

## C.B. Oldman prize 2017 (2016 publications)

The Oldman Prize is awarded to an author or joint authors of a work deemed to have made a significant contribution in the area of music bibliography or musicology in the year prior to its being awarded.

### Final short list 2017

Campbell, Edward; O'Hagan, Peter. Pierre Boulez studies. Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Hallam, Susan., Cross, Ian., Thaut, Michael (eds). The Oxford Handbook of Music Psychology. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016.

Rutter, Paul. Music industry handbook. London: Routledge, 2016. 2nd ed. Ebook [AB: might be worth comparing to the first edition of 2011]

Stroeher, Vicki P., Clark, Nicholas and Brimmer, Jude (eds). My beloved man. The letters of Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears. Martlesham: The Boydell Press, 2016.

### The winner

Stroeher, Vicki P., Clark, Nicholas and Brimmer, Jude (eds). My beloved man. The letters of Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears. Martlesham: The Boydell Press, 2016.

### Commendation

*My Beloved Man* is clearly a work of devotion and dedication from the editors, who wanted to allow Britten and Pears to tell their own story, in their own words. The book successfully brings together the 365 surviving letters of Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears, presented in chronological order with informative but non-invasive editorial annotations to assist the reader.

Divided into 8 chapters, each section starts with an introduction to “set-the-scene” for the letters to come. In between the letters the editors fill any significant gaps with key details, such as any changes of circumstances which are not clear from the letters. Other than these few additions the editors leave the letters to speak for themselves.

The letters have been reproduced as close as possible to the originals. This includes many misspellings, crossings outs and some sketchings or doodles. At first this can make for a difficult read, however you soon start to appreciate the tone and voice of the letters and the writers themselves.

Key music bibliographical features are the personalia and list of works, as well as the extensive bibliography. Both the personalia and list of works are useful reference tools for the reader to identify people/works mentioned in the letters and their relevance to Britten and Pears. They are not designed to be full biographies of the individual or work, nor would that be appropriate in this context, and the editors have done well to include an appropriate level of detail.

Taken in conjunction with other sources this volume provides a clear insight into the compositional process of Britten, and as such will be a key resource for any Britten scholar, but it is so much more than that. It is an intimate portrayal of the day-to-day life of a 39 year relationship, giving both Britten and Pears equal prominence. To quote from the foreword by Fiona Stuart “to read these letters is to climb up a wall and peer into the secret garden of two giants”, and as such the Oldman Committee are thrilled to award this year’s prize to Vicki Stroeher, Jude Brimmer and Nicholas Clark.

### Reply from Nick Clark on behalf of the authors:

Dear Colleagues,

My sincere apologies for not being able to be with you in beautiful Edinburgh at this year’s Annual Study Weekend. This wonderful award is traditionally given at the conclusion of the AGM and as I am sure many of you will be in need of a cup of tea by now I promise not to speak—in this virtual manner—for too long. It’s very necessary to state, however, on behalf of Jude Brimmer, Vicki Stroeher and myself that we are all delighted and humbled in equal measure by receipt of this year’s C.B. Oldman Prize.

Shortly before his death, Benjamin Britten stressed to his friend Donald Mitchell, who was to have been Britten’s future biographer, that his most fervent wish was for him “to tell the truth about Peter and me”. What we hoped to do in this edition of the correspondence was to shine some further light on that “truth,” and to assist Britten and Pears

in the telling of their own story. We're eternally grateful that they opted never to throw anything away. Biography is a challenging art, and the more help one can have in getting the facts right, the better informed we'll all be. We are fortunate to have such a wealth of personal history in the form of these letters.

It is difficult to put into words our appreciation of the fact that *My Beloved Man* has been honoured by the Prize Committee and recognised so generously by our colleagues and friends. We must thank especially our respective institutions—the Britten-Pears Foundation and Marshall University—for their support in this project, and also Boydell and Brewer for their on-going dedication to music book publishing. Lastly, we would like to thank IAML and its ever hard-working librarians and archivists, particularly those who are gathered in Scotland this weekend. This award is extremely important to us, and we extend our deepest thanks to all of you.

*Vicki Stroeher, Jude Brimmer, Nicholas Clark*