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Michael Tippett

THE MASK
OF TIME

L I B R E T T O

SCHOTT

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MICHAEL TIPPETT

The Mask of Time

for voices and instruments

Words written and compiled
by the composer

ED 12197

SCHOTT & CO. LTD, LONDON
48 Great Marlborough Street, London
B. Schott's Söhne, Mainz
Schott Music Corporation, New York

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PART ONE

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3. Jungle

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PART TWO

9. Three Songs: III The Young Actor Steps Out

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Preface

The Mask of Time is explicitly concerned with the transcendental. It deals with those fundamental matters that bear upon man, his relationship with Time, his place in the world as we know it and in the mysterious universe at large. But it subscribes to no particular liturgy or standard theory, Biblical or otherwise, about the creation of the world and the destiny of mankind.

Our century has acquired such vastly extended notions of space and time that I feel it would be an error to rely on past conceptions of the ontological and the transcendental. Thus the work I have written is neither a setting of the Mass, nor an oratorio, nor even an adaptation of the sort we find in late Romantic works like Delius's *A Mass of Life* or Mahler's Eighth Symphony. Inescapably, I have had to accommodate a plurality of co-existing viewpoints. At best, my composition offers fragments or scenes from a possible 'epiphany' for today. The forces used in each scene or fragment are heterogeneous; hence my description 'for voices and instruments'.

The text for *The Mask of Time* is compounded of metaphors drawn from many sources. These are swallowed up within the music, so the libretto should *not* be read as 'literature'. Direct quotations from copyright material are acknowledged at the beginning; also, at the end, I have mentioned a few of the sources upon which I have drawn in constructing the text.

The work is in two parts, which are separated by an interval in performance. Part One is more obviously mythological; Part Two potentially more historical. Part One starts with the 'creation' of the cosmos and moves chronologically, more or less, towards the emergence of human civilization and an earthly paradise (or at least the basis for one in settled human societies). Part Two is discontinuous and focuses upon the individual in history.

The titles to each movement are intended to indicate the main concerns, at different stages, within a composition that is planned and presented as a multiple panorama of experience. For the purposes of this publication, I have added a few explanatory sentences at the start of each movement.

There are, however, certain pervasive themes which are worth noting in advance. One is the notion of the *fixed*, the unchanging in nature: and related to this, the plight and status of the individual in a cosmos which, on one level, is thought to be ever-expanding, and on another, contains fixed and recurrent patterns and procedures. Arising from this is our present need for a new basis for affirmation—what *can* we now praise, what can we affirm?

In some contexts in the work I have utilised the idea of *reversal*, a term that has many overtones and connotations. (I have encountered it in the *I-Ching*, in Heraclitus, in Jung—who preferred the Greek-derived *enantrochromia*—and in modern physics, e.g. the mechanics of the pendulum or the satellite that reverses its course; I have also found 'reversal psychology' suggestive.)

An abiding theme in the work is the polarity between knowledge obtained through intellectual processes (the knowledge of scientists) and that obtained from deep inner sensibilities (the knowledge of creative artists). Sometimes in their divinations of the future, these different sources of knowledge coincide and complement each other.

Finally, regarding the title of the composition, the word 'Mask' is used in the tradition of the Renaissance *Masque*, which was a theatrical display or pageant with a great diversity of ingredients, but embodying some lofty notions that come eventually into the foreground. Each aeon of time is allowed its scene in this work: and by using the alternative spelling of 'Mask', I have deliberately suggested a contemporary ironic ambiguity.

Michael Tippett, 1983

to Meirion Bowen
Parce que c'était lui; parce que c'était moi

The Mask of Time, commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra,
was first performed on 5 April 1984 at Symphony Hall, Boston.
The soloists were Faye Robinson, Yvonne Minton, Robert Tear and John Check,
with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Tanglewood Festival Chorus conducted by Sir Colin Davis.

in the beginning and now
creation, falling away and the marriage of opposites

The Mask of Time

Part One

1. Presence

Tenor solo and chorus

The supposed beginning of the cosmos, or some other concept, such as reversal, expressed in music and a few words. The chorus impersonally looks 'back' at the vast aeons of Time, and 'out' into the infinities of Space. The soloist sings personally from within the poignant and immediate here and now. (This kind of temporal disjunction is a poetic device that is used many times in the work.)

TENOR

All metaphor, Malachi, stilts and all.
Malachi, Malachi, all metaphor.

A barnacle goose
far up in the stretches of night;
night splits and the dawn breaks loose.

I, through the terrible novelty of light,
stalk on, stalk on.

(Music continues into No. 2)

CHORUS

Sound
Where no airs blow

Sound
Song
Resounding

Exploring
Exploding
Into time
Into space

Turning
Returning
Eternal
Reversal

2. Creation of the World by Music

Soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor and baritone soloists

The cosmic creative force operates through music—an ancient tradition this, whereby music can bring order to outer or inner disorder and has physical power (cf. Orpheus). Shiva (Creator, Preserver, Destroyer) danced the present world into being. In the domain of imagination and revelation, the key words here are 'dream' and 'backwards'. In the complementary domain of material knowledge, the key words are 'measurement' and 'might'. Halley's comet was last seen in 1910 (I saw it myself as a child): it is due to return in 1986. Maybe the messengers, even the angels, will return. . . .

SOLOISTS

Shall we . . . ?
Dream backward to the ancient time
Lord Shiva dancing with informing feet
Orpheus plucking from the lyre
power to move stone
Shall we . . . ?
Affirm!

Measurement began our might

Steadying the mirror's echo of the mirror's light
 Music is of itself divine
 My ear rehearses river noises
 But I *know*

The great wild satellite has reversed its course,
 'Remember', he whispered in my ear, 'it will come back
 . . . speeding on its homeward journey to the sun.'
 A flight of angels through the sky
 singing, singing;
 and the poet singing
 achieved is the glorious work.

3. Jungle

Soloists and chorus

So much has been observed and recorded about the variety and prodigality of forms in the animal species that we gawp in disbelief and wonder. We can also be disturbed by it, sensing it to be pointless, ludicrous, even cruel. Against the speed and restlessness of man's history, it is clearly 99.9 per cent fixed and eternal, and by implication, therefore, ever more meaningless. Yet we humans must find a balance between the wonder and the horror.

The sound of this metaphorical 'jungle', implying the everlasting struggle of prey and predator, is manifest in a four-part choral complex of verbal tags. These tags are referable to animal imitations, but the onomatopoeia is mainly suggested by the rhythm.

CHORUS

Clatter-chatter, clatter-chatter, Monkee
 Pad, pad, the huge cats, prowl, growl . . . Orrhh!
 Hahahahiyeena-like ahahahaha. Jackass.
 Caw caw ock ock, mockcawing, Bird.
 (*furious panic scream*)
 Merde!!

(*Jungle chorus continues*)

Crokiokiax

SOLOISTS

The lover can see
 and the knowledgeable.
 Observe the pilgrim-lover at the creek
 Searching, through a zodiac of time, the
 tiny for the huge.
 As were I stalker on the dry Savannah
 or glass-masked diver in the deep.

SOPRANO

At last I knelt on the
 island's winter-killed grass,
 lost, dumbstruck,
 staring at the frog in the creek
 four feet away. Just as I
 looked, he slowly crumpled and
 began to sag. The spirit vanished from
 his eyes as if snuffed.
 His skin emptied and dropped;
 his very skull seemed to crumple
 and settle like a kicked tent.
 He was shrinking before my eyes
 like a deflating football.

MEZZO-SOPRANO

Through the puncture shoot the poisons
 that dissolve the victim's muscles and bones and organs
 —all but the skin—and through it the giant water-bug
 sucks out the victim's body reduced to a juice.

SOPRANO

I gaped, bewildered, appalled.
 An oval shadow hung in the water
 behind the drained frog;
 then glided away.

Merde!!

BARITONE

Allah asks:
 'The heaven and the earth and all between;
 Thinkest thou I made them in jest?'

Bizzwazz, whizzing wings

MEZZO-SOPRANO

Sometimes, when a lacewing lays her fertile
 eggs on a green leaf atop a slender stalked thread,
 She is hungry.
 She pauses in her laying,
 turns around, and
 eats her eggs one by one.
 Then lays some more,
 and eats them too.

TENOR

'Well, Lord God', asks the delicate, dying
 lacewing, whose mandibles are wet with the
 juice excreted by her own ovipositor,
 'What's it all about?'
 And do you know, he couldn't . . .

SOPRANO

I want out from this still air.
 Take a deep breath, Elijah: light your pile.
 The world may be fixed but it never was broken.
 The fleeing shreds I see, the back parts, are a
 gift, an abundance.

SOPRANO AND MEZZO-SOPRANO

Occasionally

Look

the mountains part . . .

Look

The tree with the lights in it appears . . .

Sound

the mocking-bird falls
 and time unfurls across space like
 an oriflamme.

4. The Ice-cap moves South-North

Chorus

Man's emergence in history, his nomadic wanderings at the mercy of the elements, as the ice-cap in the northern hemisphere moves south over thousands of years. The more easily imaginable outer social life of the family at the mouth of the cave is set against the rituals within the cave, where man has some mysterious contact with the transcendent. The music moves downwards.

A genetic accident, or 'miracle', amongst wild grasses results in the first breadgrain-bearing plants, cultivated by, and indeed dependent upon, the post Ice-Age man. Agricultural society emerges on the fertile river-silt plains with an outward life-style more akin to our own. Religious observance, too, emerges from underground (the music moves upwards): violent rituals, memories of which are still evoked by the pyramids and temples in Mexico and elsewhere are now enacted.

The men have gone hunting
 for the fish swim now below the river-ice
 or breathe but at the blow hole.

Every year's season the cold deepens
moving South.

To trap bear or caribou
the strong men breed resilience; skill to endure
skill to follow, follow where the reindeer ran
skill to kill with net and javelin.

Home is at this cave-mouth
Southward to the sun.
Women's work is family.
After gorging we throw the carcass to the dogs.

Clamber downwards to the dark
follow far the flick'ring lamp;
shall we dance and shall we sing
once below the cavern's vault?
Touch the sacred with our hand?
Images of bison running.

* * *

Surely some jolting in the gears of time
millions squeezed to thousands
when the ice-cap moved.
Genetic accidents of plants and man
Accident?!
Oh, let that pass.
We of that day knew
thaw, marsh, river noises;
found a strange grain.

Chanting the seed time
hurrahing the harvest
flail-thrash, spring out
the orient and immortal wheat.

Sky-god art thou there?
Then spoke the thunder:
DA

Trumpets echo trumpets echo trumpets
Resounding

We clamber up the staircase stone by stone
achieve that pinnacle above the plain
where priest unsheathes th'obsidian knife
tears out a human beating heart
an offering to the sun.

5. Dream of the Paradise Garden

Soloists and chamber choir

Only now do we reach the possibility of a settled society—a Garden of Eden. Always a dream, forwards or backwards, it is never an enduring reality, for there are always predators (e.g. the Centaur here) ready to invade and despoil. . . . This movement invokes Eden through lines from Milton's Paradise Lost, set after the manner of a Renaissance madrigal, then an instrumental transition (flutes and harp) which is in the rhythm of a sarabande. In the scene proper, there are four characters: two human (Man and Woman), one superhuman (called, neutrally, Ancestor) and a member of the animal kingdom—a Dragon (who can later be 'demoted' from such splendour of form).

The first part of the scene depicts a dream-like balance, a perfect communion of the numinous, animals and man. When this dream breaks, all goes into reverse. The friendly Dragon is demoted to a snake. The Ancestor becomes a 'pure, inviolate deity' who ascends into the sky. The Man and Woman ask for an explanation, but the impotent Ancestor merely recommends prayer.

CHAMBER CHOIR

To all delight of human sense exposed
in narrow room Nature's whole wealth,
yea more, a Heaven on Earth
for blissful Paradise the garden was.

Southward went a river large
through the shaggy hill
passed underneath ingulfed,
rose a fresh fountain;
visiting each plant and fed
flowers worthy of Paradise.
This was the place.

MAN (TENOR)

Come, Ancestor, and take a seat.

ANCESTOR (BARITONE)

I thank you; and the air is cool.

WOMAN (SOPRANO)

Dragons don't sit, I suppose.

DRAGON (MEZZO-SOPRANO)

I'll poise myself upon the grass.

ALL SOLOISTS

Evening shadows
bring surcease
across the meadows
of our peace.

ANCESTOR

Man, have you checked the walls lately?

MAN

Souder than ever:
tho' you'd know without moving.

DRAGON

I flew around them t'other day; seemed alright to me.

WOMAN

With our dear dragon for a guardian,
All is safe and homely.

ALL SOLOISTS

Evening shadows
bring surcease
across the meadows
of our peace.

In the moment of perfection
of the six-fold graph,
a line is about to . . .

WOMAN

Dragon, Dragon,
have you caught cold,
trembling in the night air?

DRAGON

My scales are dropping

too late, ah, too late, a nine-line has reversed.

MAN

Help, know-all Ancestor,
Why is that?

ANCESTOR

A thief, a Centaur, jumped the wall.

WOMAN

Dragon, fly, fly to our defence.

DRAGON

My wings fall off!

I move but on my belly.

MAN

All-powerful, what now?

ANCESTOR

Impotent, celestial;

my new country's there,

far, far beyond the stars.

But you may pray to me.

MAN

What have we done?

What guilt?

WOMAN

Why are we all alone?

MAN

What piercing sense of loss!

WOMAN

What aching, unstaunchable wound!

MAN AND WOMAN

Weep, weep, and cry again

for loss (ah) loss of that sweet time.

Look back, back, and gaze again

into that far-off garden;

rose-lawns and meadows; river noises

lost or remembered in the bitter-sweet songs
of music.

Let's go.

The snake glides swift and cringing to its hole.
The pure inviolate deity ascends the sky.

It was a sweet communion,
corrupted now to cold
indifference of the watching stars.

To all delight of human sense exposed
in narrow room Nature's whole wealth,
yea more, a Heaven on Earth
for blissful Paradise the garden was

Southward went a river large
through the shaggy hill,
passed underneath ingulfed,
rose a fresh fountain;
visiting each plant, and fed
flowers worthy of Paradise.

This was the place.
This the everlasting place of dream.

End of Part One

Part Two

6. The Triumph of Life

Soloists and chorus

The title comes from Shelley's last and unfinished poem. I have set portions of it alongside an account of Shelley's own death by drowning off the coast of Tuscany.

The theme of the fixed, the inexorable, in nature is developed now in human terms. 'Triumph', as Shelley uses it, is ambivalent. The unstoppable of Life on this Earth, powered by the same creative forces that drove the expanding universe 'in the beginning' (or at some unimaginable 'reversal') is in indeed a triumph. But the 'blindness' of the force is frightening. Against this 'blindness' and 'fear', the romantic hero (e.g. Shelley himself) asserts his individual immortality.

Shelley, the insomniac poet, spends the night on top of a hill, meditating upon the world. At dawn he wakes and looks seawards to the west. Behind him is the chariot of the sun rising across the sky. He turns this into a great tragic image of the chariot rolling on, carrying a mass of humans, all of whom eventually get thrown off.

Shelley, in an actual moment and place can ask: 'What do I see of the absolute?' There is no direct answer. Instead, in the piece, there is a transformation from the chariot scene to the drama of Shelley's own death. Chasing the sun in a boat, he is overtaken by a storm and drowns. So, in the course of the whole movement, we have progressed from dawn to midday and back to night. Legend has it that when Shelley's body was recovered and it had (for legal reasons) to be burnt, the heart would not burn.

CHORUS

At dawn

that insomniac poet on the hill-top

stretched his faint limbs . . .

TENOR

Before me fled the night;

behind me rose the day;

the Deep was at my feet,

and Heaven above my head

when a strange trance over my fancy grew . . .

As in that wond'rous trance of thought I lay
this was the tenour of my waking dream.
Methought I sate beside a public way.

Old age and youth, manhood and infancy
mixed in one mighty torrent did appear

And as I gazed methought that in the way
the throng grew wilder.

The crowd gave way, and I arose aghast,
or seemed to rise, so mighty was the trance,
and saw like clouds upon the thunder blast

. . . trance

which was not slumber,

was so transparent that the scene came through.

A crowd numerous as gnats upon the evening gleam,

Bizzwazz, whizzing wings . . .

. . . did appear,

all hastening onward, yet none seemed to know
whither he went, or whence he came, or why.

And whilst the sleeping tempest gathers might
so came a chariot on the silent storm
of its own rushing splendour, and a Shape.
All the four faces of that charioteer
had their eyes banded . . . little profit brings
speed in the van and blindness in the rear,
nor then avail the beams that quench the Sun
or that his banded eyes could pierce the sphere
of all that is, has been, or will be done.
So ill was the car guided, but it past
with solemn speed majestically on.

the million with fierce song and maniac dance
raging around

Struck to the heart by this sad pageantry,
half to myself I said, 'And what is this?
Whose shape is that within the car? And why?'
I would have added—'Is all here amiss?'
But a voice answered . . .

'Then what is Life?' I said . . .

ALL SOLOISTS

Out from the harbour speeds a yacht,
straining to entrap the sun.
That figure at the prow,
now who is he?

Th'insomniac poet,
moral navigator on the sea of life;
less skilful on the sea itself!
They haul up sail on sail
to their new topmast rigging;
to race it seems
that inevitable falling of the sun.
Faster, faster!

No more towards the sun
but flying now before the storm
in chase behind them on the wind.
All other boats haul down their sails
to hurry, frantic to the land.
But not that poet's.

flying by them to the coast

SOLOISTS AND CHORUS

Real the time,
the place?
The night,
the shore?
Real the drama that we do?
Cramming the brine-soaked body
into the metal box:
harsh incinerator.
Real the fire?

for where'er
the chariot rolled a captive multitude
was driven.

'life'

The cripple cast
his eye upon the car which now had rolled
onward, as if that look must be in the last
and answered . . .

Who is he?

Faster, faster!

Some helpful captain,

calls to come aboard or lower sail.
The tall black figure at the prow
shrieks, 'no'; and again shrieks, 'no'—
Proud as the sun itself, yet dropping into dark.
As the night comes
oh, can we still scry the scene?
The yacht, under full sail,
heels over—and is gone.

The fire from heaven.
Real the sound?
Resounding,
Flames feasting on flesh
on bones
on blood
Real?
Or unreal?
The trance which was not slumber
was so transparent that the scene came through
wherein we visioned
that the human beating heart
can never be burnt up
utterly.

7. Mirror of Whitening Light

Chorus

Science and technological mastery are now in the foreground. The title refers to the alchemical purification or 'whitening' process, by which a base metal may be transformed into gold, and, by extension, to the purification of the human soul. Music is again used as a metaphor of ordering; hence, the three canonic chorale preludes, based on the plainsong Veni creator spiritus, preceding each of the three sections of the movement.

The sections themselves pinpoint three historic moments in the triumphal progress towards a climax of 'measurement' and 'might'. With Pythagoras on Samos, the independence of physics from meta-physics is only a hint: but his graphics of measurement began a process which reached a significant stage in the alchemist's defiance of church dogma in researching the possible mutation of elements. With the splitting of the atom—and Shiva once more evoked (to dance our destruction?)—the social ambivalence of the technology that has resulted is as blindingly clear as the moment of Hiroshima itself, symbolised in the brass music of the coda.

Instrumental Prelude 1

Sailing to Samos over the wine-dark sea
memorialise the seer
who named the nodes of music and of time;
tracked 'twixt gravity and the blue horizon
the infinite quadrants of space.
For nature is number.

Instrumental Prelude 2

O rose-red cinnabar, you sombre metal
hell-heated
hotter, hotter!
radiant
look, look!
a silver and liquid pearl of mercury,
For fire is alchemy.

Instrumental Prelude 3

Fire and arithmetic
flash upon flash of mirrored mind to mind
unbind the structured atom
to a whiteness that shall blind the sun.
Or Shiva dancing our destruction.

8. Hiroshima, mon amour

Soprano and chorus

The single voice of a woman is heard in an act of remembrance and mourning, a threnody for those individuals who lost their lives in a brutal world. The text is almost all drawn from Anna Akhmatova's Requiem and also, at the end, her Poem without a Hero: all of it poetry that grew from her own experience into that of all Russia. Now, through translation into other languages, and perhaps through translation into music, it has widened into a world experience.

SOPRANO

No
not beneath another sky.
No
not sheltered by a stranger's wing
I was where,
among my people there,
where alas they were to be.

Slowly it floods my mind
like a melody in music

I heard him whisper

9. Three Songs:

I The Severed Head

Soloists and chorus

Scenes from the mythological life of Orpheus: not merely that part of the myth (which so obsessed the European imagination from the sixteenth century onwards) dealing with the death of Eurydice and Orpheus's failure to bring her back from Hades, but also Orpheus's death at the hands of the Furies, the Thracian Women who tore his body to pieces and threw the head into the river, where it floated down to the sea, still singing.

A trio evokes Orpheus, returning alone from Hell, 'stalking on' into the daylight. A baritone soloist sings a setting of four lines from Rilke's Sonnets to Orpheus (after an opening quotation from Dowland): the Rilke message, in essence, is that only a person who has known and suffered the dark side of the world can truly praise; Orpheus visited Hades and therefore experienced this darkness. The trio then depicts the Furies and Orpheus's death: and the baritone soloist (representing the singing head) sings further lines from Rilke.

TRIO (SOPRANO MEZZO-SOPRANO AND TENOR)

Peer into that cavern's mouth
whither the crazed singer wandered
turning, returning
and turned again.

BARITONE

I saw my lady weep

SOPRANO AND TENOR
Stalk on, stalk on
into daylight.

BARITONE

Who alone already lifted

CHORUS

(humming) . . .

. . . where,
. . . there,

All is now confused always
and I am powerless to tell
who is man and who is beast
whether I must wait for death.

I would like to name each one in turn
but they stole the list
and now it's lost.
I have woven a great shroud for you
out of those poor words
I overheard you speak
I shall remember always and everywhere
shall not forget come fresh evil days.
And if they shut my tortured mouth
through which a thousand million shout
then shall you remember me
on the eve of my remembrance day.

'goodbye . . .

You shall be my widow
Oh my dove, my star, my sister.'

CHORUS

. . . turning, returning

. . . Ah

the lyre among the dead
dare, divining, sound
the infinite praise.

. . . Sound

TRIO

Stare at those wild women
swarming the river bank
tearing
crunching
dismemb'ring
wrenching apart
all constellations of anatomy.
The head,
skull too hard to bite,
they hurl into the stream
of time:
flowing, diving, singing.

. . . of time

. . . Ah

BARITONE

Woe! where are we? Ever yet freer,
like torn-loose kites,
We flitter half-high, with edges of laughter,
bounced by the wind.
Order the screamers, O singing God!
That they may wake flowing,
bearing on the river-race the head and the lyre.

. . . Time

II The Beleaguered Friends

Mezzo-soprano and chorus

This refers to an actual situation. A group of anti-Nazis in Japanese-occupied Peking in 1944 await the end of the war. While waiting, they listen to a series of lectures on the I-Ching by Helmut Wilhelm (son of Richard Wilhelm, renowned translator of the I-Ching).

My text mentions the two methods of using the I-Ching: sorting yarrow stalks or the throwing of coins. Now the emperor's diviner 'juggling yarrow' and the blind flautist using coins no longer exist. Yet we can make use of the book if we wish. In Wilhelm's last lecture, he demonstrated at the request of his audience the yarrow stalks method of using the book's divinatory powers. The resulting hexagram was Deliverance. Good fortune can come provided we act properly. As earlier, in setting Akhmatova's poetry, I have widened the metaphor to stand for a more universal matter of morale in our violent and turbulent times: a metaphor for endurance, in short.

MEZZO-SOPRANO

Not in the jade palace,
with the Emperor's diviner
juggling yarrow.
Not in the hovel,
with the blind flautist alley-vendor
finger-guessing coin-signs.

Hidden, from hound and hawk,
in the goat-winter house,
we wait awhile
he asks the book:
What number is the Now?

Ah.

Fortieth of sixty-four,
Deliverance.

Ah.

CHORUS

Time-wait
to tell the number and the name.

Time-wait

to proclaim the judgement.

If there's nothing left where we've to go,
return brings good fortune.
If there's still something where we've to go,
hurrying brings good fortune.

III The Young Actor Steps Out

Tenor and chorus

Our mortality is the one inescapable feature of our existence: the triumphal chariot of Life will throw each one of us, powerful or puny, into the ditch. Species generation alone may be immortal. Nevertheless, in coming to terms with this vision we are always conditioned by our time, and therefore have to keep it all in balance since it is not an absolute. We are, in short, actors constantly finding ourselves at the beginning of the drama. Here, in this song, a young actor before his first rehearsal at the theatre in Olympia (in a novel of classical Greece), goes sight-seeing and visits the temple of Zeus. He peers at the great statue of the god. As his eye travels up, it meets the 'face of power'.

TENOR

Heat filled the wooded valley,
for spring comes like summer there.
Already the river was shallow in its pebbly bed;
the dust was hot to the foot,
the painted statues glowed.

I went in from the hot sun
to the soft, cool shadows,
and gaped with the rest at the great statue inside,
the gold and ivory,
the throne as big as my room at home.
Till my eye,
travelling upward,
met the face of power which says:

CHORUS

O man, make peace with your mortality,
for this too is God.

(Music continues into No.10)

10. The singing will never be done

Soloists and chorus (wordless)

Finally, the sound 'where no airs blow' (which is the metaphor in this piece for the transcendent) is momentarily all-powerful, present and immediate.

The End

Sources

I must acknowledge a large debt to Jacob Bronowski's *The Ascent of Man*: the television series and the book affected my conception of *The Mask of Time* in general terms and in its detailed contents.

In relation to the specific movements of the work, I have given below some indication of the sources I found useful in preparing the text.

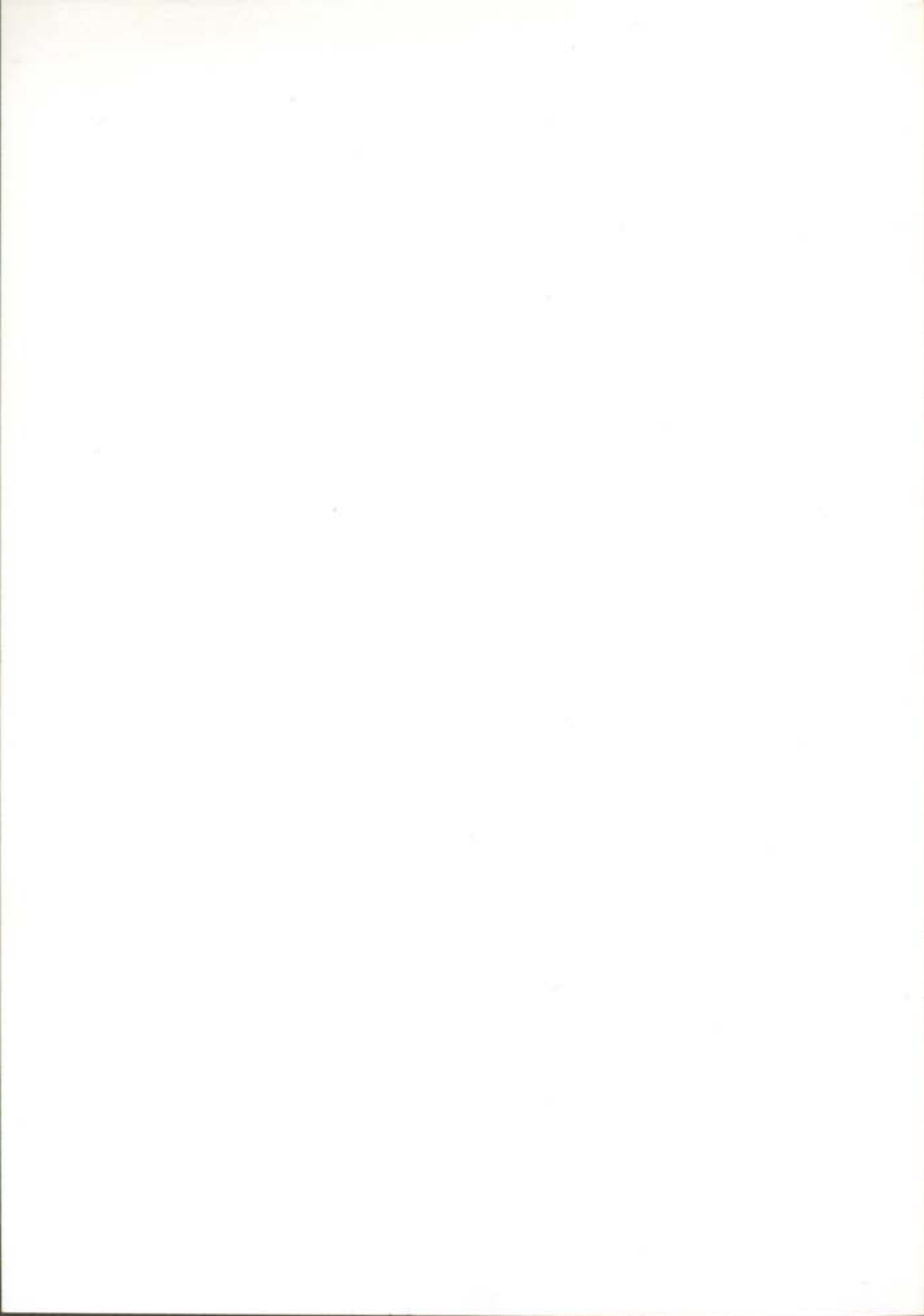
PART ONE

1. **Presence:** W. B. Yeats, *High Talk* (from *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats*, London, 1933)
2. **Creation of the World by Music:** cf. Loren Eiseley, *The Invisible Pyramid* (New York, 1970) pp. 7-8; Wallace Stevens's poem *Metaphor as Degeneration* (New York and London, 1954)
3. **Jungle:** Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (New York, 1974)
4. **The Ice-cap moves South-North:** cf. Bronowski, op. cit., pp. 65-8; T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (London, 1922); Thomas Traherne, *Centuries of Meditations*, vol. ii
5. **Dream of the Paradise Garden:** cf. J. M. Evans, *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition* (Oxford, 1968)

PART TWO

6. **The Triumph of Life:** cf. Richard Holmes, *Shelley: The Pursuit* (London, 1974), esp. pp. 712-30; Donald H. Reiman, *Shelley's 'The Triumph of Life': A Critical Study* (New York, 1979)
8. **Hiroshima, mon amour:** I have adapted here various transliterations of Akhmatova provided very kindly by Mr Peter Norman.
9. **Three Songs:** cf. J. B. Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages* (Harvard and Cambridge, 1970); Walter A. Strauss, *Descent and Return: the Orphic Theme in Modern Literature* (Harvard, 1971); Helmut Wilhelm, *Change: Eight Lectures on the I-Ching* (London, 1975); Mary Renault, *The Mask of Apollo* (London, 1966)

Michael Tippett, 1983





SCHOTT

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