt, a proponent of Webern, he was exposed to his work.[122] Given that much of *Taverner* was composed during the composer's time in Princeton, it is possible to suggest that Webern's style had an impact upon the way that Davies wrote for the voice in the opera. Certainly, the abundance of minor seconds, major sevenths and ninths which characterise the vocal writing in *Taverner* has a similarity to the angular vocal contours for the soloists found in Webern's pair of late cantatas (Op. 29 and Op. 31) composed between 1939 and 1943.

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[118] For further discussion of extended vocal techniques see, Melanie Austin Crump, 'When Words Are Not Enough: Tracing the development of Extended Vocal Techniques in twentieth-century America', PhD thesis, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA (2008). Milton Babbit's *Philomel*, which synthesises the human voice with electronics, was composed for the soprano Bethany Beardslee (b.1927) whose histrionic performance of *Pierrot* made a strong impression upon Davies at Wardour Summer School in 1965. Also, the boundaries of vocal expression are pushed in *Revelation and Fall,* and, at its first performance the soprano appeared in costume.

[119] Davies, 'The Young Composer in America', *Tempo,* no. 72 (Spring), pp.2-6.

[120] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'Remembering Darmstadt', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.173. Also, perhaps as an homage, Webern's Piano Variations (Op. 27) were featured in the concert which included the first London performance of Davies's Trumpet Sonata (Op. 1).

[121] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'Musical Life in Italy', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.30.

[122] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'The Young Composer in America', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.60.

As shown in Music Example 7.24, in the second movement (*Leicht bewegt*) of the First Cantata (Op. 29), the vocal line for solo soprano resembles that of the writing for Rose Parrowe, particularly the extended passage in Act I, scene iv (bb. 355-420).

Music Example 7.24: Webern – First Cantata (Op. 29), movement ii, bb. 14-18.

Ges.
A - ber du wirst auf - er - stehn dem Ta - ge, all den
But then thou shalt rise a - gain to day-light, to the

Music Example 7.25, shows that the bass solo in the second movement (*Sehr verhalten*) of Webern's Second Cantata (Op. 31), is melodically reminiscent of the White Abbot's vocal contour, notably in his valdedictoy aria of Act II, scene iv (bb. 163-241).[123]

Music Example 7.25: Webern – Second Cantata (Op. 31), movement ii, bb. 34-38.

B.-S.
weiße Sternenzelt ist dicht durchtropft vom erd - ßen Schöpfungslicht. Es kreist der - in ein
constel-la-tions are, so full of drops of light cre - a-tion brings. In them each circ - ling

[123] See Music Example 7.30, p.247.

Sonically, expressively and allusively, Schoenberg expanded the human voice. Through his development of *Sprechstimme* ('spoken voice') and *Sprechgesang* ('spoken singing'), he transformed the voice into an instrument through which to directly communicate expressionistic concerns. The antecedents of *Sprechstimme* lie in melodrama but Davies's employment of the technique, as found in *Taverner* and later works, is founded upon Schoenberg's definition. He wrote that 'singing unalterably stays on pitch, whereas the speaking tone give the pitch but immediately leaves it again by falling or rising […] In no way should one strive for realistic, natural speech […] but at the same time it must never be reminiscent of singing.'[124] In Schoenberg's hands *Sprechstimme* 'was a compositional habit that had primed him with felicitous approach to the challenges of devising a sustained musical recitation.'[125] Dunsby asserts that,

> The 'syllabicism' of *Pierrot* is among its most memorable features. Syllabicism is, moreover a virtually unavoidable consequence of the use of *Sprechstimme*, for melisma without discrete pitches can be achieved only by glissando, which is a slender resource. However, it has to be borne in mind that Schoenberg was exceptionally sparing with melisma throughout his career.[126]

This 'syllabicism' and 'sustained recitation' underpins much of the vocal writing in *Taverner*. In the two lengthy trial scenes which open each act, vocal style is characterised by predominantly syllabic, declarative delivery. Syllabic vocal delivery also dominates the vocal style of Stravinsky's opera-oratorio, *Oedipus rex* to which *Taverner* has aesthetic proximity. Stravinsky adopted a similar approach in *Persephone* in which he required 'only syllables, beautiful strong syllables, and only after that an action….'[127] He would later assert that 'the sequence of the words and syllables, and the cadence they create, which produces an effect on one's sensibilities very closely akin to that of music. For I consider that music is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to *express* anything at all, whether a feeling, an attitude of mind, a psychological mood, a phenomenon of nature, etc…. *Expression* has never been an inherent property of music.'[128] This approach to treatment of text, vocal expression, and,

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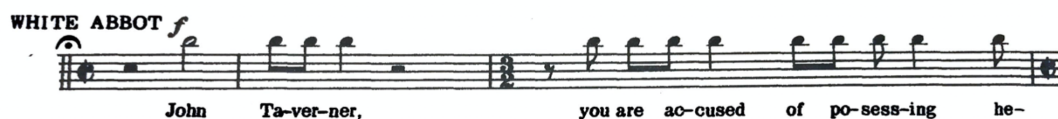
[124] Schoenberg, quoted in Rees. Joseph Auner, *A Schoenberg Reader: Documents of a Life* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2003), p.118.
[125] Jonathan Dunsby, *Schoenberg, Pierrot lunaire* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), p.32.
[126] Dunsby, op. cit., p.32.
[127] Quoted in Eric Walter White, *Stravinsky*: *The Composer and his Works* (2nd ed. Berkeley & Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1979), pp.579-81.
[128] Igor Stravinsky, *An Autobiography* (New York, Norton Press, 1962), pp.53-54. Stravinsky would qualify this statement stating that 'the over-publicized bit about expression (or non-expression) was simply a way of

in particular, to syllabicism influenced Davies. However, given the composer's engagement with the past, it is also possible to suggest that his approach was rooted in earlier practices.

Single syllable word setting has its origins in simple psalmody, Byzantine and Gregorian plainchant as found in the *Liber Usualis*, a collection with which Davies was familiar. He also read and often quoted the writings of St Augustine (345-430). St Augustine once confessed that when music was heard in church, its pleasure could detract from the absorption of text. This is an age old tension. Should music serve a given liturgical text (the sacred) or should textual clarity be surrendered in favour of musical enrichment (the secular)? When subjected to the expressive power of melisma (described as *jubilus* or *jubiliatio*), St Augustine admitted that: 'I happened to be moved by the singing than by what is sung, I confess myself to have sinned criminally.'[129]

In the trial scenes which open Act I and Act II the music serves the text where much of the vocal material is delivered quasi-sung-recitative. As show in Music Example 7.26, in Act I, scene i, the White Abbot as prosecutor, declaims syllabically: 'John Taverner, you are accused of possessing heretical books…' The pitch D-natural refers to John Taverner's *In Nomine*.

Music Example 7.26: Syllabic declamation, the White Abbot, Act I, scene i, bb. 39-41



The mirroring trial in Act II, scene i opens with the roles reversed as John Taverner is prosecutor and the White Abbot, defendant. As Music Example 7.27 shows, Taverner's syllabic delivery is similar but transformed from what was sung into 'shouting, being almost in a speaking voice.'

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saying that music is supra-personal and super-real and as such beyond verbal meanings and verbal descriptions ….today I would put it the other way around: music expresses itself.' Stravinsky and Craft, *Expositions and Developments*, (London, Faber & Faber, 1962), p.101.

[129] Quoted in Jon Paxman, *A Chronology of Western Classical Music, 1600-2000* (Omnibus), 2014, p.16.

Music Example 7.27: Syllabic declamation, John Taverner, Act II, scene i, b. 22

Vocal delivery in these two passages is in the style of the plainchant tradition where repeated notes, known as the 'reciting notes' or the 'tenor', remain at the same pitch.

There are two episodes in the opera in which Taverner's soliloquies are characterised by syllabicism. In Act II, scene iv Taverner commits pen to paper in a letter to Thomas Cromwell and, correspondingly, in his monologue of Act I, scene ii, Taverner debates internally about the meaning of religion in his music and reveals his doubts. In each of these scenes, as he writes, the vocal line is syllabic. Yet, in Act I, scene iii, as if in opposition to Taverner's vocality, the chorus of monks intone his *In Nomine* melismatically.

Given the historical context of *Taverner*, it is germane to consider syllabic, neumatic and melismatic setting of text during the time of the English Reformation.[130] In reforming the church liturgy, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer promoted the notion of 'one syllable, one note.' In the creation of his new vernacular texts the aim was to not reduce the solemnity of the original Latin, but to increase it.[131] Cranmer wrote, 'in mine opinion, the song that shall be made thereunto would not be full of notes, but, as near as may be, for every syllable a note; so that it may be sung distinctly and devoutly as be in the Matins and Evensong.'[132] Yet, as a faithful servant of the Catholic church, Taverner's festal masses were, contrary to Cranmer's wishes, 'full of notes' and contained some of the most extravagant melismatic text setting of the day. These were Taverner's 'songs to Popish ditties' written in the time of his blindness.[133]

[130] See Peter Le Huray, *Music and the Reformation in England, 1549-1660* (Oxford, Alden Press, 1967).
[131] The *Exhortation and Litany* (1544) composed by Thomas Cranmer was the first official vernacular service published in English.
[132] John Edmond Cox (editor), *The Works of Thomas Cranmer* (Franklin Classics, 2018), p.412.
[133] John Foxe, *Book of Martyrs,* op. cit.

In *Taverner*, melismatic setting is used sparingly, symbolically and in the context of pre-existing music. It is also employed to illuminate rhetorical statements, comedic or parodic gestures and provide dramatic emphasis. Table L (in landscape format) locates these passages in the opera.

TABLE L: Melismatic word-setting in *Taverner*

Character	Act, scene & bar	Text	Function
John Taverner	I/ii, 78-84 I/ii, 95-97 II/i, 97-98 II/iii, 60-67	'Or is it this the Devil's work….?' 'Scorching reason…' '….to proclaim his scandal.' 'Charity is fled…	Interior monologue/self-parody Interior monologue/self-parody Rhetorical Interior monologue/self-parody
Death/Jester	I/iii, 354-355 I/iv, 541-543	'…make me afraid.' 'That whored my corse to Rome….'	Dramatic Parodic
Rose	I/iv, 462-463	'Come John for both our sakes….'	Dramatic
Boy	I/i, 414-419 I/i, 428-431	'I discovered the Informator reading….' '..singing false his Kyrie.'	Dramatic
Monks	I/ii, 1-125 II/iii, 134-160	Sanctus Benedictus	Pre-existing music Pre-existing music
White Abbot	II/iv, 169-170 II/iv, 185-186	'…who preaching free thought do burn me.' '…be at peace and one…'	Dramatic
Archbishop	II/ii, 174-186	'Your majesty….'	Parodic
King	II/ii, 186-189	'Our good Lord Archbishop…'	Parodic

As Table L above shows, in Act I, scene ii, Taverner rejects the ‘lying vanities’ of the Catholic church. He vows to ‘arm against their injustice, to purge us, to break our idols in our image’ and becomes increasingly agitated. As illustrated in Music Example 7.28, Taverner’s vocal expression breaks into a line ‘full of notes,’ as, ironically, he refers to the ‘Devil’s work’ in his own music.

Music Example 7.28: Melismatic word-setting, John Taverner, Act I, scene ii, bb. 78-84

In this passage the tessitura is narrower compared to the wider range and disjunct style of vocal writing which characterises much of the vocal writing in the opera.

In Act II, scene iii, Taverner again sings melismatically. Prior to the entry of the soldiers and the Captain’s spilling of the communion wine, he sings: ‘Charity is fled, from our religious houses, with their gold, their feasting, their falcons, their fine clothes, their idolatry, their diverse vices…’ (bars 61-67). Also, as Music Example 7.29 shows, this is the only occasion in the opera when there is the hint of a duet. But it is subverted. Symbolically, it is negated as the two characters sing in different languages and opposing vocal styles. Taverner’s line is florid and in English, whilst the White Abbot declaims the Catholic Mass in Latin: ‘Vere dignum et justum est, aequam et salutare’ (‘It is truly right and just, our duty and salvation…’). The text is delivered, parodically, adhering to Cramer’s desire for ‘one syllable, one note.’

Simultaneously, the accompanying *In Nomine* is heard transformed and rhythmically disjunct; it is stated by a solo cello, the instrument most closely associated with Rose, Taverner’s muse, and is instructed to be played *con qualche vibrato poco in relievo* (with some vibrato, with some prominence).

Music Example 7.29: John Taverner and the White Abbot, Act II, scene iii, bb. 61-66

It is the characters of the Jester/Death and the White Abbot who have the most characterful, expressive vocal writing in the opera. Following the world-première, Kerman observed that, at the moment of Taverner's conversion in Act I, scene iv, it is not Taverner, but Death who 'sings eloquently at this juncture.'[134] Kerman also regarded the White Abbot's 'Scaffold Aria' as 'impressive' since the character is 'allowed to develop and the static 'drama of ideas' yield to drama of human personality.'[135] The White Abbot's valedictory song spans 79 bars and is the most extended solo vocal passage in the opera. Although the vocal writing is still dominated by syllabic setting, the melodic contour is more conjunct than previously and the lines more *cantabile* in style. Also, Davies repeatedly directs *dolce* and *dolcissimo* (bars 181, 204, 206 and 215) in the orchestral accompaniment, a direct quotation of the final section of the *Second Fantasia*.

As Music Example 7.30 shows, it is scored for strings only often with the instruction to play on open resonant strings (for example, bars 161 and 167, *sul G*).

[134] Kerman, op. cit., p.23.
[135] Ibid., p.22.

Music Example 7.30: the White Abbot's valedictory aria, Act I, scene iv, bb.161-171

WHITE ABBOT

I am fell_ in-to the hands of those, who, preach-ing free thought do burn_ me_ for op-pos-ing it.

Vl.I Vl.II Vla. Vc. 2 Soli Db. the rest Wh.Ab.

(sul G) 4+3 170

The strings are later joined by the harp (the instrument most associated with Taverner's muse, Rose) for some of the most expressively intimate and luxuriant music in the opera. Harmonically, the White Abbot's aria revolves around a tone centre of A which, in relation to the Death Chord, connects to the missing central dyad (A-natural/C-sharp) when stated triadically.

Davies tends to introduce tone centres in chorales or hymns where the combination of a traditional form and its tonal implications function to subvert or betray associated religious values. In the passage which follows the execution of the White Abbot, the full chorus sings the first verse of Psalm 70: 'O God, make haste to save us…. ' Its repeated descending phrase refers to the *In Nomine*, prefiguring its statement at the conclusion of the opera. As shown in Music Example 7.31, the hymn has a tone centre of of A-flat/F minor which is in opposition to that of A. Also, A-flat is a tritone away from the opera's pivotal pitch of D-natural which suggests a negation or subversion of the hymn's ecumenical message.[136]

[136] Similarly, see Music Example 7.29 for a statement of the *In Nomine* transposed at the tritone.

Music Example, 7.31: Full chorus, Psalm 70, Act I, scene iv, bb. 259-263

In reviewing the world-première, Winton Dean asserted that a 'basic trouble seems to be that Davies has little or no gift for characterization in music, or (which is in part the same thing) for writing expressive lines for solo voice.'[137] Indeed, the writing for the protagonist is angular and defined by wide intervallic leaps. However, it is possible to argue that this angular, disjunct design has an expressive or, rather, inexpressive purpose. Taverner's vocal contour has little or no axis which may be interpreted as reflecting the character's incoherence and heartlessness. Kerman believed that a failing of the opera was Davies's 'devotion to the static drama of ideas rather than the development of character.'[138] He argued that, because of the protagonist's lack of song 'neither before nor later in the opera is Taverner given the opportunity to come to life.'[139] And Majel Connery stated that,

> If, as (Joseph) Kerman suggests, Taverner's inhumanity is signalled in part by his failure to sing at his conversion, then the mad king is thoroughly human because he cannot fail to sing. *Eight Songs* is like the aria Kerman would have liked Taverner to sing – a one-act aria of steroidal proportions in which a man contemplates what it means to die for his voice, to die singing.[140]

If, in *Eight Songs* there is a surplus of song, in *Taverner* there is a deficit. This notion is supported by the lack of musical interaction between the principal characters in that there are no conventional operatic duets or set-piece ensembles. A clue to understanding Davies's motivation for this approach may be found in his description that the characters are 'cardboard figures' or 'complicated beings' who 'state' things. In fact, Davies's inexpressive vocality requires that they do not sing, mainly they declare. This may explain the paucity of 'expressive lines for the solo voice' in *Taverner*. Also, the dominance of syllabic articulation suggests that Taverner's vocalisation is symbolic of his rejection of his own music, the Catholic church and self. As Connery asserts, in *Eight Songs* it is the mad king's compulsion to sing and his hyper-expressivity which contrasts with the one-dimensional vocal writing in *Taverner*. This supports Kerman's view that Taverner is but a 'straw man.'[141] It emphasises his inhumanity and alienates the audience.

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[137] Winton Dean, *Taverner*, *The Musical Times,* July 1972.
[138] Kerman, op. cit., p.23.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Majel Connery, 'Peter Maxwell Davies's Worst Nightmare: Staging the Unsacred in the Operas Taverner and Resurrection', *Opera Quarterly*, Vol.25, No 3-4, (2010) p.256.
[141] Kerman, op. cit., p.23.

In *Lulu,* Berg approaches vocal expression to achieve similar ends, yet the practice is, at times, in marked contrast to Davies's.

> Gone is the attempt to elicit empathy from the audience. The highly lyric (as opposed to dramatic) quality of much of the music, especially the pronounced coloratura aspect of Lulu's vocal line, creates a marked distance between characters and audience.[142]

Although Lulu's vocal line is often characterised by melisma, Berg's intention remains the same: to create a distance between character and audience.[143] Berg further developed and refined his approach to vocal expression in *Lulu*. The term *Steigerung* ('intensification')[144] is introduced for Alwa and in the opera's Prologue, the Animal Trainer traverses five different types of vocal technique including spoken voice, *Sprechstimme* and full sung voice.

Dunsby has asserted that Schoenbergian *Sprechstimme* 'led the path to subsequent widespread investigations of new types of vocal sound, pitched, unpitched, 'extended' in hitherto unimagined ways.'[145] And Rees has cited the beliefs of Antonin Artaud[146] as seeking to explain the origins of novel vocalisation where in 'abandoning our Western ideas of speech, it turns words into incantations. It expands the voice. It uses vocal vibrations and qualities, wildly trampling them underfoot. It pile-drives sounds. It aims to exalt, to benumb, to bewitch, to arrest our sensibility.'[147]

In *Eight Songs for a Mad King* Davies exploited singer Roy Hart's five-octave range and his ability to produce chords with his voice to explore 'extreme regions of experience.'[148] In referring to Hart's extended vocalisation Davies stated that 'the sounds made by human beings under extreme duress, physical and mental, will be at least in part familiar.'[149] This resonates with psychologist Ralph Metzner's observation that *Sprechstimme* may be

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[142] Jack M Stein, 'Alban Berg's Adaptation of Wedekind', *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Summer, 1974), p.240.
[143] This resonates with the concept of *Verfremdungseffert* ('the Estrangement Effect') in Brecht's genre of epic theatre as discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis.
[144] Wagner uses the expression *Mit Steigerung* in *Parsifal*.
[145] Dunsby, op.cit., p.6
[146] Antonin Artaud (1886-1948), French dramatist, actor and writer.
[147] Artaud, quoted in Rees, p. 176. For a full discussion of Davies's adoption of expressionism and re-interpretation of Georg Trakl's poem in *Revelation and Fall*, see Rees, pp.172-181
[148] Full score, Preface.
[149] Davies, quoted in Paul Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies* (London, Robson Books, 1982), p.148.

interpreted 'to convey the delirium of madness.'[150] Whether it was a moonstruck Pierrot or Wozzeck's decline into madness, the topic of madness and its representation in music was also of lasting concern to Davies. The trilogy of music-theatre pieces, *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot* and *The Medium* each dwells upon a single character's mental disturbance or 'madness'[151] expressed by a lone voice which is subject, in varying degrees, to extreme vocality. Yet, it was in *Taverner* when Davies first experimented and engaged with such techniques. The roles of the Antichrist, the Jester/Death and John Taverner all require delivery of *Sprechstimme*, *Sprechgesang, parlando* and extended vocalisation.

Similar to Davies's approach in the music-theatre works, the disintegration of Taverner's personality is also mirrored by extreme vocality. The first time *Sprechstimme* is employed is in Act I, scene iv, following the taunting of Taverner by the Jester. As Music Example 7.32 shows, Davies's musical direction instructs Taverner to modulate vocal delivery from what has been sung to a 'speaking voice, enraged.' It is *Sprechgsang* which signals the beginning of Taverner's 'delirium of madness.'

Music Example 7.32: John Taverner, Sprechstimme, Act I, scene iv, bb. 177-188

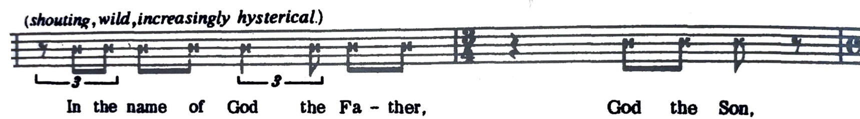
JOHN TAVERNER (*speaking voice, enraged*)
molto f *cresc.*
Ar-rogant su-per - stitious, fan - tas - tic o - pin ions, de-vised by the An - ti - christ of Rome.

Taverner's vocalisation continues to reflect his mental decline. As he tells of an epiphany, the expressive marking, perhaps ironic given that they are written in in Italian, instructs him to sing: *comiciando somnambulisticamente* ('beginning as if dreaming') at bar 661. However, as shown in Music Example 7.33, by the end of the act, Taverner's psychological

[150] Ralph Metzner (1936-2019), German-born American psychologist, researcher and writer. Quoted in Rees, p.177.
[151] For a full discussion of the theme of madness in these works see, Alan E Williams, 'Madness in the Music Theatre Works of Peter Maxwell Davies', *Perspectives of New Music*, Vol.38, No 1 (Winter 2000, pp.77-100).

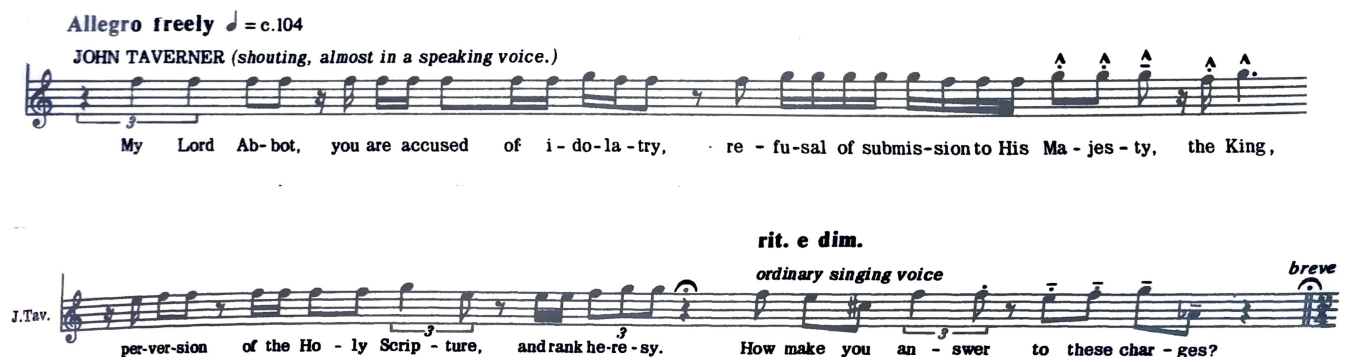
condition has declined significantly and the use of *Sprechstimme* echoes his increasing fanaticism.

Music Example 7.33: John Taverner, vocal delivery, Act I, scene iv, bb. 774-775



Taverner's mind and voice are *in extremis*. Following his conversion, the duality of his personality is increasingly apparent. Act II, scene i begins with Taverner's prosecution of the White Abbot and, as illustrated in Music Example 7.34, he delivers his accusation 'shouting, almost in a speaking voice' and, as if to emphasise his schizoid character, immediately continues in an 'ordinary singing voice.'

Music Example 7.34: John Taverner, vocal delivery, Act II, scene i, bb. 22-23



This delivery recalls Roy Hart's remark that through mastery of extended vocal techniques it was possible to enact a type of 'conscious schizophrenia.' The range of extended vocal expression which reflects Taverner's mental deterioration foreshadow techniques that would be amplified in *Eight Songs*.[152] At the climax of Act I, scene iv the delivery of Taverner's text instructs that it be delivered 'shouting, wild, increasingly hysterical.' This

[152] For further discussion of extended vocal techniques in *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, see Adrian Curtis, 'Alternative Vocalities: Listening Awry to Peter Maxwell Davies's *Eight Songs for a Mad King*', *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, June 2009, Vol.42, no 2, pp.101-117.

foreshadows a similar direction at the end of the sixth song of *Eight Songs*, *The Counterfeit* where the vocalist sings, 'If you tell me a lie' and then screams ' let it be a black lie!' at fortissimo and at the highest possible pitch. Such is the extent of the disintegration of the king's personality and voice that he leaves the stage howling. At the end of the opera, the fragmentation of Taverner's personality and his voicelessness may be less sonically visceral than in *Eight Songs* but metaphorically it is equally powerful.

The Antichrist is a 'Tenor (spoken)' role which contains the most extreme examples of extended vocality in *Taverner*. The Antichrist appears only in Act I, scene iv, but, as illustrated in Music Example 7.35, it is an impactful moment.

Music Example 7.35: The Antichrist, extended vocality, Act I, scene iv, bb. 211-214

This eruption is a hysterical restatement of the Council's sectarian message of Act I, scene i: 'to rid this fold of hererical sheep, less the whole flock be infected.'[153] The extreme vocalisation imposes a physical violence upon the human voice which, as shown in Music Example 7.36, is further intensified as the Antichrist exits screaming the Easter Papal address: 'to the city [of Rome] and to the world!'

[153] Full score, Act I, scene i, bb. 236-243, p.16.

Music Example 7.36: The Antichrist, extended vocality, Act I, scene iv, bb. 233-237

This passage prefigures *Revelation and Fall* in which the solo soprano performs equally extreme vocalisation as she shrieks into a megaphone: 'Einbrach ein rotter Schatten mit flammendem Schwert in das Haus, floh mt schneeiger Strirne.' (A crimson spectre broke into the house with a flaming sword, but fled with snowy brow').[154] At the time of the opera's world prèmiere, Davies reflected that there were 'already some of the techniques which I later used in things like *Revelation and Fall* or *L'Homme Armé*. I'm thinking of the first scene of Act II, which I wrote in 1965 or early 1966. These are much more extrovert than anything I'd used before that. In fact the opera has a lot of techniques used for the first time which later used in other things.'[155]

Extended vocal techniques are used to characterise the role of the Jester/Death. At the end of the Street Passion Play in Act I, scene iv, he yells: 'Take up thy bed and trot' (bars 527-528), and, at the end of Act II, scene i, as he rotates the Wheel of Fortune, Death shrieks in Latin: 'Rotam volubili, orbe versamus; infima summis, summa infimis mutare gaudamus.' (bars 267-280). And, at the climax of Act I as he falsely beatifies Taverner, the blessing is delivered 'shrieking.' Davies's stage directions indicate that 'Death crouches behind Taverner, and puts his jester's cap on Taverner's head, and puts his grinning mask, gargoyle-like, over his face….'[156] Metaphorically, the Jester/Death has disfigured Taverner. In Jungian

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[154] At the BBC concert performance of *Taverner* at Glasgow City Halls in 2009, the composer directed that the Antichrist be placed in the hall's balcony and use a megaphone to deliver this passage 'in the manner of Joseph Goebbels.'

[155] Davies in conversation with Stephen Walsh, 'Taverner', *The Musical Times,* Vol. 113, No 1553 (July 1972), p.653.

[156] Full score, Act I, scene iv, bb. 747-750, p.213.

terms, this is Taverner's unconscious 'inner daemon'[157] and the placing of the Jester's cap on Taverner's head alludes to depersonalisation or brainwashing.[158]

Music Example 7.37 shows that this crucial moment features some of the most neo-expressionistic imagery in the opera heightened by the use of extreme vocality.

Music Example 7.37: The Jester/Death, extended vocality, Act I, scene iv, bb. 747-750

In the composer's approach to vocal expression throughout *Taverner*, and particularly in relation to the deployment of extended techniques, his achievement lies in the eloquent melding of music, text and drama. Extreme vocality is never introduced for superficial sonic effect. Metaphorically, it mirrors Taverner's mental decline, physically it enforces the Antichrist's violent message and, dramatically, amplifies Death's grotesquerie. As part of Davies's compositional apparatus, vocal expression is an essential component.

[157] David Beard in Gloag and Jones, op. cit., p.101.
[158] Davies continued to explore the theme of brainwashing in the musical theatre work *Resurrection* work (not first performed until 1987 but composed in parallel with *Taverner*) when the character 'Dummy' undergoes a lobotomy and is reborn as the Antichrist. In conversation with Paul Griffiths in 1980, Davies said of *Resurrection*, 'Everyone will say that, of course, I've gone back to the 1965 extravagant gestures, and it's quite true, but more so and very differently. The knife is much sharper now. And the piece does go indeed go back to Act I, Scene iv of *Taverner*: it's really a paraphrase or comment on that.' Davies, quoted in Griffiths, op. cit., p.130.

7.6 Parody

> Parody has been central to much of my work, in both its original meaning – as in early parody masses, where the new work simply borrowed from and built upon material from another work – and its modern meaning of 'sending up' a work or style to which the new work refers.[159]

This 'early parody mass' to which Davies refers is a sixteenth-century genre in which familiar music from a motet, madrigal or secular song was introduced as the mass's main theme or *cantus firmus*. The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians describes parody as 'a technique of composition, primarily associated with the sixteenth-century, involving the use of pre-existent material' and that 'in Renaissance music the borrowing of material from one composition as the basis of another was common place. The essential feature of parody technique is that not only a single part is appropriated to form a cantus firmus in the derived work, but the whole substance of the source – its themes, rhythms, chords and chord progressions – is absorbed into the new piece and subjected to free variation in such a way that a fusion of old and new elements is achieved.'[160] Here, there are echoes of the idea of building 'new on old' as discussed in the context of the opera's architecture in Chapter 5. However, parody has an alternative meaning. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as: 'a literary composition modelled on and imitating another work especially a composition in which the characteristic style and themes of a particular author or genre are satirized by being applied to inappropriate or unlikely subjects, or are otherwise exaggerated for comic effect. In later use extended to similar imitations in other artistic fields, as music, painting, film, etc.' Certainly, this definition relates to Davies's works of the 1960s in which he uses parodic devices to mock or satirise a given subject.

> The first work in which I parodied a composer's music in the modern sense was the *Fantasia and Two Pavans* of 1968. This involved a great affection for the original Purcell, and my reworking of the pavans as foxtrots, although on one level funny, had deeper and more serious undertones. The tonal shift to B-flat at the end of the first pavan in A, in preparation for the second pavan, where the material is literally stifled, smothered is indicative of a fundamentally psychological shift into a world of referee's whistles, a moralizing Latin text (also used in the opera, *Taverner*), zany

[159] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'A Composer's Point of View (II): On Parody, References and Meaning', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.220.
[160] Michael Tilmouth, *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (ed. Stanley Sadie), (London, Macmillan, 1980), p.238.

> 1920s dance music and unstable tonality, only herald more of the same in many works to come.[161]

The Latin text to which Davies refers is, as discussed in Chapter 6, a motto attributed to St Augustine: ***Fides est virtus qua credentur quae videntur. Nos quidquid illud significat faciamus, et quam sit verum, non laboremus.*** ('Faith is a virtue whereby that which we cannot see be believed. Our concern is what it signifies, not whether it is true').[162] This text is sung by the chorus in Act I, scene i of *Taverner* (bars 381-391) and encapsulates the central dramatic tenet of the opera which Lister has articulated as: 'the uncertainty of apparently clear and undeniable truth: nothing is as it seems, everything is undermined.'[163] As the composer said, this 'moralizing Latin text' signalled a change in his approach to parody, a shift which was also identifiable in the composer's 'reworking of pavans as foxtrots.' For Davies, this popular dance of the 1930s recalled childhood memories of the bombing of Manchester during World War Two, when, hidden under the stairs at home, he would hear foxtrots music played on his parents' gramophone. The foxtrot would continue to have sinister associations for the rest of his life, permeate his music and become something of a 'trademark.'[164] In *St Thomas Wake: Foxtrot for Orchestra on a Pavan by John Bull* (Op. 37), Davies synthesises the old (a Pavan by John Bull (1562-1629)) and the contemporary (a series of foxtrots played by a 1930s-style dance band). At the work's climax, these musical worlds collide. Mike Seabrook perceives that:

> On one level, the piece is amusing, as usual when Max gets into foxtrots: the foxtrots themselves are extremely good tunes. That this is not a sustainable way of looking at the piece is evident from the start, however: the older theme, the symphony developing in the orchestra, is decidedly black, ominous and frightening. Against such a background the only way to regard the foxtrots is to contrast the footling vacuity of the medium with what is going on all around. It is surely not an accident that the dance band are [sic] seated apart from the orchestra, and wear boaters and striped blazers. The reference to inane young things fooling around in boaters while all around them the heavens fall cannot be missed; Hitler rises unchallenged and Jews are kicked to death in front of their children in the street.[165]

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[161] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'A Composer's Point of View (II): On Parody, References and Meaning', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.221.

[162] In the second of Davies's realisation of Henry Purcell's *Fantasia and Two Pavans* (1968), there is an optional voice which uses this text and in Act I, scene i of *Taverner,* the chorus sing these words.

[163] Rodney Lister, 'Sonata form in the music of Peter Maxwell Davies', in Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (co-eds.), *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, CUP, 2009), p.111.

[164] Mike Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (London, Victor Gollancz, 1994), p.112.

[165] Seabrook, op. cit., p.112.

It is possible to suggest that the way that Davies employs the foxtrot is comparable to Mahler's use of the Ländler. Humour may be found in parts of *St Thomas Wake* but, ultimately, this is sardonic music in the manner of Mahler and Shostakovich. Davies acknowledged that,

> There are several other composers and poets whose practice I am very aware of having adapted to my own musical ends. Mahler used certain gestures almost as signs (military calls, sentimental melodies) in such a way that they take on significance other than that apparent on the music's surface. The sign takes on a life deeper than that which its notes imply, perhaps showing the surface material in a strange light or perspective, or even contradicting any obvious sense it may have. Shostakovich employed gesture and figure, as is becoming clearer through post-Soviet research, to indict and undermine the regime under which he lived.[166]

Corresponding 'signs' or 'gestures' occur in *Taverner* and are presented as ciphers: fanfares, baroque dances and canons. Also, for Davies, Henry VIII's Tudor England represented a regime comparable to that of Adolf Hitler's Third Reich or Joseph Stalin's communist Soviet Union. In 1980, the composer reflected,

> At the time I wrote *Taverner* I was very much concerned with the figure of Shostakovich, whose music doesn't say what it appears to say on the surface. Those triumphant finales, like the one in the Fifth Symphony – they ring so hollow, and they make a political statement by inversion, if you like. He, I think, has many parallels with Taverner, in that he mounted statements which would make it appear that he was totally with the regime in Russia since 1917, but his music itself always made one wonder.[167]

Similar to Shostakovich, Davies employs parody, both musical and extra-musical, for subversive purposes. At a macro-level, Act II, scene i is a parody of Act I, scene i, it is a 'political statement by inversion.' Equally, the Street Passion Play of Act I, scene iv is parodic in the tradition of a medieval Festival of Fools whilst in Act II, scene ii, Davies adopts and adapts a subversive form of parody as practised by James Joyce to create a distorted pastiche of Renaissance dances which undermines the credibility and authority of church and state.

Yet, as Davies has stated above, the concept of parody is nuanced. In the original sense of the word it also concerns imitation. Arnold has referred to the composer's appropriation

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[166] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'A Composer's Point of View (II): On Parody, References and Meaning', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.222.
[167] Davies, quoted in Paul Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies* (London, Robson Books, 1985), p.107.

and direct quotation of musical material as a form of 'un-mocking parody.' Davies once described it as 'a pleasure almost physical in handling material that has inspired earlier composers, which has been refined and filtered through many musical imaginations over generations.'[168] This is apparent in works written before and in parallel with *Taverner* including *Alma Redemptoris Mater* (Op. 5), *Ricercar and Doubles* (Op. 10), *The Leopardi Fragments* (Op. 18) and other pieces throughout Davies's output.[169] This affectionate parody also applies to the inclusion of plainsong throughout *Taverner* and, as discussed, the composer's frequent intertextual references to Taverner's own music: his *In Nomine*, the quotation of the *Benedictus* from the *Missa Gloria Tibi Trinitas* (Act II, scene iii, bars 134-160) and the final statement of *In Nomine* and the mass combined (Act II, scene iv, bars 291-end).

Equally, in taking a 'pleasure almost physical' in pristine quotation, Davies also takes pleasure in imitation. As mentioned above, in the context of the composer's manipulation of plainsong, in Act I, scene i, the Cardinal intervenes in defence of Taverner. He describes him as 'a poor musician' and cites Taverner's talents as a composer and teacher as reasons for his pardon.[170] As the Cardinal sings '…he is skilled at the playing of the organs' the accompanying strings, bassoon and double bassoon humourously imitate a sixteenth-century pipe organ as imagined by Davies (see Music Example 7.3).[171] This short passage not only displays a virtuosic compositional technique but also has satirical function; its comic sounding registration deflates the self-important Cardinal and undermines all that he stands for.

Parody extends to self-parody. Davies's own *Second Tavener Fantasia* is stated in the postludes of Act I, scene i, Act II, scene i and integrated extensively into Act II, scene iv. It is also incorporated into Act I, scene ii, albeit in a compressed form. Lister has suggested that,

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[168] Davies, quoted in Jones, op. cit., p.220.
[169] For a chronological list of pre-existing music referenced and integrated into Davies's works, see Richard McGregor, Appendix II, 'Source material used in the works of Peter Maxwell Davies, 1957-2006', Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (co-eds.), *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, CUP, 2009), pp.242-254.
[170] Full score, Act I, scene i, bb.601-610, p.60.
[171] Similarly, Davies mimics the sound of a baroque chamber organ in his realisation of *Fantasia and Two Pavans after Henry Purcell* composed in 1968.

> In the *Second Taverner Fantasia*, an instrumental work so intimately connected with the opera, it is dramatically logical that a section that appears to be a 'sonata movement' would turn out over the course of the whole work, to be subsumed into a larger design operating on different musical principles with different processes, a sort of (deadly serious) joke on the listener.'[172]

As discussed in Chapter 5, Lister connects, structurally, the *Second Fantasia*, to Beethoven's Piano Sonata in A-flat (Op. 110). Whilst the sonata's form appears to extend over the whole work it actually consists of a series of individual movements (sonata, fugue, recitative etc.). Correspondingly, as Lister suggests, the integration of the *Second Fantasia* into the opera, is 'subsumed' for parodic purposes and alludes to St Augustine's maxim: 'Faith is a virtue whereby that which we cannot see be believed. Our concern is what it signifies, not whether it is true.' There is further self-quotation in Act I, scene iv when, prior to the mock crucifixion of Joking Jesus, a chorus of Demons parody a medieval carol: 'Behold his body in every place….' (bars 479-502) in which the melodic contour is derived from John Taverner's own *In nomine* and also recalls Davies's four-part carol 'Haylle, comely and clene' from *O Magnum in Mysterium*.[173]

As noted, the foxtrot is ubiquitous throughout Davies's output. No foxtrots exist in *Taverner*, but, in the manner of *St Thomas Wake*, there are sixteenth-century dances. Act I, scene iii and Act II, scene ii are both built around a pastiche of Renaissance dances and keyboard fantasias which articulate structure and serve a parodic purpose satirically.[174] Davies has stated that they are introduced as 'something that is happening "behind the Arras" to use Shakespeare's stage direction. They are happening as an accompaniment to what's going on […] but they make comment and they parody and they will take some phrase up from something in stage and make fun of it.'[175] Also, as the opera's historical narrative tracing England's split from Rome unfolds, the historical dance forms which Davies chooses to parody adopt a national significance. In Act I, scene iii, the reinvented dances are of

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[172] Rodney Lister, 'Sonata form in the music of Peter Maxwell Davies', in Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (co-editors), *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, CUP, 2009), p.111.
[173] Arnold, op. cit., p.26.
[174] Davies has noted that these musical tableaux prefigure the eighteenth-century suite which is 'intermittently suggested in the instrumental songs' in *The Phantom Queen* in *Eight Songs for a Mad King*. Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), '*Eight Songs for a Mad King*', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.99.
[175] Peter Maxwell Davies in conversation with Tom Service, *Opera on 3, Taverner,* BBC Radio 3 broadcast, 28 November 2009.

predominantly Italian origin. Allusively, to emphasise the dominance of the Church of Rome at the King's court prior to the Act of Supremacy, the movements and dances are all given Italian titles: *Pavana* (bar 16), *alla gagliarda* (bar 69) and *alla marcia* (bars 150 and 180).[176] Conversely, the corresponding Throne Room scene of Act II, scene ii, is set a decade or so later in Reformation England. As Davies has described, the events at court may be observed 'through a hallucinatory distorting mirror.' The country's religious and political transformation is symbolized by the Jester's re-robing of the Catholic Cardinal into the garb of a Church of England Archbishop and the dance forms of Act II, scene iii are now re-shaped and Anglicised as a Pavan and Galliard. As if to signify the declining power of Rome at the King's court, a sequence of sixteenth-century English keyboard fantasias is also introduced. These are physically superimposed and performed on stage by two historical instruments which accompany the King (appropriately, the Regal) and the Archbishop (a Positive Organ).

Table M shows how these parodied keyboard fantasias increasingly dominate the music in Act II, scene ii.

Table M: Parodied Renaissance keyboard fantasias, Act II, scene ii

Form	Bars	Instrumentation
Intrada	00 - 11	Stage band
Preambulus	12	Regal
Pavan	13 - 29	Stage band
Miserere	30 – 46	Regal
Galliard	147 – 139	Stage band
Dumpe	140 – 153	Stage band
Eterne Rex Altissime	154 – 173	Regal
Eterne Rerum Conditor	174 – 186	Positive Organ
Toccata	187 – 201/202	Regal
Coranto	202 – 224	Stage band
Mask in Echo	225 – 248	Regal & Positive Organ

[176] This extra-musical meaning recalls the opera's hierarchical scene order (see Chapter 5, p.129 of this thesis) reflecting the shifting balance of power as time moves from Pre-Reformation England to Reformation England.

The King's exit is also subject to parodic treatment. He leaves the stage accompanied by an Italian *Coranto*, albeit possibly composed by William Byrd. Arnold has suggested that the sixteenth-century models which Davies parodies may include: *Erterne Rerum (iii)* by John Blitheman (c.1525-1591) from the *Mulliner Book*, a *Coranto* by William Byrd (c.1539-1623) from the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book* and a Fancy by Thomas Tomkins (1572-1656) from *For Two to Play*. Davies systematically juxtaposes sacred and secular music to define the structure of this scene whilst historical forms reflect and parody the relationship between the King and the Cardinal/Archbishop or, symbolically, between church and state.[177]

In Act I, scene iii the King declares that 'Our marriage to the Queen, which appears contrary to God's law, as she was once Our brother's wife, which we fear illegal', he, the King (Henry VIII) is seeking approval from the Pope (Clement VII) to divorce his Queen (Catherine of Aragon) citing that their marriage is unlawful because of her (Catherine's) earlier marriage to the King's brother (Arthur). Davies presents the historical facts yet musically, through the introduction of faux marches, false fanfares, pavans and galliards he is mocking proceedings; the King's music is marked 'pomposa' and stage directions require the Jester to don a 'paper crown in imitation of King and parodying him.' (Act I, scene iii, bars 132-136).

In Act I, scene i the Priest-Confessor's accusation of Taverner further demonstrates Davies's multi-layered approach to parody. The comedic stage directions describe the character as 'fat and bungling' and, as he makes his entrance 'stumbles forward with leathern wine bottle.'[178] As show in Music Example 7.38, following bribery by a Monk, the Priest delivers his evidence in the manner of a 'Monteverdi recit., but stuttering.'

[177] Arnold, op. cit., p.25-26. At bar 63, Arnold suggests that in the opening Galliard, the Regal introduces a fragment of plainsong from the *Te Deum* ('Te per Orbem Terrarum').
[178] Full score, Act I, scene i, b.343, p.29.

Music Example 7.38: The Priest Confessor, Act I, scene i, bb. 361-363

Davies's parodic portrayal of the stuttering Priest-Confessor subverts his credibility as a witness and, by association, calls into question the integrity of the court, church and state. The counter-tenor is directed to deliver the passage 'like a Monteverdi recit.' aligning the Priest with his Italian provenance and religious persuasion. Further, his falsetto recalls Davies's parodic treatment of Handel's *Comfort Ye, My People* from the *Messiah* in *Eight Songs for a Mad King.*

As illustrated in Music Example 7.39, in another parodic intervention, God the Father is caricatured by the Priest-Confessor in a double-role complete with stuttering delivery. In this appearance, his falsetto literally gives voice to a false God as he stammers: 'Ecce fillius bastardus meus' simultaneously parodying Taverner's *In Nomine* and Davies's carol *O Magnum in Mysterium.*[179]

Music Example 7.39: God the Father, Act I, scene iv, bb. 503-508

[179] Michael Chanan notes that *Ecce Manus Tradentis* is taken from the line 'Verumtamen ecce manus tradentis me mecum est in mensa', translated: 'But behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table,' telling the story of Christ's betrayal by Judas. See Chanan, 'Dialectics in Peter Maxwell Davies', *Tempo* No.90 (Autumn 1969), pp.12-14.

Following a performance of *Taverner* in 1983, Andrew Clements wrote,

> The opera is conceived as a gigantic parody, layer upon layer; the second act mirrors and mimics the first (Taverner's actions as a sword-brandishing zealot are portrayed as a grotesque and vapid distortion of his earlier test of faith) and within each scene actions acquire double, sometimes triple meanings. In Davies's music, too, parody in its broadest sense is pre-eminent; fragments of Taverner's compositions provide the starting point for much of the invention, while quotations from his liturgical works sometimes lie cheek by jowl with the 'new music' they have generated, resulting in a web of allusions that the ear cannot hope to untangle.[180]

Davies does weave a 'web of allusions.' Attempting to untangle that web will, in part, lead to a greater understanding and appreciation of the opera and Davies's aesthetic. Yet, the composer's intertextual labyrinth which, as Clements notes, when placed 'cheek by jowel' with his own music is only a point of departure. Ultimately, the composer's achievement in *Taverner* lies not in the minutiae but in the macro, where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Parody is a key part, or to adopt Clements's parlance, it represents 'one layer.' Parody functions at multiple levels where anything and everything is fair game from religion to the monarchy, from the historical to the contemporary, from the public to the private. And although in a traditional sense, *Taverner* may be regarded as grand opera or, as the composer described it, an opera with 'a capital O', in truth, it is anything but. There is a paucity of set-pieces, a notable absence of the heroic aria, introspective monologue, love duet or congregational chorus, until Act II, scene iv where it is used for subvervise purposes. The privation of these formulaic devices suggests that Davies has created an anti-opera which parodies the very genre itself.

[180] Andrew Clements, 'Wheels with wheels', *The New Statesman*, 15 July 1983.

Epilogue

The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing.[1]

This ancient Greek epigram has been appropriated many times by thinkers including, perhaps, most famously, Isaiah Berlin. In his essay about Leo Tolstoy and the philosophy of history, Berlin adopted it to make the distinction between people who are fascinated by many things (foxes) and those (hedgehogs) who believe in one central thing.[2]

Meirion Bowen also drew upon this aphorism when he described Harrison Birtwistle as a hedgehog, whose output 'seems to gather itself together into a gigantic statement concerning the nature of music and musical expression' whereas Bowen regarded Peter Maxwell Davies as an 'undoubted' musical fox.[3] However, Arnold Whittall has argued that both Birtwistle and Davies know 'one big thing' although each approaches it in a different way. He suggested that the 'one big thing' which Davies knows is how to be a modernist composer through his ability to challenge synthesis and integration whilst alluding to both.[4] In *Taverner*, synthesis and integration are challenged by fragmentation and deconstruction, both of which are referred to simultaneously. And, it is this sense of contradiction, inherent to the opera, in which lies both its strength and its weakness.

In 1972, *Taverner* bewitched and puzzled audiences and commentators alike. Nearly fifty years following its first performance, and five years after the composer's death, the opera remains, for many, challenging. It is conspicuous by its absence from the operatic stage. Arguably, it is the work's Janus-like character, a reflection of Taverner's own conflicted identity, which sustains and increases its enigmatic status. The opera is both an apprentice piece and a work of consolidation, it is grand opera and music-theatre, a synthesis of ancient and modern.

[1] Attributed to the Greek poet Archilochus (680-645 BC).
[2] Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, *An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History* (Second Edition), (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2013).
[3] Arnold Whittall, 'Comparatively Complex: Birtwistle, Maxwell Davies and Modernist Analysis', *Music Analysis*, Vol. 13, No.2/3 (July-Oct. 1994), p.140.
[4] Ibid.

Taverner is a work of many tensions, but its greatest tension lies within and is that which exists between John Taverner's conversion and the White Abbot's martyrdom. On one level, it represents the tension between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism whilst on another, it alludes to struggles between tradition and innovation, dogma and doubt. *Taverner* is pan-symbolic and possesses 'super-allegorical power.'[5] This is morality opera.

Davies himself recognised that compositional tensions also existed within the work. He stated that,

> …one of the criticisms of it is that what I learnt from the German-Austrian traditions, were not quite in the same focus as what I learnt from the medieval-Renaissance traditions, and very often I feel that the transformation techniques which I used were really incompatible with the large forms based on Germanic models. And after I'd written the opera, long before I'd heard it [i.e. the period 1970-72], I was conscious of that as a problem…[6]

The composer sought to rectify the 'problem' in the short-form works which followed *Taverner.* In *Eight Songs, Revelation and Fall* and other pieces, traditional ideas (forms, styles and music) could be 'worn and dropped very much like masks and they could be as meaningful or as meaningless as various masks.'[7] Davies delighted in mask-play. He once described *Blind Man's Buff* (Op. 51) as a work about 'identity crises expressed through mask imagery' adding that 'you can make otherwise impossible statements behind a mask.'[8]

Equally, it is possible to suggest that *Taverner* wears multiple masks. Only by unpeeling them will the opera's many themes, structures, imagery and those 'impossible statements' be revealed and its perceived 'web of allusions' become untangled. Dramatically and symbolically, the Jester's removal of his mask to uncover himself as Death is a turning point in the opera as Taverner is challenged to distinguish true from false, black from white. On another level, Davies's grotesque, neo-expressionistic compositional style is a different

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[5] Bayan Northcott, *Music & Musicians* (July 1972).
[6] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones and Richard McGregor, 'Form and Architecture', *The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2020), p.156. See, Peter Maxwell Davies, 'Tradition and an Individual Talent,' 13 March 1984, British National Sound Archive, T8585WR and B688/1.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Davies, quoted from a letter to Gerard McBurney in Nicholas Jones and Richard McGregor, 'Compositional Technique and Process', op. cit., p.64.

mask which, when removed, reveals in the *Second Taverner Fantasia,* a hyper-expressive, luxuriant Romantic musical personality, which, until then, has been obscured.

Only in the opera's endgame is Taverner confronted by his own crisis of identity, when, following the White Abbot's valedictory, stoical aria, does he realise that through self-betrayal he has lost everything. John Warnaby has understood that,

> The dignity of the White Abbot's extended aria prior to his execution underlines the falsity of Taverner's 'conversion.' Moreover, the White Abbot's execution renders Taverner's 'redemption' meaningless, since this is the only reward he receives for his renunciation of Catholicism and music. Having been tricked into an acceptance of the role of persecutor in the name of 'reform,' Taverner is left to face the full implications of what he has lost as a result of his sacrifice.[9]

This theme of betrayal resonates with the Faust legend. In Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, Faustus learns the dark art of necromancy and sells his soul to Lucifer in exchange for an afterlife in Hell. Taverner betrays himself, and others 'for the sake of simplifying [his] earthly existence' and, where Faust seeks to exert power over the world, Taverner 'is gulled into attaining the same end by having his field of action drastically reduced.'[10] Joseph Kerman also found an analogue in Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* when he contended that,

> *Taverner* as a whole seems to echo some of the astonishing pieces of non-music described in that book, such as the *Apocalypsis cum figuris* and *Dr. Fausti Wehe-klage*. The latter 'symphonic cantata' in particular, Adrian Leverkühn's first fully serial work, recalls *Taverner* as a brilliant purely-musical structure in the service of a searching investigation, by means of a sixteenth-century myth, of the modern artistic conscience *in extremis*.[11]

This 'searching investigation' of the 'modern artistic conscience *in extremis'* is central to *Taverner.* The opera charts the protagonist's demise, spiritually and psychologically. *Docktor Faustus* has been described as a work of nihilism, yet *Taverner* surely is not. Although, an early iteration of the opera's libretto included the concluding lines: 'the heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made; in the net which they hid is their own foot taken,'[12] Davies

[9] John Warnaby, *The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies based on the writings of George Mackay Brown,* PhD thesis (The Open University, 1991), pp.iii-iv.
[10] Paul Griffiths, programme note from the original production, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.
[11] Joseph Kerman, 'Popish Ditties', *Tempo* No.102, (1972), p.22.
[12] Paul Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies* (London, Robson Books, 1982), p.53.

revised it and, in the final version, the protagonist pleads God not to forsake him. The music does not end, it fades to *niente*, there is no unequivocal double bar-line.

Tippett's *King Priam* was composed in close proximity to *Taverner*. Like Taverner, Priam endures a nightmare and through his three solo monologues undergoes a psychological collapse from the confident, outward and assertive to his final, reflective inner dialogue. Ian Kemp has interpreted the final scene of *King Priam* as if 'Priam is almost entirely submerged in the blind momentum which cuts through him as if he had not been there. Priam has ceased to be a human figure at all.'[13] The parallel with Taverner's plight is clear. In the closing moments of *Taverner,* Rose Parrowe sings 'the Lord has led thee and caused thee to walk into darkness, he has filled thee with bitterness, he has made thee a stranger, drunk with wormwood.' Taverner, like Priam, has become dehumanised. Undeniably, both operas are motivated by a hopeless sense of tragedy, but there is also an ambivalence. In *King Priam* there is joy and sorrow which may be viewed in the opera's coda as a 'kind of disclaimer.'[14] Here the focus shifts away from the characters to the music and 'it becomes the means by which the tragedy can, in some sense, be uplifting.'[15] It represents a moment of release. The closing moments of *Taverner* may not be so elevating but Taverner's *In Nomine* is therapeutic as it ends the opera quietly. Analogously, in *King Priam*, it is at a calm point in Act III, after announcing that only 'timeless music' will convey the transcendent experience of Priam's death, when Hermes delivers Tippett's own credo on the therapeutic power of music to communicate that which is incommunicable.

O divine music,
O stream of sound,
In which the states of soul
Flow, surfacing and drowning,
While we sit watching from the bank
The mirrored world within, for
'Mirror upon mirror mirrored is all the show,'
O divine music,
Melt our hearts,
Renew our love.[16]

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[13] Ian Kemp, *Tippett. The composer and his music* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987), p.369.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., p.370.
[16] Ibid., p.359.

The marriage of 'divine music,' prose, poetry and artifice, has, in opera, evolved to become the art-form through which composers have sought to mediate humanity's most profound and universal truths. In this 'mirrored world,' *Parsifal* is Wagner's final and redemptive masterpiece, Berg's *Lulu* tells a story of greed and lust, rise and fall whilst *Fidelio* is Beethoven's revolutionary manifesto on freedom and justice. It is possible to suggest that the three *Taverner* Fantasias resonate with the three *Leonora* overtures of Beethoven's *Fidelio*.[17] Composed during the Napoleonic Wars, *Fidelio* is, in part, a discourse on empowerment and liberty whereas *Taverner*, written during the Cold War, offers new perspectives on disempowerment and persecution. It is the 'blueprint for Davies's obsession with dogma and transformation, established by an anti-authoritarian stance, an interest in symbolism and betrayal and a concern with the difficulty of distinguishing truth from falsity, or the real from the unreal.'[18]

In the opera's closing moments, Taverner, now alone and deserted by his muse, sings 'Oh God, I call upon thy name, out of the lowest dungeon….' Majel Connery has written that,

> If the absence of Christ, the failure of the divine to manifest itself in a way we can see and grasp, is the implied endpoint of all the repetition, Davies's works still fall short of nihilism. If Christ *could* arrive, if the divine might manifest, then god could exist, perhaps even *ought* to exist. I argue that Davies's project, ultimately, is not the statement, 'There is no god,' but rather the question, 'Where is god?' *Taverner* and *Resurrection* testify to the persistence of that question.[19]

In *Taverner*, it is the presence of the Jester/Death who affirms the 'failure of the divine to manifest itself.' It is the Jester/Death who is the controller of destinies. In the Street Passion Play of Act I, scene iv he assumes the role of Joking Jesus and, in accordance with things

[17] Stephen Pruslin has suggested that it is possible to compare the three *Leonora* overtures to the three *Taverner Fantasias* (if *Worldes Blis* is also regarded as one of them). However, Pruslin argues that the overtures were written as integral to *Fidelio* whereas the *Fantasias* were not intended to be placed within *Taverner*. However, Pruslin does conclude that the overtures, like the Fantasias, were 'hovering under the shadow of an opera about which composer was obsessed, and all mediating on the same spiritual territory, which seems larger than a piece of music can exhaust.' See, Stephen Pruslin, 'Returns and Departures: recent Maxwell Davies', *Tempo* (No.113, June 1975), p.22.
[18] David Beard in Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (co-editors), '*Taverner:* an interpretation', *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge, CUP, 2009), p.80.
[19] Majel Connery, 'Peter Maxwell Davies's Worst Nightmare: Staging the Unsacred in the operas *Taverner* and *Resurrection', Opera Quarterly*, Vol.25, No 3-4, (2010), p.266.

Faustian, reveals a Godless world in which to create a God after one's own image is to call up the devil.[20]

'The world turns on its dark side….' sings the chorus at the start of *A Child of our Time.* It was into this turbulent and uncertain world that *Taverner* was born, an opera written in the long shadow of the Hiroshima bomb. Bayan Northcott has understood that although some 'political pressures may appear to have receded,' in the first decades of the twenty-first century they have been replaced by the rise of religious fundamentalism. Because of that, *Taverner* is enduringly relevant and even 'more immediate.'[21] Writing in 2002, Davies cited Isaiah Berlin's 'seminal observations' as key in the appropriation of 'truth' and to accomplish 'a coming-of-age in terms of the history of human belief and awareness, so to avoid in the twenty-first century the genocide, war, political and racial dogma which dominated the twentieth-century.[22] Davies stated that,

> It is against those terrible uncertainties that I compose music: it is an attempt to keep alive, and even to achieve some kind of sanity, while still remaining aware. I make no claims for lasting qualities or wider significance – it is one person's effort to come to terms, with no compromise, no surrender, and, in the first instance to make the very continuation of my own life possible. Of course, I am always more than pleased when anyone else listens sympathetically.[23]

The composer's message of 'no compromise, no surrender' remains stronger than ever. In a world which is increasingly polarised, *Taverner* demands that we listen not with sympathy, but with empathy.

The opera is pivotal in Davies's completed oeuvre and shines a light upon his stylistic evolution. Characterised by a refusal to compromise and an over-abundance of ideas, *Taverner* is, in the manner of Mozart's *Idomeneo* and Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*, the work of a young man in full creative flight. It charts Davies's development as an artist. The opera is a conduit from his apprenticeship into the world of neo-expressionistic music theatre pieces and beyond. *Taverner* contextualises the music which it spawned and

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[20] Michael Chanan, 'Dialectics in Peter Maxwell Davies', *Tempo* No.90 (Autumn 1969), p.12.
[21] Bayan Northcott, '*Taverner* - Then and Now', NMC CD D157, sleeve note (2009), p.4.
[22] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'A Composer's Point of View (III): On Religion', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.230.
[23] Ibid.

explains that which followed, much of which is a distilled and potent expression of the opera. In part, *Taverner* is autobiographical. In writing it, Davies recognised that his own aesthetic and personal crises were mirrored by those of Taverner and, upon the work's completion, the composer confronted the Antichrist 'within my [sic] own self.'[24] The absence of a credible alternative to the modernist language of the avant-garde, with its refutation of traditional form, harmony and melody, demanded that Davies would find alternative musical means with which to satisfy his expressive needs. Hence, in the opera's closing moments the composer affirms the past and puts his faith in the established, ancient musical tenets of modality, counterpoint and harmony as articulated by his alter-ego, John Taverner.

Taverner represents a coming-of-age. There was an inevitability about its composition. Its creation was cathartic, since, unlike the eponymous composer who lost his voice, Peter Maxwell Davies discovered his. Because of that, he must have the final word.

> I hope my work has some of the luminosity of lumen I perceive: I have no easy message of salvation, only an urgent cry: be aware! It is only by going beyond personal salvation, that beyond all the racket that single-answer born-again brigades, sorry victims of conversion syndrome, make about it, that anything of the world, including ourselves, might be saved, perhaps.[25]

[24] Davies, quoted in Paul Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies* (London, Robson Books, 1982), p.150.
[25] Davies, quoted in Nicholas Jones (ed.), 'A Composer's Point of View (III): On Religion', *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings* (Cambridge, CUP, 2018), p.229.

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Appendices

Appendix 1
Principal textual sources: Act I, scene iii

Peter Maxwell Davies, '*Taverner:* Synopsis and Documentation'
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Appendix 2
Concert programme, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra
8 November 2009

LIBRETTO

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The Throne Room: flourishes; enter KING, *with train, regalia, standard, etc.; among his train the* JESTER *(later* DEATH*), masked with set grin; enter from opposite side the* CARDINAL *alone. A small group of musicians plays on stage, aside.*

The KING *mounts dais,* JESTER *prostrates before him,* CARDINAL *goes down on knees, all bow low.* KING *seats himself on throne, feet on the* JESTER. CARDINAL *kisses his ring.*

KING

Our good Lord Cardinal, we thank you
with all our heart for your great
labour sustained daily on our behalf,
which service by your kind master and
King cannot be forgotten, of which
fault we trust God we never be accused.

HENRY VIII *(to Wolsey)*

Mine own good cardinal, I recommend me unto you with all my heart, and thank you for the great pain and labour that you do daily take in my business and matters, desiring you (that when you have established them) to take some pastime and comfort, to the intent you may the longer endure to serve us, for always pain cannot be endured.

[Byrne, p.28]

HENRY *(to Wolsey, 1527)*

My Lord, this shall be to thank you of your great pains and travail you have sustained since your departure here for our business and causes, wherein you have done to us no little honour, pleasure and profit, and, to our realm an infinite goodness, which service cannot be by a kind master be forgotten, of which fault I trust I shall never be accused, specially to your warde, which so laboriously do serve me.

[Byrne, p.48]

We, pondering the present state of
Christianity in our realm, miserably
afflicted with dissension, note with
regret how the dignity of the See
Apostolic is thereby diminished.

HENRY VIII *(to Gardiner, Byran, Casale and Vannes, 1529, upon Pope Clement VII's illness)*

His Highness, pondering and profoundly considering the present state of Christendom, miserably and piteously afflicte(d) with the intestine wars, dissentions and disorders reigning amongst the princes of the same, and how the dignity of the See Apostolic is not thereby a little diminished, and like to come to total ruin, and remembering his great cause of matrimony committed to the Papal Court . . .

[Byrne, p.95]

KING

We trust that reformations by you meant and begun, should take root and prosper even, that we should thereby prosper, for our enterprises have great need of that prosperity which you, Lord Cardinal, so well understand.

HENRY VIII (*to Wolsey upon his appointment of Isabel Jordan to the Priory at Wilton*)
The love I bear you (quem diligo castigo) causeth me thus to break my mind—I do think (cum agendum) touching the redress of religion, that, for the wealth of your soul and mind, I dare be bolder with you than with any, that the procedures by you meant and begun, should talk felice and prosper, those religious houses (that) would not grant to their Soverign in his necessity (not by a great deal) so much as they have to you for (the) building of your College.

[Byrne, p.76]

JESTER
(*Lifts his head, makes + sign*)
Cardinalis Pacificus. Est quidem Vir, ut uno ore praedicant omnes, unus prope inter nobiles eruditus, animoque plane philosophico.
He is pushed down by the KING'*s foot.*

ERASMUS (*on Cramer*)

Est enim Vir, ut uno ore preadicant omnes, unus prope inter nobiles eruditus, animoque plane philosophico.

[Strype]

CARDINAL
England is our storehouse of delights, a very inexhaustible well, where much abounds, and much can be extracted from many.

POPE LEO X (*attrib.*)
Truly England is our storehouse of delights, a very inexhaustible well; and where much abounds much can be extorted from many.

[Paris, IV, pp. 546-7.]

[The proceeds of the sale of indulgencies in England went to the rebuilding of St. Peter's. Wolsey was in charge in England of this traffic, and successfully stood out for Henry VIII's receiving a third of the income from this.]

KING
Herein do you show your carnal wit, which in preaching you disprize so much. And yet our expenses are truly great, and like to be greater, considering this great matter of state . . .

HENRY VIII (*on Cardinal Wolsey*)

[Byrne]

JESTER (*interrupting, reads from imaginary scroll*)
Item: gold plate given to Cardinal .. .. 9 marks
Item: presents to Queen .. .. 2 marks
Item: bribes to Venetian ambassadors .. 6 marks
Item: divers presents to the King's ten mistresses .. .. 20 marks
He is pushed down by the KING'*s foot.*

Royal Expenditure List of 1528

[Brewer IV, p. 3874]

KING
—A matter of state which lies nearest our heart . . .

JESTER *(interrupting)*
Good love then fly thou to her,
And see if thou canst woo her.

(whispering)
Greater court is paid to her than ever
was to the Queen.

Putting on paper crown in imitation of KING *and parodying him.*

I trust soon to see you again, which to
me, will be more sovereign remedy than
all the precious stones in the world.

KING
—which greviously offends our conscience,
and that our marriage to the Queen, which
appears contrary to God's law, as she was
once our brother's wife, which we fear
illegal. To this sin we attribute the death
of all our male children, and dread the
heavy wrath of God, if we persist. We are
resolved to apply for a remedy to Rome,
trusting that, for our services to the
Church, this scruple may be removed from
our mind, and a method discovered to take
another wife, and, God willing, ensure
the succession.

The Queen we honour and love, and mind
to treat as our sister, with all manner
of kindness, placing her in a nunnery;

While the Gentlewoman we have in mind
is passing virtuous, for her constant
virginity, her soberness, her meekness,
and her (apparent) aptness to the
procreation of children.

(Wishing myself in my sweetheart's
arms, whose pretty ducks I trust
shortly to kiss.)

JESTER
Quod Deus conjunxit homo non separet.

HENRY VIII *(to Anne Boleyn)*

[Byrne]

FRENCH AMBASSADOR (1528)
Mademoiselle Boleyn is come to London, the King lodging her in a very fine lodging, which he has furnished very near his own. Greater court is paid to her every day than has been for a long time paid to the Queen.

HENRY VIII *(to Anne Boleyn)*
Beseeching you to be governed by his [the Doctor's] advice in all things concerning your malady, [the sweating sickness] by which doing I trust soon to see you again, which to me will be more soverign remedy than all the precious stones in the world.

[Byrne, p.70]

WOLSEY *(to Sir Gregory Casale, 1527)*
The King attributes the death of all his male children, and dreads the heavy wrath of God if he persists. Notwithstanding his scruples of conscience, he is resolved to apply for his remedy to the Holy See, trusting that, out of consideration of his services to the Church, the Pope will not refuse to remove the scruple out of the King's mind, and discover a method whereby he may take another wife, and, God willing, have male children.

[Byrne, p.63]

CARDINAL WOLSEY *(to the Pope)*
[the King's desire] is grounded upon justice, and not from any grudge of displeasure to the Queen, whom the King honours and loves, and minds to love and treat as his sister, with all manner of kindness . . .But as this matrimony is contrary to God's law, the King's conscience is grievously offended. On the other side the approved, excellent virtuous (qualities) of the said gentlewoman (Anne Boleyn) the purity of her life, her constant virginity, her maidenly and womanly pudicity, her soberness, chasteness, meekness, humility, wisdom, descent of right noble and high thorough regal blood, education in all good and laudable (qualities) and manners, apparent aptness to the procreation of children, with her other infinite good qualities, more to be regarded and esteemed than the only progeny.

[Ellis]

HENRY VIII *(to Anne Boleyn)*

[Byrne, p.82[

[Matthew XIX v. 6]

CARDINAL

Sir, his Holiness the Pope is in captivity: how may we expect him to pronounce your marriage illegal?

CARDINAL WOLSEY (*to Henry VIII, upon the Pope being for the second time the prisoner of Emperor Charles V*).
Sir, by the only calling of God, you be made Defender of the Christian faith; now consider in what state the Church of Christ standeth; see how the Head of the Church is in captivity: see how the holy fathers be brought into thraldom and be without comfort: now show yourself an aid, a defender of the Church of Christ, and God shall reward you.

KING
We want nought but a declaration whether the marriage be valid or no; were an Angel to descend from heaven, he could not persuade us of its validity.

HENRY VIII

[Byrne, p.86]

We think the Pope delays overmuch; as soon as the trumpet of dissension blows between Rome and us, this will be a most propitious occasion to strike at papal power, which always was to us a willow tree, shewing fair buds and leaves, yet never any fruit.

As soon as the trumpet of dissention (between Rome and us) bloweth, this will be a most propice occasion to strike at Papal power, which always was to us as a willow tree, shewing fair buds and leaves, yet never any fruit.

[Byrne, p.106]

CARDINAL (*aside*)
Often have I kneeled before him the space of an hour or two, to persuade him from his will and appetite, but without result.

WOLSEY (*of Henry VIII*)
I have often kneeled before him, (in his privy chamber) the space of an hour or two, to persuade him from his will and appetite, but I could never bring to pass to dissuade him therefrom.

[Cavendish, p. 321]

If the Pope is not compliant, then also will my life be shortened, as the King will hold me culpable.

In these dangerous times, considering the premises, I am a humble suitor to the Pope to grant the King's request, not so much as the King's servant, but as one who has certain knowledge of what the result must be.

If the Pope is not compliant, my life will be shortened, and I dare not anticipate the consequences. I am the more urgent as the King is absolutely resolved to satisfy his conscience; and if this cannot be done he will of two ends choose the least, and the disregard for the Papacy must grow daily, especially in these dangerous times. Considering the premises, I am an humble suitor to the Pope to grant this request, not so much as an English subject, as one who has certain knowledge of what the result must be.

[Brewer IV, p.3644]

(Anne Boleyn was Wolsey's enemy. See affair of Wilton Abbey, where Anne requested of Henry that her mother Eleanor be made Abbess, whereupon Wolsey appointed Isabel Jordan, and was rebuked by the King.)

JESTER
Where the word of a King is, there is power, and who shall say unto him, What doest thou?

[Ecclesiastes VIII, v. 4].

CARDINAL (*to King*)

We have caused to be done all possible
on your Majesty's behalf. Plainly His
Holiness will do nothing to help.

BYRAN (*to Henry VIII, 1528, in reply to above letter to Gardiner, Byran, Casale and Vannes*).
We have done and caused to be done all possible. Plainly His Holiness will do nothing for your grace. There is no hope of recovery, nothing will serve.
[Byrne, pp.103-4]

KING
We begin to doubt if the Creature of
Rome have the divine authority to say
us yea or nay.
God and our conscience are on good
terms—however reluctant, we may be
driven to seek justice elsewhere, out of
the laws of the Popish Church—
for the quiet of our conscience.

WOLSEY
If the King cannot obtain justice in this way, he will be compelled to seek it elswhere, and live out of the laws of the Church, and however reluctant, he will be driven to this for the quiet of his conscience.
[Ellis, p.187]

HENRY VIII

Though the law of every man's conscience
be but a private court, yet it is the
highest and supreme court for judgement
or justice.
It bodes ill for the Church of Rome.

[Byrne, p.86]

KING *rises,* CARDINAL *kisses his ring, exit* KING *with train (except* JESTER*) to flourish.*

CARDINAL WOLSEY
I do tremble to consider the end of all
this high and new enterprise. For
ofttimes it has been that to a new
enterprise there follows a new manner
and strange sequel.

[Ellis I, p.214]

Exit CARDINAL. *Lights dim.*

JESTER (*alone still lying on his side, his head propped on his elbow*)
When the Lion knows his strength, hard
it is to rule him.

[Sir Thomas More]

(*standing up*)
The cords of hell encompass us about,
(*pulling off mask*)
and the floods of ungodliness
(*revealing skull-face of Death*)
make me afraid.

[Psalm XVIII, 4-5]

Total darkness, except for his skull-face, spotlighted.

BBC SCOTTISH SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

Sunday, 8 November 2009 at 7.00pm
City Halls, Glasgow

Peter Maxwell Davies at 75

TAVERNER
Sir Peter Maxwell Davies

John Taverner	Daniel Norman (tenor)
Richard Taverner	Richard Angas (bass)
Cardinal/Archbishop	Martyn Hill (tenor)
King/Archangel Michael/Captain	Stephen Richardson (bass)
Jester/Death	David Wilson-Johnson (bass)
White Abbot	Roderick Williams (bass)
Priest/God	Andrew Watts (counter-tenor)
Boy	Michael Yeoman (treble)
Antichrist/Second Monk	Stephen Jeffes (spoken/tenor)
Archangel Gabriel/First Monk	Christopher Bowen (tenor)
Rose/Virgin Mary	Susan Bickley (mezzo-soprano)

Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama Chamber Choir and University of Glasgow Chapel Choir
Oliver Rundell and **James Grossmith** chorus masters

RSNO Junior Chorus
Christopher Bell chorus master

Martyn Brabbins conductor

Welcome to City Halls for this concert performance of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies's iconic morality opera *Taverner* – a mighty climax to Glasgow's celebrations for 'Max at 75'. The opera, begun in 1956 and in gestation for some 16 years, was premiered in London in 1972, and today is considered by many to be one of the composer's greatest creations – a seminal dramatic work in Max's life. For this evening's performance, we are delighted to bring together the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, a cast featuring the best of Britain's vocal talent, combined choirs from the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, University of Glasgow and the RSNO Junior Chorus, all led by one of the UK's leading exponents of Max's music, the conductor Martyn Brabbins. We hope you enjoy the evening.

Tonight's concert performance of *Taverner* is being recorded for broadcast in *Opera on 3* on Saturday 28 November at 6.00pm.

bbc.co.uk/radio3

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Please keep coughs and sneezes well muffled ~ thank you.
The use of cameras, video or sound-recording equipment is prohibited.
Latecomers will be admitted at a suitable break in performance.

The performance will run for approximately 2 hours and 20 minutes, including an interval.

Opera on 3 is BBC Radio 3's weekly slot for recordings and occasional live transmissions from the UK opera companies including the Royal Opera House, English National Opera and Opera North and also for live broadcasts from the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. This season's programme includes operas from Handel to Maxwell Davies. *Opera on 3* is broadcast on Saturdays at 6.00pm.

TAVERNER

(1962–68/1970)

An Opera in Two Acts by Peter Maxwell Davies

Libretto by the Composer

Programme Note by Paul Griffiths

Davies's opera is based on episodes from the life and legend of John Taverner, one of the outstanding English composers of the early Tudor period. It is the story of a man whose conversion to some ruthless system of belief causes him to deny essential parts of himself, for Taverner was once supposed to have stopped composing at the time of Reformation and turned to the persecution of the church he had once adorned with his music.

The first scene finds him on trial before the White Abbot, accused of following the Lutheran heresy. Witnesses are heard, and the chorus comments, but before judgement can be given Taverner is saved by the intervention of the Cardinal (not named as Wolsey), who needs him for his art. Act 1, Scene 2 shows him debating for himself the religious meaning of his music, while monks chant. Then the scene shifts from chapel to throne room, where the King (not named as Henry VIII) is instructing the Cardinal to obtain him a divorce, while both seem to be puppets in the hands of the Jester; the orchestra here is silent, the scene being accompanied by music for an on-stage ensemble (in the original London production this was performed by a Renaissance period ensemble, The Early English Consort of London, Director: David Munrow). The Jester, or Death as he becomes, then calls forth Taverner (and the orchestra). Taverner is confused by cheapjack religious stunts, and brought to seize a sword against Catholic iniquities.

The second act is again in four scenes, and is a black version of the first. There is first another trial, nightmarishly accelerated, in which Taverner is now the judge and the White Abbot the accused, the crime this time being that of adhering to the old religion. At the climax a Wheel of Fortune appears, ridden by the Jester. Then comes a second throne room scene, again accompanied by Renaissance instruments, though now in tart parodies of period dances and keyboard pieces that carry the action forward through the sixteenth century. Monarch and churchman discuss the progress of the Reformation, while the Jester revests the latter as an Anglican Archbishop. The second chapel scene has the White Abbot and his monks at mass, while Taverner criticizes himself for his earlier credulity. A captain enters and spills the consecrated wine, whereupon the monks leave, singing an original Benedictus by Taverner. The final scene is then a big choral tableau in which the White Abbot is brought forward for burning at the stake, and in which Taverner becomes aware that he has destroyed the better part of himself.

The first production, at Covent Garden in 1972, was on a single set, but the score includes orchestral transitions that allow for scene changes, quite apart from their function of hurrying forward the continuous musical flow. There was a production in Stockholm in 1984, and the American premiere took place in Boston in 1986.

© *programme note kindly supplied by Paul Griffiths, 2009*

Born in Wales, Paul Griffiths worked for thirty years as a music critic in London and New York. Among his many books on music are The New Penguin Dictionary of Music *and* A Concise History of Western Music *(Cambridge University Press) as well as, long ago, a study of tonight's composer. His most recent book is a novel,* let me tell you *(Reality Street Editions).*

PREFACE TO THE SCORE

John Taverner was born around 1495, probably in Tattershall, whence he was summoned in 1526 by Wolsey to Cardinal's College, Oxford, for the post of "Informator", which included playing the organ, and looking after the choristers at St. Frideswide's, now the Cathedral Church of Christ.

In 1528 he was accused, along with others employed at the college, of heresy, but was released from prison at the personal intervention of Cardinal Wolsey.

After the religious changes brought about by Henry VIII, Taverner became an agent of Thomas Cromwell, and a ruthless persecutor and destroyer of monastic establishments. We assume he gave up music – the works we know predate this period. Foxe records that he "repented him very much that he had made songs to popish ditties in the time of his blindness", but the fact remains that these "songs" are as fine as anything written in Europe at the time, and constitute some of the best music of our English inheritance.

The letters describing the burning of the Rood and the monk at Boston, quoted in Act Two, Scene 4, are from Taverner's own hand, addressed to Cromwell.

In the text, I have not only drawn on the few facts known of Taverner, but combed state papers, letters, contemporary sermons, biographies, diaries, poetry, plays, records of heresy trials, etc., to give the record of John Taverner as wide an application and meaning as possible. The text, therefore, consists of quotations, applied and ordered to suit the sense and circumstance.

I started sketching it in 1956, while studying in Manchester, and completed the text in 1962 at Princeton, New Jersey, and the music in 1968 in Dorset. After the fire at my cottage there, some of it had to be reworked from sketches.

Peter Maxwell Davies, London, 1970

[The World Premiere of *Taverner* was given at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London, on Wednesday 12 July 1972, conducted by Edward Downes]

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ACT ONE

Scene One	A Courtroom
Scene Two	The Chapel
Scene Three	The Throne Room
Scene Four	The Same

ACT TWO

Scene One	The Courtroom
Scene Two	The Throne Room
Scene Three	The Chapel
Scene Four	The Market – Place in Boston, Lincolnshire

CHARACTERS

John Taverner
Richard Taverner, later St. John
Cardinal, later Archbishop
King
Jester, later Death and Joking Jesus
White Abbot
Priest-Confessor, later God The Father
Boy
Captain
Antichrist
Two Archangels: Gabriel/Michael
Two Monks
Rose Parrowe, later The Virgin Mary

Chorus

Act I Sc. I	Council
Act II Sc. I & 2	Council
Act I Sc. 2	Monks
Act II Sc. 3	Monks
Act I Sc. 4	Demons/Townspeople
Act II Sc. 4	Choirboys

ACT ONE, SCENE I

A courtroom discovered. Decor, dress, etc., all in bold black and white only. The only colour in this scene to be the Cardinal's scarlet attire. The entrance left-centre raised by a few steps, across it a large black curtain, with St. Michael the Archangel depicted, white, holding sword and balance. Present in the court – a learned council of men, the four witnesses (Taverner's father Richard, his mistress Rose Parrowe, his Priest-Confessor, a boy of his choir-school), also a religious novice stationed by the St. Michael curtain, to work this. As the curtain rises, the White Abbot enters by the St. Michael entrance, and mounts his high Judge's desk. The court is upstanding the White Abbot sits, all are then seated.

WHITE ABBOT
Call John Taverner, musician, blasphemer, corruptor, heretic.

[Enter by St. Michael entrance John Taverner, shackled, led by a monk who takes up a position on the opposite side of the curtain to the novice]

WHITE ABBOT
John Taverner, you are accused of possessing heretical books, and of spreading damnable heresies on the holy sacraments, contrary to the law of the Holy Roman Church. How make you answer to these charges?

JOHN TAVERNER
My Lord, the first charge I grant, though the books be not mine; as to the second, of one body of Christ is made two bodies, one natural, which is in heaven, the other, in the sacrament, needs be unnatural, to enter the mouth in the form of bread, and be disposed of therewith. What comfort can be to any Christian to receive for a space Christ's unnatural body? Rather, Christ's body enters the whole man, in spirit alone. If it be shown me that the Pope is right, then would I submit myself, not only to kiss his feet, but another part also.

WHITE ABBOT
John Taverner, you are lusty and young, and can live long, if you will not willingly cut off your life by death at the stake.

COUNCIL
To those who purge our lands from heretical filth is promised highest reward of supernatural blessing.

WHITE ABBOT
Call Richard Taverner, of Corpus Christi Guild, father of the accused. *[Richard Taverner comes forward]*

WHITE ABBOT
Richard Taverner, see, your son is here accused of heresy. He rants against things holy.

RICHARD TAVERNER
My Lord Abbot, we always bade him ware of his wrath, which makes each man its fool; yet he made us into the fool, and would do us no reverence. We taught him to love the laws of God, to let friend and foe feel his love, to take God's name nought in idle, to slay no man, to help that all men be at one in keeping Christ's commandment. And yet his wrath did often turn against those he loved most, and also the things, and the precepts, for that he could not have them enough, or was denied some part, by the will of others, or by his own insufficiency. His music is witness that he believes. If my son blaspheme, it is against himself, and

I, by faults in my love, am like to be cause. My Lord Abbot, be merciful.

COUNCIL
It is our duty to rid the fold of heretical sheep, lest the whole flock be infected. *[Richard Taverner withdraws]*

WHITE ABBOT
Rose Parrowe, mistress of the accused. *[Rose comes forward]*

WHITE ABBOT
We would know what this man was, and what he is; by your word he may suffer death.

ROSE
Good my Lord, he was my steadfast heart, and I was his. But in this city is he fell among thieves, who would rob him of his heart, and in its place plant supposition based on hollow reason, empty of grace. He would purge his music, of which he called me soul, and with it all his loving. New-learned religions, doubting their faith, have brought him with their honeyed tongue into darkness, from which we, in Christ's name, must bring him out. My Lord, he is all my love and I am his; preserve us whole.

WHITE ABBOT
Mistress, he who befouls the holiest ground upon which we build our lives, perjures his soul. Such spread their disease; I am but an instrument for our common protection, against this, and the pains of hell. *[Rose stands back]*

COUNCIL
Our creed grants us the right to do to you that which, if it were done to us, would be an intolerable usurpation and spiritual tyranny.

WHITE ABBOT
Bring forward Taverner's Priest-confessor.

COUNCIL
Behold! God's representative on earth. *[The Priest, fat and bungling, stumbles forward, with leather wine bottle]*

PRIEST
The confessional is not violated, except for most urgent, high and stately reasons. *[Monk gives him bag of money]*

JOHN TAVERNER
True, as a child I was made to confess to those tripes, too drunken to hear, lewd, avaricious, a Judas.

PRIEST
He is a whoreson corruptor of youth. He had blasphemous thoughts the Pope is Antichrist, he refused payment for pardons or kissing saints' relics, he ate meat on fast-days.

WHITE ABBOT
What did he say of the Holy Sacrament?

PRIEST
My good Lord Abbot, he said, in my hands, it be mere indigestion, corrupt and filthy. Never was I...

WHITE ABBOT
We thank you, Father. *[Priest steps back]*

COUNCIL
Fides est virtus qua credentur quae non videntur. Nos quid quid illud significat faciamus, et quam sit verum, non laboremus.

WHITE ABBOT
The boy from Taverner's school, let him come forward.

JOHN TAVERNER
My good Lord Abbot, bring not the boy; must I be condemned from the mouth of one so young whom I love?

WHITE ABBOT
He is a baptised Christian; his word must be weighed. *[The boy steps forward]*

BOY
Lord Abbot, I discovered the Informator reading a book, which upon espying me he hid with others under the floor, and then did he beat us for singing false his Kyrie. And as he surveyed his image in the glass, he swore upon Mary to give the Whore of Rome just such a nose also....

COUNCIL
Religious liberty is a diabolical dogma, letting everyone find his own way to Hell.

JOHN TAVERNER
I must be saved by my own faith, not by that of others.

BOY
And when I supplicated St. Frideswide, he told me it be idolatry and superstition; that to Christ I should turn....

COUNCIL
If eternal death by excommunication be inflicted for any guilt, how much more then may bodily death? *[Boy steps back]*

WHITE ABBOT
We judge that you, John Taverner, have promulgated false doctrine, despising correction, even against the holy sacrament, endangering many souls. Having invoked the name of God to give just judgment, with God and the Holy Scriptures before our eyes, we condemn you, John Taverner, in the name of God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, to be bound and attached to a stake, as an example to others who would commit the like, and there be slowly burned. *[Fanfare: enter through the St. Michael door with a large silver cross each, 2 Priests, 2 Laymen with symbolic pillars, 2 Soldiers with pole-axes, The Cardinal, in scarlet, his train upheld by 2 Acolytes (boys) The court is upstanding]*

CARDINAL
My Lord Abbot and members of our holy court, I greet you well. Concerning Master Taverner, Informator of our Choristers, he is skilled at the playing of the organs, he takes great pains in the exercise of teaching, he is skilled at the art of prick-song, for the daily solemnities of our Chapel appointed, and withal hard in replacement, whom I am loath to lose. And so we must furnish him with the opportunity of arriving at truth, and not handle him unkindly with sharp inquisition, for his blind folly. Disputation is not his strength, he is but a poor musician, and so is he pardoned, the more speedily to reform himself. And so farewell, I must to Council. *[As Cardinal and train exeunt into wings, White Abbot falls on knees and prays. Council congratulate each other, John Taverner's shackles are removed, and he joins his father and mistress, while lights fade quickly]*

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

[follows straightway, after an orchestral transition]

[The Chapel. Monks enter for office. An altar, raised, above which rises a cross with the crucified Christ upon it, with figures of Mary and John at its foot: John Taverner sits at a high desk, aside, writing]

THE MONKS
Hoc opus est Johanni Taverni in regione Lindi nati, viri arte musica singularis. Qui cum in suspicionem venisset, accusatus quod libros haereticos sub plancheta scholae suae celavit, Cardinalis tamen ob musicam ejus peritiam ei ignovit: itaque effugit et, concepto consilio, regis fit minister in opprimenda fide catholica, Atque in epistola manu ipsius scripta audietis quomodo monachum qui libellos de rebus papisticis ediderit igni commiserit. Et ars quoque musica sua periit.

JOHN TAVERNER
[over their chanting]
If I follow their lying vanities, I shall forsake my own mercy. Their mercurial stone returns gold to dross. This is the vigil. Waiting, shall I arm against their justice, to purge us, to break our idols in our image, cut out our counterfeited hearts? Or is this the Devil's work? I created meaning, now, exiled, I must look it out afresh, new reality, by scorching reason. God is my strength.

THE MONKS
In te, Domine speravi, non confundar in aeternum. In justitia tua libera me. Inclina ad me aurem tuam, et salva me. Esto mihi in Deum protectorem, et in locum munitum: ut salvum me facias, quoniam firmamentum meum, et refugium meum es tu. Deus meus, eripe me de manu peccatoris, et de manu contra legem agentis et iniqui: quoniam tu es patientia mea Domine, spes mea a juventute mea. In te confirmatus sum ex utero; de ventre matris meae tu es protector meus. In te cantatio mea semper: tamquam prodigium factus sum multis, et tu adjutor fortis.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

[follows straightway after an orchestral transition]

[The Throne Room: flourishes; enter King, with train, regalia, standard, etc., among his train the Jester (later Death), masked with set grin; enter from opposite side the Cardinal alone. A small group of musicians plays on stage, aside. The king mounts dais, Jester prostrates before him, Cardinal goes down on knees, all bow low. King seats himself on throne, feet on the Jester. Cardinal kisses his ring]

KING
Our good Lord Cardinal, we thank you with all our heart for your great labour sustained daily on our behalf, which service by your kind master and King cannot be forgotten, of which fault we trust God we never be accused. We, pondering the present state of Christianity in our realm, miserably afflicted with dissension, note with regret how the dignity of the See Apostolic is thereby diminished. We trust that reformations by you meant and begun, should take root and prosper – even, that we should thereby prosper, for our enterprises have great need of that prosperity which you, Lord Cardinal, so well understand.

JESTER
[Lifts his head, makes a sign of the cross, rattles his jingling Johnny]
Cardinalis Pacifus. Est enim Vir, ut ore praedicant omnes, unus prope inter nobiles eruditus, animoque plane philosophico.
[He is pushed down by the King's foot]

CARDINAL
England is our storehouse of delights, a very inexhaustible well, where much abounds, and much can be extracted from many.

KING
Herein, do you show your carnal wit, which in preaching you despise so much. And yet our expenses are truly great, and like to be greater, considering this great matter of state....

JESTER
[Interrupting, reads from imaginary scroll]
Item: gold plate given to Cardinal. Nine marks.
Item: presents to Queen. Two marks.
Item: bribes to Venetian ambassadors. Six marks.
Item: divers presents to the King's ten mistresses. Twenty.
[He is pushed down by the King's foot]

KING
A matter of state which lies nearest our heart....

JESTER
[interrupting]
"Good love then fly thou to her, And see if thou canst woo her."
[whispering] Greater court is paid to her than ever was to the Queen. *[Putting on paper crown in imitation of King and parodying him]*
"I trust soon to see you again, which to me, will be more sovereign remedy than all the precious stones in the world."

KING
Which grievously offends our conscience, and that our marriage to the Queen, which appears contrary to God's law, as she was once our brother's wife, which we fear illegal. To this sin we attribute the death of all our male children, and dread the heavy wrath of God, if we persist. We are resolved to apply for a remedy to Rome, trusting that, for our services to the Church, this scruple may be removed from our mind, and a method discovered to take another wife, and, God willing, ensure the succession. The Queen we honour and love, and mind to treat as our sister, with all manner of kindness, placing her in a nunnery. While the Gentlewoman we have in mind is passing virtuous, for her constant virginity, her soberness, her meekness, her education, and her (apparent) aptness to the procreation of children. (Wishing myself in my sweetheart's arms, whose pretty ducks I trust shortly to kiss.)

JESTER
Quod Deus conjunxit homo non separet.

CARDINAL
Sir, his Holiness the Pope is in captivity; how may we expect him to pronounce your marriage illegal?

KING
We want naught but a declaration if the marriage be valid or no; were an Angel to descend from heaven, he could not persuade us of its validity. We think the Pope delays overmuch; as soon as the trumpet of dissension blows between Rome and us, this will be a most propitious occasion to strike at papal power, which

always was to us a willow tree, showing fair buds and leaves, yet never any fruit.

CARDINAL
[aside]
Often have I kneeled before him the space of an hour or two, to persuade him from his will and appetite, but without result. If the Pope is compliant, his mistress being my enemy, my life will be shortened. If the Pope is not compliant, then also will my life be shortened, as the King will hold me culpable. In these dangerous times, considering the premises, I am a humble suitor to the Pope to grant the King's request, not so much as the King's servant, but as one who has certain knowledge of what the result must be.

JESTER
Where the word of a King is, there is power, and who shall say unto him, "What doest thou?"

CARDINAL
[to King]
We have caused to be done all possible on your Majesty's behalf. Plainly His Holiness will do nothing to help.

KING
We begin to doubt if the Creature of Rome have the divine authority to say us yea or nay. God and our conscience are on good terms. However reluctant, we may be driven to seek justice elsewhere, out of the laws of the Popish Church for the quiet of our conscience. Though the law of every man's conscience be but a private court, yet it is the highest and supreme court for judgment or justice. It bodes ill for the Church of Rome.
[King rises, Cardinal kisses his ring, exit King with train (except Jester) to flourish]

CARDINAL
I do tremble to consider the end of all this high and new enterprise. For oft times it has been that to a new enterprise there follows a new manner and strange sequel.
[Exit Cardinal. Lights dim]

JESTER
[alone still lying on his side, his head propped on his elbow]
When the Lion knows his strength, hard it is to rule him. *[standing up]* The cords of hell encompass us about, *[pulling off mask]* and the floods of ungodliness *[revealing skull-face of Death]* make me afraid. *[Total darkness, except for his skull-face, spotlighted]*

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

[Continues from Scene 3 without a break]

[Death (the Jester) alone, his skull-face only spotlighted. From the Death's-head emerges the face of John Taverner, with eyes closed, spotlighted. The two heads are close together, surrounded by total darkness]

DEATH (JESTER)
John Taverner, what does the Lord require of thee?

JOHN TAVERNER
[surprised, opening his eyes]
Death! a thief! I am but a poor musician.

DEATH
Confess.

JOHN TAVERNER
What would you I confess?

DEATH
Is your soul unspotted as the Dove? If you would not burn below, confess, for your soul will be judged.
[Two Monks emerge from the blackness, one in a black and one in a white habit. The one in black has a white cross the length of his habit, the one in white a black cross. The faces of both are hidden in their cowls. Between them they hold the soul of John Taverner, as a large white dove]

THE TWO MONKS
Ab initio et ante saecula creatus est.

WHITE MONK
Discontent to sing, he incarnated what he dared not voice.

BLACK MONK
His spirit was moved from an unknown source he dared not question, yet he knew not what manner of spirit he was of.

BOTH MONKS
Know thyself. Love one another.

BLACK MONK
Though he understand all mysteries, yet have not love, it profits him nothing.

WHITE MONK
Wherever Christ is, there are Judas, Pilate and the whole Passion.

BOTH MONKS
[strangling the dove]
Anathema sit.
[The Black Monk removes his cowl to reveal noble features, and the White Monk simultaneously reveals the features of a Beast. They retire to the gloom where they put the dove into a furnace, which they operate with bellows. Upon the furnace, alchemical equipment, in which coloured liquids boil. The furnace emits a flickering glow which lights the monks' faces red in the darkness, through the remainder of the scene]

JOHN TAVERNER
I am confused. What must I do to be saved?

DEATH (JESTER)
Remember. Your assiduous study and learning from hidden books gave you scruples about the validity of your religion.

JOHN TAVERNER
I am but a poor, lank shadow of myself, so racked by acid doubt.

DEATH
But the indestructible heritage of the Church is heaped against you, Taverner the fourteen articles of faith (seven for the Trinity, and seven for the Sacred Humanity), the ten commandments of the Law, the two evangelical precepts of charity, the seven works of mercy, the seven deadly sins, the seven opposing virtues, and the seven sacraments of grace.
[As he speaks a confused heap of these articles gradually appears by the furnace – bibles, Moses' tablets, chalices, copes, crucibles,

offering boxes, wafers, bottles of vino sacro, pardons, relics of saints (parts of their bodies, also clouts, girdles, shoes, wheels, griddles, axes, scalpels, boulders, lions etc.) etc.]

JOHN TAVERNER
Arrogant superstitions, fantastic opinions, devised by the Antichrist of Rome to enslave the world. *[At the word 'Antichrist', a Pope in all regalia appears enthroned on the junk-heap. It has the black face of an ape]*

ANTICHRIST
[gives Apostolic Benediction and screeches]
The murder of a heretic is not only permitted but rewarded, it is a virtuous deed to slaughter protestants until all be extirped. Innocent.

DEATH
Taverner, you have yet time to burn for this....

JOHN TAVERNER
I would act before, compel universal renunciation of obedience to the Whore of Rome, suppression of his books, abolition of this heap of trumpery forever.
[turning turtle and disappearing in a scream of rage]

ANTICHRIST
Urbi et orbi!
[The Two Monks henceforth constantly feed the furnace with articles from the junk-heap]

DEATH
But this is not enough, John. You must reject not only this, but that total self your father reared, even your Mistress, your Music, that you whored to Rome.
[Enter slowly John Taverner's father, robed in full high-office of Guild of Corpus Christi, with Taverner's mistress, Rose as Music, with dulcimer and laurel wreath]

RICHARD TAVERNER
John, my son, will you reject us? Begot I then a thorn in your mother's side?

ROSE
Will you betray us, even us, your Music?

JOHN TAVERNER
[surprised and timid]
My mistress, my life, the soul of my creation.
[Rose comes forward to face Taverner]

DEATH
You must reject her, Taverner, abhor her seductions utterly.

ROSE
You used us, John, in the service of your Church, as was natural.

JOHN TAVERNER
I knew no better.

ROSE
You could not have used us otherwise. We were all you had, all you were, all that you can ever be. Without us you are less than yourself

JOHN TAVERNER
I traced your image in all that my hand created. When I was

alone and despised, you were the cause of my continuing and of my delivery. From your lips I drank in courage; your body was the house of my worship.

ROSE
And can be still! But you would recompense your lack of understanding by taking vengeance on others for what lies in your fault. It is not given you to understand divine nature, except it be implied in your creation, through your songs for the Church. So be content, for in denying this, you betray us, the only divine in you. Then you in turn will even be denied, to walk in darkness, consumed by a bitterness from which, though you transfer it to others, and spread bitterness about, you will never be free.

JOHN TAVERNER
My hands, my loins burn for your cool body, but to temper my heat reason will not allow.

ROSE
The Devil is in your reason, which is your conceit.

JOHN TAVERNER
That it is my nature to love you, with soul, heart and body, I dare not deny – I dare not deny you; and so must acid reason follow on.

ROSE
Pray Christ light your reason in humility, that died for it. Come, John, for both our sakes.

RICHARD TAVERNER
[takes the hands of John Taverner and Rose and joins them]
My beloved son.

[They make as if to go. Upon an urgent sign from Death, a cart is trundled in across their path, with a cross upon it, ready for a street passion mystery play, drawn by painted Demons with pitchforks]

DEMONS
Behold his body, in every place, how it is dight, and all to-rent man, for thy plight. Behold his hands and his feet, how they are knocked with nails great unto a tree. Have reverence to his Cross.
[Taverner, his Father and Rose go down on one knee and bow their heads, as on high, God the Father appears. He is the Priest of Scene I, in dazzling splendour of rainbow colours. Seven lamps around him in a semicircle, he sits upon a jewelled throne, in a magnificent robe, his right hand resting upon a huge book with seven seals. In attendance Two Archangels, Gabriel with sword, Michael with balance]

GOD THE FATHER
Ecce filius bastardus meus.

GOD THE FATHER and ARCHANGELS
Ipsum audite.
[Death bows, and mounts the Cross, ostentatiously, as Joking Jesus. The Demons place huge rubber nails in his hands, outstretched against the wood. Rose takes up the station of Mary, Richard Taverner that of John]

JOKING JESUS
[crucified; throughout this speech, a Demon bangs a tabor to time]
I pray you people that pass me by. That lead your life so pleasantly. How have I grieved you? Answer me, that thou betray me thus to Rome, and all through thine error. If thus thy life in sin be led, Mercy to ask be right a-dread; the least drop of blood

thou for me shed, Will purge thee through, if thou repent what thou hast done, and strive in arms for me. I will not be angered with you, John, if you now do war for me, for mercy I him grant pardon, that whored my corse in Rome.

MARY
Art thou my Son?

JOHN
Art thou my Lord?

JOHN TAVERNER
[shrunken in on himself, dazed]
Here is the rest of all your business. Here is the port of peace, and restfulness.
To them that stand in storms of disease. Only refuge to wretches in distress...
Pray for me on high. Now God me guy, I fear me I, with doleful cry, I shall a-by....

JOKING JESUS
Take up thy bed, and trot.
[He detaches the oversize Joke nail, and offers his left hand to Taverner. Taverner takes it, receiving a large bloodstain on his right, which he looks at, dazed and fascinated]

GOD THE FATHER
To those that purge our land from heretical filth, is promised highest reward of supernatural blessing.

GOD THE FATHER and ARCHANGELS
Benedictus qui venit. Osanna.
[They vanish]

[Joking Jesus jumps, down from the Cross, and confronts John Taverner. The Demons put Mary and John on the cart, who have become as dummies, stage props, and drag it off]

DEMONS
Attollite portas, principes, vestras, et elevamini portae aeternales, et introibit Rex Gloriae. *[Repeated as they leave, fading into distance]*

DEATH
[placing scroll and pen in Taverner's hands]
Taverner, sign your confession.

JOHN TAVERNER
[writing]
I repent me very much that I have made songs to Popish ditties in the time of my blindness. *[He collapses]*

DEATH
But the unclean spirit, when he is gone out of a man, passeth through waterless places, seeking rest, and findeth it not. Then he says, I will return into my house whence I came, and when he finds it empty, swept clean, he enters and dwells there with seven other spirits, more evil than himself, and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

JOHN TAVERNER
[rising to a pious kneeling position, holding a sword vertically before his face]
There shone about me a great light from heaven, and I fell down upon the earth, and heard the voice of Christ, saying: 'Put off thy blindness. I am as reborn, His spirit is upon me. I defend Christ's truth with the sword and the fire, for love of Him. In the name

of God the Father; God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost'.
[Death crouches behind Taverner, and puts his jester's cap on Taverner's head, thrusts his jingling johnny into his hand, and puts his grinning mask over his face. He shakes Taverner's hand with the jingling johnny in it violently, causing this to rattle. Simultaneously, the Two Monks come forward from their furnace (where the junk-heap has been consumed), holding the soul of Taverner between them as before but now as a coal-black raven with shining red eyes, which they hold just behind and above the head of Death. As Death speaks, the raven is consumed in redflame]

DEATH
Salvatus! Beatus Vir! Resurrectus! Osanna!

+

INTERVAL (c.20 minutes)

+

ACT TWO, SCENE 1

Except for the White Abbot, the actors throughout this scene are somnambulistic, with jerky movements, as in an early cinema film. The whole is conceived as a parody of Act One, Scene I.
The courtroom as before, but the St. Michael curtain is now slashed across with a scarlet zigzag. Council as before, also witnesses. Taverner is discovered in the White Abbot's former position as Judge, the White Abbot in Taverner's as prisoner.

JOHN TAVERNER
My Lord Abbot, you are accused of idolatry, refusal of submission to His Majesty the King, perversion of the Holy Scripture, and rank heresy. How make you answer to these charges?

WHITE ABBOT
Sir, it is to their eternal shame that so many religious and others change their beliefs as their clothes, depending on the weather. If this month's law be last month's heresy, then can it not be kept, unless I lose my soul.

JOHN TAVERNER
Call the Master of Corpus Christi, to witness against him.
[Taverner's Father comes forward]

RICHARD TAVERNER
He did tell us to resist the King's Majesty and continue notwithstanding to the death our allegiance to the Bishop of Rome. We were to resist the Commissioners needs be with force.

COUNCIL
The King's desires are to be met; they are justified by reasons and counsel of many learned men who fear God.

JOHN TAVERNER
Call the woman Rose Parrowe to proclaim his scandal.
[Rose comes forward]

ROSE
You misuse me, John.

JOHN TAVERNER
In great matters of state it counts little who we are or what we feel. It is also to your advantage that justice be done, whose instruments we are. (In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.)

ROSE [over his last sentence]
My Lord Abbot was seen at the hunt and games, to the scandal of his station; some would have him guilty of proprietas, others of dealings with a certain religieuse....
O, Mary, I am betrayed.

COUNCIL
Perverted by dispensations and corruptions, the monastic state has become obsolete from age or depraved living owing to the iniquity of the times.

JOHN TAVERNER
His priest-confessor.... *[Priest comes forward]*

PRIEST
[collecting money]
He is a whoreson corruptor of youth; he had blasphemous thoughts the Pope is in Christ, he demanded payment for pardons and relics, he defended his idle corrupt monastic state.

JOHN TAVERNER
We thank you, father. *[Priest steps back]*

COUNCIL
There is no divided house of faith and reason. *[The boy comes forward]*

BOY
Sir, he bade us pray before the images of the saints, and for our veneration he exposed St. Audrey's wimple, her comb, and St. Edmund's shirt and Lawrence coal and Thomas' boots and bits of Christ's Cross. *[Boy steps back]*

COUNCIL
In denying that which is contrary to the senses, we do not deny that which is above the senses.

JOHN TAVERNER
My Lord Abbot, it is one thing to condemn to the flames, another to see already the executioner sprinkle sulphur, and put the fire to your face.

COUNCIL
Judge not, that you be not judged.

JOHN TAVERNER
We judge that you, Lord Abbot, have promulgated false doctrine,

despising correction, endangering many souls. We condemn you in the name of God to be bound and attached to a stake, with your sermons, and to ashes there be burned.....

[Fanfare. Enter, from side, Two Priests, with a large silver cross each; Two Laymen with symbolic pillars; Two Soldiers with pole-axes, and Cardinal in scarlet, his train upheld by Two Acolytes (boys) as before. The Cardinal has no face. Court upstanding. Behind the Council, in a redglow, appears a huge Wheel of Fortune, upon which are counterfeited the following: a King, crowned, at the top, seated; to the left, the same figure reaching upwards; to the right, the same figure descending with crown dislodging. Below, at the bottom of the Wheel, the figure falling off; to the left, the figure about to ascend; to the right, the figure about to fall off. The Wheel rotates (independently of the figures) in a clockwise motion, at first slowly, but accelerating, this effected by Death, still in Jester's garb, but unmasked, sitting at the centre of the Wheel; with one hand he pushes the diagonals, with the other holds aloft a large smoking chalice from which emerges the head of the black ape. Simultaneously, the faceless Cardinal moves over to the St. Michael curtain, which he tears down, discovering the Black and White Monks suspended by their necks from the horizontal of the Cross of Act One, Scene 4, around the vertical of which is wound a Serpent, whose mouth holds the head of the White Monk; one eye of the Black Monk is a redgash, the other is being plucked by the Raven, perched on the Cross. John Taverner meanwhile divides money between the Council; the Priests of the silver crosses pray, also the Monk and Novice by the St. Michael curtain]

DEATH (JESTER)
Rotam volubili orbe versamus; infima summis, summa infimis mutare gaudemus. Ascende si placet, sed ea lege, ne uti cum ludicri mei ratio poscet descendere injuriam putes.

COUNCIL
St. Michael warred with the Serpent and cast him down, the deceiver of the whole world. But who shall know St. Michael, who the Serpent?
[Lights fade, all is black except Cardinal, who remains lit in kneeling position, when lights go up he is discovered thus (with normal features) before the throne in the presence chamber]

ACT TWO, SCENE 2

[Continues from Scene I without a break]

[The throne room. The King is discovered, enthroned as before, with all pomp. The Cardinal is kneeling before him. At a short distance behind the Cardinal is a great wardrobe. Before the wardrobe stands the Jester, his back to the audience, arms folded, legs apart. He is not masked. A regal and positive organ are played on stage, also a small band of musicians. A pantomime-ballet (Dance of Death) performed aside]

KING
How fares our good Lord Cardinal? What news from Rome?
[Cardinal rises]

CARDINAL
Your Majesty, we have received these Papal bulls; *[unfolds and reads]* first, prohibiting your second marriage on pain of excommunication, and second, forbidding all support of you and your cause by all members of the Church.

[Jester opens wardrobe slowly; throughout the King's proclamation he replaces the robes of the Cardinal with those of an Anglican Archbishop]

KING
Our people do hate the Pope marvellously. We have resolved to make no further homage or payment to Rome, for we no longer wish to squander money which is the blood of the State. Therefore we proclaim the absolute abolishment of the usurped power of Rome. [standing] Trusty and well-beloved people, we greet you well. By due consultation, advisement and consent, we have extirped, abolished and excluded out of this our realm, the abuses of the Bishop of Rome, and do unite to our Crown Imperial the title, dignity and style of Supreme Head in Earth immediately under God of the Church of England, which title the Bishops and Clergy will recognise and approve lawfully, utterly renouncing all oaths and obedience to the Bishop of Rome, whose name, in all manner of prayers, or his presumptuous and proud pomp, utterly be abolished and razed out, and his name no more remembered, but suppressed and obscured for ever. Our good Lord Bishop – [Jester hands King Archbishop's mitre] Ye whom we have ordained [places mitre] Archbishop of Canterbury, primate of all England, judging and determining all causes spiritual within our realm, duly recognising that it becomes you not, in so weighty a matter, to enterprise your office – will grant us God's judgment in this our disputed matrimony.

ARCHBISHOP
Your Majesty and the former Queen never lived in lawful matrimony. Your legal wife be your former now pregnant mistress, henceforth the Queen of England.

KING
Our good Lord Archbishop, we see you make such reformation in these matters as needs be, to the exoneration of your conscience before God.

ARCHBISHOP
England is our storehouse of delights, a very inexhaustible well, where much can be extracted from many.

KING
[takes the Archbishop's arm, and exeunt slowly, followed by King's train, except Jester]
To further our cause, we purpose to annex the monasteries, wherein neither God is served nor religion kept....

ARCHBISHOP
Indeed our expenses are greater....

KING
Touching the redress of religion, we trust that procedures....

ARCHBISHOP
– care of His Majesty's welfare. *[They are gone]*

JESTER
[Slowly closes wardrobe in which Cardinal's clothes now hang, and makes sign of cross over door]
Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another, which shall not be thrown down.

ACT TWO, SCENE 3

[follows straightway after an orchestral transition]

[The chapel as before; the Monks are in their positions, the White Abbot kneels before the altar, his back to the audience]

WHITE ABBOT
Videbat ergo Dominus in civitate iniquitatem et contradictionem, et extendebat manus suas ad populum non credentem, et contradicentem; et tamen et ipsos exspectans dicebat: Pater, ignosce illis, quia nesciunt quid faciunt.

THE MONKS
Unus ex discipulis meis tradet me hodie: Vae illi per quem tradar ego! Qui intingit mecum manum in paropside, hie me traditurus est in manus peccatorum. Melius illi erat, si natus non fuisset. *[At the words "traditurus est", John Taverner enters, and stops to observe the Monks. During the White Abbot's preface (below) he has the following:]*

JOHN TAVERNER
Charity is fled from our religious houses, with their gold, their feasting, their falcons, their fine clothes, their idolatry, their, divers vices. Thus is Christ betrayed, by their very ease, their worldliness. Here is my shame, to be party to its corruption, providing the furniture. Melius est quod scandalum orietur, quam veritas relinquatur.
[By the "Sanctus" he is at his high desk, aside where he writes, as before, and is barely visible in the gloom]

WHITE ABBOT
Vere dignum et justum est, aequum et salutare, nos tibi semper et ubique gratias agere: Domine, sancte Pater, omnipotens aeterne Deus: Qui salutem humani generis in ligna crucis constituisti, ut uncle mors oriebatur, inde vita resurgeret; et qui in ligna vincebat, in ligna quoque vinceretur: per Christum Dominum nostrum. Per quem majestatem tuam laudant Angeli, adorant Dominationes, tremunt Potestates. Caeli, caelorumque Virtutes, ac beata Seraphim, socia exsultatione con celebrant. Cum quibus et nostras voces, ut admitti jubeas, deprecamur, supplici confessione dicentes:

THE MONKS
Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth, Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua. Osanna in excelsis. *[After last "excelsis"; White Abbot raises host before altar, the Monks prostrate, at the same time the doors are flung open, and the King's Soldiers enter, led by their Captain. The White Abbot and Monks retain their positions throughout the proclamation]*

CAPTAIN
His Majesty the King, supreme head immediately under God of the Church of England, hereby commands that the monasteries be forthwith dispossessed, and all their wealth and goods be handed over to us, his commissioners. If, after dissolution, attempt is made to return as religious, we shall cause offenders to be hanged from pieces of timber out of the steeple, or be put to execution as we shall think meet, for the example of others.
[The White Abbot makes as if to continue Mass notwithstanding]
[The Soldiers move in as they sing, and manacle the Monks; the Captain pours the wine from the upheld chalice in the White Abbot's hand, who then lowers his head and remains motionless]

WHITE ABBOT
Benedictus.

THE MONKS
Qui venit in nomine Domini. Osanna in excelsis. *[Setting by Taverner – fading into distance on the "Osanna", as the Monks are led out. The White Abbot is left alone with John Taverner in the Chapel at the close of the scene, as the lights fade]*

ACT TWO, SCENE 4

[follows straightway after an orchestral transition]

[The market-place in Boston, with the Stump in the background, and a scaffold, gradually discovered. Present, a very large crowd of townspeople. As lights go up, the Procession enters slowly, the townspeople falling back]

Procession:

1. The Captain and his Soldiers, with pole-axes, etc., and bearing the figure of Christ crucified, and the effigies of Mary and John, from the chapel.
2. The White Abbot, bound, escorted by Two Priests, and guarded by Two Soldiers with pole-axes, and followed by Two Executioners *[hooded]*.
3. The Archbishop, in full office, his train upheld by Two Acolytes [boys], and followed by at least sixteen choirboys in scarlet vestments.
4. Richard Taverner *[in full office]*, Rose Parrowe *[in mourning]*, Priest-Confessor, and the Learned Council *[from the Trial Scenes]*.

TOWNSPEOPLE
[as the procession begins to move in]
This is the work of John Taverner, musician, servant of the King.
Christ must reign, till he has put all his enemies under his feet.
The last enemy that shall be destroyed is Death.

CHOIRBOYS
I have found an upright man, that fears God and eschews evil.

TOWNSPEOPLE, COUNCIL, ETC.
He poured Death upon his cattle and servants, fire and tempest upon his children, and loathsome diseases upon him.

CHOIRBOYS
I have found a man according to my own heart.

TOWNSPEOPLE, ETC.
He had his sons ravish his daughters, and murder one another, and rebel against the Father.

CHOIRBOYS
This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

TOWNSPEOPLE, ETC.
He was led by the Spirit and tempted by the Devil.

CHOIRBOYS
This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

TOWNSPEOPLE, ETC.
He was deserted, abandoned, given over to his enemies and executioners.
[John Taverner is discovered, at his high desk, aside, writing. The

Townspeople, etc., sing throughout the declamation of his letter. The Procession by this time is grouping around the scaffold, where the Soldiers ceremoniously place their effigies, and the Executioners bind the White Abbot to the stake and make the faggots ready. The Archbishop converses quietly with the White Abbot]

TOWNSPEOPLE, ETC.
As in the tenderness of our childhood we suffer – and yet are whipped if we cry;

JOHN TAVERNER
[writing] To the right honourable my singular good Lord Privy Seal be this delivered. In my most humble manner I have me recommended to your good Lordship. It may please your Honour to be advertised that the friars and their brethren piteously lament their great poverty, knowing no way how to provide living for them.

TOWNSPEOPLE, ETC.
so we are complained of, if we complain, and made delinquents, if we call the times ill.

JOHN TAVERNER
And according to your Lordship's command the Rood was burned the seventh day of this month, and the friar, who did express the cause of his burning, and the idolatry committed by him, which has done much good, turning many men's hearts from it.

TOWNSPEOPLE, ETC., also CHOIRBOYS
Christ's painful life took off none of the pains of his death.

JOHN TAVERNER
Written at Boston this eleventh day of September, in the year of our Lord fifteen hundred and thirty-eight, by the hands of your Lordship's poor servant, John Taverner.

TOWNSPEOPLE, ETC., also CHOIRBOYS
He felt not the less for having felt so much before. *[During this full chorus' final sentence, John Taverner descends and walks slowly to the scaffold, where he confronts the White Abbot]*

JOHN TAVERNER
My Lord Abbot, prepare yourself for the fire and say your last. *[John Taverner signs to Executioners, who light torches, and hold them ready by the stake. His hand remains upheld, ready to sign to Executioners]*

WHITE ABBOT
I am fell into the hands of those who, preaching free thought, do burn me for opposing it. I know our Church would not allow such souls to perjure themselves, but prune and purge until religion be at peace, and one. I know, too, that our inheritors may preclude heretical thought, even before its inception, with access to your inmost souls, with tools more subtle than surgeons' knives. Now so many are slain, that wheat is burned with the tares. But until men can divine a choice in their inmost soul, where God should rule, and the Devil creeps, it will be chosen for them, by him that can. Men are yet less than men, less than God's image, which lies within, waiting, for the word that was spoken, and is drowned by the din that they make. But it cannot wait long. The surgeon's knife may be there already. *[Gesture of impatience by Taverner]* And meanwhile, in crucifying thieves, you may crucify Christ, to whom I commend my soul.

JOHN TAVERNER
May it please God in his mercy to reclaim you, and call you to his House.
[Nods to Executioners, dropping his arm towards faggots. The Archbishop withdraws, the Executioners light the faggots]

FULL CHORUS (including CHOIRBOYS)
O God, make haste to save us, O God, we cry from the mire, we cannot stand.
O God, our soul is drowned, O God, have mercy upon us,
O help us in our darkness, O God.
[At last "O God", all Townspeople fling up their arms in supplication, then all fall to knees, heads bowed. John Taverner is kneeling, in prayer, by the scaffold, facing the audience. Rose Parrowe comes forward, and stands just behind John Taverner. She does not touch him. Lights gradually dim, the only positive light at the end falling from the glow of the fire on John Taverner and Rose]

ROSE
The Lord has led thee, and caused thee to walk into darkness.
He has filled thee with bitterness, he has made thee a stranger, drunk with wormwood.

JOHN TAVERNER
O God, I call upon thy name, out of the lowest dungeon. Forsake not thy faithful servant. *[He falls prostrate before the pyre, arms outstretched. Rose Parrowe falls to her knees and prays. The shadow of the Cross in the fire falls across John Taverner's back]*
[Very slow curtain]

Finis
Princeton, N.J.
7.xi.62

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SIR PETER MAXWELL DAVIES, CBE

Universally acknowledged as one of the foremost composers of our time, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies (born in Salford on 8 September 1934) has made a significant contribution to musical history through his wide-ranging and prolific output. He lives in the Orkney Islands, where he writes most of his music. In a work list that spans more than five decades, he has written across a broad range of styles, yet his music always communicates directly and powerfully, whether in his profoundly argued symphonic works, his music-theatre works or witty light orchestral works.

Maxwell Davies's major dramatic works include the operas *Taverner*, *Resurrection*, *The Lighthouse* and *The Doctor of Myddfai*; full-length ballets *Salome* and *Caroline Mathilde*, and music-theatre works *Eight Songs for a Mad King* and *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*. His huge output of orchestral work comprises eight symphonies – hailed by *The Times* as "the most important symphonic cycle since Shostakovich" – as well as numerous concertos and light orchestral works including *An Orkney Wedding, with Sunrise* and *Mavis in Las Vegas*, and five large-scale works for chorus including the oratorio *Job*. His most recent series is the landmark cycle of ten string quartets, the Naxos Quartets, described in the *Financial Times* as "one of the most impressive musical statements of our time".

Also internationally active as a conductor, Maxwell Davies has held the position of Composer/Conductor with both the Royal Philharmonic and BBC Philharmonic Orchestras. He has guest-conducted orchestras including the Cleveland Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Russian National Orchestra, Oslo Philharmonic and Philharmonia Orchestra. He retains close links with the St. Magnus Festival, Orkney's annual arts festival which he founded in 1977, and is Composer Laureate of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Maxwell Davies was knighted in 1987 and appointed Master of the Queen's Music in 2004, in which role he seeks to raise the profile of music in Great Britain, as well as writing many works for Her Majesty the Queen and for royal occasions.

As part of his 75th birthday celebrations this year, Maxwell Davies wrote a violin concerto for the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and Daniel Hope. He conducted the world premiere in Leipzig, followed by its UK premiere at the BBC Proms with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (on 8 September), part of a day-long celebration of his music at the Royal Albert Hall. His music was also the focus of a weekend at the Southbank Centre London, with the first presentation of the complete Naxos Quartet cycle by the Park Lane Group. This was followed by a fortnight of events devoted to his music in Glasgow (which closes with tonight's concert). In addition to performances by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Hebrides Ensemble, Scottish Ensemble, and students from the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra gave the world premiere of his new work – *Overture, St. Francis of Assisi* – under Ilan Volkov (here at City Halls on 29 October).

Other recent and forthcoming commissions include an orchestral work on the theme of climate change for the Camerata Salzburg, a piano concerto for the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and Angela Hewitt, and an opera for the Royal Academy of Music and Juilliard School of Music. As a conductor, Maxwell Davies has worked recently with the Leipzig Gewandhaus and Hamburg Philharmonic, and this season his conducting engagements include the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Camerata Salzburg, Royal Flemish Philharmonic and Netherlands Radio Chamber Philharmonic.

PETER MAXWELL DAVIES
TAVERNER
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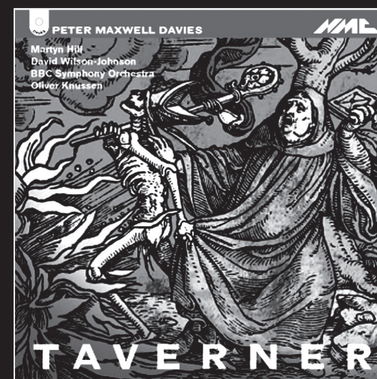

TAVERNER - AN OPERA IN 2 ACTS
Martyn Hill · David Wilson-Johnson · Stephen Richardson
Fiona Kimm · Michael Chance · Fretwork · London Voices
His Majestys Sagbutts & Cornetts · BBC Symphony Orchestra / Oliver Knussen
To mark Sir Peter Maxwell Davies's 75th birthday NMC issue the long-awaited release of his seminal opera Taverner, featuring an astonishing line up of the cream of British contemporary music interpreters, alongside specialist period instrument ensembles.
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DANIEL NORMAN (John Taverner)
tenor

Daniel Norman studied at Oxford and in the USA and Canada and at the Royal Academy of Music in London. Major operatic credits include Peter Quint *The Turn of the Screw* (Glyndebourne), Tanzmeister *Ariadne auf Naxos* (London Symphony Orchestra/Rattle), Mao *Nixon in China* (Opera Boston and Verona), Scaramuccio *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Paris Opera), the Electrician in Thomas Adès's *Powder Her Face* (Vienna and Boston premieres), Hermes in Tippett's *King Priam* (Nationale Reis Opera) and Valetto *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* (Bayerische Staatsoper). Concert performances include the Evangelist in the *St. John Passion* (at the Royal Festival Hall), Britten *Les illluminations* and Mozart *Requiem* (BBC Philharmonic/Noseda), *St. Matthew Passion* (Concertgebouw Amsterdam), Beethoven *Ninth Symphony* (Royal Philharmonic Orchestra), and Sam Kaplan in Weill's *Street Scene* (BBC Proms). Recent and future engagements include his Covent Garden debut as Borsa *Rigoletto*, Martinů's *Mirandolina* (Garsington Festival), White Minister *Le Grand Macabre* (ENO), *Messiah* (Minnesota Orchestra) and Basilio *Figaro* (Garsington).

RICHARD ANGAS (Richard Taverner)
bass

Richard Angas studied in London and Vienna. He worked for many years in Germany and at English National Opera where he was a company principal for fifteen years. Recent credits include: Swallow *Peter Grimes* (Zurich); Abbot *Curlew River* (Trento and Pisa); Sacrestano *Tosca*, Great Referee *Playing Away* (Bregenz); La Cuisinière *L'amour des trois oranges*, Jakovlevich *The Nose* (Amsterdam); *Death of Wagner* (Amsterdam, Luxembourg, Paris); Aga *The Greek Passion* (ROH, Bregenz, Brno); Swallow *Peter Grimes*, Waldner *Arabella*, Water Sprite *Rusalka*, Basilio *The Barber of Seville,* Drebyednyetsov *Paradise Moscow* and roles in *Julietta* and *L'enfant et les sortilèges* (Opera North); Angelotti *Tosca*, Bonze *Madama Butterfly*, King *Aida* (RAH/Gubbay); title role Mikado (Reisopera, La Fenice); title roles *The Mikado*, *Don Pasquale*, High Priest of Baal *Nabucco*, Alcindoro (ENO); Kommandant *From the House of the Dead* (Strasbourg and Palermo); *Julietta* (Prague, Ravenna); Parson *The Cunning Little Vixen* (Barcelona); Count *Luisa Miller* and Dikoj *Katya Kabanova* (Holland Park); Private Willis *Iolanthe* and Pooh-Bah *The Mikado* (Grange Park).

MARTYN HILL (Cardinal/Archbishop)
tenor

Martyn Hill studied at King's College, Cambridge and at the Royal College of Music. He has a distinguished international career in opera, concert and recital. Operatic appearances include Pong in *Turandot*, Goro in *Madam Butterfly* (at the Royal Opera House), *Peter Grimes* (Tel Aviv), *Idomeneo* (Glyndebourne), *Quint* (Scottish Opera), Alessandro in *Il Re Pastore* (Opera North), and Sir Philip in *Owen Wingrave* (for Channel 4). In 2008 he sang in the world premiere of Georg Friedrich Haas's *Melancholia* at the Paris Opera, subsequently performing the role in Stavanger, Oslo, Graz and Bergen. Recent engagements include *Oedipus Rex* in Budapest and Spoletta, *Tosca* at the Royal Opera House, Mozart's *Requiem* in Moscow, Howard Blake's *The Passion of Mary* with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in London, and the world premiere of Mauricio Kagel's last work, *In der Matratzengruft* in Munich. Martyn Hill sang the title role in the 1997 BBC studio recording of *Taverner*, performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra/Oliver Knussen. He last worked with the BBC SSO in 1990 for a performance of the *Te Deum* by Berlioz.

STEPHEN RICHARDSON (King/Archangel Michael/Captain)
bass

A specialist in contemporary repertoire, British bass Stephen Richardson has given the premiere performances of a number of important works including Thomas Adès' *The Tempest* (Royal Opera House, Covent Garden), Tan Dun's *Orchestral Theatre II, Re* (with the BBC SSO/Tan Dun/Jerzy Maksymiuk at Henry Wood Hall, Glasgow in November 1995 and subsequently at the 1996 BBC Proms), and *Tea* (Suntory Hall, Tokyo), Barry's *The Triumph of Beauty and Deceit* and *The Intelligence Park*, Tavener's *Eis Thanaton*, *Resurrection*, *The Apocalypse* and *Fall and Resurrection* with City of London Sinfonia at St. Paul's Cathedral; and the British premiere of Ruders' *The Handmaid's Tale* (English National Opera). He has assumed many of the leading bass roles in the operatic repertoire and recent appearances include his debut at Opera Australia as Falstaff and Sarastro *Die Zauberflöte*, Kaspar *Freischütz* (Opera de Rennes), Don Quichotte in Fenelon's *Le Chevalier Imaginaire* (Ensemble Intercontemporain), Monterone *Rigoletto* and Hobson *Peter Grimes* (Opera North), Bartolo *Le nozze di Figaro* (Grange Park Opera) and, in concert, Adès' *Powder her Face* with the London Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican Centre, conducted by the composer.

DAVID WILSON-JOHNSON (Jester/Death)
bass

David Wilson-Johnson studied Modern Languages at St. Catherine's College, Cambridge, and singing at the Royal Academy of Music. Over a career spanning some 35 years he has been a guest of the major opera houses, orchestras and festivals worldwide. He has performed on over 200 recordings including works of Bach, Beethoven, Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Ravel, Frank Martin's *Jedermann Monologues*, Schubert's *Winterreise* and songs by Finzi and Quilter, and sung under many distinguished conductors including Boulez, Brüggen, Giulini, Harnoncourt, Haenchen, Harnoncourt, Knussen, de Leeuw, Leonhardt, Mackerras, Mehta, Montgomery, Previn and Rattle. In recent years he has sung title roles in Tippett's *King Priam* (Nationale Reisopera, BBC Proms), Albeniz's *Merlin* (Teatro Real), Shostakovich's *The Nose* under Rozhdestvensky (Netherlands Opera), Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise* (Edinburgh International Festival) and Britten's *Owen Wingrave* (with the Tapiola Sinfonietta). He is Professor of Singing at the Conservatory of Amsterdam and a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music, and lives between houses in Amsterdam, London and France.

RODERICK WILLIAMS (White Abbot)
bass

Roderick Williams encompasses a wide repertoire, from baroque to contemporary music, in the opera house, on the concert platform and in recital. He has enjoyed close relationships with Opera North and Scottish Opera, and is particularly associated with the baritone roles of Mozart. In 2007 he gave highly acclaimed performances of Papageno/*The Magic Flute* for English National Opera and in 2008 sang in *La bohème* at Covent Garden. He has also sung world premieres of operas by, among others, David Sawer, Sally Beamish and Alexander Knaifel. He has worked with orchestras throughout Europe, including all the BBC Orchestras, and his many festival appearances include the BBC Proms, Edinburgh, Cheltenham and Aldeburgh. Future and recent engagements include a return to ENO for a revival of *The Magic Flute* as well as Saariaho's *L'amour de loin,* Van der Aa's *After Life* for Netherlands Opera, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* for Scottish Opera as well as concerts with the Britten Sinfonia, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales and London Sinfonietta.

ANDREW WATTS (Priest/God)
counter-tenor

Andrew Watts was born in Middlesex and studied at the Royal Academy of Music with Geoffrey Mitchell. His operatic engagements include appearances with the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, English National Opera, Glyndebourne Festival and Touring Operas, and the Aldeburgh and Almeida Festivals. Foreign engagements include the Staatsoper Berlin, Komische Oper Berlin, Hamburgische Staatsoper, Bayerische Staatsoper, München, Teatro La Fenice, Opéra National du Rhin and De Vlaamse Opera. His repertoire includes Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice*, Arsamenes in *Xerxes*, the title roles in *Orlando* and in Leonardo Vinci's *Artaserse*, Nero in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, James in Harrison Birtwistle's *The Last Supper*, Omar in *The Death of Klinghoffer*, Bishop Baldwin in *Gawain and the Green Knight*, Prince Go-go in *Le Grand Macabre*, and Pleasure in Gerald Barry's *Triumph of Beauty*. He also had roles in the world premieres of Emmanuel Nuñes' *Märchen* and Birtwistle's *The Minotaur*. Future engagements include performances at the Teatro Real Madrid, Grand Théâtre de Genève and a return to the Royal Opera House.

MICHAEL YEOMAN (Boy)
treble

Michael Yeoman is a member of the RSNO Junior Chorus, NYCoS National Boys' Choir and attends the Music School of Douglas Academy. As a soloist he has performed 'We're Walking in the Air' from Howard Blake's *The Snowman* with the RSNO at their Christmas concerts in December 2008. In August this year he sang as a soloist at the Edinburgh International Festival as one of the Apparitions in the BBC SSO's concert performance of Verdi's *Macbeth*.

STEPHEN JEFFES (Second Monk/Antichrist)
tenor/spoken

Currently studying with Ryland Davies, Stephen Jeffes is a full-time member of the BBC Singers. Specialising in contemporary music, he is also a frequent soloist and consort singer with the vocal ensemble EXAUDI. Recent solo work includes Handel's *Judas Maccabeus*, Britten's *St. Nicholas*, J.S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, *St. John Passion, B Minor Mass*, *Christmas Oratorio* and *Magnificat*; CPE Bach's *Magnificat*, Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610*, Scarlatti's *Stabat Mater*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Haydn's *Nelson Mass*, Handel's *Messiah*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and Jonathan Dove's *Missa Brevis*. His first operatic engagement was playing the role of Miles in Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* for Tel Aviv Opera in Israel and Germany. Recent roles include Tamino (*The Magic Flute*) in Holland, Damon (*Acis and Galatea*), Bardolph (*Falstaff*), Fenton (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*), and the Narrator in Judith Weir's *The Vanishing Bridegroom*. He has recorded for the Chandos, Naxos and Hyperion CD labels, as well as for film, radio and television.

CHRISTOPHER BOWEN (First Monk/Archangel Gabriel)
tenor

Christopher Bowen was born in New Zealand and studied singing and medicine at Otago University. In 2003 he moved to London and, while studying with Ian Partridge, started his professional career. Since then his versatile, high tenor voice has lent itself to recital, opera, oratorio and ensemble singing. He has performed a broad array of music from the medieval *Play of Daniel*, to premieres of contemporary works. He is especially interested in the works of J.S. Bach and has sung oratorios and cantatas in the UK, Europe and further afield. In 2005, he joined the BBC Singers with whom he performs and records across the UK and abroad. He was the tenor soloist in Mozart's *C Minor Mass* for a recent European Broadcasting Union broadcast. He was Zadok in the Dublin Handel Festival performance of *Solomon,* the youngest son in Judith Weir's *The Vanishing Bridegroom,* and a poet in Janáček's *The Excursions of Mr Brouček,* a recording for BBC Radio 3, subsequently released last year on CD by Deutsche Grammophon (BBC Singers/ BBC Symphony Orchestra/Bělohlávek).

SUSAN BICKLEY (Rose/Virgin Mary)
mezzo-soprano

Susan Bickley is firmly established as one of the most accomplished mezzo-sopranos of her generation, with a wide repertory encompassing the Baroque, the great 19th and 20th century dramatic roles and the music of today. She has sung on many of the great stages of the world performing operatic roles for Opéra de Paris, Glyndebourne, San Francisco Opera, Covent Garden, Staatsoper Unter den Linden, Netherlands Opera, and English National Opera. On the international concert platform Susan has performed with leading orchestras and ensembles at Carnegie Hall, the Salzburg Festival, the Edinburgh International Festival, BBC Proms, Barbican, Bridgewater Hall, Royal Festival Hall and Berlin Philharmonie. An accomplished recitalist Susan works with Roger Vignoles, Iain Burnside in Ludlow and Julius Drake regularly and has also performed with the Nash Ensemble at the Wigmore Hall. Recordings by Susan can be heard on EMI, Deutsche Grammophon, BMG, Hyperion and Nimbus and her disc of songs by Ivor Gurney with Iain Burnside is due for release in Autumn 2009.

ANDREW GRIFFITHS
repetiteur/second conductor

Andrew Griffiths is a recent graduate of the Jette Parker Young Artist Programme at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden. He trained under Martyn Brabbins at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow, at Scottish Opera and at the National Opera Studio. Whilst at the Royal Opera, he made his debuts with the orchestras of the Royal Opera House and Opera North, conducted Linbury Studio productions of Donizetti's *Rita* and Pergolesi's *La Serva Padrona*, and worked alongside conductors Antonio Pappano, Sir Mark Elder, Sir Charles Mackerras and others on an extensive repertoire including Wagner's *Ring* and Birtwistle's *The Minotaur*. Recent engagements include *Hansel and Gretel* (Opera North Education), *The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Barber of Seville* (Iford Festival) and concerts with Southbank Sinfonia and the Orpheus Sinfonia. He is also a member of the Grammy-nominated vocal consort Stile Antico.

RSNO JUNIOR CHORUS

Christopher Bell, chorus master

The RSNO Junior Chorus is based in Glasgow and organised and funded by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. Its primary objectives are to develop and train young voices, teach musical literacy, and perform with the RSNO to the highest possible standards. Teaching is based on the Kodály method, and the Chorus is divided up into three sections: Training Choir, Probationary Choir, and Junior Chorus. In 2007 a Changed Voice Choir was established in order to provide opportunities for boys to continue to sing with the Junior Chorus through their teenage years. Over 250 young people are involved in the RSNO Junior Chorus.

Julie Aitken
Pascale Argondizza
Suzanne Bagnall
Frances Bancewicz
Katie Barbour
Catriona Beckett
Michael Byars
Amanda Connelly
Mairi Dean
Fiona Dickson
Niall Docherty
Rebecca Dodds
Mhairi Hannah
Shona Heaney
Alison Hendry
Imogen Hendry
Duncan Hughes
Carla Jenkins
Rachel Joint
Beth Kean
Anna Liu
Jessica Liu
Claire Macaulay
Ailie MacDougall
Anna MacLeod
Clare MacMillan
Roshni Mansfield
Jennifer McDonald
Nicloe McFadzean
Olivia Naio
Anjlee Patel
Sophie Price
Rhiannon Rohmer
Sofia Spinney
Claire Stenhouse
Ashley Todd
Hannah Todd
Mary Walker
Lucy Watt

Alasdair Robertson
(standby solo treble)

Christopher Bell

Belfast-born Christopher Bell is Chorus Director of the Grant Park Chorus, Chicago, USA, Chorus master of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra Junior Chorus, the Edinburgh Festival Chorus and of the Belfast Philharmonic Choir. He was largely responsible for the formation of the National Youth Choir of Scotland in 1996 and has been its Artistic Director since then. He was educated at the University of Edinburgh and held his first post as Associate Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra between 1989 and 1991. Since then he has worked with many of the major orchestras in the UK and Eire. For his work with singers, and particularly his encouragement of young singers in Scotland, Christopher Bell was awarded a Scotsman of the Year 2001 award for Creative Talent. In 2003 he was awarded the Charles Groves Prize for his contribution to cultural life in Scotland and the rest of the UK.

ROYAL SCOTTISH ACADEMY OF MUSIC AND DRAMA CHAMBER CHOIR AND UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW CHAPEL CHOIR

Oliver Rundell and James Grossmith, chorus masters

Glasgow University Chapel Choir comprises 32 auditioned singers of mixed voices, who are a combination of volunteers, choral exhibitioners and professional Lay Clerks. In addition to the 11 funded choral awards, all members of the choir receive free singing tuition. The choir is directed by James Grossmith, who is also Chorus Master of Scottish Opera. They are accompanied by the University Organist, the renowned British recitalist Kevin Bowyer, and the University Organ Scholar, Ross Luescher. The principal function of the Chapel Choir is to sing at services held in the University Chapel. During the summer of 2009 they gave a concert tour of Tuscany. In addition to their duties in the University Chapel, they also give regular radio broadcasts and concerts, and have recorded several CDs. Their latest recording on the Bute Label, due for imminent release, is of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies' *Solstice of Light*. For more information please visit: www.chapelchoir.org

The **RSAMD Chamber Choir** consists of between fifteen and thirty singers pursuing undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Recent years have seen the choir give concerts in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Manchester, Dunkeld and Carlisle, as well as performances of Handel's *Messiah* with the Orchestra of the Universität der Künste Berlin and conductor Lutz Koehler both in Scotland and Germany. In May 2007 they performed at City Halls as part of a BBC SSO post-concert event, and also sang for The Lamp of Lothian Trust at St. Mary's Parish Church, Haddington. This season includes performances of Vivaldi's *Gloria*, as well as a concert in Glasgow Cathedral of Mozart's *Requiem*, with conductor David Danzmayr, for which they will prepare with their regular conductor Friðrik Walker. For tonight's performance of *Taverner* they have been prepared by James Grossmith and Oliver Rundell.

Soprano
Natasha Beeby
Claire Busby
Fiona Campbell
Katy Cooper
J. Daramy-Williams
Lucy Emslie
Annabel Fleming-Brown
Tani Ghaffarsedeh
Katie Grant
Rebecca Hooper
Catriona Hutchinson
Klaudia Korzeniewska
Linda McMinn
Hannah Morgan
Matilda Poward
Brianna Robertson
Deborah Rudden
Claire Price
Hannah Sandison
Gemma Summerfield
Claire Thompson

Alto
Lucy Anderson
Lynn Bellamy
Amy Brown
Sarah Buckley
Louise Cheshire
Helen Clark
Caroline Cockburn
Lizzy Holsgrove
Meadhbh Maguire
Roberta McLeod
Amy Thornton
Catherine Pope
Laura Smith
Sheena Templeton
Fiona Wilkie
Linda-Jane Workman

Tenor
Kieran Bain
Harry Campbell
Jonathan Cooke
Bruce Davis
John Findon
Gitai Fisher
Tom French
Chris Hann
Adam Magee
Christian Schneeberger
Scott Shepherd
Philip Scott
James Sliming
Cailean Swainson
Matthew Todd
Ashley Turnell

Bass
Brian Benner
Dominic Barberi
Nicholas Cowie
John Dallas
Donald Feist
Ben Fowler
Joe Gatherer
Ott Indermitte
Christopher Johnston
Noel Mann
John McGhee Doyle
David Morrison
Steven McNair
Christopher Nairne
David O'Hanlon
Tom Quinn
Leon Reimer
Donald Thomson

MARTYN BRABBINS

Martyn Brabbins held the post of Associate Principal Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra from 1994–2005. He was Artistic Director of the Cheltenham International Festival of Music from 2005–2007. Currently he is Principal Guest Conductor of the Royal Flemish Philharmonic, a position which started in September this year. After studying composition in London and then conducting with Ilya Musin in Leningrad, his career was launched when he won first prize at the 1988 Leeds Conductors' Competition. Since then he has regularly conducted all the major UK orchestras and is much sought-after in Europe, notably in Germany, Holland, Belgium and Scandinavia. He appeared at this year's BBC Proms with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in a programme of music by Jonny Greenwood, Stravinsky and Sir Harrison Birtwistle, and last season as well as appearing at the South Bank with the London Philharmonic and Philharmonia orchestras, he returned to the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. He also made his debut in Japan with the Nagoya Philharmonic and Tokyo Metropolitan Symphonies respectively, both of whom issued re-invitations for 2011. Forthcoming European engagements included the Netherlands Radio Chamber Philharmonic at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, the Residentie Orkest, Salzburg Mozarteum Orchester and the Lahti Symphony Orchestra. He last worked with the BBC SSO in March 2008 for a concert in Glasgow which included the World Premiere of Detlev Glanert's *Double Concerto for two pianos and orchestra*.

Martyn Brabbins has recorded over 30 CDs with the BBC SSO for the Hyperion label; he also has a continuing relationship with Chandos Records. For NMC he has recorded Birtwistle, David Bedford and Finnissy; for Collins Classics Rachmaninov and Scriabin, and he made a notable live recording with the BBC SSO of Britten's *War Requiem* for Naxos. His recording of Korngold's *Die Kathrin* with the BBC Concert Orchestra for CPO won the Opera Award at Cannes.

For further information please visit: www.intermusica.co.uk/brabbins

BBC SCOTTISH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Chief Conductor Donald Runnicles
Principal Guest Conductor Ilan Volkov
Associate Guest Conductor Stefan Solyom
Conductor Laureate Jerzy Maksymiuk
Leader Elizabeth Layton

The BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra is widely regarded as one of Europe's leading orchestras and enjoys an enviable position as a cultural flagship for the BBC and for Scotland. Originally a studio-based orchestra, formed in Edinburgh in December 1935, the orchestra now appears in venues across Scotland, is a core part of the BBC Proms, performs regularly at the Edinburgh International Festival and is in demand at major festivals throughout the world.

As befits its busy schedule of broadcasts on BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio Scotland and BBC Television, the orchestra has the widest repertory of almost any ensemble in the UK. The only Scottish orchestra to win the Royal Philharmonic Society Award for best orchestra, its commercial recordings have received a number of prizes, including four *Gramophone* Awards.

Since 2006, the BBC SSO has greatly expanded its programme of concerts and recordings from its permanent home base at Glasgow City Halls, and each season it continues to appear in other Scottish towns and cities. As Scotland's leading supporter of new music the orchestra has established strong links with local communities through an innovative learning programme. Abroad, it has appeared in many of the great musical centres of Europe and has toured the USA, South America and been twice to China, most recently in May 2008.

Edinburgh-born Donald Runnicles became the BBC SSO's Chief Conductor in September 2009 a post which will run concurrently with his position as General Music Director of the Deutsches Oper Berlin. He succeeds Ilan Volkov (Chief Conductor of the BBC SSO from January 2003–September 2009) who now holds the post of Principal Guest Conductor.

For further information please visit **bbc.co.uk/bbcsso**

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra
BBC Scotland, City Halls
Candleriggs, Glasgow G1 1NQ
Direct line: 0141-552 0909

NEXT BBC SSO CONCERT AT CITY HALLS

Thursday, 12 November at 7.00pm
and live broadcast on BBC Radio 3

First concert in the *Bohemian Rhapsodies* series which will feature all five of Martinů's piano concertos

DVOŘÁK Overture: Carnival
MARTINŮ Piano Concerto No.3
DVOŘÁK Symphony No.9 'From the New World'

Ivo Kahánek piano
Stefan Solyom conductor

TICKETS from the Candleriggs Box Office: 0141-353 8000
or from the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall Box office

BBC SCOTTISH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

First Violins
Elizabeth Layton (leader)
Olivier Lemoine (+++)
Jane Mackenzie
Marie Brown
Amy Cardigan
Wilson Hainey
Peter Isaacs
Gent Koço
Emily MacPherson
Alastair Savage
Joanna Sutherland
Bethan Hunter

Second Violins
Greg Lawson (+++)
Christopher Latham (++)
David Chadwick (+)
Elizabeth Flack
Julia Carpenter
Barbara Downie
Julia Norton
Alice Rickards
Alistair Tasker
Janis Walton

Violas
Scott Dickinson (+++)
Jacqui Penfold (+)
Alice Batty
Rik Evans
Martin Wiggins
Shelagh McKail
Alistair Beattie
Richard Nelson

Cellos
Sian Bell (++)
Anthony Sayer
Anne Brincourt
Harold Harris
Jessica Sullivan
Rosie Townhill

Double Basses
Nicholas Bayley (+++)
John Van Lierop (+)
Derek Hill
Jeremy Ward
Paul Spiers

Piccolo
Rosemary Eliot (+++)
Rosemary Lock (++)

Oboes
Stella McCracken (+++)
James Horan

Cor Anglais
James Horan (++)

E flat Clarinets
Barry Deacon
Simon Butterworth

Bass Clarinet
Simon Butterworth (++)

Bassoons
Julian Roberts (+++)
Peter Wesley

Contra-Bassoon
Peter Wesley (++)

Horns
David Flack (+++)
Jeremy Bushell
Patrick Broderick
Stephanie Jones
Andrew Saunders

Trumpets
Mark O'Keeffe (+++)
Eric Dunlea
Hedley Benson (++)
Brian McGinley

Trombone
Simon Johnson (+++)

Bass Trombone
Alan Mathison (++)

Tubas
Andrew Duncan (*)
Jonathan Gawn

Timpani
Gordon Rigby (+++)

Percussion
Heather Corbett (+++)
Dave Lyons
Martin Willis
Ian Coulter
Robert Purse

Harmonium
James Clapperton

Harp
Pippa Tunnell

+++ section principal
++ principal
+ string sub-principal

Repetiteur
Andrew Griffiths

Stage Band
Andrew Griffiths, conductor

Guitar
Tom McKinney

Violins
Jane Hainey
Alex Gascoine

Violas
Andrew Berridge (++)
Sarah Chapman

Cellos
Tom Rathbone (+)
Sharon Molloy
Susan Dance
Anna Morrison

Double Bass
Iain Crawford (++)

ACT 1, SCENE 4
Oboes
Timothy Rundle
Mary James

Percussion
Dave Lyons
Martin Willis

ACT 2, SCENE 2
Piccolo
Ewan Robertson

Clarinet
Yann Ghiro (+++)

Contra-Bassoon
Simon Rennard

Trumpet
Robert Baxter

Tenor Trombone
Pedro Alves

Timpani
Tom Hunter

Regal Organ
James Clapperton

Positive Organ
Joseph Cullen

ACT 2, SCENE 4
Descant Recorder
Ewan Robertson

Treble Recorder
Timothy Rundle

Tenor Recorder
Janet Larsson

Bass Recorder
Mary James

orchestra list correct at the time of going to print