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'Max-imising' madness in music
the gift of madness in the music of Peter Maxwell Davies

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**‘Max-imising’ Madness in Music:
The Gift of Madness in the Music of Peter Maxwell
Davies**

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Music
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Abstract

Perhaps no composer of the twentieth century has shown as much fascination with the topic of madness as British composer Peter Maxwell Davies (1934–2016). The objective of this research is to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the musical representations of madness in his works. I particularly focus on four theatrical pieces: *Eight Songs for a Mad King* (1969), *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot* (1974), *The Lighthouse* (1979), and *The Medium* (1981).

These four compositions each explore a slightly different aspect of madness, while also speaking to each other in productive ways. *Eight Songs* is preeminent in displaying a challenge to the concept of madness itself. The definition and characteristics of mad behaviour and the identification of the mad individual are problematised in this piece. *Miss Donnithorne* offers a questioning of the representations of madness and the stereotypes of portraying insane female characters. *Eight Songs* and *Miss Donnithorne*, as companion pieces with significant similarities, also show with particular clarity how Davies treats male and female versions of insanity in different ways. Similarly, individual and collective experiences of madness are most plainly displayed in *The Medium* and *The Lighthouse*, respectively. Additionally, Davies's representation of madness using purely vocal monologue, unaided by instrumental music and stage props, can be explored in the former, and his shifting of character roles to create confusion and collectivity in the latter.

In the absence of a multi-dimensional study on Davies's repertoire on madness, this research attempts to thematise, characterise, and thoroughly scrutinise the theme in the selected repertoire. More

specifically, this enquiry aims to shed light on the characteristics of different representations of madness in Davies's works, how they differ, and how they can musically and theoretically be explained.

The theoretical starting point of this research is Michel Foucault's conceptualisation of madness, which has been crucial for thinking in this area. If Foucault was the pioneering figure in providing a socio-cultural understanding of madness, his counterpart in the field of psychology was certainly Sigmund Freud. I will be referring to some of Freud's ideas regarding the relationship between violence and madness. His theories on the significance of sexuality on the mental well-being of individuals also form a major part of this thesis.

Davies's works are further contextualised in changing concepts of madness in the 1960s, brought about by the anti-psychiatry movement, and a number of gender theories, mainly developed during the 1970s and 1980s. August Hollingshead and Fredrick Redlich's groundbreaking work on the significance of class in relation to insanity, along with the collective aspects of madness explored by Gustave Le Bon's group mentality and Carl Jung's notion of archetypes, are examined as well. I will also discuss speech and singing theories of Antonin Artaud, Alfred Wolfsohn and Roy Hart, which are central to decoding Davies's works.

Broadly, this study revolves around the theme of madness as a form of 'otherness', a distinctive way of being, in connection with the avant-garde and its tendency to welcome the new and the unfamiliar. I particularly focus on Davies as a composer intensely engaged with the theme. This project brings a discourse beyond the arts to the study of Davies's repertoire on madness to decode the symbolic significance of

his dramatic and musical tools. In doing so, it reveals a sense of social responsibility in his attitude towards madness and his methods of approaching it.

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents Simin Fasihi and Hossein Mesbahian.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Perhaps no composer of the twentieth century has shown as much fascination with the topic of madness as British composer Peter Maxwell Davies (1934–2016). The objective of this research is to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the musical representations of madness in his works. I particularly focus on four theatrical pieces: *Eight Songs for a Mad King* (1969), *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot* (1974), *The Lighthouse* (1979), and *The Medium* (1981). In the absence of a multi-dimensional study on Davies's repertoire on madness, this research attempts to thematise, characterise, and thoroughly scrutinise the theme in the selected repertoire. More specifically, this enquiry aims to shed light on the characteristics of different representations of madness in Davies's works, how they differ, and how they can musically and theoretically be explained.

The focus remains exclusively on four compositions to allow a fully-fledged understanding of the selected repertoire. In each of these pieces, I draw attention to one specific aspect of madness that the particular piece seems to be most concerned with. *Eight Songs* is preeminent in displaying a challenge to the concept of madness itself. The definition and characteristics of mad behaviour and the identification of the mad individual are problematised in this piece. *Miss Donnithorne* offers a questioning of the representations of madness and the stereotypes of portraying insane female characters. *Eight Songs* and *Miss Donnithorne*, as companion pieces with significant similarities, also show with particular clarity how Davies treats male and female versions of insanity in different ways. Similarly, individual and collective experiences of madness are most plainly displayed in *The Medium* and *The Lighthouse*, respectively.

Additionally, Davies's representation of madness using purely vocal monologue, unaided by instrumental music and stage props, can be explored in the former, and his shifting of character roles to create confusion and collectivity in the latter.

This thesis has focused on vocal theatrical works primarily concerned with madness, however there are other related works of Davies that do not quite fit into this category but nevertheless should not escape notice. The ballet *Caroline Mathilde* (1991) is a retelling of the growing psychological instability of George III's sister, who was forced into a marriage with the disturbed Danish King, Christian VII. *Blind Man's Buff* (1972), mainly revolving around the confusion of identities, partially engages with madness when one of the protagonists (the jester) sings a mad solo. *Mr Emmet Takes a Walk* (1999), *Taverner* (1968), and *Revelation and Fall* (1966, revised 1980), where suicide, religious betrayal, and hypocrisy and fraud are respectively central, also allude to madness in different ways. Davies's suite from Ken Russell's film *The Devils* (1971) might be viewed as evoking madness as well. However, this composition is part of a movie soundtrack and, as such, any such suggestion must be considered with respect to the film in question, which is not fundamentally concerned with insanity. Another point to note is that there are numerous productions of some of the pieces under study. Reviewing all of them would be a laborious endeavour well beyond the scope of this research. In what follows, I will provide a survey of theories to act as starting frameworks against which Davies's portrayal of madness can be examined and considered.

Theoretical Framework

As a review of the scholarly works on madness reveals, this concept lacks a single definition and displays itself in diverse ways. Characteristics of

madness, however dissimilar and even contradictory, seem to fit into the framework of 'the other of reason'. This framework can be considered a critical response to the Hegelian claim that reason is all-encompassing. French poststructuralists believe that 'the other of reason' is assimilated within the Hegelian circle of rationality, while it is in fact an unassimilable realm that exists outside of it.¹ Their objection is that any reflection on reason is a 'mediated experience, mediated by something that reflection cannot appropriate', something that is left out of the Hegelian circle. In *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), Maurice Merleau-Ponty calls this 'the third term'; in George Bataille's writings it is identified as reason's own 'eye'; and for Michel Foucault it is 'madness'.²

Foucault's ideas on madness, mainly articulated in his book *Madness and Civilization* (1964), which he describes as the archaeology of the silencing of madness, have been crucial for thinking in this area.³ As Marcel Gauchet states in his introduction to Gladys Swain's book, when it comes to madness 'there is a before Foucault and an after Foucault'.⁴ Foucault constructs a novel discourse on madness, which must be reviewed if an adequate understanding of the topic

¹ A. T. Nuyen, "Adorno and the French Post-Structuralists on the Other of Reason," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 4, no. 4 (1990): 310.

Nuyen explains in his article that this anti-Hegelian theme also appears in the writings of Theodor Adorno.

² Ibid., 311–14.

³ *Madness and Civilization* is the abridged version of *History of Madness* (1961).

Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, trans. Richard Howard (1961. Reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1988), xi.

Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (1964. Reprint, London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

⁴ Gladys Swain, *Dialogue Avec L'insensé E: Essais D'histoire De La Psychiatrie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 12.

is to be attained. His doctrine will serve as my general theoretical framework. I will further justify the necessity of citing Foucault, as well as other thinkers referenced, throughout the thesis in connection to specific pieces and the zeitgeist of the period under study.

Foucault's concept of madness is a call to rethink established codes of normal and abnormal behaviour and broadens our horizons by re-evaluating common understandings of insanity. Madness can feature a wide range of conditions, from inactiveness and fearfulness to violent and hostile behaviour, from nonchalance to anxiety, and from depression to frenzy. Regardless of this variety though, mad individuals are capable of displaying a high level of sophistication. Therefore, what is conventionally called madness could potentially just be a unique approach to perceiving the world—in some instances, even a finer one. However, according to Foucault, society tends to convert 'the Other [...] [Who] is at once interior and foreign,' into 'the Same' by imposing order.⁵ As a result, madness is often marginalised and silenced, even though it has 'its own particular language' and can unfold itself in its own way. It is pushed aside on account of being foreign, incomprehensible, and unidentifiable by humans.⁶

For Foucault, the point at which this marginalisation occurs philosophically is René Descartes's refusal to doubt reason. In his search for absolute certainty, Descartes needed to deal with three issues: 'errors of the senses, the unreality of dreams and the illusions of the mad'. The first two are irrelevant to the current discussion; however, according to Foucault, Descartes deals with the third by announcing that 'I who think cannot be mad'. He makes this claim because

⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970), xxiv.

⁶ Foucault, *History of Madness*, 171, 431.

otherwise he could not be certain about his thought, as it might only be an illusion. This means that the mad cannot think, and it is the beginning of the exclusion of madness from thought.⁷

For the twentieth-century French philosopher, madness is essentially a social phenomenon, which has been considered ‘as a certain distance from a social norm’.⁸ The man of unreason is thus inspected and judged by society, and madness is ‘exorcised through measures of order’ ruling society.⁹ Power not only ‘excludes’, ‘represses’, and ‘censors’ the other, but also produces ‘reality’ and ‘rituals of truth’.¹⁰ Foucault argues that this fabricated reality is far from the truth of madness, for madness can be a state involving wisdom, insight, and inspiration—a ‘formidable’ higher type of knowledge possessed by the madman.¹¹

Foucault proposes that the normalisation process initiates the practice of excluding madness, but its wisdom needs to be communicated. Madness, he states, has been unable to engage in a dialogue with reason, and all that has remained is a ‘monologue of reason *about* madness’.¹² This means that the communication between the modern person and the mad individual has been ruptured.¹³ However, Foucault also recognises that madness can cause the ‘dissolution of thought’ and become detrimental and non-productive. If madness

⁷ Roy Boyne, *Foucault and Derrida: The Other Side of Reason* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 45–48.

⁸ Foucault, *History of Madness*, 102.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 102–3.

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 194.

¹¹ Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, trans. Richard Howard (1961. Reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 21–22, x-xi.

¹² *Ibid.* Italics in the original.

¹³ Foucault, *History of Madness*, xxviii.

crosses a certain point, the wisdom and higher knowledge associated with it are destroyed. Foucault mentions Friedrich Nietzsche, whose works after his madness became incomprehensible 'no longer afford[ed] philosophy but psychiatry'.¹⁴

Foucault's ideas triggered massive discussion and stirred great controversy. His historical assessment encompassed a vast array of madness conceptions that existed before him. It also influenced the formation of a number of movements in subsequent years. In the remainder of this section I will provide a survey of impacts on and of Foucault. Most of these will be directly employed to make arguments in later chapters, but a few are only mentioned to devise a broader spectrum through which Davies's oeuvre can be better understood.

If Foucault was the pioneering figure in providing a sociocultural understanding of madness, his counterpart in the field of psychology was certainly Sigmund Freud. I will be alluding to some of Freud's ideas regarding the relationship between violence and madness. His theories on the significance of sexuality on the mental well-being of individuals, as well as his and Josef Breuer's studies on hysteria, also form an extensive part of the third chapter.

Freud's psychoanalytic method was based on verbal communication between doctor and patient: 'The patient talks, tells of his past experiences and [...] confesses his wishes and emotions. The physician listens, tries to direct the thought processes of the patient, reminds him of things, [and] forces his attention into certain channels'.¹⁵ This process had been named the 'talking

¹⁴ Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 287–88.

¹⁵ Sigmund Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (New York: Boni and Liveright Publishers, 1920), 3.

cure' by Bertha Pappenheim (known as Anna O.) after the treatment she had received from Breuer, who was Freud's mentor and collaborator.¹⁶ The emergence of the talking cure marked a shift in the treatment of conditions such as hysteria from the somatic practice of the French physician Jean Martin Charcot, based on the visible signs of the disorder, to a sonic one.¹⁷

If Charcot observed the body of the hysteric, Freud and Breuer listened to the sounds of hysteria: 'Charcot sees, Freud will hear'.¹⁸ Clara Latham argues that the healing capacity of the talking cure for Freud and Breuer was not merely in the cathartic effect of the vocal communication of trauma, but also in the cathartic effect of the sonic materiality of voice and its ability to create affect.¹⁹ Later in this section, I will discuss the link between the clinical importance of voice and the advent of radical vocal techniques in music.

Freud's developments are fundamental to the understanding of madness and the human psyche in general. Foucault emphatically acknowledged this. He claimed that 'we must do justice to Freud' as the figure who 'restored, in medical thought, the possibility of a dialogue with unreason'.²⁰ Freud, in his view, was the first to wipe out the gap between 'the normal and the pathological, [and] the comprehensible and the incommunicable'.²¹

¹⁶ Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, trans. James Strachey (1895. Reprint, New York: Basic Books, 2000), 30.

¹⁷ Julie Pedneault-Deslauriers, "Pierrot L.," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64, no. 3 (2011): 637.

¹⁸ Steven Heath, *The Sexual Fix* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 38.

¹⁹ Clara Latham, "Listening to the Talking Cure: Sprechstimme, Hypnosis, and the Sonic Organization of Affect," in *Sound, Music, Affect*, eds. Marie Thompson and Ian Biddle (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 104.

²⁰ Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 198.

²¹ Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, 361.

Foucault was certainly greatly influenced by Freud, yet his writings about the psychoanalyst are sometimes ambiguous, containing both praise and condemnation. He asserts that as a result of the doctor's status, 'psychoanalysis cannot and will never be able to hear the voices of unreason'. To Foucault, the psychoanalyst is a powerful God-like character, 'the absolute Gaze'—an alienating figure whose presence is 'hidden behind the patient and above him'. He went so far as to declare that Freud 'amplified his virtues as worker of miracles, preparing an almost divine status for his omnipotence'.²² It seems that in Foucauldian thought, psychoanalysis lays the foundation for a communication between reason and unreason, but fails to accomplish the task. Instead, it gives rise to the pathologisation of madness and subjects it to the therapy of the domineering analyst.

From the growing criticism of the authoritative position of the doctor—primarily shaped by Foucault's writings—the anti-psychiatry movement sprang. By the 1960s, medicalisation and common treatments of mad individuals were firmly perceived as forms of oppression, and mental institutions were forcefully attacked. R. D. Laing, whose studies on schizophrenia are particularly noteworthy, was a consequential figure in this tradition. He argues that a psychiatric patient's behaviour could be seen as either 'signs of a disease' or 'expressive of his existence'.²³ His existential phenomenology was an 'attempt to reconstruct the patient's way of being himself in his world'.²⁴ I will only refer to Laing, but there were other eminent anti-psychiatrists, including David Cooper, who coined the term, and Thomas Szasz, who rejected the existence of mental

²² Foucault, *History of Madness*, 510–11.

²³ R. D. Laing, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 31.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

illness altogether, calling it a myth.²⁵

However, Foucault's texts were not only applauded; they also drew much negative response. Jacques Derrida, who described himself as Foucault's grateful disciple, is probably his most vehement critic. In "Cogito and the History of Madness" (1963) and *To Do Justice to Freud: The History of Madness in the Age of Psychoanalysis* (1994), Derrida questions the feasibility of Foucault's project of letting madness speak for itself and denounces his understanding of both Descartes and Freud.²⁶ The latter point is beyond the scope of this research, but with respect to Foucault, Derrida argues that writing the history of madness is not a sensory or imaginative practice and, as such, cannot be beyond reason. Derrida maintains that anything said about madness, in fact, speaks for it and restrains it within the frame of reason. He asks if Foucault's archaeology can avoid being 'a logic, that is an organised language, a sentence, a syntax, a work? Would not the archaeology of silence be the most efficacious and subtle restoration [...] of the act perpetrated against madness?'²⁷

Other criticisms of Foucault involve his ignorance of gender-related differences in assessing the social and cultural evolution of madness. In his biography of Foucault, David Macey writes:

²⁵ David Cooper, *Psychiatry and Anti-Psychiatry* (Oxford: Routledge, 2013);

Thomas Szasz, *The Myth of Mental Illness* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1962).

²⁶ Jacques Derrida, "Cogito and the History of Madness," trans. Alan Bass, in *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 35.

The paper was originally published in the French philosophy journal *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* in 1963.

Jacques Derrida, "To Do Justice to Freud: The History of Madness in the Age of Psychoanalysis," *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 2 (1994): 232.

²⁷ Derrida, "Cogito and the History of Madness," 35.

Feminism was of little interest to Foucault and had little impact on him [...]. He has often been criticized for his masculinist stance and it is true that neither the book on madness nor that of prisons looks at gender or takes account of the fact that women and men tend to be committed to both prisons and psychiatric hospitals for very different reasons.²⁸

Given that two of the pieces under study revolve around women, I will attempt to fill in this gap by addressing a number of gender theories, which were mainly developed during the 1970s and 1980s. Elaine Showalter examines how diagnostic bias caused insanity to be considered a female malady in Victorian England and how therapy was applied to adjust feminine behaviour to match cultural standards.²⁹ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar explore literary writings of women in the nineteenth century and discuss their confinement in their male dominated societies and in patriarchal literary constructs.³⁰ Hélène Cixous had raised the same issue a few years earlier, by disputing conventional depictions of women in different texts, including literary ones. She observes a tradition of marginalisation and exclusion, serving to characterise women as subordinate. Cixous strives to encourage women to assert their wishes and desires, and rescue and repossess their bodies through a feminine practice of writing.³¹

Catherine Clément detects a constant oppression and lack of agency in female operatic characters. Identifying it as a cultural product, she objects to their regular demise in a 'repetitive spectacle of a woman who dies,

²⁸ David Macey, *Michel Foucault* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 103.

²⁹ Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980* (London: Virago, 2014).

³⁰ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

³¹ Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," *Signs* 1, no. 4 (1976).

murdered'.³² Susan McClary emphasises the social and cultural meaning of music and argues that the portrayal of states such as madness in music has, in many instances, been gender-specific and prejudiced.³³ It is safe to claim that the precursor of all of the mentioned works was Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), which initiated major changes in the understanding of the position of women in society.³⁴

Yet, gender is not the only contributor to differences in the perception of madness. August Hollingshead and Fredrick Redlich, in a groundbreaking work, exposed the significance of class in relation to insanity. They discovered that biased diagnostic criteria and social prejudices caused similar conditions to be considered more dangerous when attributed to the working class. This led to a higher rate of mental illness among members of the lower ranks of society and made them prone to mistreatment.³⁵

Finally, yet importantly, the collective aspect of madness needs to be brought into focus for the purposes of this research. I will take advantage of Carl Jung's concept of 'the archetypes and the collective unconscious', principally articulated in a book of the same name.³⁶ Jung's idea of the existence of shared structures within the human mind is employed along with Gustave Le Bon's

³² Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 47.

³³ Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

³⁴ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1949).

³⁵ August B. Hollingshead and Fredrick C. Redlich, *Social Class and Mental Illness* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1958).

³⁶ Carl Gustav Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, eds. Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler, and William McGuire, trans. R. F. C. Hull, vol. 9, part 1 (London: Routledge, 1991).

doctrine of the emergence of a single mentality in individuals forming a group.³⁷

I shall now attend to the speech and singing theories that are central to decoding Davies's works. A parallel is visible between the attention given to voice by the talking cure and the focus on the expressive power of voice as a sonic phenomenon. The prominence given to the physicality of voice, irrespective of any communicative function, is the backbone of many theories that feature a breakdown of voice and language.

My principal references in this field include Antonin Artaud, Alfred Wolfsohn, and Roy Hart. Artaud's 'theatre of cruelty' presents 'infinitely varied modulations of voice' and 'extreme action, pushed beyond all limits'.³⁸ His method is described as extracting from speech 'inarticulate sounds, cries, and gibbering screams'.³⁹ Wolfsohn, a war veteran who became a singing teacher, was concerned with the healing power of extreme sounds for releasing emotional pressure and relieving psychic tension. His pupil, Hart, developed the vocal technique of 'conscious schizophrenia', based on the inclusion of utterances that lay well beyond the conventional spectrum of singing practices. Hart, along with Cathy Berberian, is considered to be a pioneer of an extended vocality that was used in many pieces by artists after him.⁴⁰ These vocal traditions will be explored in more detail in connection with Davies's composition.

³⁷ Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (Milton Keynes, UK: Digireads, 2008).

³⁸ Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 57, 85.

³⁹ Robert Vork, "Things That No One Can Say: The Unspeakable Act in Artaud's *Les Cenci*," *Modern Drama* 56, no. 3 (2013): 311.

⁴⁰ Eric Salzman, "Some Notes on the Origins of New Music-Theater," *Theatre* 30, no. 2 (2000): 18.

Davies's Oeuvre in Historical Context

My goal here is to situate the selected repertoire within a wider background, outlining links to Expressionism and modernism more generally. An introduction to the British music scene and the evolution of Davies's music is also provided. I will begin by examining the impact of the composer's affiliation with the Manchester School and close by probing into the role of the Orkney Islands of Scotland in the development of his music.

In 1956, Davies, Harrison Birtwistle, and Alexander Goehr, along with Elgar Howarth and John Ogdon, as members of the New Music Manchester group, performed a concert that was recognised as a game changer in the course of British music and proved fundamental to the development of the country's musical avant-garde. Goehr, Birtwistle, and Davies became champions of a post-war challenge to what Philip Rupprecht identifies as 'a tradition of British insularity' and 'hostility to avant-garde thought'.⁴¹

Davies studied Schoenberg with Elliott Carter in 1957 and attended Aaron Copland's masterclass in 1958.⁴² He explored Bartok's and Messiaen's compositional techniques with Richard Hall at Manchester and picked up a fascination for 'number-generated structures' found in their music. This influence displays itself in *The Lighthouse*, where 'the structure of all the music' reflects the number symbolism of the Tower from the tarot, the figures of which also appear in *The No. 11 Bus* (1984).⁴³ In 1957, when Davies went to Rome to

⁴¹ Philip Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 1–5.

⁴² Felix Meyer and Anne C. Shreffler, *Elliott Carter* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008), 147.

⁴³ Peter Maxwell Davies, "The Lighthouse, Composer's Note," *Max Opus*, accessed August 9, 2019, <http://web.archive.org/web/20171019200944/http://www.maxopus.com/index.aspx>.

study with Goffredo Petrassi, he established a friendship with Luigi Nono.⁴⁴ The two composers later contributed massively to a wave of radical experiments with vocality. Davies also premiered pieces such as *Clarinet Sonata* (1956) at Darmstadt.

At the same time, composers of the Manchester School took an interest in early music and refused to completely break with the past.⁴⁵ This attraction was empowered by a post-war revival of the 'pre-Classical repertoire'.⁴⁶ This preoccupation with returning to and rediscovering the music of the past was most extensive and long-lasting in the case of Davies.⁴⁷ His enthusiasm about medieval music was such that he has been described as a 'neo-mediaeval composer to the same extent as Stravinsky was a neo-classical composer'.⁴⁸

Davies's *Alma Redemptoris Mater* (1957), using a Dunstable motet as its foundation, is characterised as 'the first obvious indication of the profound influence that the middle ages have had on the composer's development'.⁴⁹ Davies borrows from Monteverdi in his *String Quartet* (1961), the *Leopardi Fragments* (1961), and *Sinfonia* (1962).⁵⁰ His *Missa Super L'homme Arme*

⁴⁴ Mike Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1994), 48.

⁴⁵ Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music and After* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 167–69.

⁴⁶ Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 101.

⁴⁷ Andrew Porter, "Some New British Composers," *The Musical Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (1965): 17.

⁴⁸ Francis Routh, *Contemporary British Music: The Twenty-Five Years from 1945 to 1970* (London: Macdonald, 1972), 233.

⁴⁹ Robert Henderson, "Peter Maxwell Davies," *The Musical Times* 102, no. 1424 (1961): 624–25.

⁵⁰ The composer's note on *Sinfonia* in Paul Griffiths, "Peter Maxwell Davies," in *Contemporary Composers*, ed. Nicholas Snowman (London: Robson, 1982), 138.

(1968, revised 1971) begins with a fifteenth-century mass.⁵¹ Even one of his film pieces, *Suite from 'The Boyfriend'* (1971), refers to a fifteenth-century French folk song.⁵² He used plainsong fragments throughout his entire compositional career in many pieces, including: *Sinfonietta Accademica* (1983), *The Three Kings* (1995), *De Assumptione Beatae Mariae Virginis* (2001), and *Symphony No. 9* (2012).

The Manchester Group's attraction to both early and modern is visible in other facets of British musical modernism. William Glock, the BBC controller, introduced an equal number of pieces by Bach and Stravinsky to the BBC Proms between 1960 and 1973. A similar equilibrium between past and present was provided at the Dartington Summer School, founded by Glock at Bryanston and later handed down to Davies.⁵³ Exploring the connections between early and modern has, for Davies, meant the continual juxtaposition of the two. In addition, he has repeatedly used modern tools to treat historical sources. Applying serial methods to plainchant segments in *Taverner* is one example.⁵⁴ The transformation of pre-existing material has in fact been a constant compositional device for Davies across the genres he has explored. His thematic and stylistic alterations, however, in many instances conceal any trace of the original material.

If early and modern were equally significant for Davies, national and international were not always so. Highly engrossed in musical novelties

⁵¹ Peter Maxwell Davies, "Missa Super L'homme Arme, Composer's Note," (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1968, rev. ed. 1971).

⁵² Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 129.

⁵³ Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 11.

⁵⁴ Paul Griffiths and Arnold Whittall, "Davies, Sir Peter Maxwell," in *Grove Music Online*, accessed April 15, 2015, <http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.catalogue.urls.lon.ac.uk/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e1832>.

occurring at Darmstadt, he protested, in an article in 1956, a 'lazy, unconstructive thought' hidden under 'Britishness'. He viewed it a technical deficiency on the part of contemporary British composers not to have made a worthwhile contribution to the latest developments occurring elsewhere in Europe.⁵⁵ He further claimed that 'there is no longer any place for nationalism in music' and attacked his fellow countrymen for ignoring the music of the continent.⁵⁶

Davies's resentment of nationalism, which was probably partially an outcome of his disgust with the British establishment, softened after constructive changes were made. He believed that nothing interesting was allowed to take place at institutions such as the BBC for a long time.⁵⁷ However, after Glock took over, a new phase started for the British avant-gardes.⁵⁸ Glock commissioned works by Goehr, Birtwistle, and Davies, along with other young British modernists.⁵⁹ Andrew Porter recognises a vogue for 'new music' in 1960s' Britain in general.⁶⁰ The acceptance and embracing of inventive musical experiments by the public seemed to have decreased young Davies's antagonism towards his nation's tradition. He draws massively from British music, especially from the 60s onwards. His employment of John Taverner, Henry Purcell, and John Bull as musical referents in the *Seven in Nomine*

⁵⁵ Peter Maxwell Davies, "The Young British Composer," *The Score*, March 1956, 84–85.

⁵⁶ Peter Maxwell Davies, "Problems of a British Composer Today," *The Listener*, October 8, 1959, 563.

⁵⁷ In Nicholas Jones, "Peter Maxwell Davies in the 1950s: A Conversation with the Composer," *Tempo* 64, no. 254 (2010): 14.

⁵⁸ Glock's magazine, *The Score*, has also proved crucial in familiarising British musicians with advancements in continental Europe.

⁵⁹ David Wright, "Concerts for Coteries, or Music for All? Glock's Proms Reconsidered," *The Musical Times* 149, no. 1904 (2008): 20.

⁶⁰ Porter, "Some New British Composers," 13.

(1963–65), *Fantasia and Two Pavans* (1969), and *St. Thomas Wake* (1969), respectively, illustrates the impact.

British subjects are found in the works of many composers during this time. Birtwistle's *Down by the Greenwood Side* (1968–69), Hugh Wood's *Scenes from Comus* (1965), and Roger Smalley's *Missa Brevis* (1967) all engage with the British cultural past in some way. Davies's national curiosity continued during later years and reaches its peak after his move to the Orkney Islands, where Scotland's tradition becomes a central topic. All the pieces examined here, except for *The Medium*, also feature British historical or literary stories.

Another general musical shift that occurred during the 1960s was, according to Rupprecht, a 'conscious exploration of music as a dramatic medium', which followed the 1950s' absorption with compositional technique.⁶¹ The rise of music theatre was the result. It emerged as a flexible and progressive alternative to traditional opera, disrupting expectations with regard to 'narrative' and 'continuity'. 'Large scale anti-narrative works' such as Nono's *Intolleranza 1960* (1961) and Luciano Berio's *Passaggio* (1961–62), and 'smaller scale music theatre experiments' such as Hans Werner Henze's *El Cimarron* (1969–70) and *Der langwierige Weg in die Wohnung der Natascha Ungeheuer* (1971) were created during this time.⁶² Music theatre dispensed with the orderly passing of time (and sometimes even the storyline) and put more emphasis on gesture and delivery.⁶³ The blooming of music theatre was unprecedented and, as Paul Griffiths states, 'sudden and brief'. Its roots, according to him, go back to Monteverdi's *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (1624). Schoenberg's

⁶¹ Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 336.

⁶² Jonathan Cross, *Harrison Birtwistle: Man, Mind, Music* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), 70.

⁶³ Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music: The Avant Garde since 1945* (London: Dent, 1981), 249.

Pierrot Lunaire (1912) and Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du Soldat* (1918) are identified as its twentieth-century forerunners.⁶⁴ Davies drew on the legacy of Schoenberg in particular, as can be seen in his use of the 'Pierrot ensemble' and other features of his music.

The 1960s thus became the era of theatricality. Goehr's *Arden Must Die* (1967), Birtwistle's *Punch and Judy* (1968) and *Down by the Greenwood Side*, as well as Davies's *Eight Songs*, were among the British compositional landmarks of the time.⁶⁵ All members of the Manchester Group were, from the start, interested in 'operatic music' and 'instrumental drama'. But Davies's music has particularly been characterised by critics as thematic and dramatic.⁶⁶ The composer himself manifests an inclination for 'dramatic intensity', even when talking about children's works, regardless of how 'light' they might be.⁶⁷ He emphasised that 'an orchestral piece has got to have a great deal of theatre in it if it's going to grip the imagination'.⁶⁸ Works as early as the *Trumpet Sonata* (1955) contain themes that are 'announced, evolve, and are transformed' in an 'unfolding drama of form', and pieces such as *St Michael* (1957) and *Prolation* (1958) contain 'an essentially dramatic impetus'.⁶⁹ John C. G. Waterhouse asserts that Davies's 60s pieces are characterised by 'dramatic incisiveness',

⁶⁴ Griffiths, *Modern Music and After*, 196.

⁶⁵ Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 255–56.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 140, 160.

⁶⁷ Peter Maxwell Davies, "A Composer's Point of View (IV): On the Composition of 'Light' and 'Serious' Music," in *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings*, ed. Nicholas Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 232–33.

⁶⁸ Peter Maxwell Davies, "Peter Maxwell Davies," in *New Sounds, New Personalities: British Composers of the 1980s in Conversation with Paul Griffiths*, ed. Paul Griffiths (London & Boston: Faber Music, 1985), 37.

⁶⁹ Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 140, 257.

which remains a feature of his music (visible also in the selection discussed here) for many years to come.⁷⁰

Davies produced many works of music theatre, the most celebrated of which is probably *Eight Songs. Missa Super L'homme Arme, Vesalii Icones* (1969), *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame* (1978), *The Rainbow* (1981), and *A Selkie Tale* (1992) are other pieces that belong to this genre. The quality that all these music theatre works share is described by the composer in the programme note of *Mr Emmet Takes a Walk*: 'There is no stylistic purity in Mr. Emmet: the musical styles change as the text suggests. As in all my music-theatre works, some of the music is emphatically tonal, with very obvious key centres'.⁷¹

Davies's mixing of styles is partly a reflection of the increasing cultural fragmentation of the 1960s.⁷² The employment of musical references in pastiche and parody especially became prominent during this time. This feature is quite fundamental to Davies's oeuvre, as manifested in the range of his musical borrowings: 'everything from 15th-century polyphony to 1930s dance music, from Monteverdi's melodic floridity to Schoenberg's harmonic strain'.⁷³

Robert Adlington also observes an entwining of music with theatre during the second half of the 1950s, giving rise to the dominance of the musically dramatic works of the 1960s and early 1970s. This entanglement was a result of, among other factors, the dramatic performance virtuosity required of the

⁷⁰ John C. G. Waterhouse, "Peter Maxwell Davies: Towards an Opera," *Tempo* New Series, no. 69 (1964): 19.

⁷¹ Peter Maxwell Davies, "Mr Emmet Takes a Walk, Programme Note," *Archive.today*, 2000, accessed July 30, 2018, <http://archive.li/qPRqL>.

⁷² John Warnaby, "Davies, Peter Maxwell," in *Grove Music Online*, accessed April 15, 2015, <http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.catalogue.urls.lon.ac.uk/subscriber/article/grove/music/07299?q=Maxwell+Davies&search=quick&pos=1&start=1#firsthit>.

⁷³ Griffiths, *Modern Music: The Avant Garde since 1945*, 192.

roles written for avant-garde scores and the introduction of the element of indeterminacy, which provided performance freedom and included the performer in compositional decision-making. These features emphasised the theatrical quality of musical works and led to the elevation of the performer's position to inventor rather than mere deliverer.⁷⁴ It is therefore not surprising that the vocalist of *Eight Songs* claimed partial authorship,⁷⁵ and that Davies confessed many of his music theatre pieces would not have existed without the virtuosity of the singer Mary Thomas.⁷⁶ Hart and Thomas have been singled out as two consequential performers with respect to Davies's compositional development.⁷⁷ Many of Davies's pieces that are vocally significant feature a symbiotic relationship between composer and performer.

Radical theatricality as well as vocal extremity thus became characteristic features of Davies's pieces during this period. It was also around this time that he seemed to be more intensely involved with the topic of madness. He came to be more committed to fleshing out emotional and mental states musically, and his music gained an 'explosive and revolutionary quality'.⁷⁸ In fact, there was a general increase in interest in portraying psychical states and heightened states of awareness as a result of the revival of Expressionism in the 1960s.

⁷⁴ Robert Adlington, "Music Theatre since the 1960s," in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth Century Opera*, ed. Mervyn Cooke (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 225–26.

⁷⁵ Noah Pikes, *Dark Voices: The Genesis of Roy Hart Theatre* (Woodstock, CT: Spring Journal, 1999), 87–88.

⁷⁶ In Lynn Ten Kate, "Obituary: Mary Thomas," *The Independent*, April 23, 1997.

⁷⁷ Grenville Hancox, "The Composer-Performer Relationship in the Music of Peter Maxwell Davies," in *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies*, eds. Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 200.

⁷⁸ Carolyn J. Smith, *Peter Maxwell Davies: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 4.

The seed of Davies's intensely Expressionist pieces was planted in 1965 at the Wardour Castle Summer School of Music, where he analysed *Pierrot Lunaire* in considerable detail.⁷⁹ His Expressionist period though, as many scholars believe, seriously started with the setting of Georg Trakl's text to music in *Revelation and Fall*, which is also considered his first music theatre work.⁸⁰

The revival of Expressionism also brought with it 'an extraordinary registral expansion in the use of the orchestra and of individual instruments, [...] extremes of both range and dynamics, [and] the extensive use of new instrumental techniques'.⁸¹ In the case of Davies, it was mainly the Pierrot Players who delivered the instrumental extremism of his penetrating dramas. The group, which he co-founded with Birtwistle in 1967, substantially extended 'the expressive vocabulary and theatrical implications of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*'.⁸² Birtwistle left in 1970 and the ensemble, renamed as the Fires of London, was from then on under Davies's sole direction.

The human voice as an important expressive tool was key to Expressionism, and vocal music was produced in abundance during the revival of the movement.⁸³ A wider spectrum of vocal sounds was being accepted into the musical realm. Berberian notes that this was 'the New Vocality' containing 'an endless range of vocal styles', which exploits 'the past experience of sound

⁷⁹ Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 93–94.

⁸⁰ Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 103; Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 318–19.

⁸¹ John C. Crawford and Dorothy L. Crawford, *Expressionism in Twentieth-Century Music* (Bloomington & Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 19.

⁸² Warnaby, "Davies, Peter Maxwell," in *Grove Music Online*, accessed April 15, 2015, http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/subscriber/article/grove/music/07299?q=Maxwell+Davies&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit.

⁸³ Crawford and Crawford, *Expressionism in Twentieth-Century Music*, 19.

with the sensibility of the present (and a presentiment of the future)'.⁸⁴ This new vocality was in many instances used in musical representations of madness, anxiety, trauma, death, and so on, which are prominent Expressionist themes. Bernd Alois Zimmermann's *Requiem für einen jungen Dichter* (1967–69), a vocal expression of suicide, is a case in point. Other examples include György Ligeti's *Aventures* (1962) and *Nouvelles Aventures* (1962–65), Nono's *Da un Diario Italiano* (1964) for 72 voices, Berio's *Sequenza III* (1965), and Mauricio Kagel's *Ensemble* (1967–69). It is certain that by the early 1960s Davies was well informed about many of the avant-garde experiments with the voice.⁸⁵

The Expressionism of Davies's music was never as intense and overwrought after the early 1970s.⁸⁶ Andrew Clements remarks that his music was moving towards a style that had 'softer edges' and gave more weight to 'instrumental colour and harmonic clarity'.⁸⁷ On the whole, in contrast to the sweeping and plain antagonism to the existing state of affairs prevalent in the previous decade, the 1970s witnessed a sort of 'reconciliation' with the possibilities at hand for British art music.⁸⁸ Additionally, in this decade a general focus on the impact of music on the listener took root among musicians. The experience of the listener was treated as fundamental to the perception of

⁸⁴ Cathy Berberian, "The New Vocality in Contemporary Music (1966)," in *Cathy Berberian: Pioneer of Contemporary Vocality*, eds. Pamela Karantonis, et al. (London: Routledge, 2016), 47, 49.

⁸⁵ Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 258–59.

⁸⁶ Warnaby, "Davies, Peter Maxwell," in *Grove Music Online*, accessed April 15, 2015, http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/subscriber/article/grove/music/07299?q=Maxwell+Davies&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit.

⁸⁷ Andrew Clements, "Davies, Sir Peter Maxwell," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Reference, 1997), 1091.

⁸⁸ Robert P. Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991), 482.

music and the formation of musical identity, especially for electronic musicians.⁸⁹ As such, the speedy growth of electronic music was significant in that it increased attention to the listener. *The Medium* and *The Lighthouse* reflect this new concern in their concentration on audience members.

During the last few years of the 1970s, Davies shifted his focus from music theatre and ensemble works to larger instrumental works. He also started to reduce his engagement with the Fires of London, even though many of his pieces continued to be performed by them. One possible reason is his desire to compose in Orkney, where he had moved to in 1971, and for Orcadians.⁹⁰ The nature and people of Orkney, as he described, provided great stimulus for him to create music.⁹¹ The proponent of music theatre now intended to provide 'functional music for the local community'.⁹² This tendency is in line with the vital role he played as a music educator—a passion that occupied him early in his career and remained a concern throughout his life. Furthermore, scholars such as Christopher Fox reckon that after the forceful Expressionist works, which were brought about at 'considerable psychological cost', his 'creative survival depended on his physical relocation', presumably because of the peace and serenity that could be attained in a place like stable, traditional Orkney.⁹³ He describes himself at the time of his relocation as 'scattered and thoroughly

⁸⁹ Griffiths, *Modern Music: The Avant Garde since 1945*, 294–95.

⁹⁰ Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 181.

⁹¹ Peter Maxwell Davies, "Pax Orcadiensis," *Tempo*, no. 119 (1976): 20–21.

⁹² John Warnaby, "Peter Maxwell Davies's Recent Music, and Its Debt to His Earlier Scores," in *Perspectives on Peter Maxwell Davies*, ed. Richard McGregor (Aldershot, Burlington, Singapore, Sydney: Ashgate, 2000), 91.

⁹³ Christopher Fox, "Sir Peter Maxwell Davies: A Personal Reflection," *Tempo* 70, no. 277 (2016): 80.

disintegrated'.⁹⁴ The history and culture of Orkney is reflected in the majority of the works created after the relocation (except for a few pieces, such as *Miss Donnithorne*). *Symphony No.1* (1975–76) and the Naxos Quartets (2001–7) are examples of purely instrumental works featuring this influence.

The composer's move to Orkney is also a 'metaphorical relocation to a safer musical landscape'.⁹⁵ Mike Seabrook describes his Orkney-related pieces as having nothing 'difficult' about them: 'All one has to do is to relax, open the ears and listen, and allow the imagination to do the rest'.⁹⁶ According to Warnaby, 'Above all, the Orkney works exemplify an increased emphasis on the harmonic dimension, as he has sought to create a discourse which listeners can follow rather as they follow tonal music'.⁹⁷ Davies was increasingly inclined towards 'harmony in traditional functional terms: of tonics, long range dissonances, and their eventual resolution'.⁹⁸

After choosing Orkney as his home, Davies also developed an aptitude for setting to music the writings of George Mackay Brown, the renowned Scottish poet. There was an affinity between Davies and Brown, as both were quite drawn to subjects concerning inner conflict and tension. In general terms, Davies's compositions after his relocation, though less personal, remained

⁹⁴ Peter Maxwell Davies, "Invisible Parameters and Spirit-Stirring Amalgams," in *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings*, ed. Nicholas Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 304.

Original Source: Editor's (edited) copy of Davies's original handwritten script, April 17, 2015.

⁹⁵ Fox, "Sir Peter Maxwell Davies: A Personal Reflection," 80.

⁹⁶ Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 168.

⁹⁷ Warnaby, "Davies, Peter Maxwell," in *Grove Music Online*, accessed April 15, 2015, http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/subscriber/article/grove/music/07299?q=Maxwell+Davies&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit.

⁹⁸ Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 448.

intensely emotional.⁹⁹ Brown and Davies were additionally linked by a deep concern with examining and questioning religious truth.¹⁰⁰ *From Stone to Thorn* (1971) and *The Blind Fiddler* (1976) are two of Davies's compositions based on Brown poems that deal with the Stations of the Cross, a theme that the composer had explored earlier in *Vesalii Icones*. The hypocritical religiosity of one of the protagonists of *The Lighthouse* is another indication of this concern.

After Davies's move, one can also witness a reduction of parody; the referencing of Scottish folk material, which fortified the lyricism of his music; and the adoption of a detached approach, which was an influence of Brown and the emergence of a sense of place. His music shows a new concern with the idea of the sea in particular: 'the vastness of the sea, the long horizons, and the bleak landscape'.¹⁰¹ In fact, the 'passionate portrayal of landscapes and, especially seascapes' in his evocation of the spirit of the Orkneys arguably became Davies's most recognisable signature.¹⁰²

Review of the Literature

While the scholarship on Davies's oeuvre was underwhelming in the 1960s, there was a rise in interest towards the end of the decade, possibly stimulated by the composition of *Taverner* and *Eight Songs*. By 1979 there was enough written on Davies that Stephen Pruslin could select articles from *Tempo* alone to create a booklet.¹⁰³ It was three years after, in 1982, that the first book solely devoted to Davies was published by Paul Griffiths. This volume is composed of a chronological survey of the composer's musical development

⁹⁹ Griffiths and Whittall, "Davies, Sir Peter Maxwell."

¹⁰⁰ Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 130.

¹⁰¹ Otto Karolyi, *Modern British Music* (London: Associated University Presses, 1994), 126.

¹⁰² Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 253.

¹⁰³ Stephen Pruslin, ed. *Peter Maxwell Davies: Studies from Two Decades* (London: Boosey & Hawks Music Publishers, 1979).

with a more detailed analysis of three of his chamber works. It also includes the author's conversations with the composer and Davies's notes on some of his works.¹⁰⁴ Substantial growth in Davies scholarship is visible in the 1990s.

During this decade, numerous articles were written, two attempts at cataloguing and categorising his works were made, and his biography was published.¹⁰⁵

This growth continued into the twenty-first century with another source book revealing previously unknown details, two major essay collections devoted to his compositions, and more focus on his musical views.¹⁰⁶ Nonetheless, there is still plenty of space for further development.

This section attempts to provide a general overview of the scholarship on Davies as well as the relevant literature on madness in opera and the affinity between madness and modernism. More detailed reviews of the literature on each individual piece will be provided in the relevant chapters.

Davies's scores, which often include notes by the composer and librettist, remain valuable resources. His official website, launched in 1994, provided useful information as well.¹⁰⁷ However, it unfortunately was taken down a while

¹⁰⁴ Davies, "Peter Maxwell Davies."

¹⁰⁵ Colin Bayliss, ed. *The Music of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies: An Annotated Catalogue* (Beverly: Highgate Publications, 1991);

Smith, *Peter Maxwell Davies: A Bio-Bibliography*;

Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*.

¹⁰⁶ Stewart R. Craggs, *Peter Maxwell Davies: A Source Book* (London: Ashgate, 2002);

Richard McGregor, ed. *Perspectives on Peter Maxwell Davies* (Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, 2000);

Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones, eds., *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009);

Nicholas Jones, ed. *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings*.

¹⁰⁷ www.maxopus.com.

after the composer's death in March 2016.¹⁰⁸ Despite that, a range of other primary source material on Davies is available. Scholars including Griffiths, Nicholas Jones, and Stephen Walsh have interviewed the composer; some of Davies's talks and interviews are available on YouTube, and reviews of the recordings and first performances of many of his pieces are not difficult to access; and his lectures, speeches, and articles written for journals and newspapers offer a general understanding of this opinionated composer's musical views and technique. Jones has also gathered a selection of his writings and spoken material from 1949 to 2015 in a volume published after Davies's death.¹⁰⁹

Generally, it seems that every aspect of Davies's career has drawn some—though not always adequate—scholarly attention: from his early interest in Indian music, revealed in his thesis at the University of Manchester, to his life-long commitments, for instance to music education.¹¹⁰

His oeuvre has also been approached from a diverse range of perspectives. In particular, the composer's connection to modernism is a dimension that has been greatly emphasised. Arnold Whittall's contribution is significant in this regard. He extracts Davies's modernist tendencies from his

¹⁰⁸ A new website has recently been launched, see www.petermaxwelldavies.com

¹⁰⁹ Jones, *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings*.

¹¹⁰ For a discussion of Davies's thesis, "An Introduction to Indian Music" (1956), and the impact of Indian music especially on his early scores, see Nicholas Jones, "The Writings of a Young British Composer: Peter Maxwell Davies in the 1950s," in *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies*, eds. Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); For Davies's involvement in music education see Brian Schlotel, "Personalities in World Music Education No. 12 –: Peter Maxwell Davies," *International Journal of Music Education* 17 (1991).

comments on his compositional technique¹¹¹ and situates Davies's works within the setting of European modernism, exploring his connection with Mahler and Sibelius.¹¹² Whittall also examines specific pieces, observing, for instance, 'a shared modernism' in his analysis of Davies's *Third Symphony* (1984) and Birtwistle's *Earth Dances* (completed 1986).¹¹³

Scholars have also focused on other aspects of Davies's compositional techniques. Rodney Lister, for instance, scrutinises his preoccupation with sonata form.¹¹⁴ Peter Owens shows how compositional material from Davies's *Worldes Blis* (1969) is reworked with different approaches in his *Hymn to St Magnus* (1972) and *Vesalii Icones*, leading to completely divergent results.¹¹⁵ Richard McGregor emphasises the compositional experience of *Salome* (1978) as giving rise to certain long-term developmental changes in Davies's music,

¹¹¹ Arnold Whittall, "A Dance for the Deadly Sins': The Beltane Fire and the Rites of Modernism," in *Perspectives on Peter Maxwell Davies*, ed. Richard McGregor (Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, 2000).

¹¹² Arnold Whittall, "A Dark Voice from Within': Peter Maxwell Davies and Modern Times," in *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies*, eds. Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹¹³ Arnold Whittall, "Comparatively Complex: Birtwistle, Maxwell Davies and Modernist Analysis," *Music Analysis* 13, no. 2/3 (1994).

¹¹⁴ Rodney Lister, "The Ghost in the Machine: Sonata Form in the Music of Peter Maxwell Davies," in *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies*, eds. Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹¹⁵ Peter Owens, "Worldes Blis and Its Satellites," in *Perspectives on Peter Maxwell Davies*, ed. Richard McGregor (Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, 2000).

and Jones has written extensively on the technical processes of his *Third Symphony*.¹¹⁶

Extensive borrowing of musical material and stylistic multiplicity have also long been identified as distinctive features of Davies's music. In the early reception of his music, this feature was the object of considerable debate and sometimes disapproval. In 1968, Roger Smalley announced that Davies was uniting and integrating source material more effectively and was achieving a different level of unity in his mixture of styles, identifying this as a sign of renewal.¹¹⁷ Jonathan Harvey confirms this unity in the case of *Eight Songs* in 1969. He argues for the manifestation of overall musical coherency despite the presence of mingled and distorted quotations in this piece.¹¹⁸ Michael Chanan's reading of the same piece in the same year is fundamentally different. He observes a 'diffuseness' emphasised by a 'stylistic multiplicity' in *Eight Songs*.¹¹⁹ Stephen Walsh, writing in 1980, generally views Davies's music theatre pieces during this period as displaying more 'virtuosity than stylistic coherence'.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Richard McGregor, "Stepping Out: Maxwell Davies's 'Salome' as a Transitional Work," *Tempo* 60, no. 236 (2006);

Nicholas Jones, "'Preliminary Workings': The Precompositional Process in Maxwell Davies's Third Symphony," *Tempo New Series* 60, no. 204 (1998);

Nicholas Jones, "Peter Maxwell Davies's 'Submerged Cathedral': Architectural Principles in the Third Symphony," *Music and Letters* 81, no. 3 (2000);

Nicholas Jones, "Peter Maxwell Davies's Basic Unifying Hypothesis: Dominant Logic," *The Musical Times* 143, no. 1878 (2002).

¹¹⁷ Roger Smalley, "Some Recent Works of Peter Maxwell Davies," *Tempo New Series*, no. 84 (1968).

¹¹⁸ Jonathan Harvey, "Maxwell Davies's Songs for a Mad King," *Tempo New Series*, no. 89 (1969).

¹¹⁹ Michael Chanan, "Dialectics in Peter Maxwell Davies," *Tempo New Series* 90: 14.

¹²⁰ Stephen Walsh, "Davies, Peter Maxwell," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980), 277.

These controversies have implications for scholars' understanding of Davies's musical language. Chanan believes that Davies's parody technique and stylistic diversity create a confrontation and opposition of styles in which the real style of the composer is revealed in a dialectic fashion.¹²¹ More recently, Steve Sweeney-Turner rejects the dialectical reading of Chanan, arguing that structural identities are too unstable to create opposition. His discussion, which is focused on the source material of *Vesalii Icones*, is built around Derrida's concept of 'deconstruction'.¹²² Griffiths seems to occupy the middle ground. He places Davies's 'real' music against the parodied and imitated musical sources. At the same time though, he acknowledges that the skilfulness of transforming source material challenges the authenticity of the so-called real style of the composer, implying that the two are intertwined and somewhat indistinguishable.¹²³

The discussion of musical quotations in Davies's music has recently shifted from its significance for the composer's musical language to what this diversity communicates and connotes. McGregor categorises the plainchants used in Davies's repertoire and explores the symbolism and meaning behind their selection;¹²⁴ Michael Hall highlights the structural importance of the diverse range of musical quotations used in *Eight Songs*;¹²⁵ David Metzger also references *Eight Songs*, the only Davies piece discussed in his book *Quotation*

¹²¹ Chanan, "Dialectics in Peter Maxwell Davies."

¹²² Steve Sweeney-Turner, "Resurrecting the Antichrist: Maxwell Davies and Parody – Dialectics or Deconstruction?," *Tempo* New Series, no. 191 (1994).

¹²³ Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies*.

¹²⁴ Richard McGregor, "Peter Maxwell Davies's Sources: Reflections on Origins, Meanings and Significance," in *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies*, eds. Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹²⁵ Michael Hall, *Music Theatre in Britain 1960-1975* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2015), 153.

and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music (2003), in a section entitled 'Mad Kings and Popes'.¹²⁶ His discussion is centred on the distortion of the past and the obsession with it, conveyed by the use of musical quotations.

Additionally, the nature of musical references in Davies's music has also been contested. Hall identifies parody as being common to all of Davies's music theatre works. However, he distinguishes between parody as borrowing for non-humorous ends, which has been present in Davies's music for a long period of time, and parody as borrowing for humorous purposes, which 'only came into its own during the period when he produced music-theatre pieces'.¹²⁷ For Stephen Arnold, similarly, parody in the non-mocking sense is present throughout the composer's oeuvre; however, in the sense of ridicule, it is not prevalent before 1966.¹²⁸ McGregor criticises the usage of the term parody altogether.¹²⁹ In his assessment of Davies's musical references, he concludes that many of them—including the quotation from Handel's *Messiah* in *Eight Songs*, the Victorian references in *Miss Donnithorne*, the pavan material in *St Thomas's Wake*, and the gospel songs in *The Lighthouse*—are not parodic because they are not meant to make us laugh.

The texts of Davies's works have also been examined, though to a much lesser extent than his musical processes. Examples include John Warnaby's assessment of the text of *Resurrection* (1987) and the opera's connections with

¹²⁶ David Metzger, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 97–107.

¹²⁷ Hall, *Music Theatre in Britain 1960-1975*, 136.

¹²⁸ Stephen Arnold, "The Music of Taverner," *Tempo*, no. 101 (1972).

¹²⁹ Richard McGregor, "The Persistence of Parody in the Music of Peter Maxwell Davies" (paper presented at the proceedings from the 2005 and 2006 Musica Scotica Conferences, Glasgow, 2008).

James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*,¹³⁰ Gabriel Josipovici's focus on the story of *Taverner* and its connections with works such as Franz Kafka's *The Trial*,¹³¹ and Majel Connery's study of the texts of *Taverner* and *Resurrection*.¹³²

The visual, structural and thematic drama of Davies's oeuvre is another facet to which scholars have attended. Rupprecht has shown that from the *Trumpet Sonata* to the *First Taverner Fantasia* (1962), Davies's compositional style conveys a 'thematic drama';¹³³ Joel Lester points out how the thoroughly planned serial structure of *Ave Maris Stella* (1975) is capable of conveying musical gesture and dramatic expression;¹³⁴ Michael Burden stresses the dramatic aspect of Davies's music theatre works, particularly his use of stage props and his interest in ritual;¹³⁵ and Hall highlights the composer's inclusion of dramatic gesture directions in the score, which he believes become increasingly significant for him from *Eight Songs* onwards.¹³⁶

¹³⁰ John Warnaby, "Maxwell Davies's 'Resurrection': Origins, Themes, Symbolism," *Tempo* New Series, no. 191 (1994).

¹³¹ Gabriel Josipovici, "Taverner: Thoughts on the Libretto," *Tempo* New Series, no. 101 (1972).

¹³² Majel Connery, "Peter Maxwell Davies' Worst Nightmare: Staging the Unsacred in the Operas *Taverner* and *Resurrection*," *The Opera Quarterly* 25, no. 3–4 (2009).

¹³³ Philip Rupprecht, "Thematic Drama in Early Peter Maxwell Davies," in *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies*, eds. Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹³⁴ Joel Lester, "Structure and Effect in *Ave Maris Stella*," in *Perspectives on Peter Maxwell Davies*, ed. Richard McGregor (Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, 2000).

¹³⁵ Michael Burden, "A Foxtrot to the Crucifixion: The Music Theatre of Peter Maxwell Davies," in *Perspectives on Peter Maxwell Davies*, ed. Richard McGregor (Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, 2000).

¹³⁶ Hall, *Music Theatre in Britain 1960-1975*, 57–59.

Davies's music is often discussed in relation to the dramatic themes he explores. Justin Vickers studies works that feature the theme of the sea, categorising them into six genres to set the groundwork for further studies,¹³⁷ while Connery identifies theological questioning as one evident theme running through Davies's oeuvre in general. Her study of *Taverner* and *Resurrection* is focused on the significance of the voice and its role in the critique of institutionalized Christianity.¹³⁸ Christopher Dromey, likewise, recognises 'the hypocrisy of institutionalized belief' as well as 'the betrayal and prosecution of innocence' as prominent in Davies's Pierrot ensemble pieces.¹³⁹ Other themes identified include the confusion of identity, morality in the sense of distinguishing between true and false, betrayal, the subversion of meaning, and madness.¹⁴⁰

Madness comes up, above all, with respect to Davies's *Eight Songs*. Scholars have mainly discussed its distortion of musical quotations and fixation on the past,¹⁴¹ the expressive power of the extreme vocal utterances articulated by the mad individual,¹⁴² and its themes of violence and sexuality.¹⁴³ Certain

¹³⁷ Justin Vickers, "Peter Maxwell Davies's Variations on a Theme: A Catalog of the Sea Works," *Notes* 71, no. 4 (2015).

¹³⁸ Connery, "Peter Maxwell Davies' Worst Nightmare: Staging the Unsacred in the Operas *Taverner* and *Resurrection*."

¹³⁹ Christopher Dromey, *The Pierrot Ensembles: Chronicle and Catalogue, 1912-2012* (London: Plumbago Books and Arts, 2012), 164.

¹⁴⁰ Burden, "A Foxtrot to the Crucifixion: The Music Theatre of Peter Maxwell Davies"; Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies*; Hall, *Music Theatre in Britain 1960-1975*, 134, 148, 149.

¹⁴¹ Metzger, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music*.

¹⁴² Gabriel Josipovici, "Two Moments in Modern Music-Theatre," in *The Lessons of Modernism and Other Essays*, ed. Gabriel Josipovici (London: Macmillan, 1977).

¹⁴³ Adrian Curtin, "Alternative Vocalities: Listening Awry to Peter Maxwell Davies's *Eight Songs* for a Mad King," *Mosaic: A journal for the interdisciplinary study of literature* 42, no. 2 (2009).

performances of the piece have also been occasionally examined. For example, T. Nikki Cesare's article focuses on how technology mediates the dramatisation of the body in a staging directed by Lydia Steier in 2005.¹⁴⁴ However, as will be made clear in the next chapter, in spite of the attention paid to this piece, many aspects of it still remain overlooked.

Detailed research on madness in Davies's repertoire rarely extends to pieces other than *Eight Songs*. Alan Shockley, Alan E. Williams, and Ruud Welten are the only scholars who take this theme as their central focus and examine more than one of Davies's relevant pieces. Shockley's conference paper mainly revolves around madness in relation to the violence of vocalicity and sexuality in *Eight Songs* and *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, respectively. He views the King of *Eight Songs* as maddest when his music is least extreme. The King's shattering of the violin in song seven and his announcement of his death in song eight are identified as the mad moments. Shockley considers the King's music as less extreme in these two songs because the musical material is 'restrained' and 'reasonable' and the King's vocalicity is mainly conventional.¹⁴⁵ In my understanding, the musical material is mainly in conflict with vocal music and only the latter is representative of the King's mental and emotional states. I also provide explanations other than insanity for the moments that Shockley identifies as the King's mad moments.

¹⁴⁴ T. Nikki Cesare, "Like a Chained Man's Bruise: The Mediated Body in *Eight Songs* for a Mad King and *Anatomy Theatre*," *Theatre Journal* 58, no. 3 (2006).

¹⁴⁵ Alan Shockley, "Sick Fantasies: Insanity, Abjection and Extended Vocal Techniques in *Eight Songs* for a Mad King and *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*/Texts and Techniques of Madness" (presented at A Celebration of the Music of Peter Maxwell Davies, St. Martin's College of Performing Arts, Lancaster, 2000), accessed February 27, 2014, http://www.maxopus.com/resources_detail.aspx?key=51.

In the case of *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, Shockley associates extreme vocality with sexuality and fixation on the past, which push the character towards delusion and hysteria. For him, the audiences' consideration of Miss D. as mad is attributable to her virginity and her abstinence from consumerism. He links this idea to the insanity of the world for which a virgin and a non-consumer is a 'spinster' and 'a suspect'.¹⁴⁶ From my perspective, the madness of this protagonist is not called into question. She is rather depicted as a textbook example of hysteria, an ironic exaggeration aimed at criticising the general representation of madwomen.

Alan E. Williams examines Davies's encounter with the theme of madness in *Eight Songs*, *Miss Donnithorne*, and *The Medium* in the context of Foucault's doctrine about madness. From his survey of the three pieces, he deduces that withdrawing from a complex musical sound world and extreme vocality are necessary to make madness manifest itself.¹⁴⁷ Williams believes that in the absence of the anti-psychiatry debates which blurred the distinction between sanity and insanity to the extreme, radical vocality reinforces the stereotypes associated with madness and creates alienation. Thus, the King of *Eight Songs* ends up being a conventional aggressive madman, and the concept of madness in the piece is reduced to a tool for exploring extreme vocality. Williams argues that Miss D. is less stereotypically mad as a result of her less violent vocality, the mildness of her manner and the piece's less extreme use of stylistic fragmentation. In his view, alienation is minimal in *The Medium*, as audiences of that piece also become somehow deluded. The

¹⁴⁶ Shockley, "Sick Fantasies: Insanity, Abjection and Extended Vocal Techniques in Eight Songs for a Mad King and Miss Donnithorne's Maggot/Texts and Techniques of Madness."

¹⁴⁷ Alan E. Williams, "Madness in the Music Theatre Works of Peter Maxwell Davies," *Perspectives of New Music* 38, no. 1 (2000): 96.

simplicity of the vocal language as well as the empty stage are identified by Williams as vital factors for depicting a less marginalised image of insanity.¹⁴⁸

My argument differs from Williams's in the attention paid to a paradox regarding the use of extreme vocality, which creates a different alienating effect in the context of each of these three pieces. I will examine this issue in detail in the fourth chapter. Suffice it to say here that my discussion revolves around the tension between the use of extended techniques for a vocal rendition of madness that regards it as a sophisticated phenomenon and the role of these techniques in putting the character on display.

Ruud Welten explores the theme of madness mainly in *Eight Songs*, and to a small extent in *Miss Donnithorne* and *Caroline Mathilde*. He refers to Foucault's notion of the death of the subject in relation to what he views as the disintegration of the character's subjectivity in *Eight Songs*. According to Welten, this disintegration is visible in the jumbled musical quotations and the King's mixture of vocal styles.¹⁴⁹ I argue that connotations of the stylistic diversity cannot be associated with the King's state, as instrumental music represents something separate from the King. Contrary to Welten, the protagonist's vocality could be read a means of exploring the psyche in its entirety rather than tearing the subject apart. Welten's discussion of *Miss Donnithorne* is very brief. It is centred on the character's lack of ability to sustain bel-canto singing, which signifies her descent into hysteria.¹⁵⁰ I elaborate on this view and explain how even the extreme vocal sounds, along with other

¹⁴⁸ Williams, "Madness in the Music Theatre Works of Peter Maxwell Davies," 95.

¹⁴⁹ Ruud Welten, "'I'm Not Ill, I'm Nervous' – Madness in the Music of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies," *Tempo*, no. 196 (1996): 21.

¹⁵⁰ Welten, "'I'm Not Ill, I'm Nervous' – Madness in the Music of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies," 24.

elements of the piece, augment the impotence of Miss Donnithorne to create a standard image of hysteria.

Reviewing the body of knowledge in the field demonstrates that the topic of madness in Davies's repertoire has not received sufficient consideration. Perhaps even more importantly, the pieces on which this research is conducted remain vastly under-researched. There is also a lack of categorisation and comparison (musically and theoretically) with respect to Davies's representations of madness.

This thesis fits into the research devoted to prominent themes in Davies's repertoire and also into the study of post-war experiments with vocality and theatricality. I certainly draw a great deal from the existing scholarship on the composer, but at times a different angle is adopted to cast the arguments. For instance, Davies's polystylism and transformation of musical quotations are not discussed in terms of what they mean for the authenticity of the composer's musical language, but in terms of their implications for the representation of madness in creating confusion, humiliation, irony, and related states. Similarly, the texts of the works are not examined with respect to their literary significance or philosophical symbolism. The focus is instead diverted to the structure of narration and how the text interacts with the music, as well as on the meaning and imagery of the words spoken by characters regarded as mad.

This study also adds to the current research on the theme of madness in Davies's repertoire by focusing on dramatic elements that have largely been ignored. These include, among other things, role-changing, instrumental drama, and performance instructions such as lighting directions. I will also attend to certain themes, such as social justice and authority, which have not been discussed in relation to Davies's treatment of madness. Other relatively

disregarded areas explored by this research are audience identification with the mad individual, the role of gender in the representation of madness, and the implications of real versus imagined reality. This study draws from various disciplines, including psychology and philosophy, enabling it to examine questions concerning issues such as social class and collectivity, which have not been raised much in relation to Davies's repertoire.

It is worth noting that in some ways the repertoire under study extends a long history of representing madness in opera. As many scholars have discussed, madness has always offered an opportunity for the loosening of musical constraints and a sort of liberation for both the composer and the character. Catherine Clément, in *Opera or The Undoing of Women* (1979) points to the frequent demise of women in opera. For her, madness could be considered a means of escape from the death nearly predetermined by the plot. She views the powerful, uncontrolled voice of the madwoman as an expression of freedom, even happiness.¹⁵¹ From a different perspective, Susan McClary argues in *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (1991) that insane females in opera are often presented as spectacles and their madness is linked to excessive femininity. According to her, this excess, which manifests itself in their vocal chromaticism and ornamentation, is contained within protective frames. McClary believes that unrestrained vocal expression, a musical tool of representing madness, also paradoxically displays the madwoman's resistance. It can even occasionally exceed the control of the frame and liberate her.¹⁵² However, Mary Ann Smart maintains that the resistance expressed mainly in the form of coloratura and chromaticism is not always sufficient for the mad woman's liberation. Her analysis of Gaetano Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*

¹⁵¹ Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, 89.

¹⁵² McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*, 90-99

(1835) demonstrates that the heroine's vocal virtuosity is subdued by three musical references: instants which recall certain moments of the plot where men exercised power over Lucia. Smart argues that Lucia's voice is eventually contained, so that there is no excess and 'the coloratura resides where it should'. The character is thus not liberated but defeated.¹⁵³

As manifested in the reviewed literature, the portrayal of madness in opera usually concerns women. Opera's fascination with insane females is exemplified by the Met's characterisation of flawless performances of prima donnas in the 1960s as 'demented'. Ethan Mordden writes: 'Demented is opera at its greatest, a night when the singers are in voice, in role, in glory. [...] And note: not thrilling, admirable, or inspiring, but *demented*: insane'.¹⁵⁴ However, there are important departures from this tradition, especially in the twentieth century. In *Disordered Heroes in Opera* (2015), John Cordingly analyses twelve male opera characters from a psychiatric point of view. He groups them into six types of personality disorders to examine deviant behaviour through opera.¹⁵⁵ Philip Rupprecht's *Britten's Musical Language* (2001) is also partially devoted to the theme of madness in Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* (1945). The author discusses Grimes's madness in the context of the opera's naming discourse: the 'repeated calling of the protagonist's name'. Rupprecht recognises that madness, as has traditionally been the case, is here tied to 'theatrical spectacle', 'vocal histrionics', and 'emotional excess' as well as fragmented verbal and

¹⁵³ Mary Ann Smart, "The Silencing of Lucia," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 4, no. 2 (1992): 81.

¹⁵⁴ Ethan Mordden, *Demented, the World of the Opera Diva* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1984), 10-11.

¹⁵⁵ John Cordingly, *Disordered Heroes in Opera*, ed. Claire Seymour (Suffolk: Plumbago Books, 2015).

musical quotations.¹⁵⁶ Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* (1925) features another major operatic madman who, similar to Grimes, has often been identified as a victim of societal maltreatment. It has been discussed in detail by George Perle¹⁵⁷ and Douglas Jarman.¹⁵⁸

Davies both draws on this operatic tradition and departs from it in some important ways. Madness in Davies's repertoire occupies the whole piece, rather than being framed as it is in many of these operas. The absence of a dramatic frame, representing some kind of 'normality' outside the mad person, is often partly a result of Davies's works only featuring a single character. In this sense, the selected pieces are more closely related to monodramas and non-operatic vocal works of the twentieth century. Additionally, the absence of a set of musical conventions to work within and against renders the frame of normality, in the traditional operatic sense, irrelevant. The kind of extended vocal techniques in Davies's repertoire also work differently from the kind of vocal excess and disorder that define earlier mad scenes. I will touch on some of these differences throughout my discussions and elaborate on the role of extended vocality in the context of each piece.

Davies's works could also be viewed in light of the literature on the affinity between madness and modernist modes of representation. Madness is a prominent theme within modernism and the modernist crisis of representation, characterised by the reliance on a subjective

¹⁵⁶ Philip Rupprecht, *Britten's Musical Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 32, 62-75.

¹⁵⁷ George Perle, *The Operas of Alban Berg*, vol. 1 (London: University of California Press, 1980), 93-129.

¹⁵⁸ Douglas Jarman, *Alban Berg: Wozzeck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

rather than fixed notion of reality, corresponds with our understanding of madness. Tobin Siebers' *Disability Aesthetics* (2010) explores the dependence of modern aesthetics on the disabled mind and body as a source of inspiration, asserting that 'the modern in art manifests itself as disability'.¹⁵⁹ Taking the standpoint of disability, *Invalid Modernism* (2019) offers new insights into the aesthetics of modernism and its interpretations of physical and mental impairment in theatre, painting, opera and the other arts.¹⁶⁰

Schizophrenia is perhaps the condition most widely associated with modernism. In *Madness and Modernism, Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought* (1992), Louis Sass discusses the affinity between schizophrenia (as well as related disorders) and modern aesthetics, identifying seven features of modernism that are also discernible in schizophrenic patients. These include: resistance to authority and convention, uncertainty or diversity of perspective, loss of the self's sense of unity and control, loss of touch with external reality, spatial form or 'an emphasis of neutral description [...] of static objects', aesthetic self-referentiality, and ironic negation and detachment. According to Sass, these features grouped together under the broad notions of hyper-reflexivity (intensified self-consciousness) and alienation, correspond with the self-absorption and detachment prominent in schizophrenics.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Tobin Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 140.

¹⁶⁰ Michael Davidson, *Invalid Modernism: Disability and the Missing Body of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

¹⁶¹ Louis A. Sass, *Madness and Modernism, Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 29-38.

Joseph Straus, who particularly focuses on the aestheticisation and evocation of various disability conditions in modern music, devotes a chapter of his *Broken Beauty* (2018) to madness. He also recognises schizophrenia as the archetypal madness of the twentieth century and identifies a divided consciousness as predominant in both schizophrenia and modernist music. Straus compares hearing voices, a feature of the shattered unity in schizophrenia, to musical quotations, which destroy musical unity by creating conflicting and incongruous layers of musical texture. He argues further that modernist music celebrates neurodiversity and recognises the artistic value of the disrupted whole.¹⁶²

The multiplicity created by musical quotations explains their widespread use in avant-garde portrayals of madness. Straus refers to the affinity between the 'clash of different musical styles' and a split consciousness in his discussion of *Wozzeck*'s madness in the tavern scene.¹⁶³ Jeremy Tambling also explores the disintegration of unitary meaning by multiple stylistic layers in *Wozzeck* as a feature of both schizophrenia and modernism. Additionally, he argues for the presence of coherency in spite of this disintegration, which matches the modernist conviction that there is 'a truth to be found beyond the fragmentary'.¹⁶⁴ For David Metzger, the diversity of musical quotations creates a

¹⁶² Joseph N. Straus, *Broken Beauty, Musical Modernism and the Representation of Disability* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 88-103.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁶⁴ Jeremy Tambling, "Listening to Schizophrenia: The *Wozzeck* Case," in *The Pleasures of Modernist Music: Listening, Meaning, Intention, Ideology*, ed. Arved Ashby (Rochester: The University of Rochester Press, 2004), 176.

‘chronological delirium’. This delirium results from the confrontation between past and present, which is also an aspect of modernism.¹⁶⁵

In my discussion of Davies’s repertoire on madness, I draw on and extend some of these modernist concepts, including subjective reality, uncertainty, alienation and disintegrated consciousness. I view Davies’s sympathetic approach to madness as testifying to his recognition of the legitimacy of madness as an unconventional mode of experience, which parallels the legitimacy of modernist art as an alternative to traditional aesthetic standards.

This thesis was conceived with the intention of pushing research frontiers with respect to academic work conducted on Davies. The justification for undertaking the research in question is layered. Aside from the evident gap in the scholarship, three interrelated matters are regarded: madness, madness in music, and madness in the music of Davies. I will address these in turn.

The somewhat romantic but still objective view, supported widely by examples from different fields, is expressed in an exaggerated, stirring fashion by Charles de Saint-Évremond: ‘We owe the invention of the arts to deranged imaginations; the *Caprice* of Painters, Poets, and Musicians is only a name moderated in civility to express their *Madness*’.¹⁶⁶ More moderately put, the creative mind is a totality, the by-products of which sometimes include volatility, unpredictability and nonsensical pondering. The curse of knowledge is often identified as distress and suffering, and it is accepted that the wrongs of the world are more burdensome and less tolerable for the more profound and the

¹⁶⁵ Metzger, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music*, 72-107.

¹⁶⁶ Charles de Saint-Évremond, *Sir Politic Would-be* (act V, scene II), quoted in Foucault, *History of Madness*, 36. Italics in the original.

more sensitive. Studying madness thus teaches us not only about the oscillations of great minds, but also about our individual vulnerabilities.

Madness is not simply a clinical condition. It can be connected to various forms of breakdown and disconnect in everyday culture and even, on a larger scale, to disruption of the status quo or cracks in the established order of society. It can denote an alternative way of looking at the world.

As a disorder, madness has historically been tied to different forms of control and segregation and has become a means of discrimination even in contemporary culture. Attentiveness to the reshaping and regeneration of these processes can raise awareness of the many ways in which other kinds of prejudice function at various levels. Incidents in today's world, from religious wars and sectarian violence in developing countries to racist comments in the heart of the most progressive civilisations, show that we are not yet accustomed to difference and otherness. We prefer to push it aside—possibly because we are threatened by it—and refuse to respect it.

Madness has a long history of being expressed in music. One possible reason could be the affinity between the two, or the suitability of music as a medium in which different aspects of madness can be communicated. The wide variety of interpretations a piece of music offers, its ability to make use of purely abstract as well as more concrete forms, and its unique language, which is inexplicable and complex but also universal and accessible, seem to provide an appropriate domain for the exhibition of a multifaceted, ambiguous, and all-pervading phenomenon.

Furthermore, in musical representations of madness one witnesses a sort of defying and scorning of conventional musical standards. Composers seem to be more content to break rules when it comes to portraying madness. As a

result, agitated vocal lines, nonverbal acrobatics, peculiar key changes, extravagant melodies, and attempts at non-conformity in general are often visible in depictions of madness. Regardless of the occasional alienation of the mad individual or a framing of the mad scene, making madness peripheral and secondary, the musical creativities remain significant. Studying representations of madness can thus shed light on composers' musical experiments.

In the mid-twentieth century, there was a shift towards more openness about mental illness, which reduced the stigma attached to it. This resulted in an increased attentiveness to madness as a way of being and to the mad individual's experiences. Davies seems to have been preoccupied with the theme of madness at around the same time. He repeatedly brings it up, approaching it from different perspectives with different concerns in mind. Davies's captivation by the topic of madness, perhaps unmatched by any composer of the twentieth century, makes his oeuvre unique in terms of the gravity and frequency of the theme and the different angles from which it is scrutinised.

Davies's incentive for attending to madness could be an outcome of the exoticism and eccentricity of the topic, or its general move to the forefront of controversy at the time. However, it might also be partly cultural. Showalter notes the significance of Bethlem Hospital, commonly referred to as Bedlam, as 'the symbol of all madhouses'. She points to the long-held view of England by the English as 'the global headquarters of insanity', a conviction that was somewhat revived after the anti-psychiatry movement of the 1960s.¹⁶⁷ Works as early as 1733 refer to the presence of an 'English Malady', assuming national

¹⁶⁷ Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980*, 7.

reasons for madness.¹⁶⁸ However, this is not meant to convey that Davies ever held such beliefs, only that madness had a distinctive place in the culture in which he grew up.

From another perspective, Davies's curiosity about madness could be completely personal. His fellow musician in New Music Manchester, John Ogdon, was a frequent visitor of his home in the 1950s. Ogdon was at that point coping with the psychiatric problems of his father, who was frequently taken to mental hospitals. The condition was passed down to the pianist himself and led to his untimely end at the age of fifty-two.¹⁶⁹ Though never mentioned by the composer himself, this intimate friendship could have been a trigger for his interest in madness.

Furthermore, Davies probably found in the solitude of the mad individual an image of himself as an enfant terrible and a withdrawn soul. Referring to the 1960s, James Murdock, the manager of the Pierrot Ensemble, remarks: 'You have to remember that in those days Max was utterly rejected by the Establishment: gay, mad, a witch'.¹⁷⁰ As a young juvenile discovering his sexual orientation, Davies felt immensely threatened. He even links the potential fate of a homosexual during his teenage years to that of a mad individual: 'psychiatric treatment, including electric shock "therapy", sterilization, lobotomy and ultimately confinement in a mental hospital or prison, along with total rejection by family and friends'.¹⁷¹

In his representation of madness, Davies uses wild shifts in musical

¹⁶⁸ George Cheyne, *The English Malady, or a Treatise of Nervous Diseases of All Kinds* (London: Strahan & Leake, 1733).

¹⁶⁹ Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 38.

¹⁷⁰ In Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 250.

¹⁷¹ Davies, "Invisible Parameters and Spirit-Stirring Amalgams," 305.

language and wide-ranging quotations. He incorporates many so-called non-instruments and non-musical sounds within his sound world. His characters switch places with each other and sing multiple roles. He also experiments with different stage designs, from putting cages and a big cake on the set to leaving it absolutely empty. What was he trying to communicate by all of that? Was he challenging the norms and conventions surrounding the notion of madness? Was madness an excuse for his musical experiments? Was it a vehicle for transgressing the bounds of tradition? These are some of the questions that this thesis will attempt to address.

Madness is a recurring theme in the music of many twentieth-century composers, from Schoenberg to Birtwistle. Thus, the current attempt to clarify the theme of madness in Davies's oeuvre can also further illuminate its role in the works of other composers. Musical conventions or unconventional musical means employed by Davies for the portrayal of his mad characters can be compared with other composers' techniques. The next section reveals the main themes of the pieces examined, along with an outline of the essential components of the research, to provide a general picture of Davies's portrayal of madness.

Thesis Overview

This thesis traverses almost two decades of Davies's musical life, focusing on four pieces centred on the theme of madness. Chapter 2, '*Eight Songs for a Mad King*, Exploring George III's Lucidity-Lunacy Paradox', is devoted to one of Davies's most celebrated and peculiar pieces. The hallmark of this work is probably its alternative singing techniques, which require pondering over the singing philosophy of Roy Hart, for whom the vocal part is written.

In this chapter, I argue that the madness of the protagonist is challenged. I sketch two interrelated possibilities concerning the lunacy of stage characters other than the King, and the protagonist's possession of an atypically expressed insight—a sort of mad wisdom. These issues are tackled mainly by utilising Foucault's madness theory.

Another distinctive feature of the work is the King's aggressive behaviour, especially at the climax. The thesis will thus turn to the task of assessing the relationship between madness and violence, and problematises it theoretically. Freud's speculations about how aggression operates in individuals cast a different light on the interpretation of this aspect of the piece. I connect the violence of the protagonist to his alienation rather than linking it to madness. Pastiche and musical quotations are critical in this regard. I assert that distortions of musical quotations could refer to the instability of the instrumentalists and act as a source of oppression, fuelling the reciter's loss of balance.

Returning to the key feature of the piece, namely vocality, I ultimately demonstrate that the challenge to the King's insanity is most explicitly manifested in his attempts at communication. This is where his condition most clearly appears as ambiguous, chiefly as a result of the interplay between masterly expression and incomprehensibility. I work out this tension by addressing a philosophical dichotomy: the Foucauldian/Derridean contrast with respect to the necessity of communicating the wisdom of madness versus the inescapable silencing of madness by reason.

Chapter 3, 'I Dare Not Call It Comedy: The Mania of Passion in *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*', is concerned with the companion piece to *Eight Songs*. The most observable difference between the two works—the significance of

gender in the portrayal of madness—comes to focus in this part of the thesis.

The discussion of gender is conceived within the context of both the 1970s, in which the piece was produced, and the Victorian era, to which the piece refers.

Assessing the relevant literature on this piece shows that Miss Donnithorne's representation has been characterised as tragic as well as comic. I evaluate these opinions and argue for the ironic and disdaining effect of the seemingly comic elements, which end up contributing to the tragic aspect of the piece. I maintain that Miss Donnithorne (Miss D.) is stereotyped and humiliated as a typical Victorian madwoman, but this mockery is aimed at the tradition that she represents.

A fair amount of time is spent explaining how the lead character's musical and theatrical portrayal typecasts her as a Victorian madwoman. Even Miss D.'s vocality, which is a mixture of *bel canto* and extended techniques, works towards this stereotyping. I also consider a number of theories that criticise the understanding of madness in women to theoretically demonstrate that Miss D. has been typified as an inadequate insane woman. My principal sources are the works of Showalter and Gilbert and Gubar.

The major phenomenon that contributes to the categorisation of the protagonist is the strong evocation of hysteric symptoms. Here, I draw heavily from the field of psychology, especially the works of Freud. This discussion is informed by referring to musical and textual examples, and expanding on the centrality of the image of the wedding cake and the role of the players as elements of the character's psyche. I suggest that stereotyping and lampooning Miss D. could offer a perspective that allows for revisiting and reevaluating traditional opinions about female insanity.

Chapter 4, 'Identity Transmutation and the Suspense of Madness in *The Medium*', focuses on an unaccompanied monodrama for mezzo-soprano with a text written by Davies. The stage is to be unfurnished with no props or effects other than a chair on which the vocalist sits. Being a palmist, she tells the audience about her clients' fortunes, but as time passes, they start to suspect that she has multiple personalities or is possessed by spirits.

The role of the audience in this piece deserves special attention. In view of the fact that they have to imagine both the scenery and the stories, I endeavour to illustrate that the experience of madness is meant to occur in their minds. I initiate my analysis by presenting the notion of obfuscation of identity, which helps to recreate the protagonist's different psychological states in the viewer's imagination.

Next, I show that the minimalist set prevents alienation, which is an oppressive force inhibiting the communication of the performer with the spectators. A selection of materials from Jerzy Grotowski's writings on 'poor theatre' is cited here.

In *The Medium*, voice is the only musical means of expression. A significant part of this chapter is, thus, reserved for discussing how the singer's use of different vocal characters influences the manifestation of madness.

My next task is placing the portrayal of madness in the context of another key concept: social class. Based in part upon Hollingshead and Redlich's theory of social class, my argument embraces the function of social strata in identifying individuals as mad and attributing a characteristic to their madness.

The Lighthouse is the subject of chapter 5. This piece is a chamber opera with a libretto by Davies. It delineates the story of the disappearance of three lighthouse keepers without any definite explanation as to what happened to

them. The opera features three characters playing all the roles and some unusual theatrical means of expression, such as placing the orchestra's French horn at the back of the playhouse and casting a beam of light over the audience.

The main issue discussed in this chapter is the theme of collective madness. I will demonstrate that the work's use of single performers to play multiple roles leads to the eradication of the distinction between different characters, as well as the one between characters and viewers. I argue that putting emphasis on the characters and viewers as one group and treating their experiences collectively highlights the interchangeability of their position and, on a more general level, the similarity of people's mental reactions under similar circumstances. I will also comment on the work's techniques of narration, by means of which the shared delusion of the protagonists and the shared disorientation and confusion of the audience members are highlighted. Additionally, I clarify the use of lighting as a means of underlining collectivity. Certain properties of lighting, such as rhythm and brightness, coupled with music, contribute to creating a delusive, ambiguous atmosphere in this piece. The general effect of lighting on mood and psychological state, along with its ability to destroy the precision of boundaries, are discussed in connection with fusion of individual and group identities and creation of analogous responses. To handle the nuances of the madness-collectivity relationship I bring into play two pertinent theories of collective madness: Le Bon's concept of group mind and Jung's notion of collective unconscious.

The pieces under study differ from one another in the angle from which they approach the topic of madness. They also make manifest Davies's changing concerns with respect to the theme. In *Eight Songs* the concept of

madness itself is challenged. We are faced with the question of what madness really is and which character is actually mad. *Miss Donnithorne*, underlining the issue of gender, concerns itself with criticising the general representation of madness, especially its gendered aspects. The general is transformed into the specific in *The Medium*, where the protagonist's own personal experience matters. Individuality is pushed aside in *The Lighthouse* so that collective aspects of our mental states can come to the fore. It must be noted that I discuss *The Lighthouse* in the final chapter, even though it was written two years before *The Medium*. The reason is mainly structural, with the three monodramas being grouped together. Also, I wished to bring out the contrasting focus on the female character of *Miss Donnithorne* as an assemblage and that of *The Medium* as an individual by discussing them in succession.

The protagonists of these works diverge from each other in major ways. While Miss Donnithorne is a failed and lost character and the lighthouse keepers' individualities are somewhat erased, the main character of *The Medium* and King George III seem to be preoccupied with self-examination, reflection, and introspection. The latter are in this sense similar to the madwoman in *Erwartung* (1909) and to Schubert's male protagonist in *Die Winterreise* (1827) in that they '[investigate] the labyrinth of [their] own psyche in search of self-knowledge or escape from unbearable pain'.¹⁷² This does not occur much with Miss Donnithorne. And with regard to the lighthouse keepers, their reflections on their past experiences has less to do with soul searching than with self-deception.

The works are also distinct in terms of the relationship between vocalists and instrumentalists. *The Medium* lacks this interaction, as there are no

¹⁷² Susan Youens, "Retracing a Winter Journey: Reflections on Schubert's 'Winterreise,'" *19th-Century Music* 9, no. 2 (1985): 129.

instrumentalists at all. In *Miss Donnithorne* there is no interaction either, simply because the only task of the instrumental music is to portray the mental and emotional states of the character. Vocal and instrumental music in this case perform the same function. Direct interaction occurs to some extent in *The Lighthouse*, but is much more extensive in *Eight Songs*, where musicians are turned into independent actors on stage and instrumental music is in dialogue with vocal music. Similarly to Birtwistle's purely instrumental theatre piece, *Tragoedia* (1965), the instrumentalists of these two pieces assume dramatic roles.

Storyline is a feature that sets *The Lighthouse* apart from the other three works. This piece, regardless of its disrupted narrative and ambiguous temporality, features a story, or rather, multiple stories. The rest of the examined repertoire, similar to many of Davies's music theatre works, seem more like 'snapshot(s)', depicting 'their subjects from a number of different angles' rather than telling a story.¹⁷³

The means of representing madness in the selected repertoire are comparable to the techniques used in other operatic and theatrical works. Davies's pushing of the boundaries of vocality to portray insanity finds its precursor in Schoenberg's use of micro-intonation and loosely organised pitch structures in *Pierrot Lunaire* and *Erwartung*. Miss Donnithorne's repetition of words is reminiscent of Grimes's 'obsessional emphasis on single words', which Rupprecht identifies as traditionally common in mad scenes.¹⁷⁴ The antagonism of the stage characters of *Eight Songs* towards the King parallels the hostility towards the Madwoman of *Curlew River* (1964), which, according to Rupprecht, is

¹⁷³ Burden, "A Foxtrot to the Crucifixion: The Music Theatre of Peter Maxwell Davies," 61.

¹⁷⁴ Rupprecht, *Britten's Musical Language*, 71.

symbolised in the D/D # (stage characters/madwoman) focal-pitch discrepancy.¹⁷⁵ Rupprecht also describes the Madwoman's music when she appearance on the stage as 'circulation of a small pool of recurring shapes'.¹⁷⁶ One is reminded of the repeating musical gestures in *The Lighthouse* and the repetitive ostinato figures in *Miss Donnithorne*. That said, Davies's heavy reliance on thematic, structural and musical ambiguity is a distinctive feature of his depiction of madness.

Ambiguity is indeed a main feature in the selected repertoire. Who is mad in *Eight Songs*, the character or society? Who is scorned in *Miss Donnithorne*, the character or her representation? Who is the woman in *The Medium*, a palmist, a patient, a murderer? What happened to the lighthouse keepers—did they die, go mad, or were they ghosts from the beginning? It is no secret that Davies was captivated by uncertainty and possibilities. John Warnaby describes him as follows: 'Every aspect of his creative personality thrives on ambiguity'.¹⁷⁷ Even his transformational compositional practice of reworking traditional genres is concerned with bringing out 'ambivalence and multiplicity'.¹⁷⁸ His personal life is also, as I will explain, full of inconsistency, paradox, and uncertainty.

Societal injustice is another constant theme in the discussed oeuvre. It manifests itself in the unfair treatment of the King by those around him, the derision of Miss D. as an unmarried woman, the cruel medical care that the woman in *The Medium* receives, and the lighthouse keepers' social isolation. This concern also exists in many other compositions of Davies, including *The*

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 230.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 231.

¹⁷⁷ Warnaby, "Peter Maxwell Davies's Recent Music, and Its Debt to His Earlier Scores," 91.

¹⁷⁸ Arnold Whittall, *Exploring Twentieth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 13.

Doctor of Myddfai (1995), whose protagonist dies as a result of societal pressures, *Kommilitonen* (2010), which features the execution of a group of people for fighting the Nazi regime, and *Resurrection* and *Mr Emmet Takes a Walk*, which are described as a kind of 'social critique'.¹⁷⁹ Davies himself is described as 'passionately committed to the social responsibility of the composer and the concept of music as a social force'.¹⁸⁰ I will elaborate on the issues of ambiguity and social justice in the conclusion of the thesis, but shall first commence my investigation of the portrayal of madness in the selected repertoire.

¹⁷⁹ Richard McGregor, "Walking the Line: Deconstructing Identity, Suicide and Betrayal in Peter Maxwell Davies's *Mr Emmet Takes a Walk*," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 24, no. 3 (2012): 347–48.

¹⁸⁰ Rossella Marisi, "Similarities across the Centuries: A Comparison between Two Vocal Works by Barbara Strozzi and Peter Maxwell Davies," *Review of Artistic Education* 15 (2018): 32.

Chapter 2

Eight Songs for a Mad King

Exploring George III's Lucidity-Lunacy Paradox

Introduction

In the history of Britain, one king has gone down as the 'Mad King'. An admirer of Handel's music, a harpsichord and flute player, and one of the most musical monarchs of the United Kingdom,¹⁸¹ King George III became the subject of a musical portrayal of madness nearly two centuries after he experienced his first serious episode in 1788.¹⁸²

Davies's *Eight Songs for a Mad King* (1969) is inspired by the King's miniature mechanical organ, which was shown in 1966 to Randolph Stow (1935–2010), the Australian novelist and poet who later wrote the text of the work. With this instrument, which played only eight tunes, was a piece of paper stating, 'This Organ was George the third for Birds to sing'.¹⁸³ Highly fascinated by the organ, Stow imagined the King attempting to accompany his birds with his impaired voice and train them to make the tormented music he could only occasionally produce with his flute and harpsichord.¹⁸⁴ Sharing a mutual interest in making George III the subject of an artwork, Davies (whom Stow had previously met in America) and Stow started a collaboration that resulted in

¹⁸¹ Stephen Roe, "Music at the Court of George III and Queen Charlotte," in *The Wisdom of George the Third*, ed. Johnathan Marsden (London: Royal Collection Enterprises, 2004), 141–45.

¹⁸² Bonamy Dobree, ed. *The Letters of King George III* (London: Cassell and Company, 1935), xvi.

¹⁸³ Randolph Stow, "Eight Songs for a Mad King, Poet's Note," in *Eight Songs for a Mad King* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1971).

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

*Eight Songs for a Mad King.*¹⁸⁵

The poet wrote eight songs, which incorporate some of George's actual spoken words and are to be understood as 'the King's monologues while listening to his birds perform'.¹⁸⁶ The words are mostly drawn from the diary of Fanny Burney, daughter of musical historian Dr. Charles Burney and author of two novels, who became Queen Charlotte's attendant at George III's court.¹⁸⁷ Davies set this text to music in a music theatre piece for a male voice and ensemble. The King's bullfinches are represented by the flute, clarinet, violin, and cello, and the vocalist has individual dialogues with them in four of the songs. The ensemble also includes a piano and harpsichord, with the player moving between them; a percussionist acting as the King's keeper; mechanical bird song devices; bird call instruments; and a didgeridu, an instrument native to the Australian aboriginals that creates the sound of the crow.¹⁸⁸ The songs, as well as the King's dialogues with the instrumentalists, are listed in Table 2.1.

The work was premiered by the Pierrot Players and Roy Hart as the vocalist on April 22, 1969 at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall under the baton of Davies himself.¹⁸⁹ In the first performance and in many successive ones, the King wandered freely on stage, conversing with his birds from time to time. All the other stage characters, with the exception of the keyboard player and the

¹⁸⁵ Peter Maxwell Davies in conversation with Paul Griffiths in Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies*, 111.

¹⁸⁶ Stow, "Eight Songs for a Mad King, Poet's Note."

¹⁸⁷ Christopher Hibbert, *The Court at Windsor: A Domestic History* (Middlesex, UK: Penguin Books, 1982), 94.

¹⁸⁸ Peter Maxwell Davies, "Eight Songs for a Mad King, Composer's Note," in *Eight Songs for a Mad King* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1971).

¹⁸⁹ On the same night, a group of eleven pieces by different composers, entitled *A Garland for Dr. K.* (1969), as well as Harrison Birtwistle's *Linoi* (1968–69), were performed by the Pierrot Players.

percussionist, were put in cages. The climax of the work is marked by Davies's direction for the protagonist to grab the violin 'through the bars of the player's cage'.¹⁹⁰ This episode constitutes the protagonist's most violent behaviour. In the rest of the piece, the King, either angry or miserable, mainly raves himself hoarse. Only sporadically will he speak and sing conventionally.

Table 2.1. Songs and Dialogues, *Eight Songs for a Mad King*

Numbers	Songs	Dialogues
1	The Sentry (King Prussia's Minuet)	
2	The Country Walk (La Promenade)	
3	The Lady-in-Waiting (Miss Musgrave's Fancy)	King and the flute
4	To be Sung on the Water (The Waterman)	King and the cello
5	The Phantom Queen (He's ay a-kissing me)	
6	The Counterfeit (Le Contrefaite)	King and the clarinet
7	Country Dance (Scotch Bonnett)	King and the violin
8	The Review (a Spanish March)	

Eight Songs was specifically written for Hart, whose voice had an exceptionally wide range, coming close to a piano. His chord production skills were such that he was capable of creating 'predictable chords rather than random and often unreliable combinations of harmonics'.¹⁹¹ Hart's voice production techniques became highly influential among musicians. Karlheinz Stockhausen studied his methods and wrote *Spiral* (1968) for him, and Henze's *Versuch über Schweine* (1968) was also specifically composed for his voice.¹⁹²

Hart was a student of Alfred Wolfsohn, an advocate of unconventional

¹⁹⁰ Davies, "Eight Songs for a Mad King, Composer's Note."

¹⁹¹ John Potter and Neil Sorrell, *A History of Singing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 237.

¹⁹² Eric Salzman and Thomas Desi, *The New Music Theatre* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 27.

singing practices that distinctly contradicted what was taught at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA), which Hart attended.¹⁹³ Wolfsohn had aspired to go beyond the conventional assigned registers for the human voice and to free it from all constraints and regulations. His method was rooted in his personal experience of participating in the First World War. In his struggles to cope with the traumas of the war, he discovered that stretching the voice to reach extreme registers relieved inner anxiety. He then proposed that unusual vocal utterances and sonic effects could have a healing effect by becoming means of emotional expression and releasing psychic pressure. Following Wolfsohn's path, Hart focused on the therapeutic power of the voice. He was influenced by Sigmund Freud and especially by Carl Jung, and in one of his voice lessons, the renowned Scottish psychiatrist R.D. Laing visited him.¹⁹⁴ Hart had also spent some time working in psychiatric hospitals and lecturing at psychotherapy congresses prior to taking part in *Eight Songs*.¹⁹⁵

Wolfsohn and Hart were cognisant of the sociocultural nature of singing practices. They maintained that no range of the human voice should be ignored for aesthetic purposes or any other established criteria. Hart believed in the legitimacy of using moaning, growling, and howling for singing what he had

¹⁹³ From three interviews conducted by Jose Monleon with Roy Hart published in *Primer Acto*, No. 130, Madrid, March, 1971. In Pikes, *Dark Voices: The Genesis of Roy Hart Theatre*, 71. The first of these interviews in which Hart speaks about RADA is also available in English on the *Roy Hart Theatre Archives* website: Roy Hart, "Roy Hart Speaks," interviewed by Jose Monleon, transcript (1971), accessed January 15, 2015, <http://www.roy-hart.com/ryhquotes.htm>.

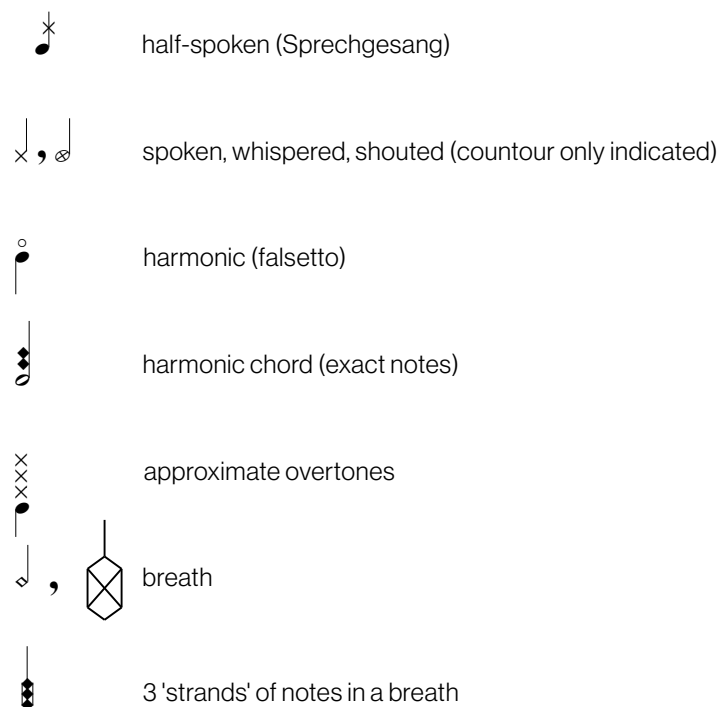
¹⁹⁴ Laura C. Kalo, George Whiteside, and Ivan Miderigh, "The Roy Hart Theatre: Teaching the Totality of Self," in *The Vocal Vision: Views on Voice*, eds. Marion Hampton and Barbara Acker (New York, London: Applause, 1997), 185–87.

¹⁹⁵ Pikes, *Dark Voices: The Genesis of Roy Hart Theatre*, 72, 75.

called 'the totality of the self'.¹⁹⁶ He sought to explore voice *in extremis* over an eight-octave range and bring 'unconscious territory into consciousness'. Hart called his method "Conscious Schizophrenia", a conscious bringing together of the many parts into which Western man usually likes to divide and subdivide himself'.¹⁹⁷

The extreme vocal sounds created based on this doctrine come to form the most striking feature of *Eight Songs*, performed by Hart in a range of over four octaves. They include Sprechstimme, harmonic chord production, vocal breath techniques, falsetto singing, and so on. Figure 2.1 shows Davies's 'Performance Note' indicating vocal guidelines for the King's part in *Eight Songs*.

Figure 2.1. Peter Maxwell Davies's Performance Note of *Eight Songs for a Mad King* (Boosey & Hawkes, 1971).



¹⁹⁶ Kalo et al., "The Roy Hart Theatre: Teaching the Totality of Self," 186.

¹⁹⁷ Roy Hart quoted in Kalo et al., "The Roy Hart Theatre: Teaching the Totality of Self," 189, 192.

The vocal intensity of *Eight Songs* was perhaps unprecedented in Davies's music, but one can find its ancestor in his *Revelation and Fall* (1966, revised 1980).¹⁹⁸ This unique approach to voice was paired with the extended techniques of the Pierrot Players.

This ensemble was formed in 1965 to play Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* and other accompanying pieces of music theatre.¹⁹⁹ *Pierrot Lunaire*, from which the group took its name, was a strong influence and certainly left its mark on Davies's piece. *Eight Songs*' instrumentation closely resembled *Pierrot*'s, and the unusual registers used by the musicians were probably to some extent influenced by Schoenberg as well, with Davies employing Schoenberg's Sprechstimme. Roy Hart's singing philosophy was in many respects similar to Albertine Zehme's (the vocalist of *Pierrot Lunaire*) understanding of the function of the voice. In a programme note for a vocal recital, which took place before *Pierrot Lunaire*, Zehme wrote:

The sounds should also participate in relating the inner experience. To make that possible, we must have unrestricted freedom of tone [*tonfreiheit*]. Emotional expression should not be denied any of the thousands of oscillations. I demand not free-thinking, but freedom of tone!²⁰⁰

The historical George III is also a Pierrot-like figure in some ways. His reaction to his bullfinches has been described as 'somewhat similar to that of

¹⁹⁸ Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies*, 65.

¹⁹⁹ Dromey, *The Pierrot Ensembles: Chronicle and Catalogue, 1912-2012*, 112–13.

²⁰⁰ In Latham, "Listening to the Talking Cure: Sprechstimme, Hypnosis, and the Sonic Organization of Affect," 105.

Pierrot to the moon'.²⁰¹ Schoenberg had been quite fascinated with setting to music stories about 'fate-contending selves, fools, and alienated artists' and his themes had many times included 'idiocy, violence, and martyrdom'.²⁰² The story of the mad King of Britain, with his love of music, is thus not distant from the subjects Schoenberg had explored.

The Austrian musician's impact on Davies is unsurprising. Earl Kim, Schoenberg's student, was among Davies's composition instructors at Princeton. Furthermore, during his Manchester years, Davies developed a close friendship with Alexander Goehr, whose father Walter was Schoenberg's student. Davies also subjected *Pierrot Lunaire* to rigorous analysis at the Wardour Castle Summer School of Music, which he organised in 1965 with Goehr and Birtwistle. A dramatic performance of the work was carried out by the Melos Ensemble at the end of this school period.²⁰³

Beyond the specific similarities between *Eight Songs* and *Pierrot Lunaire*, the work draws on Schoenberg's Expressionism more broadly. Expressionism gives centrality to humans' feelings and emotions, and to the exploration of the psyche. Based on the Expressionist point of view, inner anxieties must be recognised and discovered, and one must find a channel through which they can be released. Expressionists were interested in digging deep into the human soul to uncover the underlying tensions. They thus had great enthusiasm for psychoanalysis, and some of them even met with Freud and his followers.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Veronica Slater, "Eight Songs for a Mad King, Programme Note," *Max Opus*, accessed August 9, 2019, <http://web.archive.org/web/20171019200944/http://www.maxopus.com/index.aspx>.

²⁰² Thomas Harrison, *1910: The Emancipation of Dissonance* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 76–77.

²⁰³ Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 69, 37, 93–94.

²⁰⁴ Crawford and Crawford, *Expressionism in Twentieth-Century Music*, 1–5.

Thus, the psychological aspects of *Eight Songs* and its close engagement with humans' inner anxieties linked it to the Expressionist musical works of the twentieth century. Born in the beginning of the century, this movement was revived during the 1960s in the works of many musicians.²⁰⁵ Around this time, for instance, Luigi Nono wrote *A floresta é jovem e cheia de vida* (*The forest is young and full of life*) (1965–66), an expressive dramatic anti-Vietnam War piece full of screams, shouts, and political speeches. Alberto Ginastera composed the operas *Don Rodrigo* (1967), featuring extended vocal techniques to portray the rise and fall of the protagonist, and *Bomarzo* (1967), which he explained to be 'the story of a very tormented human being [...] and the psychological complexes which torment him'.²⁰⁶

As a theme closely associated with the human psyche, madness became the focal point of many arts that had Expressionist inclinations around the 1960s. Peter Weiss's play *Marat/Sade* (1963) is an illustrative example.²⁰⁷ It is a 'play within a play, taking place in a Napoleonic asylum for the mentally ill (and socially unacceptable)'.²⁰⁸ The birdcages on the stage of *Eight Songs* have even been viewed as visually referencing the separation of the stage from the auditorium by bars in *Marat/Sade*.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 247, 276.

²⁰⁶ Alberto Ginastera quoted in Deborah Schwartz-Kates, *Alberto Ginastera: A Research and Information Guide* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 13.

²⁰⁷ The full title of the play is *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade*.

²⁰⁸ Anne Beggs, "Revisiting Marat/Sade: Philosophy in the Asylum, Asylum in the Theatre," *Modern Drama* 56, no. 1 (2013): 63.

²⁰⁹ Janet Halfyard, "Eight Songs for a Mad King: Madness and the Theatre of Cruelty" (presented at A Celebration of the Music of Peter Maxwell Davies, St. Martin's College of Performing Arts, Lancaster, 2000).

Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty had a significant influence on many performances of *Marat/Sade*; when Peter Brook directed, Artaudian elements were both visible and intentional.²¹⁰ Sponsored by the Royal Shakespeare Company Experimental Group, Brook staged a Theatre of Cruelty season in London in 1964.²¹¹ Thus, a British revival of Artaud, whose ideas were mostly presented in his book *The Theatre and Its Double* (1938), took place during the 1960s.²¹² Artaud's doctrine, which was Expressionist in many respects, was that the theatre's goal is to heal the ailments of the soul, and thereby the devastations of society as a whole, through catharsis. This would mean that violence, cruelty, and fear are to be represented on stage so that they would be driven out of the psyche, making it purified of them.²¹³

Artaud experimented with the actor's voice 'to make audible' the sources of humans' underlying 'wounds' and was profoundly interested in screams.²¹⁴ According to him, the language of his theatre 'extends the voice. It utilises the vibrations and qualities of the voice. It widely tramples rhythms underfoot. It pile-drives sounds'.²¹⁵ Scholars such as Jacqueline Martin view Artaud's

²¹⁰ Beggs, "Revisiting Marat/Sade: Philosophy in the Asylum, Asylum in the Theatre," 62;

Brook also shows an inclination to Hart's approach in his production of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1967, one year after visiting Hart's group;

See also Pikes, *Dark Voices: The Genesis of Roy Hart Theatre*, 76.

²¹¹ Richard Helfer and Glenn Loney, "Descriptions of Peter Brook's Productions (1942-1971)," in *Peter Brook: Oxford to Orghast*, eds. Richard Helfer and Glenn Loney (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998), 128.

²¹² Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*.

²¹³ Gene A. Plunka, "Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty on Route 666: Jean-Claude Van Itallie's Motel," *South Atlantic Review* 61, no. 1 (1996): 90–91.

²¹⁴ Helga Finter and Mathew Griffin, "Antonin Artaud and the Impossible Theatre: The Legacy of the Theatre of Cruelty," *The Drama Review* 41, no. 4 (1988): 21, 25.

²¹⁵ Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, 91.

experiments with the voice as having close connections with the vocalities advocated by Wolfsohn and Hart.²¹⁶

These vocalities are probably the main reason why questions concerning the representation of madness have been central to the study of *Eight Songs* ever since its inception. However, this line of questioning has been stimulated not only by the work's vocal utterances but also by its title, instrumentation, theatricality, and sometimes incoherent, confused text. Insanity was viewed as so interwoven in every fibre of the piece that John Warrick made this denunciatory comment in the *Sunday Telegraph* after the first performance: 'Composing madness into the actual technique of music is artistically as self-defeating as portraying a boring operatic character by writing boring music'.²¹⁷

However, the vast number of performances and recordings of *Eight Songs* mean that it has earned a place in the twentieth-century musical canon. Hart's performance of the piece with Pierrot Players, which Davies conducted, was broadcast by BBC Radio in 1970. Julius Eastman and Donald Bell performed it with the Fires of London, and Davies as the conductor, in 1973 and 1976 respectively. Heinz Karl Gruber played the King with Davies conducting the Scottish Chamber Orchestra in 1991. Another staging was put on in 1995 with baritone David Wilson-Johnson as the protagonist and Oliver Knussen conducting the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group. Manchester's Psappha Ensemble recorded the piece with no conductor and Kelvin Thomas as the soloist in 2004. Other notable performances were carried out by William Pearson, Peter Tantsits, Olle Persson, and Richard Suart. The work has also been performed in many countries including Italy, Finland, France, and Germany.

²¹⁶ Jacqueline Martin, *Voice in Modern Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 66.

²¹⁷ In Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 111.

In terms of the research conducted on *Eight Songs*, the central focus has largely been the portrayal of madness. There are a few exceptions. An article by T. Nikki Cesare highlights the corporeality and physicality of the body, the effect of its technological mediation in performance, and the tension between the live and the mediated body. It focuses on a particular performance of the piece and is only partially concerned with the theme of madness and the challenges to the common understandings of insanity.²¹⁸ Adrian Curtin scrutinises *Eight Songs*' vocality in relation to sexuality. He argues that vocality (even the speaking registers), which is generally constructed and controlled by norms, is 'queered' in Davies's piece by means of extended techniques. The unusual sounds made by the King, he believes, challenge 'all the supposedly natural connections between sex, gender, identity, voice, pitch, and timbre'.²¹⁹ Curtin also evaluates the relationship between extreme vocality and violence in the piece. I will reflect on and ultimately dispute this assessment in due course.

Gabriel Josipovici considers Britten's *Curlew River* (1964) and Davies's *Eight Songs* as cutting across boundaries of expression. He views the King as embodying the Munchian scream of human agony, which results from the incapability of language to express feelings. Overall, his focus is not so much on madness as it is on expression. Josipovici asserts that the vocality of this piece is not to be heard but to be felt. He believes that we empathise with the King, so the gap between him and us is removed. The King's final howl, he writes, has a primitive quality, merging the protagonist and the audience. At the same time though, Josipovici supposes that vocality alone cannot create empathy, as

²¹⁸ Cesare, "Like a Chained Man's Bruise: The Mediated Body in *Eight Songs* for a Mad King and *Anatomy Theatre*."

²¹⁹ Curtin, "Alternative Vocalities: Listening Awry to Peter Maxwell Davies's *Eight Songs* for a Mad King," 109.

without the drama it is merely expressive virtuosity.²²⁰ I will remark on the distance between the audience members and the protagonist in relation to vocality in the chapter on *The Medium*.

Aside from the mentioned scholarship, attention to *Eight Songs* has mainly been directed at the examination of the theme of madness. Much of the literature points to the ambiguity of the King's madness. However, the subtle and peculiar perceptiveness of the protagonist is largely missed and remains limited to his awareness of his condition. Such is the case with Mike Seabrook, who believes that the King is capable of realising that he is unstable, while many of us are not.²²¹ Similarly, Michael Chanan rightly acknowledges that the King is not 'sick' but rather an 'oppressed and cornered [individual], searching intensely after liberation'. However, he simultaneously characterises him as a 'pathetic' figure, disregarding his sharpness and insight.²²² For Michael Hall, the King's powerful reflection on his situation is so far from the state of madness that Hall argues for the restoration of his sanity by the end.²²³ In my study of the work, I will explore the idea of wisdom in madness and adumbrate the instances which signify the King's possession of a sort of concealed perceptiveness.

Acknowledging those qualities of the King that are beyond convention certainly requires a Foucauldian approach, as the philosopher is the main figure who first brought this issue into the discourse on madness. Utilising Foucault's doctrine, the marginalisation of the main figure can also be investigated more precisely. Foucault's theory, explained in detail in the previous chapter, is the most important sociocultural madness theory of the twentieth century and

²²⁰ Josipovici, "Two Moments in Modern Music-Theatre."

²²¹ Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 111.

²²² Chanan, "Dialectics in Peter Maxwell Davies," 14–15.

²²³ Hall, *Music Theatre in Britain 1960-1975*, 156.

probably the most comprehensive one. The employment of this theory is further justified on the grounds that the piece's ambiguity seems to call for a Foucauldian approach to challenge and modify the conventional criteria for mad behaviour. Foucault's studies also certainly affected the spirit of the age in various respects, which was especially intensified after the English translation of his *Madness and Civilization* in 1964. Moreover, scholars such as Alan E. Williams, Ruud Welten, and Cesare have already analysed some of Davies's works, including the piece under study, from the perspective of Foucault's philosophy.²²⁴ In his discussion of *Eight Songs*, Alan Shockley has also referred to Foucault's focus on the changes that have occurred in the definition of madness throughout history.²²⁵ Still, it must be emphasised that referring to this theory, as with future theories, is by no means intended to propose a causal relationship or to imply that Davies was under its direct influence.

Another neglected feature of *Eight Songs* is its text. I pay attention to the words of the King, among other features of the work, including the role of violence, musical quotations, vocality, and the issue of power. Taking into account different factors, this chapter focuses on how this ambiguous account of madness is portrayed in this piece, the relationship between such a portrayal and the prevalent madness theories of the time, and the understanding of madness this portrayal offers. A closer scrutiny of the piece reveals many ways in which the work complicates the idea of madness and reflects on its status in contemporary society. I will review these issues, beginning with the episode that

²²⁴ Williams, "Madness in the Music Theatre Works of Peter Maxwell Davies";

Welten, "'I'm Not Ill, I'm Nervous' – Madness in the Music of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies";

Cesare, "Like a Chained Man's Bruise: The Mediated Body in *Eight Songs* for a Mad King and Anatomy Theatre."

²²⁵ Shockley, "Sick Fantasies: Insanity, Abjection and Extended Vocal Techniques in *Eight Songs* for a Mad King and Miss Donnithorne's Maggot/Texts and Techniques of Madness."

has almost unanimously been identified as the King's most conspicuous mad moment. But first, I want to look more closely at a central ambiguity in this work: Who, exactly, is mad?

Who is Mad?

Eight Songs is highly vague with regard to identifying the mad character(s). The title labels the King as mad, but the composer takes a rather equivocal position. Davies seems to represent the King as insane in the work's climax, wherein the latter grabs the violin player's instrument and shatters it into pieces. However, he is sometimes hesitant to regard the protagonist as a madman, as exemplified in the following statement:

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? ²²⁶

Here, aside from questioning the protagonist's lunacy, the composer draws a parallel between the players' imprisonment and the mad person's hospitalisation or confinement in asylums, which indicates that the instrumentalists might be the mad characters and not the King. He further complicates matters by declaring that the players are 'incarnations of the facets of the King's own psyche', implying that their madness is only a reflection of the King's insanity.²²⁷

Scholars have a more or less hybrid view on the protagonist's condition. According to Welten, the vocalist's madness is manifested in his 'loss of subjectivity', but deprived of his subjectivity, the King might be the 'symbol of post-modern mankind'.²²⁸ Paul Griffiths mentions that as the spectators of the

²²⁶ The programme note from the original 1969 performance, in Williams, "Madness in the Music Theatre Works of Peter Maxwell Davies," 84.

²²⁷ Davies, "Eight Songs for a Mad King, Composer's Note."

²²⁸ Welten, "'I'm Not Ill, I'm Nervous' – Madness in the Music of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies," 21.

madman 'we are not only voyeurs, but voyeurs at our own potential extremity'.²²⁹ In his description of *Eight Songs*, Mike Seabrook protests isolating the protagonist as mad, suggesting instead that his madness echoes a general human instability.²³⁰ Jonathan Harvey interprets the work's climax as the snapping of the King's mind, but maintains that we all 'have a little of George III lurking inside'.²³¹ These remarks indicate that the King's state is not remote from our own experiences, making it problematic to single him out as a mad personage.

Moreover, researchers have suggested that the real George III's condition is not a mental but a physical one. It was originally believed to be 'psychotic, of a manic-depressive type [...] caused by an underlying conflict exacerbated by violent frustrations, annoyance and emotions'.²³² Ida MacAlpine and Richard Hunter challenged this widely accepted diagnosis, as it failed to explain the King's physical symptoms, as well as many of his mental ones. The two psychiatrists replaced it with the physical illness of porphyria, manifesting itself in 'vocal paresis [and] visual disturbances', among many other symptoms.²³³ A hereditary disease unidentified until the twentieth century, porphyria creates 'irritability, excitement, sleeplessness, delirium, and delusions' in advanced stages, in addition to milder symptoms, such as weakness of the limbs and

²²⁹ Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies*, 65.

²³⁰ Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 111.

²³¹ Harvey, "Maxwell Davies's Songs for a Mad King," 1, 4.

²³² Charles Chenevix Trench, *The Royal Malady* (London: Longmans, 1964). In Ida MacAlpine and Richard Hunter, "The Insanity of King George III: A Classic Case of Porphyria," *The British Medical Journal* 1, no. 5479 (1966): 65.

²³³ MacAlpine and Hunter, "The Insanity of King George III: A Classic Case of Porphyria," 65, 69.

vomiting in primary stages.²³⁴ The King's deliriums were reminiscent of those experienced as a result of high fever but were never associated with madness,²³⁵ and his mental disturbances would never appear at times of physical health.²³⁶ A mad George III therefore seems more of a myth than a historical reality. Considering that porphyria is mentioned in the programme note of *Eight Songs*, the choice of King George III might have been intended to add another layer to the difficulty of labelling the musical character as mad.²³⁷ Hence, the work's reference to historical reality provides no clarification, and only adds to the ambiguities surrounding the madness of *Eight Songs*' protagonist.

This obscurity is also discernible in the absence of a potential cause for the King's mental instability, which is striking when compared to Davies's other pieces about madness. One can imagine that Miss Donnithorne suffers from being left at the altar, the protagonists of *The Lighthouse* from prolonged separation from society, fear, or guilt, and the woman in *The Medium* from having or imagining having killed her child. *Eight Songs* remains completely silent in this regard.

The quest to uncover the precise nature of the King's madness is also doomed to fail. First, as mentioned, the real George III on whom the story is based probably had porphyria. Second, as explained previously, Hart called his voice technique 'conscious schizophrenia'. Third, the use of Sprechstimme implies hysteria because of its association with the disease since the time of

²³⁴ John Brooke, *King George III* (London: Constable and Company, 1972), 339.

²³⁵ Foreword by H. R. R. The Prince of Wales in Brooke, *King George III*, ix.

²³⁶ G. M. Ditchfield, *George III: An Essay in Monarchy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 18.

²³⁷ Slater, "Eight Songs for a Mad King, Programme Note."

Pierrot Lunaire; hysteria is also more directly suggested in the score, which indicates ‘becoming hysterical’ before the King smashes the violin. Fourth and lastly, the King’s delusions and hallucinations can point to a wide range of other psychotic disorders. Although a musical piece is not typically explicit and specific regarding an identification of a character as insane, *Eight Songs for a Mad King* is—possibly purposely—extremely ambiguous in this respect.

Nonetheless, a part of this ambiguity is due to the equivocal nature of the concept of madness itself and the diversity of its behavioural symptoms. The mad person could be hallucinatory and disordered but imaginative at the same time, withdrawn with seemingly nonsensical thoughts while brilliant and creative, and wild and destructive in behaviour but more tormented and oppressed than dangerous. When it comes to sanity and normality, R. D. Laing argues, even ‘our frames of reference are ambiguous and equivocal’.²³⁸

If madness cannot be defined precisely or its definition keeps changing, it is certainly difficult to categorise individuals as mad or sane. However, *Eight Songs* seems to offer a depiction that is exceptionally open to interpretation and is intentionally vague in identifying the mad person. Unlike most other scholars, I will reflect on the potential madness of characters other than the King. All that said, the King remains the centre of attention in this portrayal of insanity, as suggested clearly by the title and because he is the leading character.

I Mean No Harm: The Link between Violence and Madness

The composer and many scholars, including Harvey, Welten, and Richard McGregor, identify the work’s climax as the clearest moment of the King’s insanity, partly because it is the exact moment in which he becomes aggressive

²³⁸ Laing, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness*, 11.

and destructive.²³⁹ The violence inflicted by the King has been tied with descriptions of this scene as a mad one. Davies remarks:

The climax of the work is the end of No. 7, where the King snatches the violin through the bars of the player's cage and breaks it. This is not just the killing of a bullfinch—it is a giving-in to insanity, and a ritual murder by the King of a part of himself, after which, at the beginning of the last song, he can announce his own death.²⁴⁰

Davies connects the act of violin smashing with the King's mental breakdown and, on a symbolic level, with the killing of the bird. Based on his earlier statement about these birds reflecting aspects of the King's inner persona, he further concludes that this is the death of a part of the King himself.²⁴¹

Undoubtedly, breaking the violin is an act of violence, as it kills the bullfinch and possibly destroys a part of the King. More importantly however, it is also violence against music and theatre, for it destroys 'the icon of musicality'²⁴² and 'disrupts the theatrical frames of the performance'.²⁴³ This sort of aggression has its contemporary precursor in Birtwistle's opera, *Punch and Judy* (1966–67), in which Punch bows Choregos (the narrator figure) to death inside a bass viol case. Choregos is the symbol of music, as he is hit on the head by a trumpet, cymbals, and a drum signifying musical crowns in the

²³⁹ Harvey, "Maxwell Davies's Songs for a Mad King," 4.

Welten, "'I'm Not Ill, I'm Nervous' – Madness in the Music of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies," 21; McGregor, "Walking the Line: Deconstructing Identity, Suicide and Betrayal in Peter Maxwell Davies's *Mr Emmet Takes a Walk*," 351.

²⁴⁰ Davies, "Eight Songs for a Mad King, Composer's Note."

²⁴¹ He mentions that they are 'incarnations of the facets of the King's own psyche'. Ibid.

²⁴² Williams, "Madness in the Music Theatre Works of Peter Maxwell Davies," 86.

²⁴³ Curtin, "Alternative Vocalities: Listening Awry to Peter Maxwell Davies's *Eight Songs for a Mad King*," 114.

coronation scenes leading to his murder by Punch.²⁴⁴ Additionally, Choregos has the traditional name of 'the trainer of the chorus in the ancient Greek theatre'.²⁴⁵ According to Michael Nyman, Choregos 'represents music itself, and is killed with the tools of his trade'.²⁴⁶ In a similar fashion to Punch, the King is hostile towards a musical emblem.

Aside from the lead character's violence, what is encountered at the climax is the hammering of the percussion while the violin is being destroyed. The percussionist's strong, aggressive beatings could be viewed as a harsh and angry character's abuse of an instrument, similar to the King's mistreatment of the violin. However, the percussion is made to be struck, and the player's rapid strikes are much less ferocious than the King's exaggerated pizzicatos and attacks on the violin. It can also be argued that the percussive attacks contribute to the King's fiery behaviour by creating an atmosphere of fear and anxiety. However, since this pounding starts after the signal to go after the violin in the score, a more plausible interpretation is that it represents an attempt to control the violent King or foretells the imminent destruction of the violin; in this sense, it is a sort of musical warning rather than the source of the monarch's violence. Thus, the keeper's aggression is trivial and of a different nature compared to that of the King. The composer therefore seems to link madness and violence. However, as I will demonstrate in due course, the piece lacks sufficient evidence to show that the King is in fact mad when snatching the

²⁴⁴ Michael Nyman, "Harrison Birtwistle's *Punch and Judy*," in *Michael Nyman: Collected Writings*, ed. Pwyll ap Siôn (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), 40. The review was first published in *The Listener* in October 1968.

²⁴⁵ Robert Adlington, *The Music of Harrison Birtwistle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 8.

²⁴⁶ Nyman, "Harrison Birtwistle's *Punch and Judy*," 40.

violin. Rather, he is massively under pressure at the climax and, in the absence of an alternative outlet, releases this pressure in the form of violence.

Furthermore, any presumed direct association between madness and violence has also been theoretically challenged. Freud brings us face to face with the strong desire for violence, latent within all of us. At times, specific forces in humans' minds that normally inhibit aggression do not function, so violence manifests itself. He identifies the massacres of the First World War as instances of humans turning into 'savage beasts'.²⁴⁷ Laing also protests against the connection made between madness and violence. He asserts that it is against the principles of 'freedom, choice, [and] responsibility' to set behavioural standards and to consider psychotic whomever does not match up with them. Although not denying the possibility that the mad might harm themselves and others, Laing maintains that people regarded as sane could be just as or even more dangerous.²⁴⁸ The treatment of the real King George III is a case in point. His aggressive outbreaks were controlled by methods that were both 'painful' and 'humiliating', causing physical and emotional harm simultaneously.²⁴⁹ The main character of *Eight Songs* can therefore be perceived as an average human being executing an act of violence while under pressure, an act that is in fact much less brutal than the ones committed by many so-called normal individuals.

Another issue to consider is that although Davies seemingly ties violence with madness in his comment, he challenges directly linking the two by not only leaving his mad character free but also by encaging the others. If the mad

²⁴⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1930), 58–59.

²⁴⁸ Laing, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness*, 27.

²⁴⁹ Hibbert, *The Court at Windsor: A Domestic History*, 112.

protagonist is dangerous, why has he been left free, striding about? Is it possible that the threatening characters are those who have been jailed, and the King is the harmless one? The position of violence in this piece is not straightforward. This theme is indeed central, but its role is yet to be determined.

Violence could be linked to madness through the vocal techniques that are scattered everywhere in the piece, but this connection has its flaws too. The protagonist's vocalities were modelled after the groans and moans of soldiers in the battlefield. The original sounds are therefore not aggressive in any way, and the same is true for the King's utterances. Davies refers to the unusual vocal effects as 'sounds made by human beings under extreme duress'.²⁵⁰ More likely then, they are means of releasing psychological blocks, rather than inflicting more violence on an already stressed individual.

An inspection of songs five and six makes this clearer. In the final part of the fifth song, the transition to 'The Counterfeit', a frantic staccato beat abruptly invades the listener's ear, brought by the entire ensemble. The staccato beat rises incessantly, never resolving and increasingly building up the tension. The flautist is now playing the piccolo, and coupled with the upper register of the violin, piano, and cello, the effect is that of screeching discomfort. This mania lasts long enough to evoke drama, and the King's immediate response is the extremely anxious repetitive gasping of the phrase 'I am nervous' with a loud dynamic at the beginning of song six. The clarinetist increases this nervousness by weaving in and out freely and blowing overtones restlessly. The King seems to be under psychological pressure at this moment and vocality is his means of

²⁵⁰ Davies, "Eight Songs for a Mad King, Composer's Note."

releasing it. He is not behaviourally aggressive, as the pressure is released through voice.

In fact, the King is most aggressive at a point where his vocality is least extreme. The inaccessibility of or the unwillingness to use vocality as a channel for relaxation causes an outburst of emotion in the form of physical force. Hart believes that 'the lack of outlet for truthful self-expression, [and the absence of] tolerance of this expression by others' are among the most crucial factors leading to mental instability.²⁵¹ Except for the violent section, in nearly all the other parts of the piece the protagonist spares no effort to channel psychic pressure through vocal delivery.

Although people under pressure could possibly hurt themselves when attempting to release that pressure, some types of relief do involve some pain. For instance, the discomfort felt during a painful massage is not the result of inflicting violence on the body. In a similar fashion, croaking and puffing the words of the text are not harmful or injurious. As mentioned, according to Wolfsohn, the sounds even have a healing effect. He insisted that they did not cause any damage to the body's voice-producing organs. To convince the critics, he sent Hart and one of his other students to be examined by 'X-ray, stroboscope, and high-speed film', while singing in the extended ranges. None of the devices detected any physical injury to the larynx or the vocal cords, which stayed healthy and relaxed throughout.²⁵²

Violence in this piece has also been viewed as being directed not necessarily at the body or vocal cords, but at the voice itself. Curtin writes: 'Davies's work appears to enact a physical violence upon the voice; the vocalist of this piece ostensibly tears his voice apart [...] voice itself is put under duress,

²⁵¹ Roy Hart quoted in Kalo et al., "The Roy Hart Theatre: Teaching the Totality of Self," 191.

²⁵² Kalo et al., "The Roy Hart Theatre: Teaching the Totality of Self," 188.

under threat, until it, in turn, threatens'.²⁵³ In my view, the voice is not torn apart, but travels to unexpected places. As Hart would probably argue, 'the totality of the self' is embraced by the voice. The self, as manifested in the voice, is acknowledged in its entirety. There is no tearing apart, there is only bringing together. It is not surprising that the vocally unexplored parts of the psyche might come across as threatening. Remarkably, for Wolfsohn, abusing the voice occurs when limiting it to convention:

Man has for centuries failed to appreciate his voice; he has underestimated it and neglected it and allowed it to waste away; he has virtually strangled it, chained it up and confined it to a straitjacket; as he has done before, man has once again turned his singing against nature into a dogma: the dogma of tightly restricted, neatly labelled categories – male and female voices, high and low voices, children's voices and adult voices.²⁵⁴

Thus, using the voice only in the conventional, standard way is a form of violence, as it imprisons and bounds it. The protagonist of *Eight Songs* thus behaves violently but cannot be considered violent on account of his voice. Neither can he be viewed as mad based on his violence, because there is no direct relationship between the two theoretically, and there is no indication that the King is mad when he is breaking the violin. I will show later in the chapter that this behavioural instability is much more likely a result of the strain he feels rather than an indication of his derangement.

Thus, contrary to what Davies's words may imply, violence does not seem to be coupled with madness. The composer, as mentioned, has in fact challenged this link by granting the mad protagonist freedom. It is also significant that Davies's comment is rather oddly phrased in emphasising the

²⁵³ Curtin, "Alternative Vocalities: Listening Awry to Peter Maxwell Davies's *Eight Songs for a Mad King*," 112.

²⁵⁴ In Paul Newham, "The Psychology of Voice and the Founding of Roy Hart Theatre," *Theatre Survey* 31, no. 2 (1993): 64.

King's 'giving-in to insanity'. It is as if the character was trying to stay sane, but was defeated. Perhaps he was giving into the insanity or the pressure around him, rather than his own madness.

It is also worth drawing attention to the composer's own state of mind during the time, as well as the fact that he composed *Worldes Blis* (1969) in the same year. Referring to Davies's own words, Mike Seabrook claims that this piece is 'an attempt to sum up how he felt about the world at about this time'.²⁵⁵ The aggression of this piece is a reflection of the composer's own anger. He is described in this period as a 'gentle man' but also 'capable of great anger and aggression', always being 'provoked by the injustice, suffering and cruelty that he sees around him'.²⁵⁶ This is suggestive of the possibility that, as in the composer's case, the source of the King's anger and consequent violence lies not in his mental state but elsewhere in society, or in this case, in the piece.

Significance of Pastiche and Musical Quotations

As specified by its composer, *Eight Songs* is full of allusions to 'aspects of the styles of many composers from Handel to Birtwistle' and is a 'collection of musical objects borrowed from many sources'.²⁵⁷ Along with some other features, Davies intends for this mixture to call into question the insanity of the reciter.²⁵⁸

According to Harvey, as the violent climax is reached, the pastiche elements (having grown with the development of the drama) reach a degree that offsets the stability of the music, and they snap 'like the King's mind'.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 114.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ Davies, "Eight Songs for a Mad King, Composer's Note."

²⁵⁸ The programme note from the original 1969 performance, in Williams, "Madness in the Music Theatre Works of Peter Maxwell Davies," 84.

²⁵⁹ Harvey, "Maxwell Davies's Songs for a Mad King," 4.

However, these pastiches could also be viewed as sources of the anxiety and pressure felt by the King throughout the piece, which results in the final smashing of the violin. In this sense, instead of a parallel existing between the snapping of the pastiche elements and the King's mind, the latter is caused by the former. If these pastiches are sources of the King's instability, the protagonist's aggressive behaviour is also possibly caused by the tension they exert and cannot be assumed as evidence of a deranged mind. This is particularly true in the wake of Freud's psychoanalytic breakthroughs; according to him, violence under pressure does not signify madness.

The King's derangement becomes more questionable if one is mindful that the instrumentalists are the ones who provide the pastiche elements. Before any additional explanation, the importance of the players in this piece needs to be highlighted. They are forces external to the protagonist, separate entities that exist outside of him. Laing, in his existential phenomenological approach, argues that we should comprehend humans' experiences as occurring within their own world rather than judging people based on what their experiences mean in the world as we know it.²⁶⁰ Hence, the entities with whom the King is conversing are as real and autonomous as they can get for the protagonist. Whether birds or humans, as for instance in the case of the keeper, these entities are outsiders. They even seem to be presented as birds and put in cages on the stage partly for us to acknowledge them as external to the King.

Additionally, these players comprise a key theatrical part of the piece and are embedded in the story. The instrumentalists of this piece are dramatic personages, not least because they are presented in costumes, as such, on the stage. As Philip Rupprecht asserts with respect to instrumental drama, these

²⁶⁰ Laing, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness*, 17–26.

players too have agency in that 'listeners can imagine human actors' within their music and ascribe to them 'motivation and psychological presence'; as such, their music approximates a storyline.²⁶¹ They are as much a part of the story as the reciter himself. This is in contrast to many other theatrical pieces in which the instrumentalists are kept out of the plot and are only engaged in music making. As previously mentioned, Davies's mixture of styles here, as he himself asserted, were aimed at enabling him to question the protagonist's madness. Would such questioning be possible without holding the instrumentalists accountable for the disarray they produce? Can the complexity of mixing styles and the excess of musical references be an element of confusion contributing to the King's violence in the 'Country Dance'?

The excessive musical borrowings from different eras, jumbled by the instrumentalists throughout the piece, might in fact be manifestations of the mental instability of those who present them. The players can be confusing the King by providing these small, discrete, and expressive snapshots. This goes on until the level-headed protagonist loses control in song seven, becomes irate, and silences one of them—the one with whom he is directly conversing—violently in a moment of exasperation. Although the players' little tales can be illustrative of the variety, diversity, and plurality of story and identity, their excess and distortion make them disturbing and open to interpretation as signs of the players' insanity or as contributors to the King's violent behaviour.

David Metzger argues that musical borrowing is so excessive in this piece that it is reminiscent of a mind trapped in the past, unable to free itself from obsessively recalling, to the extent that it leads to disintegration and instability.²⁶² The borrowed materials, presented by the players, are not only

²⁶¹ Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 338.

²⁶² Metzger, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music*, 75.

excessive and obsessive but are also often over-developed to the extent that they lose their identity, as in the case of 'The Kingdom of this world' motif from the 'Hallelujah' chorus of Handel's *Messiah* (1741) in song eight.²⁶³

Metzer views the lead character as continuously struggling to break free from the past; for him, relief is not offered even in the form of death. While the King lives the past also stays alive, and while the past is alive it will continue to drive him crazy.²⁶⁴ Considering the instrumentalists as independent entities would mean that the King's potential insanity stems not from his recollection of the past, but from the players' presentation of it.

The instrumentalists seem so mentally unstable that they cannot even recall the past properly. If Metzer is right in saying that 'in the hands of the mad, quotations too become exaggerated: the borrowed melodies more distorted, the juxtaposition of different phrases more random, and the mix of languages more confusing', then the instrumentalists must be the mad ones.²⁶⁵ This idea seems especially valid, considering that the King's words feature 'historically authentic quotations from the *Messiah*'.²⁶⁶ His references are only present in the 'Country Dance' and are limited to 'Comfort ye, my people' and its repetitions. Other than that, there is only the phrase 'rod of iron', which is present in the *Messiah*, but the protagonist's verse, 'I shall rule with a rod of iron', is a line spoken by the real George III as well.²⁶⁷ Moreover, if George III's behaviour in song seven is inflicting violence on a musical instrument, the musical references are likewise manifestations of the imposition of violence on the music of the past by the

²⁶³ Harvey, "Maxwell Davies's Songs for a Mad King," 4.

²⁶⁴ Metzer, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music*, 105.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁶⁶ Davies, "Eight Songs for a Mad King, Composer's Note."

²⁶⁷ Hibbert, *The Court at Windsor: A Domestic History*, 116.

instrumentalists.

The following musical examples show that the quotations introduced by the instrumentalists seem to be at least partly responsible for the states the King experiences and for his violence. The 'Country Dance' starts with the pianist playing a swung version of the opening of the 'Comfort ye' recitative from the *Messiah*, after which the vocalist quotes: 'Comfort ye my people'. The composer mentions that the King's echoing of the text of the *Messiah* evokes a sort of 'mocking response in the instrumental parts – the stylistic switch is unprepared, and arouses an aggressive reaction'.²⁶⁸ Davies indicates that the players are teasing the King for his madness, but also believes that the instrumentalists' action causes the King's later violent reaction.

The major contributor to the King's imbalance, however, is probably the foxtrot introduced in the same song. As a kitschy and commercial form, this dance music has often been used to characterise 'total corruption'²⁶⁹ or indicate 'falsity'²⁷⁰ in Davies's music, as in the case of the triumph of the Antichrist in *Vesalii Icones* (1969). There, the Antichrist's (Christ's fraud double) emergence from the tomb is marked by a foxtrot, representing the counterfeit. The composer mentions that the point of this section is to show the contrast between 'the false' and 'the real'.²⁷¹ The association between the foxtrot and untruthfulness is the outcome of Davies's personal experience during the Second World War. He had recollections of hearing foxtrots on a gramophone while shielding himself from Nazi air attacks. This dance has since then become

²⁶⁸ Davies, "Eight Songs for a Mad King, Composer's Note."

²⁶⁹ Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies*, 67.

²⁷⁰ Warnaby, "Davies, Peter Maxwell."

²⁷¹ Peter Maxwell Davies, "Vesalii Icones, Composer's Note," *Max Opus*, accessed August 9, 2019, <http://web.archive.org/web/20171019200944/http://www.maxopus.com/index.aspx>.

the equivalent of the degradation and ruin of moral and spiritual values associated with that period.²⁷² The foxtrots of *St Thomas Wake: Foxtrot for Orchestra* (1969)—which includes one foxtrot from *Eight Songs*—played by a small band, also stand for ‘political and moral irresponsibility’.²⁷³ The foxtrot is encountered at the end of *Missa Super L'homme Armé* (1968, revised 1971) as well. It functions as a sign of falsehood, where Judas’s disloyalty is revealed.²⁷⁴ This particular dance music has therefore come to signify dishonesty, immorality, and deceitful conduct in Davies’s work.

Since in the seventh number the ensemble plays the foxtrot and mocks the King, it can be viewed as the symbol of the wrongful deception associated with this dance. Notably, the foxtrot occurs prior to the protagonist’s loss of balance and becoming violent. Therefore, as a symbol of fraudulence, it can be the source of the monarch’s anger, especially in view of his protest against deception in the previous song. The King’s last words leading to song seven, as well as the name of song six itself (‘The Counterfeit’) are telling:

Sir George has told me a lie: a white lie, he says
But I hate a white lie!
If you tell me a lie,
let it be a black lie!²⁷⁵

It seems that the pastiche elements do not say much about the King. Rather, they point to the instability of the instrumentalists. Musical quotations only show that some of the music produced by the players contributes to the

²⁷² Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 112.

²⁷³ Peter Maxwell Davies, "St Thomas Wake, Composer's Note," *Max Opus*, accessed August 9, 2019, <http://web.archive.org/web/20171019200944/http://www.maxopus.com/index.aspx>.

²⁷⁴ Paul Griffiths, "Missa Super L'homme Armé, Programme Note," *Max Opus*, accessed August 9, 2019, <http://web.archive.org/web/20171019200944/http://www.maxopus.com/index.aspx>.

²⁷⁵ Peter Maxwell Davies, *Eight Songs for a Mad King* (London: Boosey & Hawks, 1971), 26–27.

instability and violence of the King. More importantly though, instrumental music in general, along with other elements, demonstrates that the vocalist is an oppressed individual stripped of his power.

The Oppressed King's Insightful Moments

In this section I argue that the King, the supposedly powerful individual, is an isolated and marginalised figure deprived of authority. I also demonstrate that the instrumental music symbolises this oppressive force. The King, however, is not merely ranting in his craziness or lamenting his confinement—he is a perceptive individual who inspects and evaluates his surroundings.

In this piece, the protagonist's position seems to be defined in contrast to the players. Unlike them, the King is free to walk around on the stage. He is dressed differently and his mode of communication is different as well. The instrumentalists are similar to each other and are put in cages. In this sense, they seem like figures of the status quo, possibly symbolically resembling society, while the King is 'the other'. The otherness of the protagonist is also connected with the performance of the instrumentalists, which are referred to by Harvey as 'entities that ridicule and echo the King'.²⁷⁶ The cages in which they are placed can also be interpreted as manifestations of the King's detachment as they keep him 'out', while keeping the instrumentalists in.²⁷⁷ The character's feeling of isolation and even imprisonment, despite the freedom witnessed by us, is clearly expressed in the very first song.

The opening reveals that the King is trapped. To set himself free, he first pretends in front of the sentry that he has the key: 'Here is the key of the Kingdom'. Next, he tries to fool the guard, 'You are a pretty fellow, next month I

²⁷⁶ Harvey, "Maxwell Davies's Songs for a Mad King," 2.

²⁷⁷ Burden, "A Foxtrot to the Crucifixion: The Music Theatre of Peter Maxwell Davies," 61. Italics in the original.

shall give you a cabbage'. Then he shrieks angrily in triple forte, 'Undo the door!' Failing to liberate himself, he finally pleads for mercy: 'Pity me'.²⁷⁸

At the end of the verse 'next month I shall give you a cabbage', we hear the death chord in violin and cello.²⁷⁹ The chord D-F#-E-G# has been identified as signifying death in Davies's music because of its association with this notion in *Taverner* (1968).²⁸⁰ McGregor, however, argues that in some pieces by Davies, such as *Eight Songs* and *In Illo Tempore* (1964), it is most probably associated with betrayal rather than death.²⁸¹ This idea is credible, as song one does not seem to be tied to death in any way. Moreover, Davies was quite drawn to the concept of betrayal during the 1960s, and this theme is also prominent in his music theatre works.²⁸² The chord thus appears to portray that the King has been betrayed. He is not in charge of the Kingdom; it is being locked away from him.

The character's self-perception as imprisoned continues to the second song, where he describes the world as 'Blue-yellow-green [...] like a chained man's bruise'.²⁸³ The King's part in song three is also notated in the form of a birdcage. This cage-shaped musical line in the score is another manifestation of the King's confinement as he experiences it in his mind and world. There is no justification for believing that the freedom we perceive on the stage is more real than the confinement he feels.

²⁷⁸ Davies, *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, 3–4, 7.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 4.

²⁸⁰ Arnold, "The Music of Taverner," 26.

²⁸¹ McGregor, "Peter Maxwell Davies's Sources: Reflections on Origins, Meanings and Significance," 161.

²⁸² Philip Rupprecht, "'Something Slightly Indecent': British Composers, the European Avant-Garde, and National Stereotypes in the 1950s," *The Musical Quarterly* 91, no. 3/4 (2008): 310.

²⁸³ Davies, *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, 11.

The deception and captivity felt by the lead character resurfaces in the fifth number. In 'The Phantom Queen', the King suspects that the reason why his love, Esther, has not visited is that she has been 'chained too'. As he goes on mourning, 'Do they starve you? Strike you?', the music falls into disarray.²⁸⁴ Davies describes this section as follows: 'The flute part hurries ahead in a 7:6 rhythmic proportion, the clarinet's rhythms become dotted, and its part displaced by octaves, the effect being schizophrenic'.²⁸⁵ This mayhem is possibly a reflection of the instability of the players. The effect does not dissipate until the King howls over the percussionist's woodblock roll. The words of the protagonist and his agonising howl once more signify his detachment from the rest of the group.

The King points out his alienation, most notably in song eight. He speaks about how others 'seized him', 'whipped him', and 'jeered in his face'.²⁸⁶ In a state of depersonalisation, he refers to himself in third person. He grieves for the King's passing, reports his life story, and sympathises with him. The potential reason behind depersonalisation is explained by Laing, the originator of some of the leading theories of the 1960s. He believes that the perception of not being alive could arise as a result of feeling non-existent for others, of one's presence not being 'perceived' or 'confirmed', and of one feeling not 'recognised' and ultimately not 'loved'.²⁸⁷ This interpretation is in line with what the monarch expresses in song four: 'deliver me from my people [...] I am weary of this feint. I am alone'.²⁸⁸ The indication of no vibrato in the last phrase

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 19.

²⁸⁵ Davies, "Eight Songs for a Mad King, Composer's Note."

²⁸⁶ Davies, *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, 33.

²⁸⁷ Laing, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness*, 119.

²⁸⁸ Davies, *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, 16.

suggests that the character is 'unadorned'.²⁸⁹ In the plainest and most basic sense, unembellished, the protagonist feels lonesome, enervated by 'his people'. The irony of the text in songs seven and eight, with respect to marginalisation, is also compelling. Song seven ends with 'Comfort ye', and song eight starts with 'My people: I come before you in mourning, on my breast a star. The King is dead'.²⁹⁰ It seems that George III is expecting others to find comfort in the death of their presumably mad King.

Referring back to Laing's existential phenomenological approach, I would like to emphasise the point that 'man does not exist without "his" world nor can his world exist without him'. Laing insisted that we should learn to view people in their own world rather than as 'objects' in our own world.²⁹¹ The historical George III, though most probably not mentally ill, was still imbalanced and delusional, and lived 'in a world of his own imagining. It was difficult to tell how much he knew of the real world outside'.²⁹² As I will explain, the protagonist of this piece is constantly derided, and his attempts to interact with others repeatedly fail. It is thus plausible to consider that he feels dead because his way of being is not recognised as legitimate. The King might genuinely believe he or a part of him is really and literally dead. According to Laing, 'The price, however, to be paid for transvaluating the communal truth in this manner is to "be" mad, for the only *real* death we recognize is biological death'.²⁹³ The protagonist here articulates an existential truth, which others might consider a

²⁸⁹ Curtin, "Alternative Vocalities: Listening Awry to Peter Maxwell Davies's Eight Songs for a Mad King," 111.

²⁹⁰ Davies, *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, 31–32.

²⁹¹ Laing, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness*, 17–26.

²⁹² Hibbert, *The Court at Windsor: A Domestic History*, 122.

²⁹³ Laing, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness*, 38. Italics in the original.

delusion. The 'factual' instruction in the verse 'The King is dead' and the composer's direction for this part to be sung 'extremely sanely' seem to confirm that this death is a reality for the character.²⁹⁴ The King's announcement of his death further turns Kingship into an empty role.

Song three is also one of the notable instances that manifests the lead character's marginalisation. The vocalist engages in a dialogue with the flute. Davies's instructions for the flautist, which include 'mimicking [and] parodying' parts of the protagonist's phrases, are significant. The percussionist is also required to mock and interrupt by using 'bird-calls (toys)', while other players produce mechanical bird noises.²⁹⁵ The King tries to initiate a dialogue with the flautist, which could represent the lady-in-waiting as well as one of his birds. He even announces that he means no harm. In response, he is met with the parodying of his phrases from his audience, teasing from his keeper, and fake bird uproars from all around. The jeering becomes faster and louder towards the end of song three, to the point that he takes his complaint to the River Thames and wishes deliverance from his people in song four. Here, we witness another instance of the protagonist's alienation and oppression.

If the King was a powerful individual, one could argue that the players are trying to subvert his authority with mockery. As Mikhail Bakhtin explains in his notion of the carnivalesque, the submissive can undermine the hegemony of the oppressive by using laughter, humour, and ridicule.²⁹⁶ However, the protagonist does not come across as overbearing and tyrannical. Right from the start, in the opening song, George III is introduced as an anguished and

²⁹⁴ Davies, *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, 32–33.

²⁹⁵ Davies, "Eight Songs for a Mad King, Composer's Note."

²⁹⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helen Iswolsky (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1964), 92.

oppressed figure. We enter his world when he is deprived of authority and are not presented with any indication of his misuse of power.

In this sense, Davies does not draw from the longer operatic or literary tradition of domineering kings or powerful figures, with their defective kingship or myopic misjudgements, who are struck insane. George III's position is much different from Shakespeare's King Lear, who divides his kingdom based on his daughters' flattery, or Giuseppe Verdi's *Nabucco* (1841), who loses his mind for proclaiming not only Kingship but also divinity, and thus incurring the curse of the high priest. Davies's King is much more of a victim compared to these personages, who are almost entirely responsible for the situations in which they get trapped.

Furthermore, King George III's interactions with the players indicate that the latter are exercising control over him rather than revolting against him. It is in fact the King who ultimately rebels in song seven by reaching for the violinist's instrument and destroying the source of oppression. The King responds with violence, not laughter, giving society more reason to label him as mad. Symbolically, the individual is protesting the control of the establishment. This is in line with the spirit of social protest, which was reawakened in the sixties.²⁹⁷ It also matches Davies's tendency to invert what is expected or assumed. In *Blind Man's Buff* (1972), for instance, the King cheers up and amuses the jester, instead of the reverse.²⁹⁸

Oppression and lack of recognition could imply that madness has been taken lightly, and the potential wisdom of madness has been brushed aside. However, the King is portrayed as a perceptive individual. The protagonist's moments of sharpness appear throughout the piece. He is aware of being

²⁹⁷ Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 411.

²⁹⁸ Burden, "A Foxtrot to the Crucifixion: The Music Theatre of Peter Maxwell Davies," 63.

perceived as mad and of his estrangement and isolation, he expresses his desire for the authority that he lacks and objects to his oppression, and he provides a penetrating recapitulation of his life in the final song. Song eight aside, the most notable displays of his perceptiveness are present in songs six and seven.

At the beginning of 'The Counterfeit', the reciter announces that he is not ill but is nervous, this in itself a bright ironic allusion to the state of madness. He then calms down, declaring, 'But I love you both very well; if you would tell me the truth'.²⁹⁹ These words are said over a tranquil harpsichord accompaniment that offers some alleviation from the nervous start of the song, and George III seems to have regained his composure when uttering them. However, on the word 'truth', the didgeridu groans. Then the ensemble's instruments pop in and out unsystematically. All is dissonant and chaotic. The harpsichord pounds and the violin slides up and down the fingerboard. The didgeridu has thus transported the listener from a musically calm section to a chaotic one. It is as if this instrument, insensitive towards the nervous individual, leads the rest of the crew, who for a short while were providing some relief, to resume making anxious, uneasy music.

After the murkiness cued by the didgeridu, the harpsichord offers direction to a serene, pleasant melody in E $\flat$ major. This serene melody, however, turns out to be a distorted one. As Davies mentions, it is 'a straight parody of Handel'.³⁰⁰ It's at this point that the vocalist, with a sudden vehement articulation, shouts out that he has been told a white lie and that he prefers to be told a black lie. It appears that the parody of Handel functions as a 'white lie'

²⁹⁹ Davies, *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, 25.

³⁰⁰ Davies, "Eight Songs for a Mad King, Composer's Note."

for the King and enrages him. The Handelian tune then crumbles, and the truth about the ensemble slowly emerges as the melody falls apart at the seams.

Josipovici describes this powerful surfacing of the parodic element 'with ironic echoes of Handelian arias': all this music 'has been a sort of white lie, a lie which sweetly pretends that it is nothing of the sort; this is the first of the "black lies", a lie that recognises itself as such and makes sure you do so too'.³⁰¹ The lead character's complaint about the 'white' lie that he has been told could also be connected to the 'hypocrisy of an established institution', or more generally society—a prevalent theme in Davies's music theatre works.³⁰²

Interestingly, the crow, which the sound of the didjeridu resembles, has characteristics of both a white and a black lie. The crow in Australian mythology has been associated with a trickster character who tells well-intentioned lies, as well as, in some cases, an evil character. However, in modern times the evil aspect has prevailed, slowly erasing the trickster side, especially within Anglo-American traditions.³⁰³ Ironically, the didjeridu is played loudest when the word 'truth' is uttered; its dishonest nature is encountered at the most truthful moment. On a symbolic level, the evilness prompted by the didjeridu leads to the twisted Handelian lie, which the King detects and is outraged by.

At the beginning of song seven, the 'Country Dance', the piano introduces a march-like, soft, and sensitive interlude in the key of E major. The alluring mood created turns out to be yet another deception, as the foxtrot is soon to be presented. Even the 'smoochy' instruction for this section, immediately after the

³⁰¹ Josipovici, "Two Moments in Modern Music-Theatre," 184.

³⁰² Burden, "A Foxtrot to the Crucifixion: The Music Theatre of Peter Maxwell Davies," 57.

³⁰³ Katrin Althans, *Darkness Subverted: Aboriginal Gothic in Black Australian Literature and Film* (Göttingen: V & R Unipress, 2010), 119.

fortissimo high-pitched cry of 'let it be a black lie' in the previous one, is suspicious.³⁰⁴

In this song, the monarch's experience of the world abruptly changes. Initially, he is in a carefree, cheerful mood, but then he senses wickedness and is despondent and hopeless.

Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people
with singing and with dancing,
with milk and with apples.
The landlord at the Three Tuns
makes the best purl in Windsor.
Sin! Sin! Sin!
Black vice, intolerable vileness
in lanes, by ricks, at Courts. It is night on the world.
Even I, your King, has contemplated evil.
I shall rule with a rod of iron.
Comfort ye³⁰⁵

The point at which the change of mood occurs, right before the phrase 'Sin! Sin! Sin!', is when the King 'grabs after [the] violin'.³⁰⁶ The climax is thus marked by a textual switch. This episode is accompanied by the piano pounding out thick, dissonant chords at a slow and steady rate.

The first phrase is a reference to *Messiah's* part I, scene 1. In Handel's piece, the contrast between this section in E major and the preceding overture in E minor increases the expressive effect of 'Comfort ye', which is about God's saving power and redemptive authority. In *Eight Songs*, the story is different. *Messiah's* message is inverted. The above words manifest that, for the King, there exists an unsolvable state of decadence, and the world seems irredeemable. Redemption also becomes an empty promise because, as I will explain, the vocalist's communication attempts have entirely failed at this point. Davies writes: 'The sense of "Comfort Ye, My people" is turned inside out by the

³⁰⁴ Davies, *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, 27.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 27–31.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 29.

King's reference to Sin, and the "Country Dance" of the title becomes a foxtrot'.³⁰⁷ As explained, the foxtrot has usually been used by Davies to signify corruption.

Figuratively, in the middle of his invitation to revel in dance music, the character suddenly realises, behind all the merriment and pleasures of daily life, the errors and frauds of the world signified by the foxtrot. This realisation appears to make him uneasy and results in his attempt to snatch the violin, during which the dance tune falls apart. His soliloquy also rapidly devolves into a grotesque form, as he shouts, 'intolerable vileness'. As mentioned, instrumental music not only contributes to the protagonist's isolation and nervousness, but also to his violence. It is notable that the subject of the King's anger is the violin, the instrument which he is directly conversing with in this song and the instrument partly responsible for the treacherous chord articulating the King's shutting out from his Kingdom in the first song. The King commits an act of violence and breaks the violin, but his statement about having contemplated evil could possibly be his realisation of this offense. For him, deception and wickedness prevail in the world and he is not immune to it. He, as the man in power, is inept and sinful. Hence, he 'shall rule with a rod of iron'.

The original phrase in the *Messiah*'s part II, scene 7 is 'Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron'. From a biblical perspective, this phrase most often indicates either a measure of the punishment that the defiant will face or a 'stern and irresistible rule'. The Handelian usage is close to the first biblical interpretations. In the *Messiah*, this aria signifies the fate of the ill-behaved, determined by a divine decision. However, there is a third interpretation, in which the rod signifies a shepherd's staff, and 'break them' means rule or

³⁰⁷ Davies, "Eight Songs for a Mad King, Composer's Note."

shepherd them. In relation to the last explanation, the phrase becomes an 'oxymoron'.³⁰⁸ In view of the verse's context in this piece, and considering that the protagonist is not a powerful individual and that the word *rule* has replaced *break*, the King is most likely being ironic. The desire or duty to rule and the awareness of inability or ineptness to do so appear in conjunction. He perceives himself as the shepherd who is supposed to rule with a staff. In this ironic manner of conveying his status, the King appears to be observant.

Insightful madness and flares of wisdom in moments of instability are found in all areas of human endeavour. In Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Edgar comments on the mad Lear's words, 'O, matter and impertinency mix'd! Reason, in madness!'³⁰⁹ Josef Breuer's famous patient, Anna O., who would misbehave and become completely dysfunctional at times, was described by the analyst as 'markedly intelligent, with an astonishingly quick grasp of things and penetrating intuition' and with 'great poetic and imaginative gifts, which were under the control of a sharp and critical common sense'.³¹⁰

The idea that there is wisdom in madness has also been underlined in some performances of *Eight Songs*. The lead character of this work has been staged in a technology-based take on the piece as having access to visual information that others do not perceive. In the performance directed by Lydia Steier in 2005, the King goes mad as a result of an overabundance of reality,

³⁰⁸ Alexander Francis Kirkpatrick, ed. *The Book of Psalms*, vol. I, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902), 11.

³⁰⁹ William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear* (1608. Reprint, State College, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 1997), 93.

³¹⁰ Josef Breuer, "Case I, Fräulein Anna O.," in *Studies on Hysteria*, ed. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1936), 21.

not a sensory loss of touch with it.³¹¹ In a sense, his perception is shown to be more accurate than is possible for one to handle.

Instrumental music in this piece portrays the players as oppressive, deceptive, and quite unsympathetic towards the King. The percussionist marks the King's appearance and disappearance on the stage. However, this is not an honourable announcement of the royal entrance and exit. The King feels trapped and the percussionist appears to be haunting him on and off stage. Although the assumption is that the King is in charge, he is in fact the 'other' on whom the keeper asserts control. The percussionist, who is supposed to look after the King, also plays the deceitful didgeridu in song six and pretends to be a bullfinch by playing fake bird sounds in song three. Other instruments behave in a similar fashion. The violin and cello are responsible for the betrayal chord and the flute and percussion imitate the King. The ensemble creates fake bird noises in song three and chaotic music in songs five and six. They introduce stylistic and musical distortion and symbolise corruption. The players also do not respond positively to the King's attempts at communication.

The portrayal of the King demonstrates that we are not presented with a crazed fool. He displays many signs of knowledge and perception. As mentioned by the BBC presenter of Hart's performance in 1970, the birds can even be viewed 'as an audience for the King to express his terror of himself and horror at the evils of his age'.³¹² I will next discuss how the King's vocality manifests a desperate attempt to make contact and how the unusual knowledge

³¹¹ Cesare, "Like a Chained Man's Bruise: The Mediated Body in Eight Songs for a Mad King and Anatomy Theatre," 448.

³¹² Davies, Peter Maxwell. *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, Pierrot Players, Peter Maxwell Davies, cond. With Roy Hart, vocalist. Recorded February 03, 1970. *Invitation Concert*. London. BBC Radio.

he possesses is most explicitly recognised in his communication attempts. His instrument in this regard—his voice—is also the main feature by which his ambiguous madness is portrayed.

Let Us Talk: Vocality in *Eight Songs*

According to Hart, the extreme vocalisations he originated strongly resemble the sounds produced by asylum inmates.³¹³ It thus seems natural to tie the King's vocal delivery to insanity. However, Hart is critical of the status of madness in society, and his use of this model is a means of embracing and acknowledging the experience of mad individuals. The madness he speaks of cannot be reduced to a lack of thought or intelligence. Hart even emphasises that he and his colleagues were not pushed to alienation by society because they fashioned the sounds consciously and intentionally, while the inmates who might have been making just the same sounds were estranged as insane.³¹⁴ Hart's viewpoint is remarkably in line with Foucault's criticism of society's harshness and intolerance towards the unfamiliar.

In this section, I challenge the direct link between radical vocality and madness (in the sense of foolishness or aggression) in *Eight Songs*, which I believe does not contradict the origins of radical vocality. The scene most generally accepted as a mad scene in this piece is not the most extreme in terms of vocality. During the episode where the King snatches the violin, his words are quite comprehensible and intelligible, with meaning being in no sense damaged by vocality.

I argue that extreme vocality is the King's means of emotional release. Aside from serving this function, however, it is the King's tool for making contact. Unusual utterances are the King's only recourse for making himself

³¹³ Roy Hart quoted in Kalo et al., "The Roy Hart Theatre: Teaching the Totality of Self," 192.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

understood. They represent his desperate attempts at self-expression. Going to such lengths to be heard indicates a yearning for dialogue. At the same time, it is a display of proficiency in putting into practice such diverse vocal and technical devices.

The protagonist's expressive attempts showcase a wide variety of vocal techniques and manifest his extraordinary dexterity. He is capable of swiftly switching from one mode of expression to the next in the span of a short sentence or even a word. Williams pinpoints a sentence at the end of the fifth song, 'Fall on my eyes, O bride, like a starless night', which was fragmented into six different techniques.³¹⁵ The King also transgresses conventional assigned registers for sound production by singing like a 'female vocalist' and 'like a child'.³¹⁶ Throughout the piece, he screams, shouts, roars forcefully, whispers, and makes all sorts of unusual hissing and wheezing sounds. The composer's instructions are indicative of the virtuosity required of the singer as well. He is directed to sing like a horse, sing knifelike, ululate, become all breath, and produce silky sounds, throaty sounds, and a variety of other utterances.³¹⁷

Song three, entitled 'The Lady-in-Waiting', is a vivid display of his virtuosity. He enters in a dialogue with the flautist, who could represent a bird, as mentioned in the score. The King's chattering could be seen as an effort on his part to converse with the bullfinch in the language it knows (Ex. 2.1). Since the King requests, 'Madam, let us talk', the flautist could also possibly represent the lady of the title. This song incorporates falsetto, Sprechstimme, vibrato,

³¹⁵ Williams, "Madness in the Music Theatre Works of Peter Maxwell Davies," 82;

Davies, *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, 21.

³¹⁶ Davies, *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, 27, 7.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 27, 10, 7, 16, 31, 12.

overtones, and a variety of breath sounds. The vocal line is sung in extreme registers and includes unusual wide leaps and fast-changing dynamics. The King hereby exhibits his proficiency in using advanced techniques to explore a myriad of vocalities. In this sense, he demonstrates his expert vocal skills. However, this virtuosic skilfulness creates a barrier to comprehension, making the King a victim of his own singing. The listener is also confused by the instability of the vocal line.

Example 2.1. Peter Maxwell Davies, *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, Section J1
(Boosey & Hawkes, 1971).

J1 *f* as if encouraging caged bird to chatter and sing.

Ma - dam t - k, t - k, - (etc.) -

ch - k, ch - k, - (etc.) - tu - ka, tu - ka, - (etc.) - let us talk

repeat many times very fast

It is as if the King, being an accomplished specialist in all modes of communication, uses them hastily in his struggle for recognition and attempt at making conversation. The considerable variety of the sounds could even signify the King's efforts to adapt to whatever means of communication he suspects can make sense to others. However, the way he uses his skill becomes his undoing. This is comparable to a person speaking a sentence by using five different languages in which he or she is fluent. The result is probably incomprehensible to the majority of listeners. The following excerpts (Ex. 2.2 and Ex. 2.3) from the very first song demonstrate this point.

Example 2.2. Davies, *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, Sections A&B (Boosey & Hawkes, 1971).

Section A: *ff* or *♩* = c. 88 quite freely. *fff* breath only. *fff* *f* > *p* *f* > *p*. *fff* *♩* = 44 rit. . .

Section B: **B** Freely, quite slow. *p* *f* *p* vib. *pp* dreamily *♩* = 44.

Most scholars have focused on these destructive aspects of the King's voice. Williams interprets it as violently shattering the text³¹⁸ and Welten similarly emphasises fragmentation, suggesting that 'the king squeaks, shrieks and sings like an idiot'.³¹⁹ Though recognised as difficult to produce for the performer, the King's extended vocal techniques have not been taken as an indication of the character's mastery. I, however, recognise these detrimental aspects as existing in a tension with the virtuosic features of vocality.

Generally, almost all the indications of the character's dexterity are at the same time destructive to meaning. These include odd intervallic leaps, sudden alterations in volume and intensity, and contrasting articulation styles. So, what can one make of the King's vocalicity? Should it be understood as strangely incomprehensible or unconventionally masterful? What does that say about the idea of madness being forwarded in this work, and the problems of representation that it poses?

³¹⁸ Williams, "Madness in the Music Theatre Works of Peter Maxwell Davies," 82.

³¹⁹ Welten, "'I'm Not Ill, I'm Nervous' – Madness in the Music of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies," 22.

Example 2.3. Davies, *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, Sections C&D (Boosey & Hawkes, 1971).

f quite steady, freely — *ff*
Who, who, who, who, who, who,

f wheedling
has, (has?) ha - has, who? has? sto - len my

(steady!) *f* *fff*
key?

f *♩* = c. 60
Ah my King - dom is

(freely) *fff* *f* *♩* = c. 60
snakes! snakes and danc-ing, my King - dom is

(more freely) throat (shriek!) *fff* *ff* (ululating)
lo - o - locks and s - li - ther - ing! M - make room!

Considering that madness itself lacks an explicit definition, there are no easy answers. Nonetheless, I believe that the heated debate between Foucault and Derrida is constructive in responding to these questions. Each of their doctrines sheds light on a different aspect of the character's voice and the psychological tension reflected by it. Taking place mainly in the early 1960s, the historical proximity of this conflict with *Eight Songs* is also significant. The

prominence of the topic of madness during this time is partly a result of these philosophers' focus and influence on the discourse on madness.

As discussed in the introduction, Foucault argues that society often tends to marginalise madness. The philosopher believes that madness can be a state involving wisdom and insists that a 'mad' wisdom should be communicated. According to him, madness should not be contained within the language of reason. Foucault claims that his book, *History of Madness*, is indeed a history of madness itself, allowing it to speak for *itself*.³²⁰

As mentioned, the King in general is presented as a perceptive, marginalised figure, similar to the mad individual as described by Foucault. His skilful vocal delivery could also specifically be explained by Foucault's theory. From this angle, he displays his higher knowledge in making use of different modes of communication. His vocality is beyond convention. Using his voice, the protagonist displays his novelty and his freedom from reason. He oversteps the boundaries of producing limited logical sounds to discover a wider range of the human voice. For instance, his high-range feminine singing, entering a range that is normally reserved for females, is a form of liberation. The King, perceived by others as mad, is just unique in terms of his vocality. However, as the 'other', his way of being is not accepted by the stage characters, and even us as the audience, as sensible or legitimate. The king is thus marginalised and pushed aside partly on account of his voice. He is mocked and jeered at by the instrumentalists and labelled as mad by us.

The King's singing like a 'female vocalist' is a manifestation of his nonconformity and boldness from yet another perspective. According to Jung, every man has a feminine aspect, and every woman has a masculine one,

³²⁰ Foucault, *History of Madness*, xxxii.

which he names anima and animus, respectively. The anima has historically and socially been repressed, for it has an 'emotional character' and is considered to be against the masculine ideal of 'self-mastery'.³²¹ The character thus dares to openly display his emotions and disclose his feminine side. This is strange for a society that is too used to conventional gender standards and hence is quick to label him as insane or submissive. A Jungian reading of this section is not farfetched because his analytical psychology, developed during the first half of the twentieth century, was quite influential throughout the rest of the era and continues to exert its effects today. Hart himself was also much inspired by Jung's psychology.³²²

If the King is a marginalised yet still wise figure, why does he come across as confusing? If he has such great knowledge of sound production techniques, how can his incomprehensibility be explained? To answer these questions, I turn to Derrida, who subjected Foucault's project to scathing criticism.

Derrida declares that as soon as one attempts to convey the oppression of madness by reason, one silences it with the same oppressive reason. Thus, the silencing of madness cannot be expressed. 'The revolution against reason can only operate within reason', Derrida adds. He asserts that madness cannot speak for *itself*.³²³ Madness is, in essence, what cannot be said.

Hence, from a Foucauldian perspective, madness has long been under the authority of reason, therefore its true nature has remained concealed. From a Derridean point of view, madness cannot be 'under its own authority' as Foucault wishes it to be; the mere attempt to speak of a madness liberated from

³²¹ Carl Gustav Jung, *Contributions to Analytical Psychology*, trans. H.G. Baynes and Cary F. Baynes (London: Lund Humphries, 1942), 127–30, 200.

³²² Kalo et al., "The Roy Hart Theatre: Teaching the Totality of Self," 187.

³²³ Derrida, "Cogito and the History of Madness," 42.

reason silences it because it involves the use of the same 'classical reason' that entangled it.³²⁴ What one encounters regarding the concept of madness is therefore the Foucauldian necessity of its freedom from reason versus the Derridean impossibility of any sort of reference to it without the use of reason.

The character Davies created is also troubled by a paradox. His vocal style is an attempt to let madness speak for itself and escape the language of reason; the extended vocal techniques are the manifestation of his mad wisdom. However, the mere effort aimed at explaining himself and his higher knowledge takes him further away from being understood. As shown below (Ex. 2.4), the birdcage of the score of the third song even shows him as being confined by his voice.

In the manner that madness is muted by the same reason needed to refer to it, the King is silenced by the same extended techniques he requires for self-expression. Caught in the tension between the opposites of communication and incomprehensibility, the protagonist is a figure constantly on the verge of collapse.

It is mainly by highlighting this tension that the King's ambiguous madness is portrayed. If the paradox resolves, the ambiguity also ceases to exist. He either becomes completely incomprehensible or speaks analogously to others, thus becoming unable to deliver mad wisdom. In both cases madness would be entirely silenced.

Davies's attempt to portray madness musically is probably mad in itself, just as Foucault's attempt to write a history of madness from outside the language of reason is, according to Derrida, 'the *maddest* aspect of his project'.³²⁵ It might inherently be impossible and contradictory to simultaneously

³²⁴ Ibid., 34.

³²⁵ Ibid. Italics in the original.

capture and communicate madness after all. Nonetheless, the King might be seen as an artist figure whispering the stifled wisdom of madness through the conduit of music to possibly challenge the hegemony of reason in today's world.

Example 2.4. Davies, *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, Section J (Boosey & Hawkes, 1971).

3. THE LADY-IN-WAITING (Miss MaGraves family)

The flute has a dialogue with the King, replying to his phrases [with mimicking parodying versions of — them, freely], & accompanying him with the given figures discreetly, in any order, quite freely.

The percussion player intersperses & accompanies with bird-calls (toys, mocking. The other players operate mechanical bird noises (mechanical nightingales, &c.).

Conclusion

In my discussion of *Eight Songs for a Mad King* I have suggested that the vagueness of the condition of the protagonist is a key feature and an intrinsic trait of the piece. One scholar, Alan E. Williams, argues that such a reading depends largely on historical context. Williams asserts that *Eight Songs* was read as a critique of the marginalisation of madness because of the leading discussions of the time, including the then-recent translation of *Madness and Civilization* and the fiery anti-psychiatry discourse, which tried to explain deviant and atypical behaviour. As these debates lost their novelty, and the aura of sophistication surrounding madness died, the piece could only be read as presenting a stereotypical rather than an ambiguous madman, one who is frightening, aggressive, and not even oppressed. He argues that the King's radical voice, his violent behaviour of breaking the violin, and the stylistic musical anachronisms used by Davies were read in the new context as means of imposition of violence on voice, instrument, and historical musics.³²⁶

The point to note here is that while it is possible for Foucauldian and anti-psychiatric discourses to lose their novelty, one can hardly imagine any interpretation of the concept of madness in the absence of these debates. Regardless of how much they have faded from foreground to background, I strongly believe that the discourse on madness was so fundamentally changed that it is unthinkable to offer any reading of this piece without considering that influence.

I hope that I have been able to demonstrate that irrespective of the aforementioned discussions, the three types of violence stated by Williams have

³²⁶ Williams, "Madness in the Music Theatre Works of Peter Maxwell Davies."

been problematised in the piece itself. As a result, the King's madness is indeed ambiguous and he is portrayed as utterly oppressed.

The radical vocal techniques are theoretically means of releasing pressure. Violence on the voice actually occurs by its containment and restriction. *Eight Songs* musically supports the proposition that when pressure is released through voice, behavioural aggression does not occur. The King most certainly imposes violence on the violin, but this violence is so open to question that it is not sufficient to mark him as a violent individual. The protagonist's aggression has also been complicated by his freedom on the stage as opposed to the imprisonment of other characters. It is difficult to imagine that the violent character is set free and the non-violent individuals are restricted. Moreover, the evidence of his oppression, clearly displayed in his words as well as the players' mocking, challenges the straightforward nature of his demeanour. Lastly, if the musical quotations are to be read as an imposition of violence on the music of the past, then the instrumentalists should be held responsible for this violence. As mentioned, the King's references are neither excessive nor distorted.

The protagonist's attempts at communication display the ambiguity of his state most clearly. The King is knowledgeable and extraordinary, as well as unintelligible and perplexing. The skilfulness of his vocal delivery and his simultaneous inability to converse effectively forms a paradox by which madness is represented. In a sense, madness simultaneously presents and silences itself through the King's vocality. This piece is born out of refusing to abandon one side of the paradox in favour of certainty. Tension is sustained by allowing the King's struggle to continue even when he disappears from the stage.

The only certainty about the King is that among his ravings and ranting he

expresses 'the need to express himself'.³²⁷ He ventures to do so in a sincere fashion by using a truthful voice, which turns out to be rather radical and unfamiliar. Throughout the entire piece, his desperate attempt at expression continues. But it proves impossible. In the words of Josipovici, 'Oneness with (his) nature' is unrealisable.³²⁸ In the last song, when he seems to have given up, we hear his self-announced death. He narrates the story of his life and death in a perfectly articulated eulogy.³²⁹ After this brief period, he takes up the challenge once more and is reminded that he is not dead yet: 'The anguished creature tries to bridge the impossible gap'.³³⁰ He howls off the stage, declaring in the third person that he 'will die howling'. He will die striving to express himself; his existence depends on this fight, otherwise the paradox will resolve.

Ascribing a central role to voice was probably most prominent in Davies's *Taverner*. Striking parallels in the function of voice can be drawn between this piece and *Eight Songs*. Majel Connery argues that 'Taverner's voice is his means of self-expression [...], and his recourse to individuation within the oppressive religious environment in which he is trapped'. The same is true for the King in response to his surrounding oppressive society. Moreover, the voice is 'Taverner's Achilles' heel. If he loses the battle over voice, Taverner loses his soul'.³³¹ The King is also torn by the paradox in his voice. Resolution of this paradox threatens his identity.

³²⁷ Connery, "Peter Maxwell Davies' Worst Nightmare: Staging the Unsacred in the Operas *Taverner* and *Resurrection*," 255–56.

³²⁸ Josipovici, "Two Moments in Modern Music-Theatre," 185.

³²⁹ Except on the word 'talked' and when he howls off the stage, the rest of the movement is sung free of unusual utterances in spoken form.

³³⁰ Josipovici, "Two Moments in Modern Music-Theatre," 185.

³³¹ Connery, "Peter Maxwell Davies' Worst Nightmare: Staging the Unsacred in the Operas *Taverner* and *Resurrection*," 250.

For Davies, in general, the ultimate goal of art was arguably communication. Seabrook notes that the message the composer took home from his university years and that influenced the rest of his career was that 'art [was] as nothing if it fail[ed] to communicate'. Seabrook states that as a musician, Davies was 'concerned about the communication of truth, and about communication in general—he [was] a communicator himself'.³³² Even his first work, the *Trumpet Sonata* (1956) has been described as staging 'a starkly drawn dialogic exchange between characters'.³³³ The sheer quantity of his musical output has also been viewed as a manifestation of his 'urge to communicate'.³³⁴

During the 1960s, Benjamin Britten's communicative power was a much-discussed topic within the discourse of the general inability of composers to reach their public.³³⁵ Thus, the King might even be viewed as a reflection of Davies's anxiety about the intelligibility of his musical language and its ability to resonate with audience members. As explained, upon his relocation to Orkney, connecting with his listeners became utterly fundamental to him and led to a stylistic change in his music.

³³² Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 43, 104.

³³³ Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 12.

³³⁴ Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies*, 13.

³³⁵ Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 218.

Chapter 3

'I Dare Not Call It Comedy': The Mania of Lust in *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot* ³³⁶

Introduction

Five years after the momentous *Eight Songs*, Peter Maxwell Davies wrote another piece of music theatre centred on madness. Often viewed as its predecessor's counterpart, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot* (1974) is inspired by the life of Eliza Emily Donnithorne, a woman of Australian origin. She was the main figure on whom Charles Dickens's Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations* (1861) was modelled. The historical Miss Donnithorne resided in the stately Cambridge Hall with her family when she got engaged to a naval officer. The bride-to-be was jilted at the altar. Completely crushed by this incident, she chained up her door from that day on, never leaving again nor allowing anyone to enter. The tormented woman wore her wedding dress for the rest of her life and kept the feast preparations untouched. Miss Donnithorne's only companions in the years of isolation and solitude were books. She was, in all probability, familiar with her literary analogue, as Dickens's story was published during her lifetime.³³⁷

In Davies's account of the story, Miss D. is a woman deeply immersed in her imagination, hence the archaic word 'maggot' to describe her 'whimsical or perverse fancy'.³³⁸ The piece was premiered in 1974 at the Adelaide Festival in Australia with Fires of London and their soprano soloist, Mary Thomas (1932–97). Besides being a jazz singer and pianist, Thomas was highly admired for

³³⁶ Inspired by Francis Beaumont's comment in the epilogue of *The Woman Hater* (1607): 'I dare not call it comedy or tragedy; 'tis perfectly neither'. Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *The Works of Beaumont and Fletcher* (London: Edward Moxon, 1607), 248.

³³⁷ Randolph Stow, "Miss Donnithorne's Maggot, Historical Note," *Max Opus*, accessed August 9, 2019, <http://web.archive.org/web/20171019200944/http://www.maxopus.com/index.aspx>.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

her performances of new music. After being selected to join the Pierrot Players (later the Fires of London) by Steven Pruslin, she took part in Davies's *Revelation and Fall* (1966, revised 1980), *Missa Super L'homme Armé* (1968, revised 1971), *From Stone to Thorn* (1971), *My Lady Loathian's Lilte* (1975), *The Yellow Cake Revue* (1980), and *Winterfold* (1986), as well as *Miss Donnithorne*.³³⁹ Davies's fondness for her virtuosic vocalism was such that he had confessed: 'Without Mary Thomas, most of the music I wrote for the Fires just wouldn't have been in existence'.³⁴⁰ The libretto was once more produced by Randolph Stow, who had previously portrayed mad women in his poems³⁴¹ and was known for his fascination with 'abnormal psychology'.³⁴²

Even though it was composed after Davies's move to the Orkney Islands of Scotland, *Miss Donnithorne* aligns itself more with *Eight Songs* and *Vesalii Icones* (1969), or, as Arnold Whittall observes, *Revelation and Fall*, where dramatic action and emotional effect are pivotal.³⁴³ It is a sequel to the Expressionism-influenced works of the late 60s and stands in contrast to its Orkney-influenced predecessors and successors such as *Hymn to St Magnus* (1972), *Fiddlers at the Wedding* (1973), *The Blind Fiddler* (1975), and *The Lighthouse*. In much the same way as *Eight Songs*, *Miss Donnithorne's* Expressionism is manifested in its Pierrot-like aspects. For instance, the main character is a social outcast separated from the rest of society. Davies makes

³³⁹ Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 101–3, 131.

³⁴⁰ In Kate, "Obituary: Mary Thomas."

³⁴¹ His poem 'Mad Maid's Whim' was written in 1957. Fiona Richards, "Max & Mick: The Partnership of Peter Maxwell Davies and Randolph Stow," *The Musical Times* 159, no. 1943 (2018): 34.

³⁴² Hall, *Music Theatre in Britain 1960-1975*, 154.

³⁴³ Arnold Whittall, "Miss Donnithorne's Maggot by Peter Maxwell Davies," *Music and Letters* 59, no. 4 (1978): 517.

use of a Pierrot ensemble and his dramatic theme also parallels that of Schoenberg. Melodic disjunction and extremes of vocal range employed to communicate pain, agitation, and similar emotions are other expressionistic features of the work. Assertions of Pierrot's influence may be reinforced by the fact that the composer intended this piece for Thomas, who was known and admired above all for her phenomenal execution of *Pierrot*.³⁴⁴

Miss Donnithorne's Maggot, a showpiece for the vocalist, requires great technical ability on the part of the instrumentalists as well. However, it is not as extreme and difficult to perform as *Eight Songs*.³⁴⁵ The ensemble consists of flute (doubling piccolo and alto flute), clarinet in A, violin, piano, and a range of percussion instruments, from glockenspiel and marimba to different kinds of cymbals and whistles. The eight songs, which form a cycle are labelled as follows:

1. Prelude
2. Miss Donnithorne's Maggot
3. Recitative
4. Her Dump
5. Nocturne (The Instrumentalists)
6. Her Rant
7. Recitative
8. Her Reel

Miss Donnithorne and *Eight Songs* share many qualities: the centrality of madness and Expressionism; similarity in duration; historical contemporaneity; a Pierrot ensemble and a virtuoso soloist; pervasiveness of musical references and extreme vocal and instrumental techniques; an eight-movement structure; and a historical basis. The two protagonists also approximate each other in dramatic, exaggerated, and unconventional conduct. Abandoning first-person

³⁴⁴ Seabrook, Max: *The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 149.

³⁴⁵ *Eight Songs* is graded 6 (most difficult) whereas *Miss Donnithorne* is assigned the difficulty level of 5. (See http://www.maxopus.com/work_detail.aspx?key=150).

narrative, they also sometimes tell their stories from a third-person point of view. They resemble each other in belonging to the upper social class and the beginning and ending of their stories are also astonishingly similar. The earlier work begins with George III greeting the sentry; the later one, with Miss D. welcoming the people of Sydney. The male character howls off the stage at the end, and the female one vocalises and dances when leaving. Additionally, the entrance of both protagonists is marked by percussion, and they exit with their voice fading over percussion strokes.

Considering the many similarities, one wonders if the differences between the two pieces result primarily from the protagonists' genders. Strangely, despite the more extreme means of representing madness in George III's case, his lunacy has been more widely challenged by critics. Davies, too, emphasises the ambiguity of the King's mental condition, but does not seem to have such concern with respect to Miss D. Could there be an inclination to view madmen as more alienated than truly mad and madwomen as hopelessly delusional, or are other factors involved? Nevertheless, it has to be noted that the depiction and interpretation of insanity in the two works is complicated by issues other than gender.

Aside from patriarchal prejudice, the difference in categorisation could stem from the more complicated nature of the earlier piece, suggesting that the protagonist is too substantially complex and wise for a crazed man. It is as if a man so skilful in sound production, and oftentimes perceptive, cannot possibly be completely insane. The intricate nature and dramatic role of instrumental music also add to the vagueness of the King's mental state. Davies's composing of a multifaceted piece around a male figure and a plainer one around a female may itself seem problematic. However, changes in conceptions

of art over time and how they are influenced by specific historical contexts should also be taken into account.

I believe that gender biases cannot solely account for what Paul Griffiths describes as Davies's revisiting of the world of madness by 'surer and safer means'.³⁴⁶ Neither can these discriminations be the only reason for Miss D.'s madness being viewed as less ambiguous compared to that of the King. As Davies states in his conversation with Michael Hall, the optimism formed during the 1960s about composers' move 'into areas of experience and technique that had never been done before [...] gradually evaporated after about 1973'. Hall further comments that musicians of that time 'felt the need to be simpler, more direct [and] less experimental than they had been'.³⁴⁷ Moreover, the radical musical techniques of *Eight Songs*, even if employed to the same extent in *Miss Donnithorne*, would simply be more artistically conventional five years later. Their use for the portrayal of insanity was more established; hence, Miss D. is often seen as more straightforwardly mad.

It is also significant that this piece was composed during a time when feminist psychologists voiced strong objections to the age-old prejudice of a connection between women and madness. In the 1960s and 1970s, women's fights for their rights intensified and the second-wave feminist movement took place, with sexuality among its major concerns. Women's place in British society underwent fundamental changes. The first women's liberation march in London occurred in 1971.³⁴⁸ By this time about seventy local women's liberation groups

³⁴⁶ Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies*, 68.

³⁴⁷ Hall, *Music Theatre in Britain 1960-1975*, 275.

³⁴⁸ Sue Bruley, "Consciousness-Raising in Clapham; Women's Liberation as 'Lived Experience' in South London in the 1970s," *Women's History Reviews* 22, no. 5 (2013): 717.

were active in the city.³⁴⁹ Access to contraception became free for British women in 1974 and 'words such as "sexism" and "male chauvinist" entered the [British] vernacular'.³⁵⁰

In the 1970s, in France, the concept of 'feminine writing' took root. As a major advocate on the issue, Hélène Cixous criticised writing and literature for either 'obscur[ing] women' or representing them as 'sensitive-intuitive-dreamy, etc'. She called for women to write through their bodies. For Cixous, 'almost everything [was] yet to be written by women about femininity'.³⁵¹ During this time, women's sexual pleasure started to matter in new ways and sex accessories were offered to women for the first time at Eve's Garden, founded by Dell Williams in New York.³⁵² The interruption of London's 'Miss World' ceremony by demonstrators in 1970 showed that the concept of women on display was no longer tolerated by some.³⁵³ These efforts led to the designation of 1975 as the International Women's Year. The United Nations chose Helen Reddy's 'I am Woman' (1971), also the anthem for the 70s' women's movement, as the theme to celebrate the year.³⁵⁴

The 70s witnessed not only a change in the status of women, but also the early stages of a major revolution with respect to the understanding of madness

³⁴⁹ David Bouchier, *The Feminist Challenge* (London: Macmillan Press, 1939), 53.

³⁵⁰ Bruley, "Consciousness-Raising in Clapham; Women's Liberation as 'Lived Experience' in South London in the 1970s," 717.

³⁵¹ Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," 885.

³⁵² Dell Williams, "The Roots of the Garden," *The Journal of Sex Research* 27, no. 3 (1990): 465.

³⁵³ Bruley, "Consciousness-Raising in Clapham; Women's Liberation as 'Lived Experience' in South London in the 1970s," 720–21. This demonstration was preceded by the 'No More Miss America!' campaign of 1968 in the US.

³⁵⁴ Michelle Arrow, "It Has Become My Personal Anthem," *Australian Feminist Studies* 22, no. 53 (2007): 214.

in women. This is not to say that the public perception or treatment of madwomen changed drastically, but defining female normality based on male-set standards was seriously challenged, especially as feminist psychotherapy was increasingly gaining momentum.³⁵⁵ The 1970s also produced extensive scholarly works on 'gender-bias', committed to the advancement of feminist therapy and raising awareness of women's mental health issues.³⁵⁶

The struggles of this decade were a reaction to gender-based misconceptions that can mostly be traced back to the nineteenth century. Noting that *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot* reflects on a Victorian story and is created in the 1970s, it can be viewed as part of the discourse that revisits common nineteenth-century perceptions of female madness. I will comment on how the work relates and responds to changing attitudes to women's mental imbalances, but prior to that, issues raised by the piece with respect to feminine insanity need to be scrutinised. I will provide a survey of this work and scholars' commentary to set the stage for a detailed analysis of Miss D.'s portrayal.

Overview and Scholarship

Miss Donnithorne's Maggot starts with the lead character's direct declamatory communication with the audience after abruptly emerging from inside a decaying wedding cake. The huge cake also contains the instrumentalists. In the opening prelude, the protagonist invites everyone to her banquet, wishing it would choke them. Musically, the piece is grounded in the Victorian era. The second song is even 'strophic, in the manner of a Victorian

³⁵⁵ Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980*, 19, 251.

³⁵⁶ Gerald Corey, *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy* (Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, 2009), 364.

ballad'.³⁵⁷ Here, Miss D. remembers her wedding night and suddenly shows extreme agitation on the word 'cake'. Singing it with a roulade of thirty-two notes, she tears and throws paper cakes on each note.³⁵⁸

A similarly disturbing effect is created in the next number with the use of metronomes. Run at different times and speeds, the metronomes represent clocks whose desynchronised clicks mix up gradually and muddle the heroine's nervous recollections of the wedding day.³⁵⁹ This song is entirely based on ostinato figures, presumably to bring out this metronomic confusion more efficiently. Miss D.'s manner of singing in this number is at times operatic, but her voice is also charged with anxiety. The uneasiness comes out especially towards the end of the song where, for instance, she rises euphorically on 'marriage'³⁶⁰ or vigorously repeats 'the wedding cake'.³⁶¹ Theatrically too, she is behaving oddly at this point, counting on her fingers.³⁶² Stow's attempt to show the character's instability is reflected in her identification with Ophelia from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1603), quoted at the beginning and ending of this song. Textually, sorrow and gloom prevail. Miss D. finishes the song by saying: 'Artists: canst paint a dolorous cry?'

'Her Dump', as Davies explains, is an 'Elizabethan dance form, but the surface is close to a Victorian quadrille'.³⁶³ This song generally involves the character's description of herself in connection with the navy. She makes the

³⁵⁷ Peter Maxwell Davies, "Miss Donnithorne's Maggot, Composer's Note," in *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1996).

³⁵⁸ Peter Maxwell Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1996), 8.

³⁵⁹ Davies, "Miss Donnithorne's Maggot, Composer's Note."

³⁶⁰ Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, 17.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 18.

³⁶³ Davies, "Miss Donnithorne's Maggot, Composer's Note."

strange remark about her cake 'beam[ing] out good cheer to the Royal Navy' and near the middle of the song highlights the 'cake' by repeating the word nine times, singing it louder each time.³⁶⁴ Moreover, the four lines containing the word 'cake' feature the interplay of fast, forte trills, triplets, and sextuplets in piano and agitated percussion tremolos to replicate Miss D.'s anxiety. The section of the song containing the word 'cake' is also given more prominence by means of contrast with the melodious beginning and the melancholic ending of the song. The latter includes the character's remembering her 'ayah' in India; ostinatos bring out the sadness of the text, suggesting a sense of longing for the past.

The succeeding instrumental nocturne is described by the composer as being reminiscent of 'Gustav Lange's *Blumenlied*, a very popular display piece for aspiring late nineteenth-century lady pianists'.³⁶⁵ Pleasant and light, similar to Lange's work, the nocturne sounds misty and magical for the most part. It is evocative of empty, shallow salon music and is perhaps intended to suggest the superficial emotions it represents.

Song six is an uncanny account of the wedding cake. It begins with Miss D. intoning: 'On the doorsills of my cake, cactus heaves at the hinges'. Davies instructs the violin and the cello to play pizzicatos like a ukulele and a banjo respectively.³⁶⁶ The character's hallucinations begin to surface with more intensity, and she imagines the beloved approaching her seductively. Pretending that the betrothed is knocking, she claps her hands in self-deception. Miss D.'s wordless vocalisations are initially heard here. The song

³⁶⁴ Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, 22.

³⁶⁵ Davies, "Miss Donnithorne's Maggot, Composer's Note."

³⁶⁶ Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, 28.

ends with the erotic gesture of her 'closing [her] arms and legs and hunching up'.³⁶⁷

The next number is rich in sexual content as well. Miss D. narrates how two young passers-by gossip about her ungratified sexual desire and reckon it to be the underlying cause of her dementia: 'They go mad if they don't get it'.³⁶⁸ She also recites parts of a vulgar ballad called 'The bastard from the Bush', albeit without daring to repeat the sexually explicit words. The violin's line bears a resemblance to 'theatrical traditions of Victorian music-hall',³⁶⁹ owing to its simplicity and repetitiveness. The instrument is also to be held and played like a banjo,³⁷⁰ generating a folk-like entertaining allure, redolent of the uncomplicated melodies popular at Victorian music halls, which were targeted at mass audiences. Alternation between operatic singing and squeaking and screaming is most clear in this number. Miss D.'s yelling converts into 'lady-like'³⁷¹ intonation as her feelings towards the youths change from anger to admiration: 'Dear boys [...] I think I shall adopt a little boy. A little. Post-captain. Of the Royal Navy. With a gold moustache'.³⁷²

The final song is a depiction of the character's utmost desire and expansive delusion. This seems to be initiated primarily by the naval Bosun's whistle, which symbolises her fiancé. Immediately after the whistle sounds, Miss D. intones, 'Hark! Hark, hark! His voice!' under the instructions 'maidenly and coy'. Upon hearing the beloved calling, she greets him rapturously. Emphasising her faithfulness and virginity, Miss D. runs to embrace him.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 32.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 35.

³⁶⁹ Davies, "Miss Donnithorne's Maggot, Composer's Note."

³⁷⁰ Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, 33.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 36.

³⁷² Ibid., 37.

Immersed in the fantasy of marriage, the protagonist also throws around confetti taken from her pocket. Wagner's 'Bridal Chorus' from the opera *Lohengrin* (1850) and Mendelssohn's 'Wedding March' from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1842) are referenced in a distorted fashion. According to Davies, the musical material in this section is eventually transformed into a 'cheap tune summing up the whole masquerade'.³⁷³ Miss D.'s vocal style, especially towards the end, is mostly *bel canto*, interspersed by frantic squeaking and screaming. As she leaves vocalising and dancing, the Bosun's whistle is heard again in the background.

The heroine's vocality and gestures, sexual remarks, and hallucinations, accompanied by radical instrumental techniques, help place *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot* in Davies's repertoire on madness. However, some of the factors that signify derangement have also been taken as generating humour in the piece. Stow's suggestion of writing a funny 'sequel' to *Eight Songs*³⁷⁴ and Davies's description of the resulting piece as somewhat humorous³⁷⁵ further confirm that comedy is a central topic. Yet in their accompanying notes the authors reveal their different approaches to the work. The composer seems to give more weight to heartbreaking melancholy. He points to Miss D.'s 'tragic wedding day' and her being 'imprisoned absolutely in her imagination, forever estranged and alone'. The piece, for him, is 'certainly only "funny" in a most qualified manner'.³⁷⁶ The librettist, by contrast, satirically characterises the work as 'a

³⁷³ Davies, "Miss Donnithorne's Maggot, Composer's Note."

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

base and cowardly slur on the reputation of an unfortunate lady', only faintly sympathising in saying that she 'merits half a tear'.³⁷⁷

The fact that *Miss Donnithorne* has generally been described as comic to a much greater extent than its companion piece could partly be due to its less extreme theatricality and musicality. Whereas the mad monarch smashes an instrument, Miss D. only tears paper.³⁷⁸ This makes for less discomforting theatre. Thus, her actions are more likely to come across as satirical. As previously stated, the piece was composed during the time that Davies was moving away from the overtly Expressionist works of the late 1960s and becoming increasingly interested in the writing of Scottish poet George Mackay Brown.³⁷⁹ This factor, along with the general musical conservatism of the 1970s, could partly be the cause of *Miss Donnithorne* being less radical compared to *Eight Songs* and hence more readily interpreted as funny. The more tonal and lyrical nature of the later piece, as well as its lesser complexity, are also significant. This relative moderation might allow certain elements, which in a more radical setting are distressing, to be perceived as comic. For instance, Miss D.'s paper-tearing scene, had it been accompanied with more intense shrieking and squeaking, would probably not have been described as funny.³⁸⁰

It should be noted that most scholars also acknowledge the sorrowful aspects of the piece. Arnold Whittall senses an atmosphere of grief and derangement.³⁸¹ For Michael Burden, while 'comic elements' are present,

³⁷⁷ Stow, "Miss Donnithorne's Maggot, Historical Note."

³⁷⁸ Michael Burden describes the King as 'violent and aggressive' and Miss D. as 'comparatively gentle'. Burden, "A Foxtrot to the Crucifixion: The Music Theatre of Peter Maxwell Davies," 63.

³⁷⁹ Warnaby, "Peter Maxwell Davies's Recent Music, and Its Debt to His Earlier Scores," 75.

³⁸⁰ Michael Hall has characterised this episode as 'comic'. Hall, *Music Theatre in Britain 1960-1975*, 165.

³⁸¹ Whittall, "Miss Donnithorne's Maggot by Peter Maxwell Davies," 518.

'pathos is the over-riding engagement with the audience'.³⁸² Jane Birkhead identifies witty musical features, but ultimately describes Miss D. as a 'lonely, frustrated woman'.³⁸³ Similarly, Edward Venn views Miss D. as 'encouraging us to laugh, [but] also engag[ing] our affections – we are touched by her despair'.³⁸⁴

The more disputed issue is identifying where satire and sadness lie. Hall believes that musical mockery is targeted at Victorian salon music, and textual hilarity being mostly 'verbal' is prone to concealment by the extreme music and vocal effects required to portray insanity.³⁸⁵ For him, the tragic air of the piece is in the character's growing delusion, which peaks in the last song.³⁸⁶

Sexual comments, indicative of Miss D.'s delusion and devastation in Hall's explanation, are read as humorous by Mike Seabrook. He identifies the character as 'funny' and even 'often exceedingly rude, in a pleasing and amusing way', and is convinced that not much concern is shown for her suffering. In his view, the piece presents some 'compassion' for the protagonist in the libretto, in vocal fluctuations between lyrical singing and distressed groaning, and in 'the sensitivity of the instrumentation'. However, ultimately 'the compassion is offset by the rich opportunities for humour and satisfying, earthy crudity'. Seabrook states that Miss D.'s case is profoundly different from the

³⁸² Burden, "A Foxtrot to the Crucifixion: The Music Theatre of Peter Maxwell Davies," 58.

³⁸³ Jane Birkhead, "Miss Donnithorne's Maggot by Peter Maxwell Davies; Randolph Stow," *Notes* Second Series 35, no. 4 (1979): 998.

³⁸⁴ Edward Venn, "Maxwell Davies: Miss Donnithorne's Maggot; Eight Songs for a Mad King," *Tempo* 59, no. 233 (2005): 80.

³⁸⁵ Hall, *Music Theatre in Britain 1960-1975*, 77, 165.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 166–67.

tragic and agonising story of George III, which has no humour at all.³⁸⁷ The madwoman's sexual wordplay, especially towards the end, and her unmannerly or, as Pruslin puts it, 'unladylike' interest in sexually vulgar remarks are perceived by Seabrook as clearly comical.³⁸⁸

Aside from sexuality, vocality has also been a controversial aspect of this composition. Miss D. often adopts a *bel canto* style of singing and her articulation is technically less demanding when compared to the King. Alan E. Williams comments that 'the bestial [...] qualities of the vocal part in *Eight Songs for a Mad King*' are absent in *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*. In his judgment, this feature, along with the more tuneful music and less aggression, works towards questioning Miss D.'s madness.³⁸⁹ Contrary to this claim, Ruud Welten argues that *bel canto* singing, which typically demonstrates one's command over the voice, here signifies loss of control over 'meaningful expression', as the character regularly descends into hysteric singing. 'Virtuosity is strained in order to express Miss Donnithorne's hysteria', Welten writes.³⁹⁰

Examination of the debate provoked by this piece poses a number of questions. What is the balance between melancholy and comedy and how does veering between the two play into the representation of madness? Is there a tension between text and music in terms of focusing on these two aspects?

³⁸⁷ Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 149.

It needs to be mentioned that this view is not shared by all scholars. Stephen Pruslin, for instance, states that comic elements are present in both *Eight Songs* and *Miss Donnithorne* and that they 'always serve a purpose', though he does not specify what that purpose might be. Stephen Pruslin, "Peter Maxwell Davies," in *Peter Maxwell Davies: The Complete Catalogue of Published Works*, ed. Judy Arnold (London: Vail Printers, 1981), 5.

³⁸⁸ In Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 149.

³⁸⁹ Williams, "Madness in the Music Theatre Works of Peter Maxwell Davies," 88–92.

³⁹⁰ Welten, "'I'm Not Ill, I'm Nervous' – Madness in the Music of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies," 24.

What do musical references signify and how do they influence the depiction of Miss D.'s condition? How does the sexual content play into the portrayal of madness and the comicality of the piece? The constant comparison between this piece and *Eight Songs* makes it paramount to also investigate the role of gender in Miss D.'s representation.

I believe that all of these issues are by some means connected to the nature of comedy, which is mostly misinterpreted by scholars. Their widespread consensus on humour shows that this piece certainly has the potential to create amusement for some. However, hilarity is only the side-effect of the main role that these seemingly funny features play: the disdaining of the character. Miss D.'s sexual remarks, nonsensical words, and bizarre gestures, along with instrumental music and the set design, paint a pitiable image of the character. The pathetic figure created might be amusing, but she is only amusing because she is miserably inadequate. I argue that the elements read as witty by others mainly contribute to the humiliation of the weak protagonist. Thus, the piece is spotlighting a silly, overemotional heroine in her crazed world and going so far in debasing her and emphasising her absurdity that it creates laughter. All of this makes the piece much more tragic in the end.

By way of tracing the scorning of this character in relation with her mental state, I will demonstrate that she is a fair reflection of traditional nineteenth-century beliefs about madwomen. I will further argue that the piece calls into question the long-held beliefs about madwomen through displaying Miss D. as an almost textbook example.

The composer's use of Victorian references and their low-status, domestic associations, as well as the heroine's appearance and her vocality, will be discussed in the first section of this chapter to show the rendering of a foolish,

sentimental kind of madness. The issue is that this is not simply scorning a mad woman. It is rather mocking the dogmas she symbolises.

The piece's sexual content is the focus of the second part of the chapter. I maintain that this aspect of the work is significantly evocative of hysteria as described by Freud. This psychosis is most notably and recurrently evoked by the sexual symbol of virginity: the wedding cake. The emphasis put on amenability and ineptness in the portrayal of hysteria here leaves no room for the insightfulness that many hysterics are capable of demonstrating. I maintain that in deriding the impotent hysteric creating delight with her ridiculousness, the creators of the piece are expressing contempt for the prejudiced, old-fashioned beliefs about hysteria she represents.

Stark Mad in White Satin: Modern Day Victorian Madwoman

The extensive use of Victorian music in *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot* is undoubtedly meant to communicate a sense of the period. But instrumental music also says a lot about the character. Miss D.'s relationship with the players is fundamentally different from George III's in *Eight Songs*. The King is physically separated from the instrumentalists by bars, and interacts with them as separate entities. Each member of the ensemble is an actor, a dramatic personage. *Eight Songs* resembles *Vesalii Icones* with respect to absorbing the 'instrument[s] into the narrative'. Davies' *Le Joueur de Notre Dame* (1978) also features the musicians playing the roles of monks and the violinist portraying the Virgin Mary.³⁹¹ Other composers have experimented with this idea as well. For instance, the instrumentalists in Henze's *La Cubana* (1973) are instructed to play 'in character'.³⁹²

³⁹¹ Burden, "A Foxtrot to the Crucifixion: The Music Theatre of Peter Maxwell Davies," 59–61.

³⁹² Adlington, "Music Theatre since the 1960s," 237.

In the case of *Miss Donnithorne*, the players do not take theatrical roles and are not part of the narrative. Their music does not interact with the character's line; it acts more like a commentary on the events of the drama or the character's state. The significance of the musicians is in their position. By placing them in the wedding cake—from which the character herself also emerges—their music becomes entwined with the ceremony the heroine wished to have and the consequent trauma she experienced. The change in instrumental music when words related to marriage, the navy or the wedding cake are uttered, the quoted wedding music, and the Bosun's whistle are constant references to the heroine's past, representing her memory. As I will explain in due course, the position of the players also links them to the character's sexuality. Thus, instrumental music is by no means a discrete entity detached from or independent of the heroine. Accordingly, Victorian music—or any other music for that matter—is representative of her personality and emotions. The players' connection to the vocalist's inner world will become clearer when the significance of the wedding cake is explained later in the chapter.

As a result of the close connection between the leading character and the musicians, all the inferior, mawkish attributes of Victorian music are by association extended to her. Hence, the mocking of Victorian music, which, as Hall argues, takes place in the piece, at the same time targets the character. Indeed, the aesthetic value of this music was low in the composer's view. In 'The Mocking of Christ', the sixth movement of his *Vesalii Icones*, Davies states that 'the "mocking" is effected inside the music entirely – the Dancer plays, on an out-of-tune piano, a garbled Victorian hymn (a musical style which I consider almost the ultimate blasphemy) and subsequently the pianist turns this into a

cheery foxtrot'.³⁹³ The reversal of function (the hymn as profane or praising the fake Christ) and the transformation into a foxtrot to communicate corruption express Davies's contempt of Victorian music.

In the piece itself, this detestation is partly reflected in the second song, which resembles a Victorian ballad.³⁹⁴ Balladic songs in general had a low position in that society, for they were easy listening music, attuned to the taste of their often-lowbrow audiences. Ronald Pearsall considers them a 'dishonest' type of music. He believes that they dissimulated themselves as art-music and cushioned their listeners against bitter societal realities. They were mostly concerned with unrequited love with a glimpse of optimism regarding the return of the beloved; thus, they were heavy-hearted, yet avoided being too tragic. 'Anxiety about death, sex and the restlessness of the poor [...] as the "dangerous class"' were pervasive subjects among Victorian ballads. Their intended market was well-off ladies and their piano accompaniment was unchallenging.³⁹⁵

Thematic similarities between Victorian ballads and Miss D.'s story are unmissable. The two correspond on subjects such as unrequited love with a pinch of optimism that lost love will be restored, ungratified sexual urges, and even hostility towards the poor, when Miss D. sarcastically 'welcomes the people of Sydney, most of all the deserving poor' to a feast that will choke them all.³⁹⁶ Her giant wedding cake, if taken as a symbol of 'prosperity' unaffordable in its embellished form by the necessitous,³⁹⁷ is also a boastful display of her

³⁹³ Davies, "Vesalii Icones, Composer's Note."

³⁹⁴ Davies, "Miss Donnithorne's Maggot, Composer's Note."

³⁹⁵ Ronald Pearsall, *Victorian Popular Music* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1973), 89–95.

³⁹⁶ Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, 2-3.

³⁹⁷ Carol Wilson, "Wedding Cake: A Slice of History," *Gastronomica* 5, no. 2 (2005): 72.

high social rank. Furthermore, the sentimentality and style of Miss D., the honourable daughter of a 'Governor of the Mint and a Judge',³⁹⁸ are perceivable in the reference to Lange's *Blumenlied*.

Hinting at the deplorable features of Victorian music is not limited to the second song. 'Her Dump' is close to a Victorian quadrille. A quadrille is generally performed 'in the quietest possible manner, without any display of steps "acquired" from the dancing mistress' and must be started by 'a gentleman of highest rank'.³⁹⁹ This alludes to the sexist, materialistic standards of the Victorian society and degrades the heroine. Imitations of Wagner and Mendelssohn's wedding music in 'Her Rant' could also be read along the same lines. The former was used at Queen Victoria's wedding and the latter at her daughter's. The glory and pride associated with such ceremonies illustrate Miss D.'s personality and the feast for which she was preparing. Additionally, the final song turns into 'a cheap tune',⁴⁰⁰ pointing to the emptiness and banality of all this grandeur. Miss D. is belittled; she is, in the end, a 'cheap' madwoman. Even when associating the character with the common traditions of 'Victorian music-hall' referenced in song seven, Davies denounces her directly by sarcastically asking, 'Could such a well-bred Victorian lady ever have visited such a common establishment?'⁴⁰¹ The poignancy of all this humiliation probably outweighs any laughter that can be induced by the character's behaviour.

Furthermore, Miss D. is not only demeaned by the music, but her appearance also stigmatises her as a classic nineteenth-century madwoman.

³⁹⁸ Stow, "Miss Donnithorne's Maggot, Historical Note."

³⁹⁹ Elizabeth Aldrich, *From the Ballroom to Hell: Grace and Folly in Nineteenth-Century Dance* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 114.

⁴⁰⁰ Davies, "Miss Donnithorne's Maggot, Composer's Note."

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

Mary Thomas was dressed in white in the premiere of this work, as were many successive Miss Donnithornes, including Jaroslava Maxova, Anne-May Krüger, Stacie Dunlop, and Alison Wells in Peter Richardson's film, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot* (2013). According to Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, the colour white was 'inextricably' connected to 'female vulnerability and madness'.⁴⁰² These scholars, whose research from 1979 follows in the wake of other studies from the same decade, argue that femaleness was characterised by the 'desire to be beautiful and "frail"', to the extent that women were not only defined as 'sickly', but were actually encouraged to be 'ill'.⁴⁰³

Elaine Showalter's extensive study on Victorian England also shows that madness in general was considered 'a female malady' and a thick line was drawn between 'feminine madness' and 'masculine rationality'. Showalter, writing in the 80s, also continues the 70s discourse of criticising the forged link between madness and femininity. She focuses on social inequality and sexist diagnosis systems as the main causes in the equation of femininity with insanity. She also argues that the situation was worse for unmarried women. Their unsatisfied sexual desires made them supposedly even more susceptible to mental illness.⁴⁰⁴

The symbol of purity, the colour white, was often used to represent this untouched madwoman. Moreover, stamping women with whiteness was not limited to clothing. It was discernible in attributing to them a 'marble forehead', pale face, and light skin hue as well. Aside from virginity and insanity, white also suggested a 'passive', 'submissive', 'unawakened character' with no 'desire for

⁴⁰² Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, 32, 615–19.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 54.

⁴⁰⁴ Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980*, 2–4, 61.

self-gratification'.⁴⁰⁵ Miss D.'s use of the phrases 'the white lady of silvered Sydney town', 'apple pale', and 'stark mad in white satin' to describe herself can thus be thought of as indications of her docility.⁴⁰⁶ Never furious with her lover or angry at societal expectations, she is utterly unassertive throughout the piece. The lack of violence probably plays into this interpretation as well. With white also being the colour of the dead,⁴⁰⁷ she might be considered almost non-existent. It is not surprising that scholars such as Burden and McGregor discern a tragic demise at the end, even though such an ending is not specified in the work.⁴⁰⁸

Overall, Miss D. seems to be the assemblage of all the cultural conventions regarding female insanity. She is represented by the era's music and even identifies with Ophelia, the prototype of a madwoman in nineteenth-century imagination. Quoting Ophelia—also always dressed in white⁴⁰⁹—in song three, Miss D. sings: 'They say the owl was a baker's daughter. Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be', possibly pointing to the jilting that came instead of the promised marriage.⁴¹⁰ Her madness is thus confirmed by her positioning in the tradition of insane females in white. The disconcerted metronome clicks dominating this number also portray it musically.

The heroine seems to be additionally stereotyped by her confinement. The concept of imprisonment in the Victorian era was dissimilar for males and

⁴⁰⁵ Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, 32, 615–19.

⁴⁰⁶ Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, 4-5, 14.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 620.

⁴⁰⁸ Burden, "A Foxtrot to the Crucifixion: The Music Theatre of Peter Maxwell Davies," 63; McGregor, "Walking the Line: Deconstructing Identity, Suicide and Betrayal in Peter Maxwell Davies's *Mr Emmet Takes a Walk*," 321.

⁴⁰⁹ Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980*, 11.

⁴¹⁰ Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, 14.

females. For the latter, Gilbert and Gubar argue, it was more 'actual and social', as in literally not leaving the house. For the former, it was more 'metaphysical and metaphorical', as in imagining being entombed alive.⁴¹¹ Davies follows the same cliché a century later. Though also socially marginalised, imprisonment is less physical for George III compared to Miss D. The King is the only character in *Eight Songs* who remains free to move about on stage. He mostly feels confined in his mind; in this sense, his confinement is more abstract than actual, more psychological than physical. Miss D., on the contrary, is literally locked up in her house, 'a real, self-willed, self burial'.⁴¹² She additionally imprisons herself in her wedding dress. This two-fold, self-imposed captivity is a testimony to her impotence, a quality that she also displays through her voice.

Miss D.'s vocal performance is a mixture of conventional operatic singing and extended techniques. Her *bel canto* delivery is reminiscent of the virtuosity of nineteenth-century insane heroines such as Lucia in Gaetano Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835) or Elvira in Vincenzo Bellini's *I Puritani* (1835). It plays into the musical conventions of madwomen and puts Miss D. on display as a member of a category. Furthermore, this beautification can be seen as an attempt to mesmerise the groom, to win him—or even us, the audience—over. Borrowing Mladen Dolar's term, it can be said that Miss D.'s voice is 'fetishised' in this process.⁴¹³

Dolar suggests that the voice can be 'the source of aesthetic admiration' as well as 'the vehicle of meaning', but in neither case is it really heard. It is only

⁴¹¹ Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, 86–87.

⁴¹² Used to describe Emily Dickinson's situation, *ibid.*, 87.

⁴¹³ Mladen Dolar, "The Object Voice," in *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects*, eds. Renata Salecl and Slavoj Žižek (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 15.

'overheard'.⁴¹⁴ He explains that if meaning is the main concern, the corporeality of the voice is overlooked, and if aesthetic quality is emphasised, fetishisation occurs.⁴¹⁵ Miss D. engages in lyrical delivery especially towards the end of the piece, where, based on Davies's instructions, she is trying to be 'seductive and operatic'.⁴¹⁶ This is essentially the heroine's struggle for recognition by her lover, using her voice as a device. But he is only a vision, a fantasy; he is not there to be mesmerised. The vocal fetishisation and the character's showing off to a non-existent spectator point to her dementia. It is also an indication of her inability and failure, because, considering the absence of the betrothed, the voice is virtually powerless for the purpose she wants to use it. The voices that she creates to deceive herself, and the ones that she presumably hears in her head, further emphasise the pitiable aspect of her personality and the futility of her actions. In light of this powerlessness, many of her remarks and behaviours become much less comic than they were considered thus far.

Paradoxically, the 'abnormal' or unusual side of Miss D.'s voice also works towards bringing her closer to the image of the amenable Victorian madwoman. Miss D.'s madness has been viewed as gentler than George's because of the less shocking nature of her vocal line.⁴¹⁷ While the direct linking of madness to vocality is problematic, the less extreme vocal line does portray the character as less assertive. For George III, extremes of voice were means of expression that channelled out his inner tension. What can one make of Miss D.'s extended vocal technique? Firstly, her voice is not as extreme as the King's and does not

⁴¹⁴ Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 4. Dolar also discusses a third feature, which is beyond my present scope.

⁴¹⁵ Dolar, "The Object Voice," 15.

⁴¹⁶ Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, 46.

⁴¹⁷ Burden, "A Foxtrot to the Crucifixion: The Music Theatre of Peter Maxwell Davies," 57.

break as many boundaries. Her sporadic squawks and screeches are analogous to outbursts of a repressed soul, but are not powerful enough to provide relief or freedom. In the fourth number she sings: 'the beetle and her maid gnaw on their stolen moons, gnaw on their indigo moons'.⁴¹⁸ On the lyric of 'moon' and 'gnaw' Davies evokes a thick, exaggerated vibrato from the vocalist, guttural and animalistic in timbre, magnifying the importance of the notes by oscillating their pitch, fluctuating them beyond the usual bounds of a traditional vibrato. The vocalist delivers these words in an unrestrained, coarse manner. There is also a rough downward glissando on the word 'gnaw'. Apart from the mentioned words, the entire line is sung conventionally (Ex. 3.1).

Example 3.1. Peter Maxwell Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, Section Z
(Boosey & Hawkes, 1996).

♩ = 84

3.the bee - tle and her maid gnaw on their sto - len moons,

4 GNAW on their in - di - go

7 moons,

increase vibr. decrease vibr.

f pp

The not-so-radical articulation of only two words resembles an unsuccessful attempt of an unauthoritative voice unable to release the emotional load. She manifests rising distress gnawing at her, rather than any

⁴¹⁸ Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, 23.

release through the sounds she makes. A similar effect is created in the same number by the multiple repetitions of the word ‘cake’ (Ex. 3.2). The last attempt ends in a high falsetto scream, but it is her struggle that preponderates. Her obsession with ‘the moon’ in this song also leads to a four-time repetition at the end of the song, as a result of which she becomes ‘moonstruck’.⁴¹⁹

Example 3.2. Peter Maxwell Davies, *Miss Donnithorne’s Maggot*, Section Y (Boosey & Hawkes, 1996).

The musical score for Section Y of *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot* is presented in three staves. The first staff (measures 9-10) is in 2/8 time, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It features a melody with triplets and a dynamic marking of *f* (forte). The lyrics are "2. On the ter - ri - ble". The second staff (measures 10-12) continues the melody with triplets and a dynamic marking of *p* (piano). The lyrics are "sea - cliffs wild with night-shade and i - vy where my cake! cake!". The third staff (measures 13-14) features a melody with triplets and a dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo). The lyrics are "cake! cake! cake! cake! cake! cake! cake! beams".

Not extreme enough to aid in alleviating pressure or showcase an extraordinary skilful delivery, and also not ordinary, consistent, and steady enough to be considered sane, her voice can only be symptomatic of her mental imbalance. Her *bel canto* delivery, constantly interrupted by unusual vocalisations, does not even demonstrate the prowess of a typical prima donna. Catherine Clément, despite all her criticism of the image of women in traditional

⁴¹⁹ Davies's instructions read: 'becoming all moonstruck'.

opera, acknowledges the power of their voices. Of Mélisande's voice in Claude Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1091) she writes: 'this unyielding voice, this pythian voice [...] this voice drives Golaud crazy, this voice that speaks only of itself'.⁴²⁰ Miss D.'s interrupted *bel canto* certainly lacks this power and agency, and her extreme techniques are not frequent and radical enough to provide relief or manifest dexterity.

The general portrayal of Miss D. and her less daring vocal attitude is an obstacle to her self-imprisonment being perceived as purposeful and meaningful, possibly a sort of objection to the norms of the outside world—an anti-establishment rather than anti-social gesture. Alan Shockley understands the general perception of Miss D. as mad in relation not to her sexual obsession, but rather to her virginity and her abstinence from consumerism.⁴²¹ The piece though, does not seem to provide sufficient ground for such an interpretation.

Miss D. ultimately symbolises the weak and vulnerable women who are too mentally confused to have a voice that shows any sign of strength. She refers to herself in 'Her Rant' as 'a female afraid, squeaking out so enticing'.⁴²² The music associated with her, her appearance, her confinement, and the weakness of her character leave little room for power and authority to surface. Miss D., a virgin woman who has gone mad as a result of lost love, has been typified as a nineteenth-century madwoman and is constantly disdained and

⁴²⁰ Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, 113.

⁴²¹ Shockley, "Sick Fantasies: Insanity, Abjection and Extended Vocal Techniques in Eight Songs for a Mad King and Miss Donnithorne's Maggot/Texts and Techniques of Madness" (presented at A Celebration of the Music of Peter Maxwell Davies, St. Martin's College of Performing Arts, Lancaster, 2000), accessed February 27, 2014, http://www.maxopus.com/resources_detail.aspx?key=51.

⁴²² Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, 31.

humiliated. However, the character occupies such a firm position in the tradition of nineteenth-century madwomen that this whole tradition can be thought of as being scorned by the authors. Furthermore, the composer goes so far in stereotyping this protagonist, to fully reject the entire tradition, that she is portrayed as having the typical feminine disorder of hysteria.

The Feminised Label of Hysteria

The consideration of hysteria as a female malady mainly goes back to the Victorian era. The disease's association with femaleness, though, was particularly strengthened with the advent of Freud's psychoanalysis. Freud's theory remained influential throughout the twentieth century, and criticisms of the hysteria-femininity link in the 60s and 70s were usually responses to claims that go back to him. Therefore, it is necessary to review his ideas to gain an in-depth understanding of the 70s context. Furthermore, the lead character of *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot* exhibits symptoms that strongly resemble Freud's description of signs of hysteria. I will be referring to his arguments and how they relate to the protagonist throughout this section.

Freud regards 'a psychic trauma, a conflict of affects and [...] a disturbance in the sphere of sexuality' as definite determinants of hysteria.⁴²³

Highlighting sexuality even further, he declares:

I do not merely mean that the energy of sexual instinct makes a contribution to the forces that maintain the pathological manifestations (the symptoms). I mean expressly to assert that that contribution is the most important and only constant source of energy of the neurosis.⁴²⁴

⁴²³ Sigmund Freud, *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (1905. Reprint, New York: Touchstone, 1997), 18.

⁴²⁴ Sigmund Freud, "The Sexual Aberrations," in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. James Strachey (1910. Reprint, London: Martino Publishing, 2011), 42.

In hysterics, sexual wishes remain unfulfilled and the libido (the pleasure striving) is not gratified.⁴²⁵ The more controversial aspect of Freud's theory lies in his assertion that hysteria is more likely to develop in women than men because its determinants 'are intimately related to the essence of femininity'. He believes that this higher susceptibility is due to women's 'wave of repression at puberty', at which point they start to embrace femininity by 'put[ing] aside their childish masculinity'. The change in a woman's leading erotogenic zone from clitoris to vagina, as opposed to the constancy of the masculine zone, the penis, is also a crucial factor in women's predisposition to hysteria.⁴²⁶

According to Freud and Joseph Breuer, a psychical trauma is central to hysteria and 'hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences'. Hysterical phenomena are tied to an inability to respond to the distressing event in the form of words or deeds. The patient, often unaware of the connection between the experience and the attacks, relives and hallucinates about the disturbing incident.⁴²⁷ This illness, which does not always involve a complete repression of normal consciousness, is usually accompanied with motor phenomena such as 'kicking about and waving the arms and legs'. Other symptoms include shortness of breath, stammering, hoarseness or complete loss of voice, depression and despair, unsociability, severe coughs, and amnesia.⁴²⁸ Even though insane at the time of the attack, 'as we all are in dreams', Freud and

⁴²⁵ Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, 116, 260.

⁴²⁶ Freud, "The Transformations of Puberty," in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans James Strachey (1910. Reprint, London: Martino Publishing, 2011), 99.

⁴²⁷ Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, 3–9.

⁴²⁸ Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, 15–16, 126;

Freud, *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, 15–17.

Breuer recognised among hysterics 'people of the clearest intellect, strongest will, greatest character and highest critical power'.⁴²⁹

I shall not look at Miss Donnithorne as a case study of hysteria, but the work does seem to contain rich allusions to the disease. Needless to say, the representation of a character as hysteric is not derogatory per se. The condition does not automatically denote foolishness or incompetence. Nevertheless, selecting hysteria as a madwoman's psychosis is prone to being interpreted as prejudiced, for the disease has long been falsely associated with females. This is an even more sensitive issue with respect to the portrayal of Victorian women. However, the most substantial problem in Miss D.'s depiction is the elimination of all but a very few signs of insight or vision from the hysteric character's personality. The solid connection made between her mental state and sexuality also strongly characterises her condition as feminine. This is noteworthy because in *Eight Songs* madness is not so tightly linked to the male protagonist's sexuality. With all that said, the piece cannot be reduced to a regressive account of feminine madness. As stated, this sort of lampooning is intended to more broadly criticise the historical representation of hysteric women. Miss D.'s line when saying 'Artists: canst paint a dolorous cry?', under the instructions 'challenging, mockingly', seems to be a sarcastic allusion to this bias in portrayal.⁴³⁰ This could also be viewed as one of the very few insightful remarks the character makes, representing her awareness of this historical inadequacy in representation.

Miss D.'s source of instability is a psychic trauma and an ungratified libido. Her obsession with the humiliating experience is reminiscent of the constant reliving of the distressing incident that occurs in hysteric patients. Additionally,

⁴²⁹ Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, 6–13.

⁴³⁰ Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, 20.

her wedding cake is used in the piece as a central image for the link between neurosis and sexuality. Clearly, cakes are a common element of all weddings; thus, scrutinising the manner in which Miss D.'s cake is treated in relation to the story, the specific prominence given to it, and its sexual connotations is necessary to prove plausible a reading such as the one I am offering.

Miss Donnithorne's Maggot begins with Miss D. emerging from inside the wedding cake. The cake, although decaying, is intact, just as the character is untouched but aging. This is as Davies demanded: 'there should ideally be a set containing a huge wedding cake in an advanced *state of decay* [...]. The mezzo-soprano playing Miss Donnithorne must be dressed in a period wedding gown with veil, also in a *state of decay*'.⁴³¹ Viewers first encounter the protagonist when she emerges from inside the cake, and this tends to define her in terms of her virginity. This virginity has also become a distinguishing feature through the white dress. Thus, it is certainly within reason for the audience to connect the mental imbalance of this abandoned, old bride in a torn, white gown, who comes out of the emblem of virginity, with her sexual deprivation.

The musicians, who constantly remind Miss D. of the wedding day and portray her mood and mental state, are also placed inside the cake.⁴³² These representatives of her memory and psyche are symbolically linked to her virginity by their position. From a psychoanalytic perspective, virginity is linked to the female erotogenic zone. In this sense, Miss D.'s psyche and mental state (represented by instrumentalists) are rooted in her sexuality (represented by the wedding cake). As mentioned, the firm connection between mental state and

⁴³¹ In Hall, *Music Theatre in Britain 1960-1975*, 165. Italics in the original.

⁴³² Davies notes this in his preface to the facsimile manuscript score. In Whittall, "Miss Donnithorne's Maggot by Peter Maxwell Davies," 517.

sexuality is a crucial Freudian doctrine about hysterics. Thus, this stage direction is in itself evocative of hysteria.

Additionally, cutting the cake, although denoting a joined ritual, has the sexual implication of 'plunging the knife [...] to break through the "virginal white" outer shell'.⁴³³ The 'virginal white' of Miss D.'s cake is untouched, as she remains a virgin, but its decomposition implies the gradual destruction of her erotogenic zone and indicates its uselessness. As the place that the musicians inhabit, this decay could also be taken as depicting the deterioration of her memory and mental state. The match is telling: the shattering of the cake, shredding of the dress, wearing out of the erotogenic zone, and the decline of mental health. Miss D.'s madness is indeed feminine.

In addition to the setting, further evidence of the comparability of the cake and the female erotogenic zone can be found elsewhere in the piece. The cake is *the place* that contains the character at the beginning and the instrumentalists throughout the work. Miss D. also occasionally regards it as a territory, an area: 'On the doorsills of my cake', 'On the windowsills of my cake', 'In the strong vaults of my cake', and so on. It even becomes a sexual zone in 'Her Rant', when she sings:

In the exercise-yard of my cake
never a sentry passes;
the guards have died too soon
to see out my time.
Yet somebody knocks, someone knocks, or was it the southerly?
Somebody hacks back the bolts with his hands and advances, on
me all womanly.⁴³⁴

Miss D.'s illusion of the lover's erotic approach points to her unfulfilled sex drive. The knocking occurring on the cake's door while it is left unguarded signifies the

⁴³³ Simon Charsley, "The Wedding Cake: History and Meanings," *Folklore* 99, no. 2 (1988): 106–7.

⁴³⁴ Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, 29–30.

cake as the sexual zone of intercourse. In this sense, likening the cake to a prison connotes that the character is captive of her sexual instinct. The sexual deprivation, here and elsewhere, also demonstrates the extent of Miss D.'s loneliness and melancholy, echoing the desolation and depression symptomatic of hysteria.

Throughout Miss D.'s struggle with her trauma, the cake is frequently invoked, theatrically emphasised, musically embellished, and pictorially described. The word 'cake' is always musically highlighted. It is sung melismatically and in a scream-like fashion in almost every instance. The most notable instance of its accentuation occurs in the middle of the second song. This section has been identified by Hall as both the composer and librettist being 'comic'.⁴³⁵ Miss D. sings:

She wept like a xylophone, she laughed like a tree.
"Alack and alas," she said, "who would not change with me?
To have to herself alone such a fine tower of cake
Where the seaweed does intertwine with the precious coral
snake".⁴³⁶

The protagonist seems to say the opposite of what she feels, namely that no one would in fact like to be in her place. Ironically pointing to her misery in third person, she praises her decaying cake as a 'fine tower' and obsessively repeats the word 'laughed'. Connotations of the use of 'snake' in Stow's writing suggest that the word may be 'a metaphor for Eliza's maggot, the demon that rises up to bite her'.⁴³⁷ In *Eight Songs*, too, the protagonist's ruined Kingdom was characterised as snakes.

However, by referring to herself in the third person, Miss D. could be taken as the representative of the operatic and literary women gone mad as a result of

⁴³⁵ Hall, *Music Theatre in Britain 1960-1975*, 165.

⁴³⁶ Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, 7-9.

⁴³⁷ Richards, "Max & Mick: The Partnership of Peter Maxwell Davies and Randolph Stow," 35.

an emotional trauma. This is one of the instances where these stereotypes of madwomen are problematised. Miss D.'s use of rhetorical devices to make rather ridiculous comparisons, sometimes viewed as comic, is in fact mocking the type of portrayal that women of her kind usually receive. The sarcasm with which Miss D. takes delight at her situation suggests a criticism of the general conception of female insanity of which she is the symbol. This reference could also be seen as a case of black humour.

Additionally, this section of song two (starting at figure H) seems to present a hysteric attack. The climax is when Miss D. articulates the word 'cake' in a rapid roulade of thirty-two notes. This violent outburst, redolent of stuttering at a time of a neurotic attack, is accompanied by the violin's bowing across the bridge, adding a harsh, high squeaky sound. Both Miss D. and the violin rise in dynamics from piano to fortissimo in a hysteric scream. The marimba provides accompaniment with tremolos in a similar escalation in dynamics, giving way to the tam-tam's electronic howl (Ex. 3.3). The combined effect is nervousness and loss of control. This is also observable in the character's multiple repetitions of 'laughed', 'tree', 'the seaweeds', and 'coral'.

Example 3.3. Peter Maxwell Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, Sections I&J (Boosey & Hawkes, 1996).

The musical score for Example 3.3, Peter Maxwell Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, Sections I&J, is presented in three staves: Percussion (Perc.), Voice, and Violin (Vln.).

- Percussion (Perc.):** The Marimba (Mar.) part begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic, marked *freely*. It transitions to fortissimo (*ff*) and then fortississimo (*sfz*). The Tam-tam part is marked *f* and includes the instruction "Tam-tam (scraped, to give 'electronic' howl)".
- Voice:** The vocal line features a rapid roulade of thirty-two notes for the word "cake", marked *freely* and *sim.* (simile). The lyrics include "cake (kay-ay-ay----)", "where the", "sea - weed, the", and "off!". Dynamics range from piano (*p*) to fortissimo (*ff*).
- Violin (Vln.):** The violin part includes the instruction "across bridge" and dynamics from piano (*p*) to fortissimo (*ff*). It also features a pizzicato (*pizz.*) section marked *mf*.

On the word 'cake' Miss D. is also instructed to tear bits of paper cakes and throw them up and about, moving her hands at each note. The rapid hand movement, which in effect must take place thirty-two times, is comparable to the loss of control over motor activity in hysteric patients. (Miss D.'s other erotic arm and leg gestures, aside from their sexual significance and being examples of manifestations of her immersion in fantasy, can be read along the same lines). Additionally, the marimba's tremolo alludes to the hysteric's trembling during an attack. Here, the character's frenzied demeanour and her frantic voice, resembling hysteria, are again tightly connected to the uncut cake, the icon of virginity.

The segment (figure G) leading to this hysterical part is wordless and includes only the piano and cello. Here, fast-moving sextuplets, sudden emphases created by sforzandos in the cello, and sustained, loud piano chords create an anxious atmosphere. It is only at the end of this section that uproar turns into gloom when a single chord in the piano gradually fades out and the cello plays a soft portamento from G to the F above (Ex. 3.4). The discussed hysteric section when Miss D. starts singing follows figure G. It is dominated by violin and marimba. The piano only holds down the sustaining pedal on a chord that had started at the end of rehearsal section G and is now barely audible. The cello's sound has also completely vanished. Given that the players demonstrate the character's psychological condition, it can be deduced that her mental state is represented first by piano and cello and then by violin and percussion. The change in players thus alludes to a change in her psychical state. It is at exactly this point that vocal and behavioural symptoms of hysteria begin to surface. In other words, the instrumental switch marks the onset of hysteria.

The whole process of the neurotic attack is enacted musically. In section G, Miss D. is silent and absorbed in her thoughts. She is contemplating and unconsciously reliving her wedding day. Piano and cello portray her psychical state, as signs of hysteria such as angst and depression, having no vocal outlet, build up. A situation follows in which the character is seized by memories of the traumatic day. Visibly agitated, she keeps repeating words and tears papers, accompanied with hand movement. She refers repeatedly to the wedding cake that was to be cut, the virginity that was to be lost. She articulates a psychical change—a hysteric attack that is musically corroborated by the switch from piano and cello to violin and percussion. Although my interpretation might be a controversial one, there can be no doubt that the cake receives specific importance due to the unique way in which it is musically represented. Miss D.'s psychological state is sexually defined.

Example 3.4. Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, Section G (Boosey & Hawkes, 1996).

The musical score for Section G of *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot* is presented in two systems. The first system is marked 'G Lento ♩ = c.72' and features a Piano (Pno.) part with a forte (f) dynamic and a Violoncello (Vc.) part with a forte (f) dynamic. The Piano part includes a tempo marking 'crisp, yet with much pedal' and a dynamic marking 'ff'. The Violoncello part includes a dynamic marking 'ff' and a tempo marking 'sfz > mf'. The second system continues the Piano and Violoncello parts, with the Piano part marked 'p' and the Violoncello part marked 'p'. The Violoncello part includes a dynamic marking 'p' and a tempo marking 'sfz > mf'. The score is written in 2/4 time and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

But Miss D. is not just hysteric; she is also insubstantial and incompetent. The form of this song, a Victorian ballad, points to her shallow character. Moreover, she goes on to sing: 'till full like a spider's egg grew her lovely moony face/and happy spiders chased all up and down the place'.⁴³⁸ Following the nineteenth-century tradition, similitude to spiders symbolises either being doomed or being the messenger of 'the doom of sterility'.⁴³⁹ Miss D. views herself as one of those old virgins on whose bodies spiders dwell. Simone de Beauvoir describes the association:

The curse is in their very flesh, this flesh that is object for no subject, that no desire has made desirable, that has bloomed and wilted without finding a place in the world of men [...] Of a forty-year-old, still beautiful, woman presumed to be a virgin, I heard a man say with great vulgarity: "It's full of cobwebs in there".⁴⁴⁰

Miss D. is stereotyped according to yet another misogynist Victorian prejudice. She is a familiar cultural construct, unable to rise above the conventions of her time. With wisdom removed by the form of the song and the spider allusion, her hysteria is of a pathetic kind.

Furthermore, any potential agency, power to protest, or intellect seem to be removed from Miss D.'s condition. Even when she appears to break conventions, it only attests to her loss of control. For instance, in the final number she displays a brief moment of insight into her condition with language that is not expected from a respectable Victorian lady:

In the strong-vaults of my cake
It is not blood on the ingots. It is bat's piss.
And bats that soar towards the moon
break their stupid fucking necks on the glass.
I wear this bat in my hair. It portends, they say,
a disastrous, a devastating passion.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁸ Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, 12-13.

⁴³⁹ Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, 619, 632.

⁴⁴⁰ De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 209.

⁴⁴¹ Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, 43-45.

The use of this language may seem a protest against the norms of Victorian society for proper speech, but a review of the preceding song proves otherwise. In the seventh number, Miss D. is hesitant to use unfitting words when narrating the story of the boys who comment on her virginity:

He said to Billy: 'They go mad if they don't get it.
They need *****,' he said, 'to keep them right'.
Such things they say, a lady could not repeat them.⁴⁴²

Her weakness and instability are manifested in both her words and her singing. Though furious at the boys who humiliate her, she cannot help but adore them:

Monsters! Life-takers! And yet....
Dear boys. Such dear boys. I think I shall adopt a little boy.
A little. Post-captain. Of the Royal Navy. With a gold moustache.⁴⁴³

The alternation between conventional and extreme vocality is also most prominent here, revealing the delicacy of her mental state. She is too frail to withstand the intense emotional distress.

Having complied with society's standards of politeness even when imbalanced, she completely breaks down in the following (final) song, when her hallucination peaks and she is engrossed in a sexual fantasy: 'I am virgin. O chevalier, I come'.⁴⁴⁴ Inappropriate language is used in a state governed by excessive emotion. She is thus more likely to be completely out of her mind rather than protesting with her choice of words. Her behaviour is so much controlled by her sex drive that she leaves the stage to go to the bridal chamber. The potential 'critical power' of hysterics seems to be removed from her representation.

⁴⁴² Ibid., 35-36.

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 36-37.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 47.

It appears that the few supposedly wise or critical instances are not truly insightful. Even Miss D.'s avidity for books, present in the original story, does not get much recognition in the piece. The only point at which she displays her knowledge is in song three:

Under the leaves of this dark Domain
I shall speak by heart
all the words of Shakespeare.⁴⁴⁵

Yet, her actual quotations from Shakespeare remain limited to one from Ophelia, the archetypal madwoman.

Another major sign of Miss D.'s hysteria are her illusions, portrayed most strongly in the last number. 'Her Reel' begins with a rhythmic melody in flute over forte violin pizzicato chords. The sound of cymbals, added shortly afterwards, creates a nervous atmosphere, possibly denoting her disturbed memory of the wedding night. The Bosun's whistle sounds subsequently, suggesting a naval ship. Most likely only an illusion, the whistle gets Miss D. commenting: 'Hark! Hark, hark! His voice! The bridegroom calls from the chamber. Hark! Hark! Hark!'⁴⁴⁶ Obsession, evocative of hysteric fixation, is conveyed by word repetition in the text together with ostinato figures in violin (groups of semiquavers played prestissimo) and the piano's bass line (staccato chords). The piano's right hand plays semibreves, prolonged against the staccato left hand by holding down the sostenuto pedal. These long notes, considered independent of their surroundings, have a pointillist quality. They fall like drops of rain on the repetitive background and disturb it. Interruption and fragmentation are intensified when the clarinet comes in after a short gap and plays with 'intermittent varied pause', and a crescendo on each note.⁴⁴⁷ The

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 16.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 38-39.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 39.

protagonist's thought process disintegrates as she imagines the groom calling. Davies even demands for her singing to be 'maidenly and coy'⁴⁴⁸ in order to emphasise the scope of her erroneous perception. Davies's instructions are in fact strongly aimed at highlighting the character's fantasy. In 'Her Rant', when Miss D. claps her hands, pretending that it is a knock at the door, Davies writes, 'One part of Miss D. knows it was only her handclap'. A short while later he indicates: 'it is a game no longer, Miss D. believes the reality'. Immediately emphasising the conflicting nature of this decision, he adds: 'scared, not daring to believe the reality'.⁴⁴⁹

Miss D.'s fantasy escalates as the last number unfolds. Towards the end, she hears the whistle again. Davies specifies that it might only be the sound of the wind.⁴⁵⁰ Immediately after, she makes a reference to Mendelssohn's march to marimba accompaniment, which imitate the march's harmony (Ex. 3.5). Miss D. responds to the illusory call of the groom with her voice, and the ensemble portray this fantasy with marimba. The sense of loss and intense longing bring about this delusion by a small, not to mention false, trace of the beloved. She even tries to enthrall and impress him by singing 'seductive[ly] and operatic[ally]' and emphasising her chastity: 'I come! I come! O heart I am faithful as you are. I am perilous as pear-flower that falls at a touch, I am virgin'.⁴⁵¹

I recognise this section as mainly revealing the character's imbalance. She hallucinates hysterically to the extent that she is completely unaware of her surroundings, fantasising cluelessly. The very use of celebratory wedding music

⁴⁴⁸ Davies's instructions in Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, 38.

⁴⁴⁹ Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, 30.

⁴⁵⁰ Davies asks: 'Is it the wind through the trees?' In Davies, "Miss Donnithorne's Maggot, Composer's Note."

⁴⁵¹ Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, 46.

in this moment of intense turmoil dramatises the whole situation. It functions to mock the character's wishful thinking and dismiss her as sentimentally deluded. Desperately dreaming of being received, Miss D. revels with confetti by the thought of joining the 'chevalier', as she calls him. Though the sexual element might create laughter, I see it as generally functioning to emphasise Miss D.'s misery and scorning her, hence giving the piece a tragic air.

Example 3.5. Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, Sections H2&I2 (Boosey & Hawkes, 1996).

The musical score for Example 3.5, Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, Sections H2&I2, is presented for measures 12 to 15. The score is in B-flat major (one flat) and 4/4 time, with a tempo of ♩ = 72. The instrumentation includes Piccolo (Picc.), Clarinet (Cl.), Percussion (Perc.), Voice, Violin I (Vln. I), and Violoncello (Vc.). The voice part has lyrics: "I come! I come! O heart, I am faith-ful as you are I am". The percussion part includes "Bosun's whistle" and "Marimba". The voice part has tempo markings: "listens entranced take time pp", "f", "f", "seductive, operatic". The score also includes dynamic markings like "p", "pp", "f", and "f".

The heroine's delusion becomes progressively unmanageable and her derision through music continues. Immediately after Mendelssohn's march, the eighth movement of Oliver Messiaen's *Turangalila-Symphonie* (1946–48),

'Développement d'amour' (Development of Love), is imitated.⁴⁵² That is, after Miss D.'s 'ecstatically rush[ing] into his imagined arm'⁴⁵³ we hear 'a work that celebrates on a colossal scale the union of male and female in erotic love'.⁴⁵⁴ This is probably the climax of her delusion, an imagined fantasy of intercourse. Miss D. vocalises and dances off the stage, as the Bosun's whistle is heard again. This is 'the sensation of orgasm as likened to death', a *petite mort*.⁴⁵⁵ This could be another reason for characterising the finale as madness ending in death.

Miss D. is portrayed as mad but she does not display the wisdom that Foucault believes the mad could have (on a different level from the sane). As Hall mentions, unlike the King, Miss D. is unable to reflect on her situation. She does not distinguish reality from dream in the finale of the piece.⁴⁵⁶ In the last song she even remarks, 'I wear this bat in my hair. It portends they say, a disastrous, a devastating passion', and is instructed to enjoy the word 'passion'.⁴⁵⁷ She is commenting on her destiny, but wants to enjoy her fantasy. According to Venn, she ends up in a state of 'intoxication' in the final scene,⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵² Williams, "Madness in the Music Theatre Works of Peter Maxwell Davies," 89.

It is worth mentioning that Davies was influenced by Messiaen, as he attended some of his lectures, though never directly studying with him. He was particularly familiar with *Turangalila-Symphonie* through Goehr. Davies also chose to work on Indian music for his thesis as a result of Messiaen's influence, who often used Hindu rhythms in his works.

⁴⁵³ Davies, "Miss Donnithorne's Maggot, Composer's Note."

⁴⁵⁴ Williams, "Madness in the Music Theatre Works of Peter Maxwell Davies," 89.

⁴⁵⁵ "Petite Mort," in *Oxford English Dictionary*, eds. William Craigie, James Murray, and James Simpson, accessed January 18, 2016, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/260928?redirectedFrom=la+petite+mort&>.

⁴⁵⁶ Hall, *Music Theatre in Britain 1960-1975*, 166–67.

⁴⁵⁷ Davies, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, 45.

⁴⁵⁸ Venn, "Maxwell Davies: Miss Donnithorne's Maggot; Eight Songs for a Mad King," 80.

and as Burden states, she presumably warmly receives death because she is deluded by the fantasy that the beloved is anticipating her arrival.⁴⁵⁹

The focus of the piece seems to mostly be Miss D.'s sexual longing and its connection to her hysteria. She is never furious with the betrothed; there are only complaints and desires. Her fantasies of having a companion are always erotic. Instead of blood resulting from first-time intercourse, this abandoned woman's cake, her erotogenic zone, is covered with bat urine. She is deprived and has thus gone mad. Miss D. does not touch the cake, as if she believes the long-held superstition that 'a taste of the cake before the wedding means loss of the husband's love (while a piece of cake kept after the big day ensures his fidelity)'.⁴⁶⁰ Passive and submissive, she comes out of the emblem of virginity, lamenting her fate. Is this hysteric woman treated as fundamentally for display?

Georges Didi-Huberman, in his *Invention of Hysteria* (1982), traces Jean-Martin Charcot's use of photography to study hysterics in the Salpêtrière mental hospital. He argues that the constant photographing of patients not only caused them to fake their symptoms and led to the 'invention of hysteria', but also turned Salpêtrière into an 'image factory', 'a museum'. In this sense, the continual subjection of the patients to photography created a sort of 'museological authority of the sick body, the museological agency of its "observation": the figurative possibility of generalizing the case into a *tableau*'.⁴⁶¹ Could this interest in the image of the hysterical body or voice be governing Miss D.'s representation?

⁴⁵⁹ Burden, "A Foxtrot to the Crucifixion: The Music Theatre of Peter Maxwell Davies," 63.

⁴⁶⁰ Wilson, "Wedding Cake: A Slice of History," 69.

⁴⁶¹ Georges Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria* (London: MIT Press, 2003), 30. Italics in the original.

Miss D.'s appearance, behaviour, voice, and the music accompanying her seem to signify her as the victim of the same objectification procedure. We watch and pity this timid, unwise, and deranged heroine. If it is true that 'loss, bereavement, and absence trigger the work of the imagination and nourish it permanently as much as they threaten it and spoil it',⁴⁶² Miss D.'s representation seems to be ignoring the former aspect. The memory of the betrothed symbolised by the Bosun's whistle accompanies her very last utterances and haunts her to the final minute. She does not seem to gain 'greater knowledge' from this suffering—the kind of knowledge only available to and possessed by the wisest of individuals, those who have experienced 'terrifying worlds' with which others are unfamiliar.⁴⁶³ Her sorrow does not give her any strength or the desire to protest; she unassertively daydreams and complies. However, in this pitiable and sorry portrayal of Miss D., and in putting her so plainly on display, the creators of the piece probably intended to caricature the very nature of such representations.

Conclusion

Most scholars' assessments of *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot* fit the description of tragicomedy; it is a work that is neither fully a tragedy or a comedy, but has elements of both. While tragedy appears to play a major role, I am somewhat sceptical about the comicality. I see more mocking and scorning features in the work than humorous elements. The character is only comic

⁴⁶² Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 9.

⁴⁶³ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, eds. Karl Amerikas and Desmond M. Clarke, trans. Judith Norman, in *Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1886), 166.

because she is daft. It is in fact the absurdity of her situation that reduces the gravity of the piece.

Surprising as it may sound, and acknowledging that it is essentially impossible to argue that something is or is not funny, with so many researchers putting so much emphasis on humour, it is not unlikely that a bias exists in the scholarship on this piece. Aside from the practice of staging demented females in white costume, there has been a 'firmly enough established' tradition of considering madwomen clothed in white as amusing.⁴⁶⁴ Thus, the sight of a madwoman with unkempt hair in a ripped wedding dress might still cause laughter, or at least the expectation of something funny to emerge.

This tragic-comic classification might also be shaped by Davies's remark about Miss D.'s 'tragic wedding day' and Stow's intention to write a 'funny sequel'. As mentioned previously, the composer's and librettist's contradictory focuses could potentially create a tension between text and music. However, this does not seem to be the case. There is in fact no tension between text and music in any respect. In general, the text can be seen as the monologue of a weak, isolated, deranged character governed by her hallucinations. The music, not much differently, is a description of the mental state of a sentimental, passive madwoman fantasising about sexual union.

Madness in this piece is portrayed through fantasies. The nature of this fantasy is almost entirely sexual. This is observable in implicit and explicit sexual remarks in the text, erotic gestures, wedding music references, the musical and textual prominence of the wedding cake, and even the seductive nature of the heroine's operatic voice. All of these features also simultaneously portray the powerlessness of the protagonist and disdain her. Both text and

⁴⁶⁴ Mary Ann Smart, "The Silencing of Lucia," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 4, no. 2 (1992): 125.

music eventually dramatise the poignancy of Miss D.'s situation and deepen the sombre mood of the piece by humiliating her.

Miss D. is a pale, frail, and insane woman foolishly remaining loyal to an abandoning lover. She is the embodiment of all the nineteenth-century clichés about madwomen. The importance of gender cannot be overlooked in her representation. Many features of her madness—including its link to sexuality, passivity, sentimentality, and a lack of insight—are not present in George III's portrayal. The value of what the two characters desire also differentiates them. Miss D.'s yearning is overly romantic; it is linked to what has been lost, a nostalgia or a memory that is painful to the extent that elicits inaction. George III's yearning, on the other hand, is for dialogue; it is an active attempt to make contact with the ignorant society, stemming from wisdom. Although the theme of love-struck madness is often considered sentimental, it has great potential to create esteem and regard for the individual experiencing it. But we can hardly respect or admire Miss D. Indeed, the heroine's erotic passion seems cheap compared to the hero's struggle to communicate.

The sympathy and identification that Miss D. provokes has been a somewhat debatable topic. While the vulgar sexual elements creating humour make it difficult for Seabrook to feel compassion for the character, Williams views the less extreme vocal line, the simple and more lyrical musical language, and the lack of aggression as allowing some identification with her.⁴⁶⁵ I see Miss Donnithorne as sitting comfortably within the category of insane females before her, where, as Susan McClary describes, "the ravings of the madwoman will remain securely marked as radically "Other," so that the contagion will not

⁴⁶⁵ Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 149;

Williams, "Madness in the Music Theatre Works of Peter Maxwell Davies," 88–92.

spread'.⁴⁶⁶ The character is so stereotyped and humiliated and is so much on display that we can hardly identify with her. Yet, we are still able to sympathise and feel her sorrow to a certain extent. She even seems designed to provoke pity in the audience. As Clément asserts, we do suffer 'an agreeable little sorrow, scratching the surface of the soul to give it depth, without really hurting it!'⁴⁶⁷

The general effect of this piece is to create pity for the miserably inadequate and melancholic madwoman while also disdaining her life purpose and values. But the work can still be considered a protest without creating identification. In light of the intensification of women's rights movements during the 1970s, it seems reasonable to claim that disdaining Miss Donnithorne actually targets the conventions that she symbolises. Miss D. belongs to the tradition of women driven to madness by memory, a tradition that includes the protagonists of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Erwartung*, and Berio's *Recital I (for Cathy)* (1972).⁴⁶⁸ Miss D. could resemble the singer of Berio's piece in some ways. According to Metzger, the protagonist of *Recital I* places herself 'in a line of abandoned women' through musical quotations and 'gathers [the] chorus of hysterics around her, making their voices her own'.⁴⁶⁹ In a similar way that the protagonist of *Recital I* becomes the voice of mad and oppressed women by quoting them, Miss D. could be thought of as the representative of madwomen who have been stereotypically portrayed. In symbolising them, she also takes all the humiliation.

⁴⁶⁶ McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*, 86.

⁴⁶⁷ Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, 22. Stated with regard to the reception of operatic madwomen.

⁴⁶⁸ Metzger, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music*, 74.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 94–95.

Stow's claim that the work is an intentional slur meant to depict an unworthy and timorous woman could be a manifestation of his critique of the general representation of the likes of Miss D. Bearing in mind Davies's attitude towards Victorian music, the work's self-conscious Victorianism is also really the scorning of all the dogmas of that time with respect to madwomen. When speaking in third person, Miss D. symbolically takes the role of a representative, a spokesperson, who points to these traditional prejudices on behalf of all the objectified madwomen before her. The general over-stereotyping of this character also signifies that the mocking is directed at the stereotype itself.

Shockley points to a major bias underlined in the piece:

[Miss D.'s] incorporation of the overheard talk of boys (clearly stating that women's hyper-sexual drive is what drives them to insanity) and the text's complete saturation with sexual imagery all point to the age-old patriarchal view of female insanity: [...] a woman's insanity almost always originates in her sexual organs.⁴⁷⁰

It is in fact this masculinist stance that is the subject of contempt and ridicule in this piece.

How effectively the work challenges misconceptions about female insanity, or to which extent it actually intensifies the stigmas, could certainly be a domain for scholarly dispute. It is also imaginable that the authors misjudged the general assessment of the audience, namely that the clichés in the representation of women by men are instantly understood as unjust. If such interpretation does not take place, it would mean that the biases still prevail and extending the derision of the character to the tradition that she represents

⁴⁷⁰ Shockley, "Sick Fantasies: Insanity, Abjection and Extended Vocal Techniques in Eight Songs for a Mad King and Miss Donnithorne's Maggot/Texts and Techniques of Madness" (presented at A Celebration of the Music of Peter Maxwell Davies, St. Martin's College of Performing Arts, Lancaster, 2000), accessed February 27, 2014, http://www.maxopus.com/resources_detail.aspx?key=51.

cannot take place effectively. Whatever Davies's intention was and how successful he was in concretising it, his next approach to female insanity is fundamentally different. In *The Medium*, written some six years later, he is mainly focused on the madwoman as a unique individual rather than a cultural assemblage. Her personal experience is so crucial that he attempts to recreate it in the audiences' imagination. This piece is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Identity Transmutation and the Suspense of Madness in *The Medium*

Introduction

The Medium (1981), an unaccompanied monodrama for mezzo-soprano, had its premiere at the St Magnus Festival in Orkney. Although its titular character is 'a true descendant of the Mad King and Miss Donnithorne',⁴⁷¹ its story has no historical basis and is the pure outcome of Davies's own creative power. The viewers are also encouraged to make use of their imagination to form mental images of the events. The stage is unfurnished. There are no props or effects other than a chair on which the vocalist sits. 'To be most effective, the work should be performed to a small audience in fairly claustrophobic circumstances',⁴⁷² Davies specifies.

This piece, though highly demanding and intense, is not too shocking in terms of vocal techniques. The musical language, being frequently tonal with motivic repetitions, is in general less complicated than the composer's two previous music theatre works on madness-related themes. Relying on Mary Thomas's technical ability for the most part, *The Medium* is among the pieces specifically written for her by Davies. Mike Seabrook describes it as 'probably the stiffest test of her great gifts'.⁴⁷³

Thomas had made a name for herself long before collaborating with Davies. She was a member of the Deller Consort founded by Alfred Deller in 1950. As mentioned in the previous chapter, she was chosen by Stephen

⁴⁷¹ Peter Maxwell Davies, "The Medium, Composer's Note," *Max Opus*, accessed August 9, 2019, <http://web.archive.org/web/20171019200944/http://www.maxopus.com/index.aspx>.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 83.

Pruslin to become a member of the Pierrot Players in its early days. Thomas was the only one, aside from Pruslin, who continued with the ensemble until its final break-up as Fires of London.⁴⁷⁴ Besides singing, she also occasionally played the piano with the group; for example, she plays the four-hands part with Pruslin in a 1990 recording of Davies' *Suite from The Boyfriend* (1971).⁴⁷⁵ It is indisputable that her musicianship was a huge influence on Davies and inspired many of his compositions.⁴⁷⁶ Paul Griffiths emphasises that 'Mary Thomas's histrionic skills and her extraordinary vocal virtuosity have contributed to all [Davies's] works with solo soprano'.⁴⁷⁷ *The Medium*, in particular, was described as being 'essentially a vehicle for [...] [her] extraordinary talent'.⁴⁷⁸ According to *Time Out*: '[she] raved, pleaded, imagined, chanted, shouted, crawled and sang with incredible concentration and conviction [. . .] [She is] unquestionably one of the great vocal virtuosi of the day'.⁴⁷⁹

In *The Medium*, Thomas depicts a seemingly disturbed fortune-teller. It is implied through her confused self-conversations and communications with clients that she might bear the sin of murdering her daughter. Later on, she starts hearing voices and seeing visions, her body supposedly becoming inhabited by spirits. These possessions, or potentially hallucinations, which continue over the course of the drama, mainly revolve around the child. They illustrate her in states of denial, psychological breakdown, self-restraint, and a

⁴⁷⁴ Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 182.

⁴⁷⁵ Gerard McBurney, "Record Review," *Tempo*, no. 176 (1991): 32.

⁴⁷⁶ Hancox, "The Composer-Performer Relationship in the Music of Peter Maxwell Davies," 200–201.

⁴⁷⁷ Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies*, 19.

⁴⁷⁸ Stanley Sadie, "Music in London," *The Musical Times* 123, no. 1673 (1982): 490. This comment was made in response to London's first public performance of the piece.

⁴⁷⁹ In Kate, "Obituary: Mary Thomas."

wide range of different moods and emotions. The number of characters she embodies varies from a priest, the child herself, a mistress, and a male spirit to a dog, a crab, and many others. Towards the end, the heroine complains about her treatment, suggesting that she might be in a mental institution.

Overall, the identity of the reciter is extremely obscure, which is one of the defining features of the piece. The composer highlights this sense of uncertainty:

Is she a Medium? or is she a knowing fake? By whom does she appear to be possessed – is it her true self, as opposed to the often sad and confused creature we see? Has she a dark secret she will not even acknowledge to herself, concerning a child she has had? Finally we wonder if she might even be a psychiatric patient, preparing herself for electro-therapy or worse.⁴⁸⁰

The character could even be a woman engaging in role-playing to tell a story. But then, isn't her passionate performance too extreme a measure to tell a story, and as such indicative of her madness?

The mysteriousness of the personage together with the minimal stage design and vocality seem to be intended to trigger the imagination of the audience. The events of the drama are to be recreated in their minds, so that they can go through the character's emotional upheavals first-hand and have a better grasp of her condition. The methods by which this has been attempted, as well as the effectiveness of these methods, are the subject of this chapter.

Researchers have paid scant attention to *The Medium* and very little scholarship exists on the work. There is not a single full-length article devoted to it, and attempts to elucidate its musical structure remain exceptionally few. The reason for this marginality could be that, as a voice-only monodrama, this piece is not vocally more striking than its predecessors. As I will explain, *The Medium* does not involve the large palette of extreme techniques which are present

⁴⁸⁰ Davies, "The Medium, Composer's Note."

especially in *Eight Songs*. Its lack of instrumental accompaniment, creating a less complex sound world compared to the other two music theatre pieces, might have also played a role.

Additionally, in *Eight Songs* theatrical tendency to shock reached its peak. George III's shattering of the violin attracted a lot of attention, for instance, and it is not surprising if the less aggressive *Medium* has generated less discussion. Issues of gender and sexuality in relation to madness were also reviewed when *Miss Donnithorne* came into being, and were no longer fresh at the time of *The Medium*. The theme of madness in general might have also lost its novelty after the vast number of pieces produced around it in the mid-1960s and early 1970s.

Among scholars, Alan E. Williams has shown the most interest in *The Medium*. As mentioned in the introduction, he has discussed, in view of Foucault's theory, the evolution of Davies's approach to madness in the twelve-year period encompassing the composition of *Eight Songs*, *Miss Donnithorne*, and *The Medium*.⁴⁸¹ The author believes that the silencing of madness is reduced to the slightest degree in *The Medium*. Williams argues that this piece requires the audience's suspension of disbelief to accept one performer taking on many roles. He claims that we initially view the character as being possessed by spirits, as the name of the piece suggests. It is only towards the end that we realise that she could be schizophrenic and that the piece did not really require a suspension of disbelief to accept unnatural phenomena. The fact that we were misled, according to Williams, means that we were taken in by the story and were somehow deluded. He concludes that the alienation of the character is minimal and we are faced with the question of what level of

⁴⁸¹ Williams, "Madness in the Music Theatre Works of Peter Maxwell Davies."

delusion would make someone mad. Williams's argument focuses on how *The Medium's* less complex musical language and minimal stage design contribute to its recreation of the delusions of the protagonist in the minds of the audience, thereby reducing the character's alienation and blurring the distinction between sanity and insanity. Here, I endeavour to broaden the perspectives Williams has offered regarding the listeners' mental experience, as well as explore the notions of reality and identity with respect to the protagonist. I shall also add a new dimension by attending to the issue of social class, which has altogether been neglected.

The audience's engagement with the drama is mainly dependent on voice and stage design. The character's recognisable vocal extremism could potentially ease the process of relating to the mad person by rendering her less strange. But does normalising the sounds of madness have costs as well as advantages? Similarly, the bare stage removes the safe distance between the character and the viewers, as she becomes less of an object of spectacle outside the conventional set. On the other hand, the lack of props and multiple characters could mean that the audience does not come into direct contact with the protagonist's experience as occurring within her world.

Social standing can also act as a compounding factor in the viewer's perception of and resulting connection with the heroine. Her status is ambiguous compared to both George III and Miss Donnithorne, but she definitely seems to be further down the social hierarchy. I will examine the potential significance of this feature for her mental well-being and how it might influence our level of sympathy. There is also another question of concern: Is Davies's focus on the social response to madness different for this character compared to the powerful King George and the upper-class Miss Donnithorne?

Before further exploration, I need to pause and ponder upon the narrative and music of this mysterious tale.

Tracing the Unknown Enigma

Akin to George III and Miss Donnithorne, this protagonist comes to the stage with greetings: 'My Lords, ladies and gentlemen'. She goes on to humbly publicise the magical power of her 'unworthy somnambulic imagination'. Unseen clients come along. She takes their hands and predicts their future, but also sporadically comments on her own fortune. She only makes pleasing remarks about others, while constantly denigrating herself. 'You have despised your origins', she says, addressing herself. She also often sings in a lower register when speaking about herself.⁴⁸²

This fortune-teller appears weak and powerless as a result of her status, her profession, the negative self-image that she has, the modesty with which she advertises her services, and the possession to which she is constantly subjected. However, as I will argue in due course, she is in fact more authoritative than both George III and Miss D. by means of the strong influence she exerts on the audience.

Amid the character's conversations with the clients and her inward dialogues, in the very first minutes the spectator learns that she is troubled by the memory of a child. The word 'child' is almost always marked by either an upward jump or a downward leap, creating unusually large intervals with the preceding and following words.⁴⁸³ When all the customers are gone, the heroine starts to hear voices and footsteps approaching her booth. Confused about their nature, she is

⁴⁸² See for example Peter Maxwell Davies, *The Medium* (London: Boosey & Hawks, 1983), 1.

⁴⁸³ See for example Davies, *The Medium*, 2, 6.

finally convinced that it is her 'good angel'. In a sexually provocative gesture accompanied by an operatic scream consisting of successive glissandos followed by a shriek, she is pulled and possessed by an unseen force (p.6, lines 1-6).

In what follows, the character goes through different psychological phases starting with questioning the existence of the child, claiming that she is 'a changeling'. She then sees the girl with the face of an angel, but quickly realises that it is 'a scrofulous puppy dog! a giant crab!', approaching to attack her. Finally, she dismisses the whole idea, calling it 'an illusion'. As Williams remarks, up until this point where the character claims that she is indisposed (p. 8, line 1), the music is formally coherent and repetitive and we are mainly dealing with a disrupted text.⁴⁸⁴ We see a major vocal shift in the score in the final bars of p. 8, where the character admits that she is mentally volatile. She executes her words between consecutively alternating breath movements, inward and outward. This dramatic technique is employed for the first time in the score at this point and accentuates the degeneration of the vocalist. This is followed immediately by the most extreme tonal repetition we have seen thus far. Ironically, oscillating between C and E ♭ eight times, the character declares that she has recovered and is in control (p. 9, line 1).

The heroine then takes the role of different individuals, at first becoming a mistress addressing her maid Mary. She is temporarily interrupted by a sudden rush of anxiety, which she tries to play down by associating it merely with 'the heat of the inion in an overexcited widow's philoprogenitive cerebellum'.⁴⁸⁵ As she regains control, she sits some

⁴⁸⁴ Williams, "Madness in the Music Theatre Works of Peter Maxwell Davies," 93- 94.

⁴⁸⁵ The inion is the most pronounced protrusion of the occipital bone at the base of the skull.

spirits around a table. A major tonal shift occurs at this point, when Davies employs the diatonic scale for the first time. The vocal line pivots between the key centre of D and F, shifting back and forth three times, keeping to the diatonic scale (with only the exception of the 2nd bar of the 3rd line) (p. 10, lines 1-4). The character invites the spirits to inhabit her body. Viewers witness her becoming intensely agitated and hear her as Mary for the first time. This transformation features the use of clapping, which when coupled with the free-time arpeggiated laughter provides a stirring departure from the character's recitation (p. 11, line 3).

As Williams rightly observes, there is no considerable difference in the music of Mary and mistress in terms of 'pitch material'.⁴⁸⁶ However, Mary, in contrast to the mistress, almost exclusively uses the vocal technique of *Sprechstimme* (p. 10-12). In the course of their conversation, the maid reveals that the whereabouts of the little girl are unknown and the mistress's bloody handkerchief has been found where she was last seen. The distinction between the mistress and the fortune-teller is blurred in this section. The heroine personifying the mistress accuses Mary of deceitfulness, but continues 'as herself' (presumably the medium, who is the palmist with whom the story began) to stress that she has 'the protection of the court' (p. 13, line 1). The lack of distinction between the mistress and the medium is also portrayed musically. The octatonic collection used to represent the character 'as herself' throughout the piece is here used by the mistress.

After the conversation between Mary and the mistress, as the character's identity becomes increasingly confused, the vocalist performs

⁴⁸⁶ Williams, "Madness in the Music Theatre Works of Peter Maxwell Davies," 94.

a clear succession of glides systematically decreasing in volume, each in the interval of a minor third (p. 13, line 3). This is again referenced when she is in deep distress after a male spirit, introduced later in the score, threatens her (p. 17, line 8).

Next, spirits are called by ringing a bell and the protagonist is instructed to imitate the sound of a trumpet (p. 13, lines 4-5). Immediately proceeding is the characterisation of the 'little girl'. In this role, we see consonance and an adherence to a diatonic scale. However, this scale modulates quickly, most often every two bars, so the effect is not used to excess. The psychic converses with the child, who adopts a 'nursery rhyme' style and reveals to her that she was taken away and replaced first by a dog, then a crab, and eventually a knife, before finally being brought back to life by the angel (p. 13-14). Many of the subsequent events in the drama are tied to this narration given by the child. After this conversation, the character becomes 'theatrically vulgar' and 'takes an imaginary knife from between her thighs' (p.15, line 1). Then comes Davies's first hint at the issues of marginalisation and oppression. 'I have been a considerable time lost to the world', 'filthy dead', the character rasps (p. 15, line 3).

Following this, the next prominent characterisation shift occurs. Davies employs neume notation, which was a system of musical notation used in Medieval Latin church music and was a precursor to 5-line notation. This notation is used to convey the characterisation of the priest who sings a pastiche of plainchant (Ex. 4.1). Holding the imaginary knife both like a 'chalice' and a weapon to be 'plunged into her heart', the priest speaks of the desire to be sanctified. The text becomes more

confusing as a male spirit intrudes (p. 15, line 7). Sticking to the tonal centre of F major, the male spirit states in a ‘hymn-like’ fashion that she is not allowed to die yet. The spirit commands that the heroine, ‘purified by the sacrifice of the innocent Lamb’, kill the corrupted souls with the knife (p.16, line 2).

Example 4.1. Peter Maxwell Davies, *The Medium*, 15 (Boosey & Hawkes, 1983).

she becomes as a priest, holds up the imaginary knife melodramatically, like a chalice at an altar, and at the same time as a knife about to be plunged into her heart.

f
Saint Ig - na - tius I ac - cept your sign. Thou shalt wash me, o Lord,
(rit.) - - - (a tempo)
p *f*
and I shall be made whi - ter than snow. I will go in - to the al - tar of—

Once again, identities overlap and mix. The reciter kneels and sings: ‘soul of my Saviour, sanctify my breast’ (p. 16, line 5). The character could be the priest preparing to be sanctified or the psychic responding to the order of the male spirit preparing to carry out her task, but the instruction on the score—‘as male spirit’—has not changed. Musically, the regular meter of this section contrasts with the free rhythm of the priest, and the heroine sings in the same key as the male spirit’s hymn. But immediately after, the male spirit no longer sticks to the tonal centre of F major and is characterised with extremely low notes (p. 16, lines 6-7).

The character's mental state worsens with the characterisation of the dog, forcing her to change posture and howl for a short period. For the first time in the score, Davies instructs the vocalist to repeat *ad lib*, improvising barks (p. 18, line 9). Exceptionally the character is unleashed here and is given vocal freedom.

The subsequent lines, where she is upright, are all the more puzzling. It is often unclear in this section whom she is speaking to. At first, she seems to address her clients, singing, 'You mock me! You who claimed to believe in me!' or to talk to herself, saying, 'You who destroyed your origins and your birthright'. Then, she addresses the priest, 'and who have kissed my paw in holy baptism', and later possibly the audience: 'Now God has loosed me upon you, fresh from that holy sepulchre, to infect you with my delirium, that you may slaughter each other according to your deserts' (p.19, lines 1-6). Also, it seems fair to say that this is a climax of disorientation.

Moreover, it is especially unclear who she is in this section. She could be the child when she declares: 'I am the changeling; I the innocent lamb you sacrificed'. She could be a schizophrenic woman being ironic and critical, as manifested in her wish to spread her delirium. She could be the psychic complaining about her clients' poor faith in her. She could be the male spirit, who commanded the killing of the unworthy, here hoping for them to just be slaughtered by one another. The reference to the 'paw' could even mean that she is carrying some trace of the spirit of the dog. Identity transformations are also not signalled by musical markers. Thus, all the characters might be considered to merge

into one, as she stands on the stage symbolically accusing the viewers of negligence and abuse.

Another animal personality is assumed immediately after this speech. In the most theatrically challenging episode, the protagonist lies on her back and becomes a crab. To execute this personification, Davies simultaneously instructs the protagonist to scuttle the feet, clap, and pant freely. The use of three simultaneous body rhythms marks another notable first in the score (p. 19, line 7).

At last, all the spirits leave her body and she sings a prayer asking for God's protection (p. 20, lines 2-3). From here, frequent and drastic key changes disrupt the structure of the music. The prayer melody, previously in B $\flat$ major, is hummed a tritone away in E major (p. 20, lines 5-6). Using the devil's interval between two prayer melodies is an instance of questioning appearances and boosting the vagueness of the piece. Is she really pleading to God or does she disdain religious beliefs? More simply, the tritone could suggest that one of these prayers is the reversal or opposite of the other. This means that the actual prayer containing words is being demeaned in the humming that comes immediately after. This 'questioning even to the extent of negation' is a general characteristic of Davies's music, which underpins his frequent transformations of melodies to their inversions.⁴⁸⁷

Employing the interval discouraged by the church in this manner also matches Davies's critical view of religion. His musical criticism of religion goes back to pieces as early as *St Michael* (1957) but becomes more overt in the late 1960s where, for instance, 'the distorted Victorian

⁴⁸⁷ Griffiths, *Modern Music: The Avant Garde since 1945*, 191.

hymn in *Vesalii Icones* functions 'allegorically as image of deception or betrayal'.⁴⁸⁸ The protagonist of *The Medium*, however, creates a paradox when she implies her belief in the prayer. After the supposedly devaluing humming, she intones: 'What is that? That white shape? An answer to my prayer?' (p. 20, line 6).

The vocalist soon relapses again by her own fist knock on the floor (p. 20, line 7). She feels herself being pulled towards a white light and articulates the following in C# major: 'It is an Archangel! It is myself! Myself!' Switching to C major she continues with, 'not this mad bitch' (p. 20, line 9), only to return to C# major to add, 'but the real beautiful me' (p. 21, line 1). The key change for the small section containing the word 'mad' is certainly telling.

Next, she willingly offers her soul to this white light and feels her body become cold and empty. Her vocalisations here return to minor thirds (p. 21, lines 3-4). While her soul is leaving her body, the vocalist executes some sort of a cadenza, tighter in intervals, consonant in F minor. Screaming at the beginning, she ends the passage on a hushed note as her energy is drained (p. 21, lines 5-8). The character, then, becomes a changeling, mingling her identity with that of her child. Desperate and powerless, she asks for help. For this section, Davies uses neume notation, which is characteristic of the priest (p. 22, line 5).

In the next step she prepares herself for therapy, albeit unhappily. 'As I am now, so you will become' she says directly to the audience, under the instruction: 'sane, with absolute gravity' (p. 22, line 7). This supposedly sane section is formally erratic, as the rhythms fluctuate

⁴⁸⁸ Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 146.

wildly, and the tempos frantically change. Davies's criticism of the treatment of the mad is most manifest when the heroine mentions 'electric shocks' and her fear of the approaching 'footsteps' to take her, calling the audience her 'torturers'. She then seems to become completely unhinged, speaking of the angel being her husband at first and a 'black Angel' later on.

The piece ends with the character's repeated vocalisations of the word 'Rapist' in descending minor thirds. She becomes increasingly more dramatic, expressing 'hunger for the rapist, and total loathing and fear, at the very idea', as Davies demands (p. 24, lines 7-8). Finishing the piece the composer uses long fermatas, giving the lead character a stretched, stuttered effect, as she leaves the stage. As I will explain, the effect of all these dramatic features and the communication of emotions is immensely intensified by their execution on an empty set.

Stage Design

Davies's note on the score of *The Medium* states that it is 'to be performed with the minimum of extraneous effects (i.e., no special lighting, or minimal lighting at the most, and no "scenery", except one chair for the singer to use)'.⁴⁸⁹ The intention seems to be to cast a non-pictorial and abstract image of the story into the spectators' minds. The composer also adds that 'the text and the music create the lights and scenery in our imagination, without spurious aids'.⁴⁹⁰ I will argue that a set cleared of props in the context of this piece is crucial for both preventing the alienation of the protagonist and enhancing the re-experiencing of her thought processes by the audience.

⁴⁸⁹ Davies, "The Medium, Composer's Note."

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

What we perceive to be the heroine's hallucinations actually exist for her. Denying the viewers multiple characters, refusing to provide a sense of place, and the mysterious quality of the events taking place on the stage help audience members to acknowledge this distinction. Her experience is unique and reality to her has a different meaning. It is only by recognising this difference that the spectators, using their imagination, can later experience her world. Theatre scholar Anna Harpin calls for the realisation of madness within the 'continuum of [human] experience', as real as any other form of experience. She puts forward the prospect of 'unreality' being 'legitimated as a valid alternative experience'.⁴⁹¹ Her understanding is reminiscent of Freud's notion of 'psychological reality', which he distinguishes from 'ordinary objective reality'.⁴⁹²

If this heroine's unreality is to be grasped, it must remain unreal to the sane eye. A conventional stage design would not only distance her from the audience by spotlighting her, but would also transform her reality to a kind that is familiar to us. The empty set is necessary for the acknowledgement of her reality as legitimate. This seems to be the precondition for any sort of immersion in her world.

The Medium might effectively be understood as a type of 'poor theatre', a concept discussed by the Polish director Jerzy Grotowski in the 1960s. For Grotowski, the theatre is essentially 'what takes place between spectator and

⁴⁹¹ Anna Harpin, "Dislocated: Metaphors of Madness in British Theatre," in *Performance, Madness and Psychiatry*, eds. Anna Harpin and Juliet Foster (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 189, 195.

⁴⁹² Sigmund Freud, "Group Psychology," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1921), 81.

actor'.⁴⁹³ He suggests that eliminating all 'superfluous' theatrical elements such as costume, scenery, and lighting makes possible many different variations of the performer-spectator relationship. The inclusion of the audience as participants in the performance also requires this elimination.⁴⁹⁴ The definition of the theatrical stage was generally undergoing transformation during this time. In the same decade, Peter Brook writes: 'I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged'.⁴⁹⁵

Grotowski's argument mainly revolves around providing an environment for the performers to express their inner selves shaped by the story in the most forthright, honest manner. His acting theory, known as 'via negative', is based on 'not a collection of skills but an eradication of blocks'. 'A complete stripping down' and 'the laying bare of one's own intimacy' is required of the performer. He defines it as 'a technique of the "trance" and of the integration of all the actor's psychic and bodily powers which emerge from the most intimate layers of his being and his instinct, springing forth in a sort of "translumination"'.⁴⁹⁶ The rendition of *The Medium* is in close accord with Grotowski's 'poor theatre'. Even the wording he uses shows the correspondence. The director demands a 'possess[ion]' by the 'theme', to reflect the 'experience' of life, not 'ideas' of it.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹³ Jerzy Grotowski, "The Theatre's New Testament (1964)," in *Towards a Poor Theatre*, ed. Eugenio Barba (Holstebro, Denmark: Odin Teatret, 1968), 32.

⁴⁹⁴ Jerzy Grotowski, "Towards a Poor Theatre," in *Towards a Poor Theatre*, ed. Eugenio Barba (Holstebro, Denmark: Odin Teatret, 1968), 19–20.

⁴⁹⁵ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (1968. Reprint, London: Penguin Books, 2008), 11.

⁴⁹⁶ Grotowski, "Towards a Poor Theatre," 16–17.

⁴⁹⁷ References to Grotowski's speech in New York in Mary Benson, *Athol Fugard and Barney Simon: Bare Stage, a Few Props, Great Theatre* (Randburg: Ravan Press, 1997), 62.

The unfurnished set of *The Medium* and the presence of only one performer also assist a pure expression of the psyche by placing a different demand on the actress. She has to make the drama alive single-handedly by a more intense and animated performance than expected with the aid of props or other actors. To achieve this, she needs to activate psychic processes and forces, not refrain from them. Only then would she be able to 'transform from type to type, character to character, silhouette to silhouette – while the audience [watch] – in a poor manner, using only [her] body and craft'.⁴⁹⁸ This profound engrossment in the role, enhanced by a lack of external support, empowers the actress. This consequently aids the conveyance of the psychological state that she is experiencing through the role.

The empowered actress is more likely to draw the audience into her fantastical world. Even Davies's elimination of instrumental music can be regarded as an attempt to hold the audience in the psychedelic atmosphere created by the performer. They are, borrowing from Grotowski, to be focused on the 'intonations', 'association of sounds', and 'the musicality of the language'.⁴⁹⁹ All the voices heard in this piece (with the exception of a bell sound and including the knocking and stamping supposedly coming from elsewhere) are produced by the character and, as such, reflect something about her. Instrumental music is probably ruled out to avoid an external intrusion with both the performer's expression of psyche and its direct communication to the audience.

The bare stage is also essential for illustrating the ambiguousness of the woman's identity. The set can be interpreted, among other things, as a mental institution, a tent, or a room in a house, depending on the viewer's perception.

⁴⁹⁸ Grotowski, "Towards a Poor Theatre," 20.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., 21.

Accordingly, the character could be a madwoman, a psychic, or a mistress. I will explain, in due course, that this vagueness, intensified by vocality, is a key factor in the spectators' encounter with the drama.

The empty space removes the safe distance between the audiences and the protagonist as a result of considering her a part of the story they are observing. It can, however, also end up displaying and alienating her by subjecting her to scrutiny as the only entity on the stage. Samuel Beckett's minimalism, for instance, has been interpreted as subjecting the elements that are actually presented on the set to 'interrogation' by the audience to reveal some 'abstract meaning'. When everything is eliminated, what remains is thought to have a significance beyond appearance, a sort of "higher" meaning'.⁵⁰⁰ However, the purpose and effect of the empty set in Beckett's theatre, where action and dialogue are also often greatly reduced, seem very different from Davies's work. In *The Medium*, I would argue, there is so much bewilderment that audiences are not encouraged to interrogate the character in the same manner. Unlike Beckett, who often makes sure that audiences acknowledge that they are in the space of the theatre, Davies here seeks to put it out of their minds. There is such confusion in the narration and so much shock and disturbance conveyed by the reciter's dramatic gestures, identity changes, embracing of different voices, and projection of broken images of the story that the audience members are potentially left dazed. Here, action and dialogue are not reduced, but are rather exaggerated and elaborated. Thus, the pruning away with regard to the stage does not lead to the interrogation of the character. Quite the contrary, the heroine attains the position of power by confusing the listeners and, hence, making them unable to examine her. The

⁵⁰⁰ Colin Counsell, *Signs of Performance: An Introduction to Twentieth-Century Theatre* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 135.

stage, bare of scenery, is more an extension of the arena of expression, where she can play with their minds. She might be lost in fantasy herself, but she is the one causing the confusion and, as such, is in control. The protagonist is not an object on display but a subject in charge.

Keeping audiences small and close to the character also facilitates the one-to-one connection. Her authority is linked to the freedom of the unaccompanied soloist from the control of a conductor or collaboration with other performers.⁵⁰¹ There is a fundamental difference between this heroine and the highly ranked George III and Miss D., who are exceptionally vulnerable in relation to their public. The former struggles to express himself and is also derided by the instrumentalists symbolically representing society; the latter is portrayed as a feeble woman, who is constantly humiliated and arouses the viewers' pity.

The minimalism of the stage design in *The Medium* lays bare the character's experience and makes it more accessible. This is not to say that the intellectual demand of the piece is low. It only means that it is effective in achieving the goal of communication and connection with the viewers, as it puts before them the core of the phenomenon without decoration. The audience's participation would, thus, be two-sided: they are involved in her fantasy as well as in the 'illusion inherent to theatre form'.⁵⁰² They experience the legitimate unreality and, in so doing, it becomes real to them. If what is reality becomes somewhat similar for the character and the listener, then it seems that soundness of mind in its standard sense is a shaky concept.

⁵⁰¹ Brian A. Inglis, "The Liminal Zone of Opera: (Unaccompanied) Operatic Monodrama and The Song of Margery Kempe," in *Music on Stage*, eds. Luis Campos and Fiona Jane Schopf (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 184.

⁵⁰² Harpin, "Dislocated: Metaphors of Madness in British Theatre," 198.

What is to be regarded as real seems to be an old concern of Davies and one that even applies to his own musical language. In the programme note for *Vesalii Icones* Davies mentions, 'In *St. Thomas Wake—Foxtrot for Orchestra* I had worked with three levels of musical experience,' which he identifies as the original pavan, the foxtrot derived from it, and 'the level of my "real" music'.⁵⁰³ Placing the word 'real' in inverted commas clearly indicates that he is aware of the issue of authenticity. Is not the pavan in a new context and its transformation as real as the music that he supposedly wrote from scratch? Is his supposedly real musical language not influenced by the music he borrowed and as such somewhat unauthentic? Questioning reality was also a key concept in *Eight Songs*. Who is really mad and how real the mad person's world is were issues that were kept ambiguous in that piece. In *The Medium* everything happens on a set stripped of props, so that the imaginary nature of the events can challenge what reality is.

Vocality and Its Role in Communication

The vocal style of the protagonist of *The Medium* is aimed at recreating her mental journey, and the most critical functions of vocal techniques seem to be directed towards achieving this end. Madness is announced, disclosed, and recognised through the activation of a 'physical language', to use Antonin Artaud's term, an expressive vocal vocabulary that goes beyond words.⁵⁰⁴ The spectators' imaginations are also triggered by modulations, repetitions, and vocalisations whose meaning is only sonic. The abstract use of the voice amounts to the abolition of concrete meaning and frees the mind and senses to float in the hallucinatory world of the protagonist. Moreover, suffering—a prevalent feature of the experience of madness and profoundly associated with

⁵⁰³ In Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies*, 152.

⁵⁰⁴ Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, 54.

the character's state—is strongly conveyed through the sounds she makes.⁵⁰⁵ All of these qualities help the listeners immerse themselves in her world and connect with it. This is particularly clear in a few key passages of the work.

Prior to the character's passionate coupling with the phantom lover, she sings, 'My angel, I am ready!' The text insists that the angel is a 'good angel', possibly 'an imago, or eidolon'. The character's excitement, accompanied by theatrical unease and textual reference to intercourse, mainly communicates the exhilaration of a sex act. The voice, however, adds another dimension: the possibility of the psychic's unwillingness to unite with the wraith. In other words, the quality of the sound produced raises doubts about the heroine's preparedness. She recites a loud passage featuring glissandos, which grows into a glass-shattering falsetto scream. Her vocal style here can indicate torment and imply her reluctance as much as suggesting excitement. The former is hinted at in Davies's instructions: 'in panic, searching for escape', 'in desperation', and 'in ecstasy, hating it'.⁵⁰⁶

It is important to note that her torment is presented not in what is said, but in the way it is said. The heroine here keeps repeating the word 'come', for instance, and insists, 'breathe into my apertures warmly'. But the sonic tools used spark senses, images, and thoughts that connect the viewer to the performer in ways more profound than the words. In a manner similar to Albertine Zehme's rendering of *Pierrot*, the focus is on expressing 'affect and emotion through the sound of the voice rather than through the meaning of the

⁵⁰⁵ Harpin points to 'extreme distress' as 'a significant aspect of many [mad] individuals' experiences'. Harpin, "Dislocated: Metaphors of Madness in British Theatre," 202.

⁵⁰⁶ Davies, *The Medium*, 5–6.

words spoken'.⁵⁰⁷ The same physical language is at work when 'child' is uttered. The frequent leaps or jumps and the generally extravagant style of articulation employed for this word convey its significance for the character's balance and possibly as the source of her trauma. Listeners become sensitive to this word after some time and consequently react and respond to it. The sense of shock, angst, or repulsion felt by the lead character is in this way recreated in her public.

This piece is full of vocalities so disorienting and intense that they take a major part of the audience's focus. The mistress's internal conversation with herself before interacting again with Mary is a case in point. She says: 'I must not evince by my gestures the extreme state of my mind. I am sufficiently recovered to be capable of proceeding normally to the next stage'.⁵⁰⁸ The first sentence is a dramatic Sprechstimme uttered extremely rapidly while the character is gasping for breath. The words of the next one are broken apart and disintegrated by unusual and unexpected accentuations of syllables.

Artaud believes that 'rhythmic repetitions of syllables and particular modulations of the voice [...] arouse swarms of images in the brain, producing a more or less hallucinatory state' and give the words 'approximately the importance they have in dreams'.⁵⁰⁹ Roy Hart, too, affirms the importance of 'the dream world' in the emergence of his approach to singing.⁵¹⁰ His pupil, Richard Armstrong, states in an interview that 'with Roy's teaching I learned that what lay beneath certain sounds might appear later in the recall of a dream'.⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁷ Latham, "Listening to the Talking Cure: Sprechstimme, Hypnosis, and the Sonic Organization of Affect," 102.

⁵⁰⁸ Davies, *The Medium*, 8-9.

⁵⁰⁹ Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, 94, 120-21.

⁵¹⁰ Roy Hart quoted in Kalo et al., "The Roy Hart Theatre: Teaching the Totality of Self," 192.

⁵¹¹ Pikes, *Dark Voices: The Genesis of Roy Hart Theatre*, 79.

The disquiet created by the vocalist's hasty articulation, panting, and fragmented words, as well as the many dynamic changes, could thus overwhelm meaning and stir up senses in unusual, dream-like ways. Announcing the experience of the protagonist in this manner might ease the process of the distancing of the listeners from real life and their subsequent entrance into the character's zone. Consequently, the spectators would probably be more inclined to imagine the maid she addresses—the maid they cannot see.

The various sonic vocalisations used also function in the same way. The non-referential quality and the absence of literal meaning links them to dreams and illusions. For instance, the 'ah' and following 'o-o-o-o-o' sounds when the character is begging the male spirit provoke sensations that mirror her distress. The protagonist's humming ('mm-mm-mm') when she holds the hands of the spirits and tries to connect with them is another auditory tool that elicits mental images that correspond to hers. The hum, according to Steven Connor, is a powerful stimulant, for it is 'emitted [...] as though from the whole body'. He suggests that humming has an immersive quality: 'The hum seems to have no direction, development or position; it seems to be everywhere at once and all at once'. Connor adds that in our understanding and everyday use of language, m-sounds are linked to 'melding and immersion' and as such are capable of inducing 'states of drowsy numbness or meditational trance'.⁵¹²

Davies's employment of these sounds in *The Medium* is reminiscent of a number of avant-garde composers' use of non-linguistic sounds, such as György Ligeti's 'use of vowels and consonants, not tied to words' in *Aventures* (1962). Ligeti's usage is, however, much more extensive and most likely is

⁵¹² Steven Connor, *Beyond Words* (London: Reaktion Books, 2014), 96, 75–76.

mainly meant to destroy meaning in favour of an abstract investigation of voice and speech.⁵¹³ In Davies's case, on the other hand, non-referential voice patterns add new dimensions to the meaning conveyed by the words. Although lacking definite meaning, these sounds can function as questioning the surface meaning of the words, confirming it, adding different aspects to it, or rejecting it altogether.

The reciter's suffering in her unstable and vulnerable state is also frequently communicated with voice. When she turns into a crab and is 'utterly demented', Davies demands that she 'weep, in agony'.⁵¹⁴ She speaks her words 'tutta forza' with a harshness that exhausts her and causes her to slow down towards the end of the phrase. Though gesture is highly vital in creating the atmosphere of pain and terror, it is undeniable that her anguish is also heard strongly through sobbing as well as the forceful delivery (Ex. 4.2). Another instance of the vocal communication of distress is when her scream turns into 'very ugly and hysterical half-laughter, half-weeping' before the spirit of Mary invades her body.⁵¹⁵

Vocality in *The Medium*, be it extreme or not, obscures the identity of the character. There are numerous instances where it is not clear at all who she is or whom she is addressing. Many of the voices can potentially come from within or outside her. Even the spirits' voices could be interpreted in various ways. The male spirit, for example, could be read as a symbolic allusion to 'the hypnotic voice that demand[s] submission'.⁵¹⁶ The hypnotist's voice exerts its power to

⁵¹³ Zeynep Bulut, "Theorizing Voice in Performance: György Ligeti's 'Aventures,'" *Perspectives of New Music* 48, no. 1 (2010): 51.

⁵¹⁴ Davies, *The Medium*, 19.

⁵¹⁵ Davies, *The Medium*, 11.

⁵¹⁶ These are some of the voices significant for psychoanalysis as described by Mladen Dolar. Dolar, "The Object Voice," 14.

cause the subject to lose contact with his/her senses, surrender, and enter a new state. In a similar fashion, though by the different methods of threat, manipulation, and interference, the male spirit seeks for the character to give in and do as ordered. The priest, on the other hand, could be ‘the voice of consciousness (superego)’ pleading sanctification for the crime she might have committed.⁵¹⁷ Just as the superego—the inner critic—advocates moral behaviour, the priest strives for her sins to be washed away.⁵¹⁸

Example 4.2. Davies, *The Medium*, 19 (Boosey & Hawkes, 1983).

She turns over on her back, demented, and scuttles, rapidly, as a crab,
sometimes snapping her hands together like claws
panting, breaths *freely*

utterly demented, weeping, in agony
(♩ = c.112)
ff tutta forza

And I shall be a can-cer to claw your flesh from in-side, to cor-rode your cor-

slowing down becoming exhausted *rit.* *p ma intenso*

rup - ted hearts, to wreak ven-geance slow - ly from in-side your burn-ing skulls.

Blurring the dividing line between personalities is significant for the audience’s experience of the character’s state. *The Medium* was composed two

⁵¹⁷ Ibid.

⁵¹⁸ Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1933), 66.

decades after the poststructuralists of the 1960s changed the general discourse around identity. They argued that identity is 'unstable, flexible, ongoing, [and] negotiated' and must be regarded as 'fluid, multiple, diverse, dynamic, varied, shifting, subject to change and contradictory'.⁵¹⁹ From this perspective, identity is a fictional construct and is virtually undiscoverable. This work seems to be based on a similar philosophy. The heroine's identity is obscure and ungraspable on every level, to the extent that every attempt to discover it is futile. This transparent and conspicuous unattainability of subjectivity, which is dependent greatly on vocality, acts as a catalyst for the imagination. The confusion caused by different personas inhibits fixation on one single so-called true identity. This fluidity avoids restriction of the mind and sets it free. The oscillation of imagination between identities helps the audience to submerge itself in her world—to drift along her mental path and be dragged along on her journey.

In general, Davies's use of vocality in this piece indicates a sympathetic, non-invasive approach to insanity. The focus is shifted from what the character has done (and possibly even an unconscious evaluation of her actions) to her perceptions and senses. Identifying and potentially re-experiencing what she undergoes is more likely to occur when she is under less scrutiny. Vocality seems to enhance the recreation of her experience but, as I suggest below, there are complicating factors involved.

The Strain between Normalisation and Exhibition

The character's voice in *The Medium* is often extreme, but the vocal techniques are limited in variety. The piece includes Sprechstimme, rapid

⁵¹⁹ Mohammad Hossein Kouhpaeeenejad and Razieh Gholaminejad, "Identity and Language Learning from Poststructuralist Perspective," *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* 5, no. 1 (2014): 200.

coloratura, ululation, and falsetto singing. There is also much shouting, squeaking, howling, and similar sounds, which all seem to fall into the same category. There are, however, hardly any approximate overtones or harmonic chords. The vocal range is wide, but the tessitura is not too unconventional. The work mostly includes realistic sounds that are potentially produced in non-musical situations and tends to avoid complicated extended techniques. The vocal line is mainly demanding due to the stamina and energy required for holding the breath, rapid panting, covering a wide range, and producing sound in uncomfortable theatrical poses. Furthermore, the extreme sounds are produced in the context of a less complicated musical language, partly because there is no accompaniment and partly because the vocal line is on many occasions tonal and repetitive.

This particular manner of singing has the advantage of bringing the heroine closer to the audience via a more recognisable vocal performance. The reduced use of extended techniques minimises the spectacular quality of the protagonist's condition. It weakens the association of insanity with what Darian Leader calls 'dramatic outbursts'⁵²⁰ or what Harpin describes as 'identifiable surface behaviours'.⁵²¹ However, there are drawbacks to diminishing radical vocal techniques.

Making the character's experience more accessible by decreasing the variety and intensity of extended sounds creates a certain tension. This strategy, as an attempt to lessen the exhibition of the heroine, comes at the cost of normalising her. Madness in such a portrayal does not receive proper recognition. The more identifiable vocality gives it a common shape, one that is

⁵²⁰ Darian Leader, *What Is Madness?* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2011), 10.

⁵²¹ Harpin, "Dislocated: Metaphors of Madness in British Theatre," 189.

easily understandable. But it also eradicates the sophisticated dimension of the mad voice, somewhat confining it to the stereotypes of yelling and screaming.

Overlooking radical techniques not only damages the manifestation of madness as a complex phenomenon, but also influences others' experience of it. Artaud asserts that through unconventional vocal sounds 'the sense of a new physical language, based upon signs and no longer upon words, is liberated'.⁵²² Hart's techniques are also based on the physical qualities of voice, such as 'timbres and nuances', as means of expression.⁵²³ His philosophy is manifested in the subtitle given to his group's performance of Euripides's *The Bacchae* (1969): 'Language Is Dead, Long Live the Voice'.⁵²⁴ Madness, as an atypical form of existence, requires an atypical means of communication. In *The Medium*, this physical language, with its irregular vocal modulations and peculiar syllabic repetitions, is not fully abandoned, but it is confined.

The singer does have a croaky, breathy, and nasal sound, but unusual breath techniques are used sparsely and in limited ways. Comparisons to *Eight Songs*, wherein short sentences or even single words are sung using a variety of techniques, make this clearer. In the earlier piece, for instance, the word 'pretty' is broken down by three vocal techniques: harmonic chord, spoken sound, and strands of notes in a breath (Ex. 4.3). *The Medium*, on the other hand, does not even feature the first and third techniques, which require a more delicate, skilful use of laryngeal muscles and vocal cords. This is significant, considering that *Eight Songs* was written for an actor and not even a singer. In general, complex vocal techniques seem to be avoided in *The Medium*. For instance, mouth-trumpet, which is a demanding vocal technique involving great

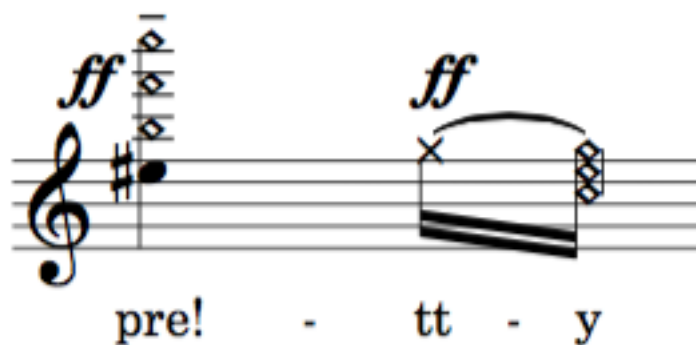
⁵²² Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, 54.

⁵²³ Roy Hart quoted in Kalo et al., "The Roy Hart Theatre: Teaching the Totality of Self," 192.

⁵²⁴ In Pikes, *Dark Voices: The Genesis of Roy Hart Theatre*, 90.

control over vocal cords and airflow through squeezed lips, is made much easier here with the aid of the character's hand 'cupped to her mouth'. The sounds produced are very distant from the sound of a trumpet. This matches the instruction, which reads: 'she makes muted trumpet-like noises'.⁵²⁵

Example 4.3. Davies, *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, Section B (Boosey & Hawkes, 1971).



Furthermore, in *Eight Songs*, complicated vocal techniques are often combined with vocal trills and wheezing sounds, and are accompanied by instructions such as 'piano but knifelike', 'becoming all breath', 'sweet', 'silky', and similar directions, taking full advantage of the physicality of the voice. *The Medium*, instead, avoids complex techniques and seems to rely partially on non-vocal sounds, such as clapping or stamping with feet, to communicate states of mind. This restriction of the range of extended sounds, I would argue, limits the listeners' experience of the character's condition.

Extended techniques provide access to a hidden reality, so much so that Hart described them as 'the muscle of the soul'.⁵²⁶ They are often associated

⁵²⁵ Davies, *The Medium*, 13.

⁵²⁶ In Pikes, *Dark Voices: The Genesis of Roy Hart Theatre*, 93.

See also: Kalo, et al., "The Roy Hart Theatre: Teaching the Totality of Self," 195.

with channelling out the underlying sufferings that humans experience. Alfred Wolfsohn, who experienced auditory hallucinations as a result of hearing the harsh groaning and moaning sounds of dying soldiers during the First World War,⁵²⁷ also described his method as 'making audible [the] hidden or wounded areas of his soul'.⁵²⁸ The entire range of the human voice was embraced for the purpose of communicating emotions, and everything the vocal chords were capable of producing was a valid means of releasing inner tension. Thus, in making less use of extended techniques, *The Medium* provides less access to these hidden areas of the psyche.

One major characteristic that strips the protagonist of the wide range of means available to convey different aspects of her suffering or to reach a broader audience is that she most often has to produce exact notes. In contrast to *Eight Songs*, where in many instances only contour is indicated for spoken and whispered sounds, this protagonist loses some of her expressive freedom due to the score's precision. In *Eight Songs*, some of the King's pitches are not even written on the staves. Numerous other phrases are also notated so imprecisely that vocal performance would strongly depend on the performer's intellectual and emotional take. Michael Chanan identifies this indeterminacy, which provides much performance freedom, as 'the most important technical aspect' of the piece.⁵²⁹

The introduction of musical indeterminacy in Davies's music goes back to *Revelation and Fall* (1966, revised 1980) and *Missa Super L'homme*

⁵²⁷ Sylka Uhlig, "Voicework in Music Therapy: Pioneers and a New Generation," in *Voicework in Music Therapy: Research and Practice*, eds. Felicity Baker and Sylka Uhlig (London and Philadelphia: Jessica and Kingsley Publishers, 2011).

⁵²⁸ Pikes, *Dark Voices: The Genesis of Roy Hart Theatre*, 187.

⁵²⁹ Chanan, "Dialectics in Peter Maxwell Davies," 14.

Armé (1968, revised 1971) and is influenced by Witold Lutoslawski's early 1960s works.⁵³⁰ In *The Medium*, however, on many occasions, every shriek, every rasp and even every non-referential vocalisation is precisely notated. This limits the performer's liberty to include in her sound production what is felt through action and engagement with the drama. The following example, where the character is giving up her soul and the composer indicates that she is 'in pain', clearly demonstrates the boundary set by the score (Ex. 4.4).⁵³¹

The medium's singing is on many occasions inconvenienced by uneasy postures, but she still has to produce the exact notes. Allowing the voice to uncontrollably unfold as actions and interactions take place is the principle behind action-based singing, as introduced by Nina Sun Eidsheim. In this manner of singing the action that leads to the sound is crucial, and producing particular fixed pitches is not desirable.⁵³² The protagonist of *The Medium* is often bounded by the notes and cannot, through her voice, fully express the emotional and bodily torment that she experiences. For instance, when the male spirit threatens her and she is 'reeling from imaginary blows', her words are expected to match the written pitches.⁵³³ Even afterwards when 'she crashes to the floor, exhausted, and groans deeply, breathing heavily', the 'ah' sounds that she produces under the instruction 'keening' are precisely notated.⁵³⁴ The scarcity of freedom in using extended techniques and exploring vocal capacity restricts the character's communication power and consequently hinders the audience's ability to truly grasp her state.

⁵³⁰ Hall, *Music Theatre in Britain 1960-1975*, 153.

⁵³¹ Davies, *The Medium*, 21.

⁵³² Nina Sun Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 147.

⁵³³ Davies, *The Medium*, 17.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*

Example 4.4. Davies, *The Medium*, 21 (Boosey & Hawkes, 1983).

fff in pain *animando* - - - - - *ff* *fff*

molto f

Ah! It leaves my bo - dy, a spark - ling ra - diant light!

ff *mm* = c.90

Ah - ah - ah - ah - ah - ah - How

de - li - cate - ly it flies, curves to - wards her! Ah - ah - ah - ah -

f *mf* *mf* *p* *rit.* *p* *pp* *ppp*

ah - ah - ah - ah -

she rubs herself with her hands, suddenly chilled

p *pp* *ppp* *mm* = c.112

Ah - ah - ah - ah - ah - ah - ah -

(becomes a hummed note) *pp* *mm* = c.112

mm I am cold and emp - ty. My ve - ry soul is flown.

It seems that the reduction of extreme vocality indeed reduces exhibition, but the limit put on the use of extended vocal techniques also suppresses the manifestation of madness. Radical techniques certainly create a tension. Diminishing them would silence madness by normalising the protagonist, and their extensive employment would have an alienating effect by making madness spectacular, putting the subject under the audience's gaze and excluding her as 'the other'. This paradox is more or less inherent to radical vocality, but it creates a different effect in different contexts. The King of *Eight Songs* is mainly marginalised by the instrumentalists, who represent society, because of his radical and skilful communication method. However, the King's vocality, though

to some extent silencing him, also expresses a mad wisdom; it the manifestation of madness speaking for itself. In *Miss Donnithorne*, the character is such a textbook example of hysteria that extended techniques, though employed to a lesser extent, only reinforce her categorisation as mad and facilitate her exhibition.

By the 80s, extended vocality had strong associations with musical portrayals of insanity, especially among avant-garde composers. From the inhaled tones and mouth clicks of Berio's *Sequenza III* (1965), which has often been understood in terms of hysteria or schizophrenia,⁵³⁵ to the 'hysterical kind of breathing'⁵³⁶ of the vocalist of Elliott Carter's *A Mirror on Which to Dwell: O Breath* (1978), the traditional boundaries of voice were extended to portray restlessness, desolation, struggle, and similar emotional states. Furthermore, as explained in chapter 2, radical vocality, according to Roy Hart, bears a strong resemblance to the sounds of asylum inmates. So, although extreme techniques cannot be linked to stereotypes of insanity (aggression, absurdity, or foolishness), unlike representational tools—such as a white dress and unkempt hair—they are not arbitrarily connected with madness.

The strong association of experimental vocal sounds with madness at the time of the composition of this piece cannot be overlooked. Even though the reduction of these sounds creates normalisation and neglects the sophisticated aspect of madness, their employment would also have a strong alienating effect

⁵³⁵ Cathy Berberian's performance of this piece has been described as illustrating 'a fragmented vocal persona, readily metaphorized as schizophrenia or hysteria'. In Anne Sivuoja-Kauppalä, "Cathy Berberian's Notes on Camp," in *Cathy Berberian: Pioneer of Contemporary Vocality*, eds. Pamela Karantonis, et al. (London: Routledge, 2016), 149.

⁵³⁶ Elliot Carter's statement in an interview with Charles Rosen in Charles Rosen, *The Musical Languages of Elliott Carter* (Washington, D.C.: Music Division, Research Services, Library of Congress, 1984), 40.

in the 1980s. At the time of composition, these sounds were considered a prominent and established musical device for the representation of madness. Thus, it can be argued that in a similar way that the white dress made the madwoman the object of the spectator's gaze, radical vocality, to some extent, made madness spectacular and turned the mad person into a specimen in the context of the 80s. Darian Leader puts forward an important question: 'Why is madness always made so visible, so tangible, so audible?' ⁵³⁷

In *The Medium* extreme vocality is not fully abandoned, so that madness remains true to its essence and its quiddity is not damaged. However, it is presented in a more attenuated form, both to avoid displaying the subject and to make her experience more accessible. The cost of this, however, is normalising madness to a certain degree and limiting its expression.

The Link between Madness and Class

The social class of both George III and Miss Donnithorne is made explicit, while the medium's is not. However, the heroine of this piece is predominantly recognised as lower in rank than George III and Miss D. Her profession in general is not associated with wealth. Her excitement over the money she receives from the clients also strongly marks her as underprivileged. She might also be the previous mistress of a house, experiencing a change in her socioeconomic situation. Although her identity is not clear and all the events could be only happening in her head, the piece mostly contains clues that point to hardship. The only indication of wealth appears in the presence of a housekeeper, who might even be the character herself. With everything being so intense, confusing, and transitory, the viewers' primary perception is most likely that they are encountering an impoverished individual.

⁵³⁷ Leader, *What Is Madness?*, 9.

This attribute has certain implication for the audience's experience and understanding of the drama. Considering the equivocality of the persona, her inferior status affects our level of sympathy. If judged as a charlatan or an imposter, the possibility that her actions stem from destitution comes to the fore and some compassion would probably be aroused. If one understands her as deranged, it becomes conceivable that financial crisis has been the underlying cause and her distress becomes more fathomable. If one assumes her child dead, the high rate of mortality in disadvantaged neighbourhoods might come into view and create a tendency for her to be regarded as more of a victim than a murderer.

The character's rank raises issues related to social reaction and treatment, which have some basis in reality. During the 1960s, August Hollingshead and Frederick Redlich studied the New Haven population in Connecticut, USA, the social structure of which is markedly split. They gathered detailed data from that small town to deduce the probability of the occurrence of mental illness by class in the general population. Their research reveals that 'a very significant relation [exists] between social class and treated prevalence of psychiatric disorders'.⁵³⁸ On nearly every occasion, they found, the proportion of patients in the lowest class is higher than expected, compared to the number of individuals in that class.⁵³⁹ Furthermore, they discovered that certain conditions are more widespread among particular classes. 'Each class also reacts to the presence of mental illness in its members in different ways, and the treatment of psychiatric patients within the various classes differs accordingly'.⁵⁴⁰ Other

⁵³⁸ August B. Hollingshead and Fredrick C. Redlich, "Social Stratification and Psychiatric Disorders," *American Sociological Association* 18, no. 2 (1953): 167.

⁵³⁹ Hollingshead and Redlich, *Social Class and Mental Illness*, 217.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, vii.

studies in the 70s and 80s also confirmed that regardless of the mental disturbance, the intensity of reactions to psychiatric disorders in terms of confinement, hospitalisation, and other torments are strongly influenced by the patient's social class.⁵⁴¹

In Hollingshead and Redlich's investigation, individuals with no treatment (only custodial care) were typically concentrated in the lower classes. Psychotherapy was most widely applied to upper classes; if the impoverished ever received psychotherapy, it was certainly not psychoanalysis.⁵⁴² These researchers found that normally, mentally ill patients of the lowest social standing 'are not wanted by their families, and they are viewed as useless, obnoxious, and occasionally as dangerous to society if not to themselves'.⁵⁴³ They also noticed that 'the class status of the patient influences expenditures on the treatment in each type of psychiatric facility in highly significant ways'.⁵⁴⁴

The above-mentioned study, though probably the most influential research with regard to the relationship between social class and mental illness, remains highly limited. It does not take untreated conditions into account and, as such, cannot be generalised with certainty. What was surely exposed by these analysts, however, was that the impoverished receiving treatment were significantly disadvantaged compared to the upper classes.⁵⁴⁵ Their research, along with a number of later studies inspired by their findings, '[has] led to a

⁵⁴¹ Thomas J. Scheff, "The Labelling Theory of Mental Illness," *American Sociological Association* 39, no. 3 (1974): 449.

⁵⁴² August B. Hollingshead and Fredrick C. Redlich, "Social Stratification and Psychiatric Disorders," 168–69.

⁵⁴³ Hollingshead and Redlich, *Social Class and Mental Illness*, 331.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ William C. Cockerham, *Sociology of Mental Disorder* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 118.

general acceptance within the psychiatric profession that, in addition to medical criteria, latent social factors can be influential in the determination of who is treated where, how, and by whom'.⁵⁴⁶

It appears that discriminatory treatment for different classes was recognised as a flaw in the mental health system by the 80s. This is probably one of the reasons that therapy, which does not even come up as an issue in *Eight Songs* and *Miss Donnithorne*, gets so much attention in this work. This is especially significant in the case of the historical George III, as there are numerous accounts of his subjection to ruthless physical and medicinal cures. King George III was frequently confined in a strait-waistcoat 'with his legs tied to the bed' and had to submit, time and again, 'to vomits, purges, bleeding, blistering, cupping, the application of leeches, and so on'.⁵⁴⁷ These references are not included in the musical work, except once in passing in song five, when the King is talking to his phantom queen: 'Have they chained you too, my darling, in a stable? Do they starve you? Strike you? Scorn you, ape your howls?' But even here, as in the entire piece in general, the focus is more on societal marginalisation and estrangement than therapeutic injustice.

The protagonist of *The Medium*, on the other hand, is clearly dissatisfied with and scared of her treatment, which in comparison to the two aforementioned protagonists is much more physically harsh. Miss D. was never subjected to physical abuse and George III was himself the source of violence. Negative social reaction in their cases chiefly revolved around derision and a lack of understanding. The medium, in contrast, speaks about her torturers, whispering footsteps advancing towards her, and the buzzing of electric

⁵⁴⁶ Richard F. Mollica and Mladen Milic, "Social Class and Psychiatric Inpatient Care: A Twenty-Five Year Perspective," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 143, no. 1 (1986): 12.

⁵⁴⁷ MacAlpine and Hunter, "The Insanity of King George III: A Classic Case of Porphyria," 69.

machines. Davies's denunciation of the mentally ill's medical care is also far more candid in this piece. All the textual criticism can be attributed to him because the libretto is his own work. He also directly points out that the character 'might even be a psychiatric patient, preparing herself for electro-therapy or worse'.⁵⁴⁸

Moreover, the strict control and governing of this individual in the name of therapy, criticised in the finale, typifies the merciless treatment that patients of lower rank often receive. Her conflicting emotions about the black angel and the rapist, and even possibly her detestation of the public, are also evocative of the paradoxical and negative feelings of the mentally unstable towards the family that does not want them. This character's social class and the drawbacks of belonging to that class, especially in terms of treatment, reveal other aspects of her experience and give the listeners' understanding of her distress a new dimension. If she were in a more fortunate position, would she have received better care and suffered less?

Assuming the heroine is unhinged, she would in all likelihood have schizophrenia. This disorder comes to mind on first encounter because of the voices and images she hears and sees, her belief that she is possessed or needs to kill, her switch between various modes of articulation, and her uncanny transitions between different personalities. These are all redolent of the widely known symptoms of schizophrenia, namely 'hallucinations, delusions and thought disorder'.⁵⁴⁹ Without digging much into her psyche, she comes across as schizophrenic, as also pointed out by scholars such as Williams.⁵⁵⁰ In this

⁵⁴⁸ Davies, "The Medium, Composer's Note."

⁵⁴⁹ Christopher Donald Frith, "Consciousness, Information Processing and Schizophrenia," *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 134, no. 3 (1979): 225, 230.

⁵⁵⁰ Williams, "Madness in the Music Theatre Works of Peter Maxwell Davies," 93.

way, *The Medium* is similar to Schoenberg's *Erwartung*, which, despite being open to interpretations, strongly leads one to believe that its unnamed woman is experiencing schizophrenia.⁵⁵¹

According to a number of studies, schizophrenia is the psychosis more often found in the working class, as opposed to the neuroses whose prevalence decreases as you move down the social ladder.⁵⁵² 'The highest rates of first admissions to psychiatric hospitals for schizophrenia' were found by Robert Faris and H. Warren Dunham to be strongly associated with 'the loci of poverty'.⁵⁵³ I am not claiming that this condition is more prevalent among the poor or that Davies deliberately assigned it to the character whose treatment he was criticising. My intention is to highlight the issues that were gaining prominence around the time of the production of this piece. I want to point out that these studies, even with their limitations, drew attention to possible biases in diagnosis and to the disproportionality of access to medical care among different classes and how hugely it influenced the patients' well-being.

For schizophrenia, for instance, the therapy people received was closely linked to their rank. The variance was to the extent that 'among the psychotic patients treatment differences among classes are most marked for schizophrenics contributing, in no small part, to the large number of chronic patients in [the lowest class] who remain in state hospitals year after year'.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵¹ See for instance: Till M. Meyn, "Panic in Modern Music," in *Panic: Origins, Insight and Treatment*, eds. Leonard J. Schmidt and Brooke Warner (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2002), 257.

⁵⁵² See for instance: Hollingshead and Redlich, *Social Class and Mental Illness*, 223.

⁵⁵³ In Ramsay Liem and Joan Liem, "Social Class and Mental Illness Reconsidered: The Role of Economic Stress and Social Support," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 19, no. 2 (1978): 140.

⁵⁵⁴ Hollingshead and Redlich, *Social Class and Mental Illness*, 290, 300–301.

Joseph Zubin and Bonnie Spring also confirmed that 'a prolonged schizophrenic episode results from social reactions to the schizophrenic person and not an internal pathogenic process'.⁵⁵⁵ Hence, social conditions and the quality and availability of therapy seem capable of massively exacerbating symptoms. As a result, the disapproval of the treatment of the mad individual, which I argued is strongest in this piece, could potentially include condemnation of the social inequality from which she suffers.

Thus, Davies's sympathetic approach to insanity, demonstrated in his employment of vocality, also reflects itself in his attitude towards the treatment of the mad in relation to their social class. While *Eight Songs* mainly disapproved of the labelling of individuals as mad and *Miss Donnithorne* challenged the representation of the mentally unstable, *The Medium* seems to criticise the care and therapy they receive by calling for the audience members to put themselves in their position. The protagonist's social class sheds a new light on her condition, our experience of her condition, and Davies' criticism of her treatment.

It needs to be emphasised that awareness of the heroine's rank does not limit the freedom of imagination required for the listeners to be absorbed in the drama. One could argue that her poorness or richness is not of any significance, and the spectator is meant to solely experience the character's trauma. The point, however, is that her status plays a significant role in what she is going through. Towards the end, the piece turns a spotlight on an impoverished woman receiving dreadful treatment. Social factors seem to affect her mental state and her fate. They also impact our identification with the

⁵⁵⁵ Joseph Zubin and Bonnie Springs, "Vulnerability: A New View of Schizophrenia," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 86, no. 2 (1977). In Liem and Liem, "Social Class and Mental Illness Reconsidered: The Role of Economic Stress and Social Support," 145.

individual. The sympathy created is partly the result of our experience of the injustice done to her, which in turn creates uncertainty about how our minds would have reacted under the same circumstances. I believe it can safely be claimed that poor psychiatric treatment and degrading social reactions emphasised by the piece question the assumed stability of our mental states, just as re-experiencing this protagonist's condition is a dramatic feature that challenges the clear-cut separation between sanity and insanity.

Conclusion

A central aim of *The Medium*, I have argued, is to encourage the audience to feel and experience the state of the character and refrain from meticulously inspecting her. This has been done by presenting the reciter's so-called fantasy as a legitimate unreality, separate from the spectators' reality. The unadorned and unaccompanied manner of portrayal and the stage minimalism make this distinction possible. The empty set also acts as the enlargement of the field of expression for the protagonist and puts her in the position of power. This authority, along with the confusion created by her identity changes and vocal switches, further draws the viewers into her fantastical world. As the spectators become more integrated into the show, the dividing line between the two realities gets hazier. The result is the shattering of the common understanding of the soundness of mind.

This heroine is an impactful, dominant figure in causing the dissociation of the listeners' psychological processes. Yet, she is also represented as a marginalised figure, as manifested in her oppressive treatment and in the reduced use of vocal techniques, which silences her. Furthermore, this piece demonstrates a critical view of the adverse link between socioeconomic status and the mad individual's access to care. Considering the attention paid to

therapy in relation to class in the 1980s, the heroine's objection to her treatment could be viewed in connection with her low social standing. The main effect is the condemning of the inferior treatment of the poor and the side effect is increasing the audience's level of identification and sympathy.

Vocality plays its main role in prompting audience participation. This is largely done by focusing on the physicality of the sounds beyond the meaning of the words, destroying definite meaning through sonic, allusive utterances, and the communication of suffering. Sound production in *The Medium*, though a laborious endeavour requiring forceful delivery, does not display a technically radical approach to vocal style. Less complicated extended techniques are used sparsely against a backdrop of tonal and repetitive music. Such usage of vocality is to avoid putting the character on display and making her condition spectacular. The downside of this, however, is the silencing and normalisation of madness.

As mentioned, an important function of voice in this piece is the obfuscation of identity. The sounds of the drama, sometimes not clear as coming from within or outside the character or being altogether symbolic allusions, obscure who she is and to whom she speaks. Identity, being an ever-shifting concept itself, is here made overly volatile. In a way similar to *Erwartung*, voice no longer communicates a 'stable identity', 'rather [it] articulate[s] (deliberately) futile attempts at constructing coherence which is clearly documented in [its] non-linear, anti narrative formal design'.⁵⁵⁶ The uncertainty of space and place also adds to the vagueness in *The Medium*, in the same way as in *Erwartung*. The audience members' minds, as a result, fluctuate between different identities and are freed to get lost in the imaginary

⁵⁵⁶ Christian Utz, "The Rediscovery of Presence," in *Vocal Music and Contemporary Identities*, eds. Christian Utz and Frederick Lau (New York: Routledge, 2013), 46–47.

events presented to them. *The Medium*'s connection to *Erwartung* has been noted by scholars, and this piece, along with Berio's *Visage* (1961) and Francis Poulenc's *La Voix Humaine* (1958), has been identified as a single-voice dramatic work descending from Schoenberg's piece.⁵⁵⁷

Unlike Williams, who proposes that only at the end of the drama do we encounter the possibility that the character might be schizophrenic,⁵⁵⁸ I suggest that we have our doubts about her mental state from the very beginning for, as Paul Griffiths also reckons, 'right from the start she behaves oddly'.⁵⁵⁹ Her identity, and along with it her mental state, is always temporarily disclosed only to be contradicted one moment later. It is recurrently and intentionally altered, revised, and remodelled. In formulating such a reading, I draw on Derrida's concept of the deferral of meaning embedded in the idea of *différance*.

Différance relates simultaneously to 'difference as distinction, inequality, or discernibility' and deferral, signifying 'the action of putting off until later, [...] a detour, a delay, a relay, a reserve'.⁵⁶⁰ In *The Medium*, the explanation of the character's mental state is repeatedly deferred, as her identity is regularly reconstructed. We are, thus, constantly kept in a state of suspense, waiting for the next disclosure to come. This feature is crucial for listeners' participation in the drama, as the hesitation, the delay, and the lingering carry them with the flow of the events.

In fact, this piece stands apart from similar representations of madwomen by means of involving and including the audience and obscuring the sanity-

⁵⁵⁷ Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound*, 39.

⁵⁵⁸ Williams, "Madness in the Music Theatre Works of Peter Maxwell Davies," 93.

⁵⁵⁹ Paul Griffiths, "The Medium, Programme Note," *Max Opus*, accessed August 9, 2019, <http://web.archive.org/web/20171019200944/http://www.maxopus.com/index.aspx>.

⁵⁶⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 1972. Trans. Alan Bass (Reprint, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 2, 8.

insanity divide. The protagonist of *The Medium* is much less alienated when compared to the madwomen of *Erwartung*, Britten's *Curlew River* (1964), or even to Davies's own Miss Donnithorne. Schoenberg's piece is more about the expression of the psyche and removing the distance between the character's inner and outer worlds than about removing the distance between her and the audience. While the medium's fantasies are presented as a 'legitimate reality', the perception and experiences of *Erwartung*'s heroine, including, for instance, taking a tree trunk for the beloved's body, come across as delusions of a sick mind. *Curlew River*'s Madwoman, appearing to the words 'You mock me', also remains a figure of derision for a large part of the opera. These portrayals of madwomen are largely estranging compared to Davies's piece. This feature of *The Medium* aids the listeners' experience of the protagonist's mental journey, which seems to be the main objective of the piece.

It even appears that Davies is trying, in *Miss Donnithorne*, to criticise the representation of madwomen and to portray in *The Medium* how this sort of representation should be carried out. The woman in *The Medium* is an individual, not a symbol for a category. Even though the cause of mental instability seems to be emotional trauma, it is not the lost love cliché; her story is unique. She does not give the impression of being foolish or sentimental. She is instead powerful and authoritative, as she plays with the minds of the audience and criticises her treatment. However, before attending to this distinctive and individual experience of madness, Davies had explored it in the collective form in *The Lighthouse*, the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 5

The Lighthouse

A Tale of Collective Madness

Introduction

Davies moved to the Orkney Islands of Scotland in 1974 and lived a solitary life in close proximity to the sea. This relocation was so significant that Justin Vickers describes it as the determinant of 'Davies's future compositional voice'. From this point on, the sounds of the sea came to be special for the composer and were heard abundantly in his works.⁵⁶¹ *The Lighthouse* (1979), an opera written five years after Davies's move to Orkney, illustrates the strong influence of the sea both sonically and thematically. This piece is in fact the product of Davies's long-held concern with the topic of madness and his comparatively newer interest in the Orcadian landscape. The seminality of the islands' culture, however, has overshadowed the significance of madness in the opera.

The Lighthouse is a chamber opera in a prologue and one act with a libretto by Davies himself. It is inspired by Craig Mair's book on the Stevenson family, who were famous for designing and engineering lighthouses in Scotland.⁵⁶² Based on a real incident in 1900, the opera sketches out the story of the disappearance of three lighthouse keepers and leaves it open-ended, providing no solution to the mystery of their fates. The Flannan Isles Lighthouse is renamed Fladda in the piece, out of consideration for the keepers' families.⁵⁶³

⁵⁶¹ Vickers, "Peter Maxwell Davies's Variations on a Theme: A Catalog of the Sea Works," 644.

⁵⁶² Craig Mair, *Star for Seamen: Stevenson Family of Engineers* (London: John Murray Publishers, 1978).

⁵⁶³ Peter Maxwell Davies, "The Lighthouse, Composer's Note," in *The Lighthouse* (London: Chester Music, 2000).

Commissioned by the Edinburgh Festival, this work was first performed in September 1980 with the Fires of London, conducted by Richard Dufallo and directed by David William. Three singers play all the roles:

Tenor (keeper named Sandy, first officer)

Baritone (keeper named Blazes, second officer)

Bass (keeper named Arthur, third officer, Voice of the Cards)

The opera opens with three officers testifying in court about their journey, 'with provisions and the relief', to a lighthouse strangely empty of its occupants.⁵⁶⁴

The same three men play the final night of the keepers. At some point they also become the relief keepers who were meant to replace the original keepers, and they seem to act as narrators or the judge at the beginning and ending of the opera as well.

Davies's musical style in this piece and during this period in general is closely tied to the Orcadian landscape and, especially, seascape. He recreates the sounds of the sea sonically and confesses to mapping 'the pieces he writes onto the topography of the daily walks he takes with his dog'.⁵⁶⁵ In this work we hear piccolo evoking birds, marimba creating the murmur of the sea, and strings bringing to mind the lapping of waves onto the shore. The howling winds, the advancing fog, and the darkness of deep waters are also strongly felt through music. The impact of Orkney's history and mythology on this opera is profound, tying it to the composer's earlier one, *The Martyrdom of St Magnus* (1976).

Davies was also highly influenced by the Scottish poet George MacKay Brown at this time, and wrote this libretto in a style similar to his. This composition is

⁵⁶⁴ Davies, *The Lighthouse* (London: Chester Music, 2000), 3.

⁵⁶⁵ In conversation with Tom Service. Tom Service, "A guide to Peter Maxwell Davies's music," *The Guardian*, August 20, 2012, accessed May 9, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/music/tomserviceblog/2012/aug/20/peter-maxwell-davies-music-guide>.

still Expressionist and emotional like his 1960s pieces, but pastiche and musical quotations are less central and are used to a lesser extent.⁵⁶⁶ Vocality here does not come anywhere near Davies's previously discussed works in terms of extreme techniques.

According to Mike Seabrook, *The Lighthouse* is 'one of the most popular and frequently performed operas by any composer of the twentieth century'.⁵⁶⁷ Paul Driver also counts it 'among the most successful British operas since Britten's *Peter Grimes*'.⁵⁶⁸ But in spite of the triumph of its many productions, not much has been written about it. There is no work solely devoted to this opera. It is discussed sometimes among Davies's 'Sea Works' as in the case of Vickers's note;⁵⁶⁹ sometimes among a certain director's stagings, as in the case of Ron Jenkins's article on Peter Sellars's creations;⁵⁷⁰ and sometimes among a body of twentieth-century compositions that resemble each other in particular musical and contextual aspects, as in Istvan Anhalt's essay.⁵⁷¹ The literature on this piece is mainly either brief or descriptive.

The principal reason for this scant attention is probably Davies's change of musical style following his move to Orkney. After this transition, his main

⁵⁶⁶ John Warnaby, "Davies, Peter Maxwell," *Grove Music Online*, accessed April 15, 2015, http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/subscriber/article/grove/music/07299?q=Maxwell+Davies&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit.

⁵⁶⁷ Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 178.

⁵⁶⁸ Paul Driver, "The Lighthouse and Malmo Symphony Orchestra," *The Sunday Times*, March 22, 2009, accessed April 5, 2018, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-lighthouse-and-malmo-symphony-orchestra-tkcznrc5t3b>.

⁵⁶⁹ Vickers, "Peter Maxwell Davies's Variations on a Theme: A Catalog of the Sea Works."

⁵⁷⁰ Peter Sellars directed a production of *The Lighthouse* in 1983. Ron Jenkins, "Peter Sellars, Interviewed, with an Afterword by Ron Jenkins," *Theatre Journal* 15 (1984).

⁵⁷¹ Istvan Anhalt, "Music: Context, Text, Counter-Text," *Contemporary Music Review* 5, no. 1 (1989).

concern was to connect with the local population and to adopt a musical language more easily comprehensible for the general public. This would mean 'less emphasis on innovation or experimentation'. As a result, critics regard most of his Orkney works as inferior to the works produced in the 1960s and 1970s.⁵⁷² There also seems to be a tendency to discuss Davies's Orkney-related works as a group, not paying each individual one the consideration it deserves.

The Lighthouse's similarities with Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* might also be a factor in its neglect. Both works revolve around the experience of socially isolated individuals, feature a strong connection with the sea, and contain the theme of madness. In spite of the popularity of *The Lighthouse*, scholars might not have been too dazzled by Davies's rendition of concerns similar to those that were so artistically explored in *Peter Grimes*. *The Lighthouse* has also been compared with Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* (1954), a chamber opera featuring a ghost story. Driver, though acknowledging the appeal of the opera later, writes of its first performance at the Edinburgh Festival, 'It did not, I feel, achieve sufficient dramatic cogency to warrant the comparisons with *The Turn of the Screw* that could be overheard afterwards'.⁵⁷³

Even though researchers have pointed to the presence of delusion and derangement as major themes, *The Lighthouse* has not been considered part of Davies's oeuvre on madness and is rarely discussed alongside other works concerning the theme. However, the opera not only profoundly engages the topic, but also tackles it in a unique manner. *The Lighthouse* interrogates the

⁵⁷² Warnaby, "Davies, Peter Maxwell," *Grove Music Online*, accessed April 15, 2015, http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/subscriber/article/grove/music/07299?q=Maxwell+Davies&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit.

⁵⁷³ Paul Driver, "The Lighthouse," *Tempo*, no. 135 (1980): 46.

theme of humans' collective experiences, and explores how the same source might cause the simultaneous derangement of a group of people. The piece strives to illustrate that similar circumstances can create shared mental and emotional states. It also plays with the collective delusion of viewers through the circular construction of the story, regular displacement of the order of events, the swift role-changing of characters, and lighting instructions.

The weight placed on the collective aspect of madness puts this piece in contrast with Davies's *The Medium*. Whereas the monodrama deals with the protagonist's psychological state and each spectator's understanding of it, the opera stresses humans' shared experiences. It is certainly controversial to claim, as Tom Sutcliffe does, that 'the point of the theatre is, after all, what happens in the minds of the audience', but it is even more problematic to treat audiences as a collective crowd.⁵⁷⁴ Individuals vary on different levels and it is highly ambitious to try to influence them in a similar fashion. I will attempt to shed light on the tools that the opera employs to address what is shared rather than what is individual. This approach is taken not only for the spectators but also with regard to the characters and other aspects of the opera in general. Even the names of the characters—Sandy, Blazes, and Arthur—call earth, fire, and air to mind. These three elements along with water, which sets the atmosphere, symbolise the constitution of the universe as a whole.⁵⁷⁵ Collectivity manifested in form, state, action, response, and the like is the heart of this opera.

⁵⁷⁴ Tom Sutcliffe, *Believing in Opera* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), 4.

⁵⁷⁵ Mark Valencia, "Review: The Lighthouse," *WhatsOnStage*, November 4, 2017, accessed January 29, 2018, http://www.whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/reviews/review-the-lighthouse-hackney-showroom_45059.html.

Collectivity and Ambiguity: Story Overview

Similar to Davies's earlier opera *Taverner* (1968), *The Lighthouse* starts in a courtroom. The three officers of the Lighthouse Commission boat respond to wordless questions asked by the orchestra's horn, which is placed at the back, among the audience.⁵⁷⁶ The officers describe their journey to the lighthouse amid fog, wind, and tidal flows. Confused and terrified, they provide dissimilar accounts of what they had witnessed.

The story takes on a mythical dimension when they each claim to have seen 'three black selkies', 'three great scarfs' and 'three black gibbies' around the lighthouse.⁵⁷⁷ When finally entering the lighthouse, the officers again give contradictory versions of the uncanny situation there. All three men, though, agree that there was no trace of the lighthouse keepers. As the prologue closes, the characters announce the recording of an open verdict of death by misadventure. Spectators learn that the lighthouse is now automatic because no one dares to live in a place haunted by ghosts. At this point 'the lighthouse itself flashes its automatic signal, [gradually becoming brighter], to a rhythm which is reflected in the orchestra'.⁵⁷⁸

The main act, 'The Cry of the Beast', takes place entirely inside the lighthouse. The three keepers are at a table. Arthur, the devout Christian, annoys Blazes by insisting on being grateful to God, under conditions that are not at all pleasing to the latter. As tension mounts between the two, Sandy interferes by asking Blazes to play a game of Crib with him. While they play,

⁵⁷⁶ Davies, "The Lighthouse, Composer's Note," *Max Opus*, accessed August 9, 2019, <http://web.archive.org/web/20171019200944/http://www.maxopus.com/index.aspx>.

⁵⁷⁷ Davies, *The Lighthouse*, 28.

⁵⁷⁸ Davies, "The Lighthouse, Composer's Note," *Max Opus*, accessed August 9, 2019, <http://web.archive.org/web/20171019200944/http://www.maxopus.com/index.aspx>.

Arthur acts as Voice of the Cards, speaking of chaos, destruction, and a corrupt God. The game does not last long, as Sandy accuses Blazes of cheating. This time Arthur (now as one of the keepers) tries to intervene. Realising that the situation may get completely out of hand, Sandy suggests singing songs to change the mood.

Blazes starts a ballad, accompanied by violin and banjo. His song reveals that he has robbed and killed a woman at the age of eleven. Sandy sings a love song with cello and an out-of-tune upright piano. It is seemingly innocent, but strangely does not disclose much about his life. The mysteriousness is boosted by the other two characters irregularly repeating his words of affection 'inwardly'.⁵⁷⁹ When Arthur's turn comes, he sings a religious hymn supported by brass and clarinet. It describes the Israelites' worship of the Golden Calf and the 'jealous' God's subsequent revenge, leading to massive death. According to him, the Golden Calf, which was burnt to dust, will come back to life and the only way to save humanity would be for it to 'break asunder'.

A short while after, the fog gets thicker and Arthur starts the foghorn. In this piece, as David Beard suggests, the horn is a 'recurring [device] that connote[s] underlying tension'.⁵⁸⁰ The keepers grow more distressed by the tempestuous sea. Blazes imagines seeing the ghost of the murdered woman. It is implied that Sandy might have committed an indecent act with his sister and a 'boy at the manse', whose spirit has come to take him. Arthur sees the Golden Calf appearing. The room is filled with spirits.

Arthur asserts that they have to kill the beastly animal and they all plea to God to spare them from his anger and save them from the spirit, now seen as

⁵⁷⁹ Davies, *The Lighthouse*, 99.

⁵⁸⁰ David Beard, "Taverner: An Interpretation," in *Peter Maxwell Davies Studies*, eds. Kenneth Gloag and Nicholas Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 104.

'the Antichrist'. An overwhelming brightness emerges, blinding the audience. In this dazzle the keepers become the officers and the Beast's eyes appear as possibly the lights of a ship.⁵⁸¹

Towards the end of the piece, the characters, acting as officers, order the relief keepers to leave, but then 're-enter as the three relief-keepers' themselves. They are 'obscure and phantasmal' and take positions identical to the original lighthouse keepers, around the same table.⁵⁸² The opening scene is thus recreated with the same dialogue. After the repeated dialogue, Davies instructs the band to take up 'the repeated rhythm of the "automatic" signal from the end of the prologue'.⁵⁸³ This suggests a repetition of the story, starting with the keepers at the table, ending with the automatic lighthouse, and skipping the middle. The lantern flashes and the automatic signal becomes increasingly brighter, cutting 'the final rimshot' at its brightest.⁵⁸⁴ The flashing of this signal while the relief keepers are present poses the possibility that, as Davies asserts, 'We have been watching a play of ghosts in a lighthouse abandoned and boarded up for eighty years'.⁵⁸⁵

Many hints of collectivity and instances of ambiguity can be detected in the story. Three people living in similar conditions go missing simultaneously. All three have a shady past, which manifests itself in the form of haunting ghosts and flashbacks in their songs. There are three sets of characters—the keepers, the officers, and the relief crew—but all eventually appear to be the same. Whose story are we really being told? The Beast's eyes and the lights of the

⁵⁸¹ Davies, *The Lighthouse*, 139.

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*, 142.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 144, 147.

⁵⁸⁵ Davies, "The Lighthouse, Composer's Note."

relief crew are also the same. Which one is real and which one is an illusion? Also, who is the judge in the story: the horn asking questions or the characters announcing the verdict? The opera also has some mythical and prehistoric aspects in its reference to fantastical creatures seen by the officers and in the story of the Golden Calf. Does this signify the shared origin of humans and their ancient collective past? Furthermore, the temporal loop of the story suggests that the audience might be collectively deluded. Does positioning the horn among the viewers place them in the story and link them with the characters in any way?

Moreover, we are not told what happens to each set of characters. Andrew Clements believes that the officers 'imply that they have been attacked by the deranged men and were forced to kill them'.⁵⁸⁶ David Beard perceives that the three lighthouse keepers transform into 'hysterical wrecks'.⁵⁸⁷ Christopher Fox reckons that the lead characters of this opera are 'the victims of forces larger than themselves', unlike, for instance, the mad King, who is demolished by his 'own inner contradictions'.⁵⁸⁸ Fox's interpretation is perhaps prompted by the supernatural elements of the story, including the Golden Calf, the ghosts, and the Antichrist.

The Antichrist is particularly significant, as it is a recurring subject in Davies's oeuvre. In *The Lighthouse* it is a figure feared by the characters and, similar to many other works of Davies, denotes destruction and deception. When the dancer of *Vesalii Icones* (1969) is revealed to be the Antichrist,

⁵⁸⁶ Andrew Clements, "Lighthouse, The," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Reference, 1997), 1265.

⁵⁸⁷ Beard, "Taverner: An Interpretation," 79.

⁵⁸⁸ Fox, "Sir Peter Maxwell Davies: A Personal Reflection," 80.

audiences learn that they have worshipped an imposter, a bearer of disaster.⁵⁸⁹ Inspired by the myth of the fake double of Christ maligning Christian values, Davies wrote a concert overture entitled *Antechrist* (1967) as well. The Antichrist's connection with dishonesty is also manifested in the performance of a concert in 1973 entitled 'Triumph of Antichrist', which included 'a series of images which are "infiltrated" or "corrupted" from within', in Davies's words.⁵⁹⁰ Additionally, Davies's opera *Taverner* is thematically centred on spiritual betrayal by the Antichrist. I will argue that the deceptiveness of the Antichrist in *The Lighthouse* is mainly linked with the idea of shared delusion, one aspect of collectivity that this opera emphasises. The unfolding of this argument will be evident later in the chapter.

In what follows, I investigate how *The Lighthouse* plays with the mental state of the audience by presenting contradictory versions of the events. I shall also look into the effect of unusual treatments of the audience, such as blinding the audience by excessive light or placing the orchestra's French horn at the back of the playhouse. These instructions challenge the absolute division between reality and illusion, absence and presence, and actors and spectators. The opera's engagement with the theme of collectivity will be discussed in three major sections concerning multi-roling, the use of flashbacks, and lighting instructions. To further explicate my interpretation, I will close by providing a theoretical framework for the piece's emphasis on traits and settings that cause analogous psychological states among humans, and even initiate collective action.

⁵⁸⁹ Burden, "A Foxtrot to the Crucifixion: The Music Theatre of Peter Maxwell Davies," 58.

⁵⁹⁰ Programme note to the 1973 Fires of London concert, 'The Triumph of Antichrist', quoted in Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies*, 56.

Multi-roling

Different roles played by the same character generally suggest that we might be dealing with a case of multiple identities. In this opera, the same actors play the keepers and the officers. We know that the situation at the lighthouse was not ideal for its keepers. At the beginning of the main act, Blazes complains about having been trapped there for too long and having had to eat the most awful meals. His irritation with Arthur's dutiful gratitude in such misery and the clash between him and Sandy over the game of Crib also imply a level of edginess in the air. Fear of the rough sea probably adds to the sensation of anxiety. Thus, one possibility is that we are provided with a snapshot of the situation at the lighthouse where the keepers, engrossed in an imaginary scenario about what could happen to them, envision themselves as officers arriving after their own death. The situation Anhalt describes as 'confinement, a measure of sensory hunger [...] together with a high level of psychic tension', could be said to have induced this illusion.⁵⁹¹ Thus, this role-changing potentially characterises the keepers as unbalanced.

However, the three men also act as narrators, by directly addressing the audience. Additionally, they return to the scene as relief keepers towards the end. If we assume that these personages are the product of the keepers' imagination, then the role-changing offers them temporary liberation. The officer masks allow them to overcome the lack of contact with the outside world and the isolation imposed by their location, narration empowers them to bridge the communication gap with society, and their role as relief keepers enables them to stay optimistic about the arrival of a replacement crew. The fact that the opera uses the same set design to represent different places contributes to the

⁵⁹¹ Anhalt, "Music: Context, Text, Counter-Text," 110.

converging of these roles into one.⁵⁹² The swift role-changing, not leaving much room for costume change, strengthens the effect.

Multiple role-playing in this opera also conveys that adverse conditions can impact a group of people in a similar fashion. This is highlighted most directly by the keepers being collectively affected. But it is also demonstrated when the officers re-enter as the replacement crew and imitate the original keepers. It is as if the relief keepers, the officers, or anyone for that matter would have behaved exactly the same under the same circumstances. The mirroring at the end emphasises the resemblance of mental and behavioural states of distinct personalities under similar conditions, and presents quarrelling and seeing ghosts as symbolic possible reactions. Are these responses also shown as conceivable from the audience members? This can only be the case if the viewers' role is not fixed and they are not completely removed from the events of the story.

Undermining the precision of roles is a feature that indeed extends to the audience, mainly via the orchestra's horn.⁵⁹³ By means of questioning the officers, the horn represents a member of the court, and by its position among the audience, it acts as a member of their group. It thus obscures the distinction between the audience and court members. The horn also dissolves the solid line between characters and viewers by means of location. Through their link to the horn, viewers watching the opera are at the same time placed in the

⁵⁹² Davies, "The Lighthouse, Composer's Note."

⁵⁹³ Scholars have emphasised the uncertainty brought about by multiple roles. See the following:

Bill Naismith, "Commentary," in *Top Girls*, ed. Caryl Churchill (London: Methuen, 2009), iii;
Janis Balodis in personal email communication with Elspeth Tilley, in Elspeth Tilley, "Different Kinds of Doubling: Comparing Some Uses of Character Doubling in The Ghosts Trilogy by Janis Baldois, and The Captive by Ben Ellis," *Australian Drama Studies* 60 (2012): 59.

courtroom. Moreover, the association of the horn with the audience extends all the roles that the horn takes on to them. One of these roles is the fog-warning siren. When the fog gets thick in the middle of the main act and Arthur is instructed to send a signal, we notice that the foghorn is actually played by the offstage horn. As such, the warning message is sent from among the audience members. They are collectively transferred to the Fladda Lighthouse and become watchers on top of a lookout tower.

One could argue that the horn does not really ask questions and the setting of the courtroom is really the same as the lighthouse. This would mean that the judge is also the product of the characters' imaginations. Hence, the audience, by means of association, could also be the product of the characters' imaginations. Identities seem utterly indeterminate. This opera, as Anhalt puts it, leaves us 'with an unequivocal implication regarding the notion of an unalterable generic ambiguity being inherent in *all* men'.⁵⁹⁴ Instead of viewers possibly watching a story about ghosts in a lighthouse, they might be treated as delusions of the characters seen on the stage. This is reminiscent of Ridley Scott's 1982 film *Blade Runner*, in which the lead character, in charge of detecting bioengineered humans, encounters the possibility that he himself might be a synthetic being.

The orchestra's horn further links the audience with the protagonists via one of the characters, namely Arthur. He is the one whose song is accompanied by the horn and he is in charge of starting the foghorn. By referring to 'the cry of the Beast' immediately after sounding the horn, he implies an association between the two.⁵⁹⁵ Not long after, he adopts 'characteristics of the Beast'

⁵⁹⁴ Anhalt, "Music: Context, Text, Counter-Text," 121. Italics in the original.

⁵⁹⁵ Davies, *The Lighthouse*, 111.

himself.⁵⁹⁶ The audience, the horn, Arthur, and the Beast thus merge into one. We too are evil, as the horn that represents the cry of the Beast is one of us.

Furthermore, Arthur's personification of the Beast denotes that his piety is a sham. More generally, he exemplifies fraud. Richard McGregor identifies his song, 'This be thy God, oh Israel', as 'the mock Victorian gospel song', hinting at its fabricated nature.⁵⁹⁷ Our connection to Arthur through the horn means that we are also simultaneously victims and hypocrites. Broadly speaking, the horn blurs the distinction between watchers and players. The audience, Arthur, and consequently the officers and relief keepers merge into one. It is thus conceivable for all to have a similar mental and emotional experience under similar circumstances.

The horn breaks the dividing line between 'cast and audience', as well as 'voice and orchestra' and 'word and music'. Such shattering of distinctions seems to have been endorsed and advocated around this time by composers such as Luigi Nono. In a book entitled *Texte, Studien zu seiner Musik* (1975), Nono vigorously denounces traditional opera for clearly separating these performance parameters.⁵⁹⁸ As Paul Griffiths points out though, 'abolishing the barrier between pit and stage' by involving the musicians is an earlier practice observable in pieces such as Henri Pousseur's *Votre Faust* (1961–68).⁵⁹⁹

In *The Lighthouse*, multiple identities also take a psychologically significant dimension if we consider that guilt is vital to the understanding of the story. The characters are described as 'consumed by memories of past guilts and

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., 130.

⁵⁹⁷ McGregor, "The Persistence of Parody in the Music of Peter Maxwell Davies."

⁵⁹⁸ The reference to Nono is made in Griffiths, *Modern Music: The Avant Garde since 1945*, 256.

⁵⁹⁹ Griffiths, *Modern Music: The Avant Garde since 1945*, 258–59.

obsessions'⁶⁰⁰ and driven to 'guilty desperation' by the ghosts they see.⁶⁰¹ The plot is also defined as the story of 'guilt, obsession and demonic vision' invented by the officers 'to explain to themselves the riddle of the empty lighthouse'.⁶⁰² According to Otto Rank, guilt can force an individual to refuse 'to accept the responsibility for certain actions of his ego, but to place it upon another ego, a double'. Doubling, he argues, is a reflection of an inner unrest creating an 'inner division and projection'.⁶⁰³ Some roles in the opera could thus be viewed as reflections of the guilty ego of the characters.

Griffiths suggests that since the officers are the ones who play the final hours of the keepers, and they too have been long secluded in the sea, what they demonstrate might well be a reflection of 'their own personalities and relationships' rather than that of the keepers.⁶⁰⁴ Therefore, it is not implausible to propose that the keepers are a reflection of the guilty ego of the officers (or vice versa). In the case of Arthur, his impersonation of the Beast could be read as a reflection of his own guilty ego. This would be a doubling of the double, crisscrossing the boundaries between the real and the imaginary even more. The theme of collectivity is exhibited in the shared experience of the officers, which leads all of them to create a double. It is also observable in the perception of the keepers, for whom the guilty past becomes haunting, as well as that of the viewers, who are uncertain about what is real. The fate of the keepers has also been described as either 'collective [...] suicide by drowning'

⁶⁰⁰ Jenkins, "Peter Sellars, Interviewed, with an Afterword by, Ron Jenkins," 51.

⁶⁰¹ Davies, "The Lighthouse, Composer's Note."

⁶⁰² Paul Griffiths, "Ghosts at Sea, Programme Note," 2001, *Max Opus*, accessed August 9, 2019, <http://web.archive.org/web/20171019200944/http://www.maxopus.com/index.aspx>.

⁶⁰³ Otto Rank, "Narcissism and the Double," in *Essential Papers on Literature and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Emanuel Berman (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 126.

⁶⁰⁴ Griffiths, "Ghosts at Sea, Programme Note."

or a murder by 'the relief crew', which again emphasises collectivity in action.⁶⁰⁵

Elsbeth Tilley has argued that 'when actors cross ethnic, class, gender, age or other boundaries to achieve doubled or multiple characterisation within a single performance, they can effectively expose or problematise those boundaries' constructedness'.⁶⁰⁶ This opera does not seem concerned with such boundaries of gender, class, etc., but plays with the clear-cut separation of 'real and spectral',⁶⁰⁷ natural and supernatural, actors and audiences, and sanity and insanity. All these functions though, seem to be at the service of emphasising collectivity. It is demonstrated, via secondary and tertiary identities, that we are all 'inherently, through our drives, vacillations, ambivalences in our minds at least, victims and aggressors, the accused, the witness and the judge, singly and all together at the same time'.⁶⁰⁸

It needs to be emphasised that different roles in the opera are not discernible through any meaningful musical marker. The only time that the characters sound different is when they sing their songs. Sandy's love song, Blazes's ballad, and Arthur's hymn are not to be mixed up with each other. However, at times of musical clarity, ambiguity is introduced by other means. For instance, Arthur and Blazes sing Sandy's song in first person, leaving the point of reference unclear. Vocal range is also another means of distinction. For example, the third officer is a baritone and we hear the same voice whenever he speaks. But then we cannot vocally distinguish him from Arthur and the Voice of the Cards. The manner of singing is not particularly different when

⁶⁰⁵ McGregor, "Walking the Line: Deconstructing Identity, Suicide and Betrayal in Peter Maxwell Davies's *Mr Emmet Takes a Walk*," 321.

⁶⁰⁶ Tilley, "Different Kinds of Doubling: Comparing Some Uses of Character Doubling in *The Ghosts Trilogy*, by Janis Baldois, and *The Captive* by Ben Ellis," 56.

⁶⁰⁷ Griffiths, "Ghosts at Sea, Programme Note."

⁶⁰⁸ Anhalt "Music: Context, Text, Counter-Text," 111.

roles change, and at the end the relief crew virtually copy the original keepers. In this piece, the distinctive qualities that give humans their individuality and uniqueness are pushed to the periphery.

The Use of Flashback

In *The Lighthouse* flashbacks are used as a psychological tool to disclose the personalities of the characters, mainly through their songs. Davies asserts that the songs 'might be taken as an indication of the inner character and history of the singers'⁶⁰⁹ and Griffiths confirms that 'each character holds his song as a lifeline into his past and as an authentic expression of his personality'.⁶¹⁰ This expression of psyche includes insecurities and disturbances that are not fully known to the protagonists, and only appear in their final hallucinations, "bursting" forth through the thin surface of resistance'.⁶¹¹ Thus, hints of mental instability already evident in the flashbacks presented in the songs, become more perceptible in the protagonists' phantasmic visions at the end. Collective delusion results from the same cause for all three: guilt complexes rooted in their past.

For Sandy and Blazes, flashbacks come in the form of bygone experiences and reveal their respective shady eroticism and violence. Their memories haunt them till the end, making them extremely unsettled. For Arthur the effect is subtler. He does not speak of an experience or a memory. The insight into his personality and hidden aggression is more symbolic and comes from a reference to the story of the Golden Calf. In Arthur's story, God is jealous and orders the sons of Levi, who did not worship the Golden Calf, to slay others who did. The Golden Calf is also guaranteed to return and destroy all there is.

⁶⁰⁹ Davies, "The Lighthouse, Composer's Note."

⁶¹⁰ Griffiths, "Ghosts at Sea, Programme Note."

⁶¹¹ Anhalt, "Music: Context, Text, Counter-Text," 111.

This, as Davies mentions, is 'a projection into God's will and bible history of [Arthur's] own boundless and unexpressed aggression'.⁶¹² The main point, however, is that Arthur is not occupied by a personal recollection, but is rather engrossed in an ancient time that he has not experienced first-hand. His hymn is concerned with a general collective past, whereby a group of people jointly turn their backs on their God and make the communal sin of worshipping a fraudulent idol—and are thus collectively punished. We are here dealing with collective sin and punishment symbolising a personal complex. The choice of Arthur for this symbolism is compelling, as he is the one who has the strongest association with the audience members through the horn. The instrument, as mentioned, is linked to viewers by its position and with Arthur as the figure who is represented by it and is in charge of it. The implied hidden message is that comparable causes could lie beneath the psychoses in all humans.

Flashbacks also function as dramaturgical devices that create structural disruption and delude the audience with respect to the state of affairs and the identity of the protagonists. Going back and forth in time does not necessarily create confusion, but in this opera we are confronted with flashbacks within flashbacks. Whose flashbacks we are witnessing is also sometimes kept vague. The story begins with officers in the courtroom, so most of the main act seems to be a flashback of the events that happened at the lighthouse. Within this flashback though, there is, for instance, a transition to Sandy's earlier romance. It is sometimes portrayed as if occurring at that very moment. 'I am transported by your charms,' he sings.⁶¹³ This flashback within a flashback becomes especially perplexing and unsettling when we realise that the story is not being told solely from Sandy's perspective. The other two keepers later sing along as

⁶¹² Davies, "The Lighthouse, Composer's Note."

⁶¹³ Davies, *The Lighthouse*, 97.

if they had the exact same experience. Moreover, in the main act we constantly travel between flashbacks that are presented as the officers' perception and flashbacks that cannot be so, as the three men claim to not be in possession of those facts.

The delusional quality of the work is to some extent due to the fact that the evidence given by the officers cannot be trusted. Their contradictory accounts and their 'fantastical imaginings of evil during a "flashback" to the lighthouse'⁶¹⁴ in the prologue mean that what they describe might itself be an illusion or an invention. Are these events really flashbacks at all? By the end of the prologue spectators are bewildered enough as to what really happened to be receptive to any imaginary scenario.

When the main act begins with the same actors in different roles and with the same set as another place, recognising the flashbacks becomes even more problematic. It takes longer and is more difficult to accept that we are witnessing a flashback when we are not aided by new actors to take on the role of the keepers and a new design to stage the lighthouse. Furthermore, if the events presented are flashbacks, why do we see, at the end, three keepers at a lighthouse that we were told is abandoned and empty? Flashbacks, which are meant to provide background information, also raise new questions here.

The main act is most disturbing because it begins and ends with the same scene, in the same manner, making the present obscure and crushing our sense of ending and beginning. The events at the lighthouse can be thought of as a loop with the potential to be repeated many times. The dialogues are the same and the lantern flashes the automatic signal in the same manner just before the main act and at the end of it. The circularity of events makes it

⁶¹⁴ Paul Griffiths, "The Lighthouse, Short Note," 2011, *Max Opus*, accessed August 9, 2019, <http://web.archive.org/web/20171019200944/http://www.maxopus.com/index.aspx>.

difficult to identify the flashbacks and their timing. The effect is bemusing and disorienting to the audience. This confusion seems to be the general dominant effect of the use of flashbacks in this manner and is unlikely to depend much on the personal engagement of each spectator with the flashbacks.

This opera, like many others, 'blatantly disregards the logic of time and place'.⁶¹⁵ It explores the confounding dimensions of flashbacks and uses them as a functional device to portray the transient quality associated with the characters and their 'ephemeral' appearance at the end. This is fundamental to the work's ability to play collectively with the mindset of the audience.

Lighting

Lighting in this opera is closely tied to the highlights of the story, and most of the dramatic turning points are accompanied by specific lighting states, including flashing light, dazzling light, dim light, increasing or decreasing brightness, moving light, and coloured light. In spite of this delineating guidance, many conventional functions of light, such as creating a sense of location or passage of time, remain unused. Lighting cues (specifically those spelt out by the composer) do not help us understand where the actions take place or the order of the incidents. Rather, they seem intended to loosen our mental grasp on these matters. For instance, the actions in the prologue take place inside a courtroom, on the relief vessel, and on the lighthouse doorsteps, but Davies demands that a lighthouse light shines out throughout.⁶¹⁶ This certainly plays with our understanding of place and accentuates the elusiveness of reality. As such, the fragmented structure of the narrative of this story owes much to its use of lighting, which destroys linearity by refusing to offer us

⁶¹⁵ Josef Svoboda, "From the Secret of Theatrical Space," in *Theatre and Performance Design*, eds. Jane Collins and Andrew Nisbet (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 393.

⁶¹⁶ Davies, "The Lighthouse, Composer's Note."

precise locations in which actions take place.

The major aspect of lighting design is the use of flashing lights. They appear four times in this opera. The 'robot lantern' of the lighthouse flashes for the first time at the end of the prologue, right after the officers announce that the lighthouse is dead and deserted.⁶¹⁷ This usage is only apt, as both aspects of the design, namely brightness and pulsation, draw attention to what must be noticed: the empty lighthouse.⁶¹⁸

Research indicates that exposure to flashing lights 'induces faster emotional responses by the perceiver', 'activate[s] an innate state of alert', and is correlated with danger.⁶¹⁹ According to one study of lighting design, flashing lights can be 'disruptive and produce a certain amount of excitement, even tension'.⁶²⁰ This is very much the way they are used in *The Lighthouse*. We were informed earlier in the story that the abandoned lighthouse was infamous for being haunted by 'ghosts [and] echoes'.⁶²¹ As a result, the flashing light of the end of the prologue, just before the main act, readily becomes associated with mystery and spirits. The anxiety created by the undisclosed fate of the keepers, the distress immediately evoked by the mention of ghosts, and the sense of terror communicated by the officers sets the stage for the flashing light to act as a strain-inducing and warning device. This is supported by the music.

⁶¹⁷ Davies, *The Lighthouse*, 64.

⁶¹⁸ Attracting attention is a main function of flashing lights.

Richard H. Palmer, *The Lighting Art: The Aesthetics of Stage Lighting Design* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1994), 19;

Rosella Tomassoni, Giuseppe Galetta, and Eugenia Treglia, "Psychology of Light: How Light Influences the Health and Psyche," *Psychology* 6, no. 10 (2015): 1220.

⁶¹⁹ Tomassoni et al., "Psychology of Light: How Light Influences the Health and Psyche," 1220.

⁶²⁰ Palmer, *The Lighting Art: The Aesthetics of Stage Lighting Design*, 164.

⁶²¹ Davies, *The Lighthouse*, 59.

Davies employs a number of effective musical manoeuvres to deliver an innate state of alert and impending danger. First, the flute and clarinet perform an unrelenting ostinato consisting of short, dissonant notes, which at the close of each bar never seem to fully line up rhythmically. The flute leads the clarinet, which obstinately falls out of time. What disturbs the listener is that the clarinet seems undecided between resolving and forging its own path from the flute. Second, the violin and viola, though less prominent, support the flute rhythmically but provide further tonal dissonance to disturb the listener. Thirdly, the trombone plays without any identifiable rhythmic pattern, preventing the listener from making any sense of its journey. Davies uses dynamic crescendo to great effect on every instrument, but on a trombone in particular it creates a vast difference of timbre. At a softer volume, the tone of the instrument is extremely dark, but then it roars with conviction, warning us that something exciting is happening. Finally, the introduction of timpani and its accompanying crescendo is also effective at building the feeling of alert and danger. As indicated in the score, the light flashes faintly but grows in intensity, and so too does the ensemble volume begin faintly and grow stronger in dynamic intensity. The brightness of the light is alluded to by the volume of the ensemble. Furthermore, while the timpani grow in volume, it also increases in rhythmic frequency. To start, it plays only approximately every three beats, but as it progresses the time between its strikes shortens. The timpani acts like the heartbeat of the orchestra; as its beating quickens, the state of alert and excitement heightens as well (Ex. 5.1). Fear wells up through music and lighting, so audience members are kept on their toes, watchful and anxious, before being presented with the keepers' final night.

Example 5.1. Peter Maxwell Davies, *The Lighthouse*, Section X1 (Chester Music, 2000).

X₁

The score is for Section X1 of *The Lighthouse*. It features the following instruments and parts:

- Fl.** (Flute): Two staves, both with a *cresc.* marking.
- Cl.** (Clarinet): Two staves, both with a *cresc.* marking.
- Tpt.** (Trumpet): Two staves, both with a *cresc.* marking.
- Tbn.** (Trombone): Two staves, both with a *cresc.* marking.
- Mar.** (Maracas): One staff, with a *To Timp.* marking.
- Cel.** (Cello): One staff, with a *cresc.* marking and a *tr* (trill) marking.
- Guit.** (Guitar): One staff, with a *p cresc.* marking.
- Vi.** (Violin): Two staves, both with a *cresc.* marking.
- Vla.** (Viola): Two staves, both with a *cresc.* marking.
- Vlc.** (Violoncello): One staff, with a *p cresc.* marking.
- D.B.** (Double Bass): One staff, with a *p cresc.* marking.

X₁ The lantern of the lighthouse flashes its "automatic" signal, at first very faintly, but slowly increasing in brightness to full strength during the final two bars of the Prologue.

When the same flashing light comes back under similar circumstances at the end of the opera, similar feelings are induced. Yet, this time viewers have heard the story, so the effect is slightly different. The tension and terror associated with the keepers' destiny is reduced, as a sketch (however vague) of

the events has been presented, and it has become apparent that some things are to remain unresolved. Enigma and obscurity thus have the upper hand. The possibility that the keepers are ghosts also mainly arises towards the end and increases confusion. Spectators face the possibility that they have been tricked into believing a delusion. The now-familiar flashing transports them to the end of the prologue and gives whatever happened in between a transitory and ghost-like character. Viewers are back to where they began. It is as if nothing has happened and they dreamt it all.

Musically, repetition of a melody with no particular direction builds the sense of mystery at this stage in the piece. The theme is set by the flute, whose melody disjointedly sits atop the ensemble. Tossing and churning beneath, we hear an asymmetrical cluster of instruments in dissonance. The flute keeps repeating the same theme. However, it is united bit by bit with the other instruments of the ensemble. First to enter is the violin, then the guitar, then the right hand of the piano, then the cello, all doubling the flute and one another in both pitch and rhythm. The effect is that of reinforcement. This strange melody is given more and more power throughout the passage. The trombone provides the countermelody and is joined in unison by the double bass (Ex. 5.2). Like the flute, the trombone's part is now strengthened by this cohesion. A drum roll, starting just before the flute melody, also slowly grows in volume, together with the ensemble. As a unit, the ensemble seems to start and stop, over and over. Where is the theme going? Why does it keep starting and stopping? As the theme is clear, listeners are given something to hold on to aurally. But they are kept puzzled, for there is no explanation on where this melody will go or how long it will keep repeating. The tension is reduced but this reduction does not alleviate the mystery. Instead, it concentrates it into a form that is stronger than

ever.

Example 5.2. Davies, *The Lighthouse*, Sections R2&S2 (excerpts) (Chester Music, 2000).

The musical score is divided into two sections, R2 and S2. Section R2 (top) features a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and sixteenth notes across all instruments. Section S2 (bottom) shows a change in tempo and mood, with a box labeled 'S2' and a note indicating a tempo change from 8/8 to 12/8. The instruments include Flute (Fl.), Guitar (Guit.), Viola (VI.), Violoncello (Vlc.), Piano (Pno.), and Violin (VI.). The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, dynamics (pp, p), and articulation marks.

9

Fl.

Pno.

Guit.

VI.

Vlc.

arco

p

tutti poco a poco cresc. -----

13

Fl.

Pno.

Guit.

VI.

Vlc.

-1- *fff* massima forza

Fl.

Pno.

Guit.

Vi.

Vlc.

The lantern is at its brightest. It cuts on the final rimshot.

The second time that the lantern flashes is considerably different. This time we watch Arthur climbing up the tower to light the lantern. ‘Unseen’, according to the stage directions, he then becomes the Voice of the Cards over his colleagues’ game of Crib.⁶²² Davies requires that this signal be different from the “automatic” one at the end of the Prologue’ and specifies a particular rhythm according to which the light is to flash.⁶²³ Feelings of terror, restlessness, and alarm are again provoked by the flashing light. This effect is not surprising since the pattern and frequency of changing light can immensely influence mood and psychological state.⁶²⁴ More importantly, in contrast to the gradually brightening light of the end of the prologue, the instructions here demand that the light fade out. It completely disappears when the audience hears the Voice of the Cards.

I maintain that the second pulsating light is particularly linked with the character of Arthur. The lantern flashes and then fades out just as Arthur climbs

⁶²² Davies, *The Lighthouse*, 77.

⁶²³ Davies, *The Lighthouse*, 74.

⁶²⁴ Palmer, *The Lighting Art: The Aesthetics of Stage Lighting Design*, 164.

up to the lantern and strangely disappears in the dark (for the Voice of the Cards to emerge). He claims that the lantern beams 'as a light from God across the darkness of sinfulness, to guide even the most depraved Beast towards holy salvation'.⁶²⁵ However, we do not witness a glowing, bright beam of light, but an unstable flashing light that grows dull and eventually dies out. This parallels Arthur's shaky, insincere faith and symbolises his transformation into the Voice of the Cards, which, emerging from the dark, is linked to the 'darkness of sinfulness'.

Like the character of Arthur, the music is also fragile in this passage. It is scattered and generally fainter than before. The strings, which previously played in sync, now play completely out of sync with each other rhythmically. The violin, viola, and cello all play pizzicato, which gives their tone a thin and delicate sensation. The glockenspiel and celeste correspond with the flashing of the light. Every time the light flashes the two instruments perform a rapid sweeping gesture, identical in each iteration. Joining in is the guitar, which plays another single phrase at the start of every flash, with each phrase also identical in each iteration. The choice of the glockenspiel and celeste also seems worthy of note. They are both thin, fragile-sounding instruments which sound only at the top of the register of the ensemble. The only player in the low register is the double bass, whose atonal, widely jumping intervallic part does not offer the listener any strong foundation to rest upon. Conspicuously absent are all brass. In contrast to their previously prominent and strong presence, they are now silent. The flute and clarinet only join in when the light is fading. They enter with long tones, while the violin, viola, and cello disappear (Ex. 5.3).

⁶²⁵ Davies, *The Lighthouse*, 73.

Example 5.3. Davies, *The Lighthouse*, Sections I&J (Chester Music, 2000).

The musical score is divided into three systems, each featuring three staves: Cello (Cel.), Guitar (Guit.), and a rhythmic line for 'rhythm of lantern flashes'. The first system shows the Cello and Guitar parts with dynamic markings 'p dolce' and 'a'. The second system adds the Glockenspiel (Glock.) part, which has a '3' above it, and continues the Cello and Guitar parts. The third system continues the same instruments. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'p dolce', 'a', 'a niente', and 'L.v.'. The rhythmic line for 'rhythm of lantern flashes' is shown in a simplified notation at the bottom of each system.

System 1: Cel., Guit., rhythm of lantern flashes. Dynamics: *p dolce*, *a*.

System 2: Glock., Cel., Guit., rhythm of lantern flashes. Dynamics: *p dolce*, *a*, *L.v.*.

System 3: Glock., Cel., Guit., rhythm of lantern flashes. Dynamics: *a*, *a niente*, *L.v.*. Includes a section marked 'J' with a tempo change '♩ = ♩ (2+2+3)'.

Below the rhythmic line in the third system, the text reads: "Sandy and Blazes start their gam of crib." followed by "(fade).....".

Musically, we are left with only a thin shell, mimicking the fading of the light and of course the character of Arthur. The instruction to be 'unseen' is more than a dramatic tool that actualises a fantastical transformation for the audience. It sharply illustrates the concealing power of light, playing with ideas of presence and absence. Arthur goes to the tower of the lighthouse, but the sound coming from where he went is not his. He is both there and not there. His identity is fragile and so is the music.

A similar challenge to the presence-absence dichotomy occurs later on in the opera. When Arthur assumes characteristics of the Beast, a triangle of lights representing the eyes of the Beast appears. Davies's instructions read: 'from afar, the three eyes of the Beast approach, ever brighter white and red lights, flashing, by the mention of "Antichrist" becoming an all-blinding dazzle'.⁶²⁶ Excessive light is used to defy the predominant function of light, specifically visibility. The blinding of the audience provides an opportunity for the keepers to become the officers from the Commission boat.⁶²⁷ Presence and absence as two polar opposites are merged together again. We are not sure who is present and who is not. What happened to the keepers, who supposedly left, and from where did the officers emerge?

In the build-up to the characters changing roles, we see the ensemble crescendo to a frenzied climax. The brass growl and slide, the piccolo and clarinet squeak at the top of their ranges, and the strings tremolo dramatically. The bass drum enters. It solemnly keeps time and is joined with the pianist striking across the bass strings with a drumstick. The whistle blows, the tam-tam is struck and the cymbal rings. The keepers become the officers under

⁶²⁶ Davies's instructions in Davies, *The Lighthouse*, 131.

⁶²⁷ Davies's instructions in *ibid.*, 139.

dazzling light, which starts from the mention of the Antichrist and lasts until the roles change; the music is chaotic and frenzied here. When the roles change and the light becomes normal, the reeds enter with a held tone in the pleasing interval of the major third. This is then passed to the cello and double bass, then the marimba, and finally the guitar. All is calm and order is restored.

The glare, the eyes of the Beast, is the only time we encounter coloured light in the opera. It is worth mentioning that studies of light signals discern a difference between visibility and focus. While objects are most easily perceivable with white light, red light attracts the most attention.⁶²⁸ As a result of its longer wavelength, it also has a 'tendency to advance in the visual field' and we see it as closer than, for instance, a blue light on the same spot.⁶²⁹ The Beast is thus perceived as being close or moving rapidly towards us, giving rise to panic and angst. Although people's responses to colour are varied, general patterns exist among populations. Red light is associated with 'excitement, stimulation, and aggression'. It is, in fact, 'the most stimulating color, [...] produc[ing] measurable quickening of body functions [...] [and] provoking a feeling of threat and anxiety'.⁶³⁰ Research indicates that exposure to red light can potentially generate a feeling of being 'disrupted'.⁶³¹

Another point to note is that the triangle of lights representing the eyes of the Beast becomes 'an all-blinding dazzle' upon reference to the Antichrist, and it is at this point that the characters' identities change. The Antichrist, aside from symbolising Arthur's counterfeit pietism, indicates that the viewers might be tricked. The glare of light, obscuring our perception, and the mention of the

⁶²⁸ Faber Birren, *Light, Color and Environment* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1969), 47.

⁶²⁹ Palmer, *The Lighting Art: The Aesthetics of Stage Lighting Design*, 99.

⁶³⁰ Ibid., 101, 104.

⁶³¹ Faber Birren, *Color & Human Response* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978), 48.

Antichrist co-occur, reinforcing ideas of deception and misbelief. Davies explains that 'a retention of distorted image with near blindness' is created, aiming to 'momentarily confuse vision at a crucial point of misunderstanding in the action'.⁶³² We, witnessing the switching of identities, might be as delusional as the characters—an impression which does not seem inaccurate, considering that the same triangle of lights later become the lights of the relief ship. How much of this is the illusion of the keepers or officers and how much of it is the illusion of the viewers? What does this dazzling light really represent? Audiences and characters collectively share this equivocal state.

This usage of lighting also functions as a means of doubling. The preciseness of role and purpose is destroyed, as we cannot be convinced of the nature of the lights. They are ambiguous and create a fantastical aura. Moreover, one of the officers claimed that he had seen it previously and speculated that it came from a lighthouse. But there was no lighthouse nearby and Fladda's light was out when the three men got there.⁶³³ This very triangle, specified by the composer to be seen 'in the "sudden calm" of the prologue'⁶³⁴ and for which there are no lighting instructions in the score, goes completely unrecognised by the other officers.⁶³⁵ What the lights stand for is utterly vague and their existence is simultaneously confirmed and denied. They could be pure delusion.

Lighting sets the mood and atmosphere in this piece and as such is 'a main feature' for the composer.⁶³⁶ Ironically, the light of a lighthouse—intended

⁶³² Davies, "A Composer's Point of View (II): On Parody, References and Meaning," 224.

⁶³³ Davies, *The Lighthouse*, 21–23.

⁶³⁴ Davies, "The Lighthouse, Composer's Note."

⁶³⁵ Davies, *The Lighthouse*, 17–20.

⁶³⁶ Davies, "The Lighthouse, Composer's Note."

to provide warning and guidance—is used here to create delusion, confusion, and tension. Lighting not only communicates the experiencing of these moods by the characters, but also induces similar feelings in the audience members. Thus, in the remainder of this chapter I will attend to the issue of collective mentality with respect to both audience members and characters.

The Collective Mental State

Many phenomena of the ancient and modern world are recognised to have, in reality or potentiality, a collective dimension. Émile Durkheim writes of religion as ‘the characteristic way of thinking of collective existence’.⁶³⁷ Nationalism has been defined as ‘collective and individual paranoia’.⁶³⁸ Other scholars have formulated collective dignity,⁶³⁹ collective memory,⁶⁴⁰ collective fear,⁶⁴¹ and collective anxiety neuroses.⁶⁴² Collectivity with regard to mental state is not a concept that is strange to psychological and sociological discussions or even removed from ordinary discourse. After Princess Diana’s death, Britons were said to have experienced a ‘collective nervous breakdown’.⁶⁴³

⁶³⁷ Émile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, trans. John A. Spaulding and George Simpson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1897), 277.

⁶³⁸ Danilo Kis, "On Nationalism," *Performing Arts Journal* 18, no. 2 (1996): 13.

⁶³⁹ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Revival in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 163.

⁶⁴⁰ Milton Takei, "Collective Memory as the Key to National and Ethnic Identity: The Case of Cambodia," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 4, no. 3 (1998).

⁶⁴¹ David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, "Containing Fear: The Management of Transnational Ethnic Conflict," *International Security* 21, no. 2 (1996).

⁶⁴² Ari Kiev, "Psychiatric Disorders in Minority Groups," in *Psychology and Race*, ed. Peter Watson (London: Aldine Transaction, 2007), 418.

⁶⁴³ William Walter Bostock and Emanuelle C. S. Bostock, "Disorders of the Collective Mental State," *Journal of Psychology & Psychotherapy* 7, no. 6 (2017): 1.

Research has shown that behavioural attitudes such as insecurity, fear, and violence can become widespread among a group of people. Rational choices, for instance in the case of aggression, as well as emotional forces and factors such as myths and memories (historical and individual), can contribute to the passing on of these feelings between members of a group.⁶⁴⁴ How does collectivity come about?

The Lighthouse concerns itself with the issue of collectivity from two different but interrelated perspectives. I draw upon two scholars to clarify this focus. Gustave Le Bon's theory of group mentality, formulated in 1895, is a groundbreaking idea that exerted massive influence on group dynamic studies and crowd psychology. It elucidates the prominence of a single mentality for individuals forming a group. I also call attention to Carl Jung's theory of 'collective unconscious', a term coined by him in 1916, which highlights the psychical constituents inherent in and shared by all humans.

Le Bon claims that a group of individuals, no matter how dissimilar they may be, possess what he calls a 'collective mind'. They gain this solely by virtue of being placed in a group. The collective mind projects humans' unconscious foundation, which is similar for all of them, and suppresses their differences, which stem from intellect. 'The heterogeneous is swamped by the homogeneous', Le Bon asserts. Furthermore the collective mind of a group is not simply the average of the common traits of the people forming that group, but actually displays new characteristics. A group can thus behave, think, and feel in ways quite distinct from its individual members. The new qualities emerge from three sources: contagion; the numerical power gained by individuals, which allows them to release whatever they usually keep under

⁶⁴⁴ David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, "Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict," *International Security* 2, no. 2 (1996): 41–44.

restraint; and the quality of suggestibility, which is prominent in groups.⁶⁴⁵

The group mind in *The Lighthouse* can be viewed as being in operation at two levels. First, we have collectivity manifested in different groups. The individual keepers are quite different from each other, as observable in their life stories and their in-group quarrels. In a group setting though, for instance when the sea gets upset, they display similar characteristics. We witness collective fear and the simultaneous witnessing of a beast. When fear becomes contagious even the irreligious Blazes prays for deliverance. It can also be argued, based on the confusing and contradictory accounts of the officers, that they are collectively lying about what they witnessed at the lighthouse. Even audience members, taking the role of the judge by their link to the horn, are symbolically shown to collectively reach the same verdict that is announced in the end.

Furthermore, all these groups are shown to merge together and form a larger united group mentality. The keeper and officer characters are effectively unchanged. What's more, when the officers leave the lighthouse at the end, they re-enter as the relief crew but behave as the original keepers. Hence, all three groups are somewhat one and the same. As mentioned earlier, the clear-cut distinction between the actors and viewers is also removed, mainly by the orchestra's horn. Thus, we join this large group as well. The opera merges all of these small groups, and dissolves the separating lines that differentiate one from the other to form a collective whole. The focus is on the indistinguishable, the unvaried, and the homologous. In this way, the piece communicates the interchangeability of these groups' situations and, as a result, the state, emotions, and actions of their members.

⁶⁴⁵ Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, 14–16.

The other perspective from which the opera approaches collectivity is related to Le Bon's notion of unconscious traits coming to the fore in groups. Humans as a race share some fundamental qualities. According to Jung, man is not born totally new but carries the 'entire psychic structure developed both upwards and downwards by his ancestors in the course of the ages'.⁶⁴⁶ Jung observes there to be two layers to the human unconscious: one that is derived from personal experience and one that is 'identical in all men'. He calls the latter 'collective unconscious' and described it as a 'universal, and impersonal' psychic system, the contents of which 'have never been individually acquired [...] but [are] inherited'. This structure represents the totality of the psyche and consists of archetypes or 'definite forms [...] which seem to be present always and everywhere'.⁶⁴⁷

A number of archetypes are detectable in Davies's opera. I will discuss these not with the aim of providing a Jungian reading, but to show the work's emphasis on the qualities shared by all humans that can give rise to mental imbalance. The first archetype is related to spirits. The existence of spirits is not rationally explicable or provable, but their psychic manifestation denotes their archetypal nature. Jung argues that 'the phenomenon we call spirit depends on the existence of an autonomous primordial image which is universally present in the preconscious makeup of the human psyche'.⁶⁴⁸ The spirits the characters view in the opera are thus archetypal contents shared by all of us. Jung specified that the content of the archetype is unconscious, but once perceived 'it takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to

⁶⁴⁶ Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 279–80.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 3–4, 42–43.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 214.

appear'.⁶⁴⁹ The spirits appearing to the characters, too, take their colour from each person's past and personality.

Rebirth is another notion that—though it has never been experienced or witnessed—has existed for the longest of times and has even been discussed in music.⁶⁵⁰ Jung provides examples from Greece and Egypt and mentions the story of Christ being twice born. The tradition of assigning a godfather and godmother to newborns is also a by-product of this ancient belief.⁶⁵¹ In the opera we directly encounter this archetype in the rise of the Golden Calf and in the re-emergence of the lighthouse keepers in their phantasmal state. Arthur is also symbolically reborn from the Voice of the Cards. The entire story is also regenerated at the end when everything is repeated.

The third archetype is mythological fantasy. There are certain fantasies that cannot possibly be 'individually acquired', as they are of an impersonal nature and 'cannot be reduced to experiences in the individual's past'. Jung believes that these fantasies correspond to structures inherent in the human psyche and closely resemble mythical images.⁶⁵² The mythological creatures that the officers see around the lighthouse are fantasy-images. They represent our shared psychical structure in the form of traditional myths.

It is consequential that the mere presence of archetypal figures does not signify pathology or imbalance, as they can be found in all humans. It is rather the consciousness's loss of control over these unconscious ideas that is problematic. For instance, the dissociation of archetypal contents, on which

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., 5.

⁶⁵⁰ Harrison Birtwistle's *Down by the Greenwood Side* (1969) has been discussed as featuring the archetype of rebirth. Michael Chanan, "Birtwistle's *Down by the Greenwood Side*," *Tempo* 89 (1969): 20.

⁶⁵¹ Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 45.

⁶⁵² Ibid., 155.

conscious phenomena rest, from consciousness can activate deliriums.⁶⁵³

When dissociation of consciousness from the unconscious occurs in groups of individuals, it probably means that they are experiencing unfavourable conditions at the same time. Jung specifies that in such instances, 'the archetype corresponding to the situation is activated, and as a result those explosive and dangerous forces hidden in the archetype come into action'.⁶⁵⁴ Conditions of pervasive stress, for instance, have been shown to considerably alter the collective mental state of populations.⁶⁵⁵ Widespread aggression during wartime or depression after conflicts have also been characterised as collective mental disorders initiated by destructive situations.⁶⁵⁶

In *The Lighthouse* we are dealing with adverse conditions driving a group of people towards mental instability. The opera focuses so much on the interchangeability of the conditions in which these groups exist and on the interchangeability of the groups themselves that it is left uncertain which group's instability we are dealing with. Are we watching paranoid keepers or delirious officers? On a subtler level we could be faced with our own collective delusion. We are not hallucinating in any way, but it is implied that our state is not far from the players. Also, we are at least prone to being deceived or deluded collectively by not being able to tell who the characters are or by not realising that we have possibly watched a ghost story. The Antichrist appears as an archetypal spirit with which the keepers are concerned, but it could also be read as an indirect reference to us being collectively deceived.

⁶⁵³ Ibid., 39–40.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid., 47–48.

⁶⁵⁵ John E. Cawte, "A Sick Society," in *The Psychology of Aboriginal Australians* eds. George E. Kearney, Philip R. de Lacey, and Graham R. Davidson (London: J. Wiley and Sons, 1973).

⁶⁵⁶ Bostock and Bostock, "Disorders of the Collective Mental State," 1–2.

It is worth mentioning again that discussing the archetypes is not meant to imply that Davies intentionally incorporated them in the story to explain the delirium of the characters. The significance of spirits, the ideas of rebirth, and the mythological aspects of the story is in the weight they put on the basic, the primitive, and the shared. This, in Jungian terms, would mean that disturbing situations could loosen the conscious grasp that any of us have on our unconscious. By referring to these archetypes, I intend to show the piece's emphasis on our common traits, which can drive us to think and act similarly. Though I do not offer a Jungian reading, it must be noted that Davies was familiar with the works of Jung and the concept of archetypes in particular. In his conversation with Paul Griffiths regarding his musical language, the composer states: 'I think that ultimately that's something that no matter how you organise your music you've got no control over. There are archetypes somewhere in the mind, and they just come out and out and out'.⁶⁵⁷ In his note on the production of *Resurrection* (1987), Davies references drawings in Jung's *The Practice of Psychotherapy* (1967) and the libretto contains words that 'directly come from Jung'.⁶⁵⁸ The libretto of *Taverner* also includes, among other sources, citations of the writings of Jung.⁶⁵⁹

Conclusion

The Lighthouse is a member of Davies's repertoire on madness and is also classified among his Orcadian works. It is technically and thematically linked to many other works of the composer and also to pieces by other British

⁶⁵⁷ Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies*, 103.

⁶⁵⁸ Connery, "Peter Maxwell Davies' Worst Nightmare: Staging the Unsacred in the Operas *Taverner* and *Resurrection*," 267.

⁶⁵⁹ Beard, "Taverner: An Interpretation," 87.

composers before him. As such, it is a multifaceted work with many connections to a large number of musical pieces.

For example, assigning the dramatic role of the lawyer or the judge, as well as the Cry of the Beast, to the horn was not an entirely new practice for Davies. In his *Eight Songs* the players stand for the King's birds; the cellist of *Vesalii Icones* appears on stage as 'the musical embodiment of the physical presence of the dancer',⁶⁶⁰ the dancer's 'alter ego',⁶⁶¹ 'shadow, partner, or ideal';⁶⁶² and the violin in *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame* (1978) is linked to the Virgin Mary.⁶⁶³

The horn taking a dramatic role in *The Lighthouse* is a continuation of a tradition in Davies's music, but the horn as a recurring device is the start of a new one. Davies returns to making recurring references to the horn twenty years after composing this opera in *Mr Emmet Takes a Walk* (1999). In the introduction and after the suicide of the main character, a train horn is heard. But as Davies describes in a discussion with Driver, the figure of the horn comes back in different contexts, which creates a parallel with its multiple reappearances in *The Lighthouse*.⁶⁶⁴ Beard argues that the use of recurring devices to indicate tension and conflict starts with *The Lighthouse* and continues in pieces such as *Resurrection* and *The Doctor of Myddafi* (1995),

⁶⁶⁰ McGregor, "Walking the Line: Deconstructing Identity, Suicide and Betrayal in Peter Maxwell Davies's *Mr Emmet Takes a Walk*," 335.

⁶⁶¹ John Warnaby, "The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies Based on the Writings of George Mackay Brown" (The Open University, 1991), 138–39.

⁶⁶² Griffiths, *Modern Music and After*, 196.

⁶⁶³ Warnaby, "The Music of Peter Maxwell Davies Based on the Writings of George Mackay Brown," 138–39.

⁶⁶⁴ In McGregor, "Walking the Line: Deconstructing Identity, Suicide and Betrayal in Peter Maxwell Davies's *Mr Emmet Takes a Walk*," 323.

which use recurring pop songs and hymn tunes, respectively, for the same purpose.⁶⁶⁵

Thematic connections have also been made between this opera and other musical works. Anhalt, for instance, has referred to ambiguity as a theme explored both here and in Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*.⁶⁶⁶ The subject of fate is also common between this piece and *The Martyrdom of St Magnus*, where Magnus reckons that he has to submit to being executed.⁶⁶⁷ Yet, *The Lighthouse* is such a many-sided opera that fate becomes central only if we view the keepers as destined to go mad because of the long isolation or consider that it was inescapable for them to surrender to the ghosts because of their past deeds.

Most important of all though, this opera revolves around the sea. In Sellar's rendition of *The Lighthouse*, even the instrumentalists are transformed into 'tempestuous waves of sound and movement thrashing wildly at the foot of the lighthouse'.⁶⁶⁸ Vickers asserts that 'it is impossible to hear Davies's sea compositions without acknowledging the longstanding tradition that preceded them in Great Britain'. He names a number of works including Frank Bridge's *The Sea* (1910-11), Ralph Vaughan Williams's *Riders to the Sea* (1932) and *Sinfonia Antartica* (1947), Ethel Smyth's *The Wreckers* (1906), and Britten's *Peter Grimes* and *Billy Budd* (1962), which particularly focus on the 'mysteries and ferocity of the sea'.⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁵ Beard, "Taverner: An Interpretation," 104.

⁶⁶⁶ Anhalt, "Music: Context, Text, Counter-Text," 121.

⁶⁶⁷ McGregor, "Walking the Line: Deconstructing Identity, Suicide and Betrayal in Peter Maxwell Davies's *Mr Emmet Takes a Walk*," 327.

⁶⁶⁸ Jenkins, "Peter Sellars, Interviewed, with an Afterword by Ron Jenkins," 51.

⁶⁶⁹ Vickers, "Peter Maxwell Davies's Variations on a Theme: A Catalog of the Sea Works," 648, 653.

Nevertheless, the characteristic feature of *The Lighthouse*, which sets it apart from all the aforementioned pieces, is its emphasis on collectivity. In this opera, not only are a number of roles played by one character, but it is also to some extent uncertain whom that character represents at any given moment. When characters change identity in the midst of high intensity light, it becomes increasingly difficult to tell reality from illusion. As the players switch places with each other, audience members get caught in the transitions. Spectators themselves are also ascribed roles that are entangled with those of the characters. When discerning personalities becomes a futile attempt, all identities unite and form a collective whole. If one is mad, all can be mad.

Add timelessness to the equation and individual distinctions disappear further, revealing the unity more evidently. Flashbacks disrupting the storyline introduce new uncertainties. Recollections of the individual keepers are mysterious and memories of the officers are contradictory and vague. The story unfolds in such a way that viewers also become suspicious about to whom the flashbacks refer and whether indeed they are flashbacks at all or no more than pure delusions. Lack of restriction to a particular time, along with the everlasting quality created by the circular structure of the work, reinforces the sense of wholeness: an ambiguous whole, the discrete details of which are too jumbled to be fully differentiable.

This whole could be the collective mind, which according to Le Bon is more than the sum of its constituents. Different groups in the opera engage in collective action and the listeners also experience comparable mental and emotional states, even symbolically behaving similarly. This implies the significance of the circumstances under which the collective mind forms, and indicates that any psyche under those specific circumstances could become

part of that same collective mind. Humans, as Jung has shown, share much more with each other than they realise. Jung discusses this issue in terms of our collective unconscious, the contents of which are inert archetypal phenomena. The opera's reference to these inherent shared traits is another expression of the prominence given to collectivity.

The collective side of our being, on which *The Lighthouse* puts emphasis, has been highlighted by other thinkers as well. In 1981, Franz Borkenau wrote about 'collective madness' and even believed in the rise of a 'paranoiac age' characterised by the 'predominance of paranoid features in the character structures of individuals'. He specifically refers to the end of the nineteenth century as the age of 'classical psychoneurosis'.⁶⁷⁰ Durkheim discusses 'collective or common conscience' as 'the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society [...] which does not change with each generation'.⁶⁷¹ W. Trotter writes of 'the herd instinct' inherited by humans, which is most manifest in the mentality and behaviour of groups.⁶⁷² Attributing a collective aspect to psyche is an ancient practice in both Eastern and Western cultures. Its modern revival, mainly in the twentieth century, is the continuation of the same tradition, stressing 'the collectivity over the individual, the whole over isolated selves'.⁶⁷³

Davies seems to have also followed the doctrine of diminishing the private and the personal in this piece. But his interest in collectivity seems to have

⁶⁷⁰ Franz Borkenau, *End and Beginning: On the Generations of Cultures and the Origins of the West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 77, 82, 388.

⁶⁷¹ Émile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, trans. George Simpson (New York: Macmillan, 1893), 79–80.

⁶⁷² W. Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1916), 28–29.

⁶⁷³ Mario P. Varvoglis, "Conceptual Frameworks for the Study of Transpersonal Consciousness," *Journal of General Evolution* 48, no. 1–4 (2010): 106.

come later in the course of his musical career. Davies is generally characterised as 'a dramatist of the individual'.⁶⁷⁴ His concern for the individual, to which he goes back again in *The Medium*, was such that even the 'intertwining vocal lines' of the duets of *Leopardi Fragments* (1962) are described as 'the channel for twinned expression of a single consciousness'.⁶⁷⁵

In contrast, around the time of *The Lighthouse*, Davies was involved in campaigning against uranium mining in Orkney and produced *Black Pentecost* (1979) in support of this cause. The stylistic objectivity this piece necessitated is quite distinct from what is described as 'the intensely personal output of the later 1960s'. Davies adopted the same general approach for *The Lighthouse* and other pieces such as *The Yellow Cake Revue* (1980). Even the libretto of this opera is written with 'a measure of detachment', which points to its less personal and intimate nature.⁶⁷⁶ The composer seems to have been moving away from the personal to the general, the common, the shared. Furthermore, the remote islanders among whom Davies was living have a strong sense of community, mainly as a result of a symbiotic relationship with the sea. There is among them a 'tribal sense of belonging, a desire to protect and provide for one another'.⁶⁷⁷ It is thus not unlikely that the collectivity manifested in their style of living and how they valued life as a group reflected itself in Davies's treatment of madness in this opera.

⁶⁷⁴ Griffiths, *Modern Music and After*, 196.

⁶⁷⁵ Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 259.

⁶⁷⁶ Warnaby, "Davies, Peter Maxwell," *Grove Music Online*, accessed April 15, 2015, http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/subscriber/article/grove/music/07299?q=Maxwell+Davies&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit.

⁶⁷⁷ Vickers, "Peter Maxwell Davies's Variations on a Theme: A Catalog of the Sea Works," 644–45.

Concluding Thoughts

Davies was described on his website as a twenty-first-century composer whose oeuvre spans more than five decades. This thesis specifically identifies pieces from 1969 to 1981 because works in which the most noticeable signs of madness are present were produced during this period. Also, as mentioned, each of the compositions discussed seems to display a unique approach to the theme and demonstrate a particular aspect of it.

Here I would like to deliberate on the topics of ambiguity—in the form of contradiction, tension, and uncertainty—together with social justice in relation to Davies's oeuvre on madness. I also examine aspects of the composer's life in connection with these subjects to provide a more holistic account of his portrayal of madness.

It certainly seems inevitable for any manifestation of madness to display some sort of tension and indeterminacy. Tension is intrinsically ingrained in madness, probably even more so if it is not simply reduced to pure sickness. The schizophrenic, for instance, is believed to be oscillating 'between two extreme forms of intensity, illumination and terror, breakthrough and breakdown'.⁶⁷⁸ With regard to the examined pieces, one can discern this strain, this fluctuating force, in the King's expressive skilfulness and his struggle to communicate; in Miss Donnithorne's typification as a madwoman and her derision of stereotypes of madwomen; in the medium's attempt to take us through the experience of madness and her normalisation of it; and in the lighthouse keepers' wiping out of our individual differences and attempt to show us that, as a whole, we are all potentially mad.

⁶⁷⁸ Sylvère Lotringer, "Notes on the Schizo-Culture Issue," in *Schizo-Culture*, eds. Sylvère Lotringer and David Morris (South Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2013), ix.

Tension and ambivalence have in fact always been fundamental structural elements of Davies's music. One can perceive 'a tension between freedom and order in works as early as *Alma Redemptoris Mater* of 1957, though there the "freedom" was heavily circumscribed within the musical texture'.⁶⁷⁹ Tension is also revealed in Davies's play with reality and fantasy. There are various points in all the discussed works where audiences are confused about what is real and what is imagined. Does the King imagine the birds, who are in fact psychical entities, or do they really exist? Does Miss Donnithorne really address the audience at the beginning or does she imagine people coming to her feast? Is the protagonist of *The Medium* really at a mental institution or is that one of the places she imagines? Are the lighthouse keepers real individuals imagining ghosts from their pasts or are they really ghosts themselves?

Moreover, three of the four pieces discussed are fantastical renditions of true stories. Such is also the case with some of Davies's other works, including *Taverner* and *Caroline Mathilde*. In his interview with Griffiths, the composer states: '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'.⁶⁸⁰ In the pieces discussed, all the lead characters constantly swing between real and imaginary worlds. The two are so intertwined that they often become indistinguishable, creating equivocal situations and ambivalent states quite akin to the experience of madness.

Davies had personal tensions of his own. Though an islander living in isolation, he is described by Stephen Pruslin as a 'social artist in a profound sense'.⁶⁸¹ Davies was an avant-gardist absorbed in medieval forms, an

⁶⁷⁹ McGregor, "Stepping Out: Maxwell Davies's 'Salome' as a Transitional Work," 2.

⁶⁸⁰ Davies in Griffiths, *Peter Maxwell Davies*, 106.

⁶⁸¹ Pruslin, *Peter Maxwell Davies: Studies from Two Decades*, 3.

internationalist immersed in his national heritage, and an atheist reflecting incessantly on religion. He was fascinated with religious forms and wrote masses for Westminster Abbey and the Chapel Royal, describing religion as 'a wonderful work of art'.⁶⁸² At the same time, being an outspoken atheist, he emphasised that he was never affiliated with any religious group and did not hold religious beliefs.⁶⁸³ Davies sympathised with the left of the political spectrum and was a republican, but accepted knighthood in 1987. Despite being described as 'antimonarchist', he became Master of the Queen's Music in 2004.⁶⁸⁴ Even the composer himself acknowledged the irreconcilability of his reputation as an enfant terrible with 'becoming such an "establishment" figure'.⁶⁸⁵

Davies was thus well aware that contradictory things could co-exist, and this is utterly perceivable in his depiction of madness. In the face of all these paradoxical doctrines, however, one principle remains constant, and that is his sense of social responsibility. Davies personally suffered from discrimination because of his sexual orientation and also felt that he was one of the victims of Britain's music education system. This probably instigated his life-long determination to protest injustice.

With regard to education, the composer believed that he had been deprived of inspirational training by a system that was not open to invention and embraced only the familiar. He protested the 'tragic waste of resources' which came about from the lack of stimulus and challenge for young people and 'the

⁶⁸² Davies, "Will Serious Music Become Extinct?," 267. Source: The Royal Philharmonic Society Lecture, Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, April 24, 2005.

⁶⁸³ Davies, "Invisible Parameters and Spirit-Stirring Amalgams," 304–5.

⁶⁸⁴ Vickers, "Peter Maxwell Davies's Variations on a Theme: A Catalog of the Sea Works," 657.

⁶⁸⁵ Davies, "Will Serious Music Become Extinct?," 265.

promotion of the ordinary and the exclusion of the exceptional'.⁶⁸⁶ This rejection by the force of ordinary standards is another concern that is displayed in his treatment of madness. His own educational method, though challenging, was never elitist. During the years that he worked as music master at Cirencester Grammar School, he taught based on principles that involved 'pupils of all musical abilities'.⁶⁸⁷ He insisted that 'almost all children possess the potential for creativity'⁶⁸⁸ and that 'most children compose music well and naturally unless inhibited'.⁶⁸⁹

Davies wrote many works for children, including *The Shepherd's Calendar* (1965), *The Two Fiddlers* (1978), *Cinderella* (1980), and *The Turn of the Tide* (1993). Of the influence of children's writings and the knowledge that he acquired through working with these supposedly unsophisticated minds, he said, 'Without the example of children's co-operative music-theatre creations, composed and performed in class, I would never have had the confidence to compose the *Eight Songs for a Mad King* or *The Lighthouse*'.⁶⁹⁰

Davies's disapproval was not limited to Britain's music teaching strategies. Accepting a knighthood did not prevent him from vehemently accusing the British government of having 'genocidal policies' during the invasion of Iraq in 2003.⁶⁹¹ He bitterly objected to many forms of injustice, from the abuse of

⁶⁸⁶ Davies, "A Disorienting Ruckus," 275.

⁶⁸⁷ Warnaby, "Davies, Peter Maxwell."

⁶⁸⁸ Seabrook, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, 170.

⁶⁸⁹ Davies, "A Disorienting Ruckus," 276.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁹¹ Peter Maxwell Davies, "Bearing Witness," in *Peter Maxwell Davies, Selected Writings*, ed. Nicholas Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 282. Source: Keynote speech, ArtMusFair 2009: Shaping the Future of Contemporary Music, Glasgow, October 29–November 1, 2009.

detainees of Abu-Ghraib prison to the violation of human rights in Guantanamo.⁶⁹² When the Orkney Islands Council interfered with his civil partnership ceremony in 2007, he complained, 'We have a situation here of [...] first and second class citizens because I am gay'.⁶⁹³

Above all, Davies had an unshakable commitment to defending the ecosystem and was a passionate environmental activist. He spoke repeatedly of the responsible use of the earth's resources and the need to protect our natural surroundings. The composer vehemently opposed the proposed plan to mine for uranium in Orkney and wrote *Black Pentecost* (1979) and *The Yellow Cake Revue* (1980) in response to it.

His dedication to environmental sustainability brought about a commission from the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) and the London Philharmonia Orchestra to write his eighth symphony, *Antarctic Symphony* (2001), and an invitation by BAS to reside on the Antarctic Peninsula with scientists for a month. His diary entries were then collected in a volume entitled *Notes from a Cold Climate* (2001).⁶⁹⁴ Davies also conveyed his concerns about climate change and his horror of humans' exploitation of the ecosystem in *The Sorcerer's Mirror* (2009) and *Last Door of Light* (2009). His devotion to this cause is a facet of his desire for social justice, also threaded through his oeuvre on madness.

In a fashion similar to the environment, which can both nurture and threaten, madness can be both a curse and a gift. Much depends on point of view, on whether cure or comprehension is the concern, and on attitude, which

⁶⁹² Davies, "A Disorienting Ruckus," 272.

⁶⁹³ Davies quoted in Auslan Cramb, "Queen's Composer Threatens Musical Revenge over Gay Wedding Rebuff," *The Telegraph*, January 10, 2007.

⁶⁹⁴ Peter Maxwell Davies, *Notes from a Cold Climate: Antarctic Symphony (Symphony No. 8)* (London: Browns, 2001).

shapes the response. Alongside an objective consideration of the state of madness and an attempt to bring its experience centre stage, Davies displays a highly compassionate attitude towards it. This is the reason that taking inspiration from Plato's interpretation of madness as a divine gift from God seemed apt for the title of this thesis. Plato claims that madness has given us 'the best things we have',⁶⁹⁵ the god Apollo has given us 'the inspiration of the prophet', and Dionysus, 'relief from present hardships'; The Muses have provided us with a 'frenzy of songs and poetry', which eclipses all 'self-controlled' verses, and Aphrodite has offered us 'love'. When someone who loves is touched by the madness of Aphrodite 'he is called lover'.⁶⁹⁶ Madness in this sense is 'divinely inspired release from normally accepted behavior' and was historically used to refer to 'the finest experts of all'.⁶⁹⁷

Much still remains to be learned about madness by the rational mind. Human beings' understanding of madness has frequently been expressed in their music. Davies in particular has undertaken this task many times. Examination of all the hints at madness throughout Davies's entire repertoire, different interpretations of his portrayal of madness across different performances of the same piece, and the prevalence of madness and its connection with other major themes he explores (such as religion or betrayal) could be promising areas of future research. The extent to which Davies's works reflect or signal changes in attitudes towards madness would also require more extensive investigation.

On a larger scale, it would also be fruitful to compare and contrast

⁶⁹⁵ Plato, "Phaedrus," in *Plato: Complete Works*, eds. John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 522.

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 523, 527, 542.

⁶⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 522, 542.

Davies's understanding of madness, his methods of representing it, and the angles from which he attends to it with the approaches of other composers. On a yet larger scale, how much musical representations of madness in general fall under the influence of definitions of madness in psychology and philosophy, or how much they possibly shape the understanding of madness in society and inform its conceptions of mental illness, are questions worth exploring.

Broadly, this study revolves around the theme of madness as a form of 'otherness', a distinctive way of being, in connection with the avant-garde and its tendency to welcome the new and the unfamiliar. I explore the resonance between the nonconformist avant-garde challenging the status quo, and madness as a form of discord with society. I particularly focus on Davies as a composer intensely engaged with the theme. The mere diversity of Davies's approaches to madness as well as his sympathetic attitude towards this topic are manifestations of his social commitment, which is also visible in his environmental activism, anti-war political protests, criticism of Britain's education system, anti-consumerist stance and support of gay rights.

Davies's social consciousness in his encounter with madness links his approach more closely to composers such as Berg and Britten than, for instance, Berio or Ligeti, whose portrayal of the theme heavily relies on abstract voice play and seems to be a purely sonic event. Davies's mad characters, similar to Peter Grimes, are in conflict with society at large, and denouncing the abuse of the ignorant society, a key feature in Berg's *Wozzeck*, is ingrained in his oeuvre on madness.

This project brings a discourse beyond the arts to the study of Davies's repertoire on madness to decode the symbolic significance of

his dramatic and musical tools. In doing so, it reveals a sense of social responsibility in his attitude towards madness and his methods of approaching it.

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