

Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears

Audio Guide transcript of National Sound Archive recording

The musical and personal partnership of Peter Pears and Benjamin Britten was one of the most influential in the 20th century. As a tenor of outstanding skill, Peter Pears was known as the best interpreter of Britten's music. Here he remembers working with Britten.

'He was a very very sensitive musician. And I can remember very well, one of the things I shall never forget is, his getting his hands into position to play – they were tense in the sense they were ready to pounce on the piano. And there was in certain cases a suspicion of a quiver because it was so electric as though the current had been switched on.

It was very seldom that Ben and I had a difference of opinion about what we wanted to do in a song. Terribly seldom. To say whose idea came first, I don't really know because our ideas worked along parallel lines, like a railway. We'd discuss it before maybe, and maybe discuss it afterwards making points but really when it came to working at a piece it was gestures, just little indications.'