

LETTERS
FROM A LIFE
Selected Letters

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Selected Letters
and Diaries of
Benjamin Britten

Volume One 1923-39

Edited by
Donald Mitchell
and Philip Reed



EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: DONALD MITCHELL

Letters from a Life:
The Selected Letters and
Diaries of Benjamin Britten
1913-1976

VOLUME ONE
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DONALD MITCHELL

ASSISTANT EDITOR:
PHILIP REED

ASSOCIATE EDITORS: ROSEMARY STRODE
KATHLEEN MITCHELL, JUDY YOUNG



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The texts of the letters and diaries: we have preserved throughout Britten's idiosyncratic spelling and punctuation in his letters and diary entries. We have not, however, extended this principle to cover letters or documents by other hands, where obvious mistakes have been silently corrected.

Format: in the lay-out of the letters we give addresses and dates in their original form. Editorial information about location (in the case of some diary entries) or the type of communication, i.e. when it is a postcard or telegram that is reproduced, is contained within square brackets, ranged left at the head of each item. We also indicate where letters are typed (as distinct from handwritten) and where handwritten additions have been made. It was often Britten's custom, on finishing a letter, to add a postscript at the top of the first page, above the address and date. We have preserved this feature where it occurs. Where addresses have been supplied or dates conjectured, this information appears in square brackets, ranged right.

All Britten's letters and diary entries, and Pears's letters and diaries, are set *unjustified*, as are quotations from these sources in the annotations. All other written and published sources appear justified.

Omissions: in Britten's wartime letters to his sisters we have occasionally omitted duplications of news and information. In a very small

number of instances we have omitted a remark which might cause hurt or pain directly to a living person. In the case of one correspondent, we have acceded to the request that the letters should not be given in their entirety. All editorial omissions are indicated thus: [. . .].

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DM, PR

KEY TO BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ABBREVIATIONS

- BBAA** Benjamin Britten, *On Receiving the First Aspen Award*, London, Faber and Faber, 1964
- BBST** Benjamin Britten, 'Britten Looking Back', *Sunday Telegraph*, 17 November 1963, p. 9
- BC** Christopher Palmer (editor), *The Britten Companion*, London, Faber and Faber, 1984
- DMBA** Donald Mitchell, *Britten and Auden in the Thirties: The Year 1936*, London, Faber and Faber, 1981
- DMHK** Donald Mitchell and Hans Keller (editors), *Benjamin Britten: A Commentary on His Works from a Group of Specialists*, London, Rockliff, 1952
- DMPB** W.H. Auden, *Paul Bunyan: The Libretto of the Opera by Benjamin Britten*, with an essay by Donald Mitchell, London, Faber and Faber, 1988
- DNB** *The Dictionary of National Biography*
- DVDM** Donald Mitchell (compiler and editor), *Benjamin Britten: Death in Venice*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987
- EMWHA** W.H. Auden, *The Complete Works of W.H. Auden: Plays (with Christopher Isherwood) and other Dramatic Writings, 1928-1938*, edited by Edward Mendelson, London, Faber and Faber, 1989
- EWB** Beth Britten, *My Brother Benjamin*, Bourne End, The Kensal Press, 1986
- EWV** Eric Walter White, *Benjamin Britten: His Life and Operas*, 2nd edition, edited by John Evans, London, Faber and Faber, 1983
- GE** Graham Elliott, *Benjamin Britten: The Things Spiritual*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wales, 1985
- HCWHA** Humphrey Carpenter, *W.H. Auden: A Biography*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1981
- IHB** Imogen Holst, *Britten (The Great Composers)*, 3rd edition, London, Faber and Faber, 1980
- LFBML** Lewis Foreman, *From Parry to Britten: British Music in Letters*, London, Batsford, 1987