



## **Letters from a Life: the Selected Letters of Benjamin Britten, 1913-1976 (Selected Letters of Britten)**


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# Letters from a Life: the Selected Letters of Benjamin Britten, 1913-1976 (Selected Letters of Britten)

## **Letters from a Life: the Selected Letters of Benjamin Britten, 1913-1976 (Selected Letters of Britten)**

The sixth and final volume of the annotated selected letters of Benjamin Britten, edited by Philip Reed and Mervyn Cooke, covers the composer's last decade. The genesis, composition and premieres of major stage works such as Owen Wingrave, commissioned by BBC Television, and Death in Venice are fully documented, as are the church parables, The Burning Fiery Furnace and The Prodigal Son. Important concert works from this period include the powerful Brecht setting, Children's Crusade, the Third Cello Suite (for Rostropovich), Canticles IV and V (both settings of poetry by T. S. Eliot), Phaedra (for Janet Baker) and the Third String Quartet, with its haunting echoes of Death in Venice. As in previous volumes, Britten's letters to his life partner and principal interpreter, the tenor Peter Pears, remain central. Other significant correspondents include the Queen and Queen Mother; librettists William Plomer and Myfanwy Piper; artistic collaborators Frederick Ashton, Colin Graham and John Piper; musicians Janet Baker, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Mstislav Rostropovich; and composers Oliver Knussen, Dmitri Shostakovich and William Walton. The volume also traces the conversion of Snape Maltings into the Aldeburgh Festival's principal concert venue, its destruction by fire on the opening night of the 1969 Festival and its miraculous rebuilding in time for the following year's Festival, as well as major concert tours by Britten and Pears to New York, Canada, South America, Moscow and Leningrad, Australia, and New Zealand. Close attention is paid to Britten's final years, when his failed heart surgery left him a near invalid. Published in association with The Britten-Pears Foundation.

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