

THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

**THE VOICE OF THE NEW RENAISSANCE:
THE PREMIERE PERFORMANCES OF PETER PEARS**

By

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To Dr. Kenneth and Mary Jewell

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ABSTRACT

Sir Peter Pears (1910-1986) was the foremost interpreter of Benjamin Britten's vocal music. Britten composed a majority of his vocal works with Pears's voice in mind: seven song cycles, twelve original opera roles, five canticles, and eight works for voice and orchestra. Britten also prepared most of his folksong arrangements and realizations of Baroque vocal works for Pears. The tenor's reputation stretches far beyond Britten's music. A popular recital artist, Pears gave countless performances across four continents. In recital and opera, he performed a great variety of music, from early Baroque to Contemporary. He was a founder of a major music festival, frequently wrote essays on music, and later in his life, devoted his time to teaching.

This treatise concentrates on other important aspects of Pears's career, namely his commissioning of and performance of new works. Over the course of his career, he premiered more than two hundred pieces of music. Britten composed, realized, or arranged about 120 works for Pears, while over 40 other composers provided the rest. The treatise focuses on the music that Pears premiered during the first half of his career, performances that took place between 1932 and 1954, discussing music by Benjamin Britten, Alexander Brent Smith, Michael Tippett, Antony Hopkins, William Wordsworth, R. W. Wood, Gerard Schurmann, Lennox Berkeley, Humphrey Searle, Arthur Oldham, Bertus van Lier, Robin Orr, Aaron Copland, Grace Williams, Alan Bush, Mátyás Seiber, Priaux Rainier, James Bernard, William Walton, realizations of music by Henry Purcell and Maurice Greene, and arrangements and works by Franz Schubert and Gustav Holst. Discussion will cover a wide variety of genres and styles, and will analyze the music from the singer's perspective. The treatise includes a complete chronological list of Pears's premiere performances. Through these, the author wishes to illuminate the influence of Peter Pears upon the musical world in the second half of the twentieth century.