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Edward Venn

University of Leeds

Music, Metaphor and Modernism: Barrie Gavin's Composer Portraits

Abstract

The Royal Philharmonic Society has described the series of composer portraits created by Barrie Gavin as 'an unprecedented legacy and treasure trove for musicians and curious listeners alike to discover'. These profiles are characterized by their commitment to music of living composers, but also to a repertoire that has become increasingly marginalized in arts coverage in the half century or so since Gavin's first portrait. This article examines Gavin's contribution to the filmic presentation of musical modernism of the past fifty years, and in particular, explores his use of creative visual metaphors as a tool for interpretation.

Keywords

Barrie Gavin, metaphor, modernism, music, portraiture, interpretation,

In May 2017, the film director Barrie Gavin (born 1935) was awarded Honorary Membership of the Royal Philharmonic Society (RPS), in recognition of his 'documentation of the arts' (2017). This was the first such award given to a film maker. The citation drew attention to the 'over-

riding priority' afforded to contemporary composers and contemporary music within Gavin's work, singling out in particular the remarkable and ongoing series of composer portraits he has produced during his long career.[1] These, the RPS noted, represent 'an unprecedented legacy and treasure trove for musicians and curious listeners alike to discover' (ibid.). At the time of writing, Gavin's list of works contains 48 films that he designates as composer portraits (see Table 1), produced relatively consistently over the last half century. The first of these, 'The Rise and Fall of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart', was broadcast as part of the arts series *Sunday Night* (1965–68) on the BBC. A significant number were included within *Omnibus* (1967–2003, another occasional visitor to the Sunday evening TV schedules); others were broadcast in Germany, particularly in the 1990s onwards. Most recently, Gavin has been making films as independent productions.[2]

[1] Throughout this article I shall maintain a distinction between 'composer portrait' and '(music) documentary'. I will suggest that the former, although a sub-category of the latter, through the foregrounding of its subjective, interpretative nature, enables a sidestepping of broader theoretical tensions in documentary studies between reproduction of reality and its representation (see Nichols 2010: 13; Rogers 2015: 1). The narrower category of composer portraiture, with its more focused educational and aesthetic purpose, also counterbalances the definitional issues around documentary as a practice (see Nichols 2010: 7–41).

[2] The dissemination of Gavin's output thus described reflects an era in which social and economic drivers – perhaps most significantly the deregulation of UK television in the early 1990s – changed the nature of television documentary. Although I shall refer to shifting conventions in documentary presentation below, this is not my central focus: rather, I shall

Although Gavin's musical subjects range from the twelfth century (Hildegard von Bingen) through to the present day, over half of the films (marked by an asterisk in Table 1) take as their subjects living, or very recently deceased, composers. Represented here are composers belonging to the European avant-garde (including Karlheinz Stockhausen [1928–2007], Luigi Nono [1924–90] and Luciano Berio [1925–2003]); at the other stylistic extreme can be found minimalists such as John Adams (born 1947) and the jazz-infused work of Richard Rodney Bennett (1936–2012) and Mark-Anthony Turnage (born 1960). Common to all these recent composers, however, is an adherence (albeit with differing degrees of intensity) to the tenets of musical modernism.

Table 1: Barrie Gavin's Composer Portraits 1965–2017

First Broadcast/ Date Produced (where known)	**Title/Details**
26 July 1965	'In Search of Constant Lambert', *Workshop*, BBC Two
31 October 1965	'The Rise and Fall of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart', *Sunday Night*, BBC One
13 February 1966	'Holst' [co-producer with Michael Bradsell], *Sunday Night*, BBC One
18 January 1970	'Espansiva' [on Carl Nielsen], *Workshop*, BBC Two
31 May–14 June 1970	'Beethoven' [a three-part biographical series], *Music on 2*, BBC Two

concentrate in the main on the continuities across Gavin's work in isolation from their historical context. For a discussion of how such drivers shaped the style of the *South Bank Show* (ITV 1978–2010, Sky Arts, 2012–present), see Lee (2021 in this Special Issue).

20 June 1971	* ‘The Explorer’ [on Roberto Gerhard], *Music on 2*, BBC Two
19 November 1972	‘The Unknown Warrior’ [on Havergal Brian], *Aquarius*, ITV
12 December 1972	‘Berg’, *Music on 2*, BBC 2
13 May 1973	‘Vision and Revolution’ [on Olivier Messiaen], *Workshop*, BBC Two
27 October–3 November 1974	*Bogeyman-Prophet-Guardian* [on Arnold Schoenberg, two episodes], BBC Two
10 June 1977	* ‘A Line Through the Labyrinth’ [on Luciano Berio], *Omnibus Italia*, BBC One
1 October 1978	* *Vive a Venezia* [on Luigi Nono], BBC Two
29 November 1978	* *One Foot in Eden* [on Peter Maxwell Davies], BBC Two
?	* ‘Xenakis at Cluny’ [Gavin’s personal list describes this as a ‘short film for *Omnibus File* series’]
26 February 1980	* ‘Tuning in’ [on Karlheinz Stockhausen], *Omnibus*, BBC One
16 March 1980	*The Face Behind The Face* [on Dmitri Shostakovich], BBC Two
1981	* *Nali* [on H.K. Gruber], HR Fernsehen (Germany).
1983	* *A Journey to Mu* [on Kurt Schwertsik], Hessischer Rundfunk (Germany)
1983	* *Ikarus* [on Igor Markevitch], Hessischer Rundfunk (Germany)
17 August 1986	*The Noble Savage* [on Percy Grainger], Central Independent Television
11 April 1987	* *Leonardo* [on Edward Cowie], BBC Two
17 May 1987	* *Crossover* [on Richard Rodney Bennett], Central Independent Television

30 May 1987	*The Ballad of the Unknown Composer* [on Kurt Weill], Hessischer Rundfunk (date is the first broadcast on BBC Two)
25 September 1987	* 'Towards Antara' [on George Benjamin], *Omnibus*, BBC One
11 December 1988	* 'Dust in the Road' [on Michael Finnissy], *Sound on Film*, BBC Two
1988	* *Adams in Eden* [on John Adams], Central Independent Television
27 May 1990	'Think Today, Speak Tomorrow' [a survey of dissident composers in the USSR], *Soviet Music*, BBC Two
10 June 1990	* 'The Fire and the Rose' [on Sofia Gubaidulina], *Soviet Music*, BBC Two
17 June 1990	'Giving Voice' [a survey of dissident composers in the USSR], *Soviet Music*, BBC Two
24 June 1990	*Chez Francis: An Evening with Francis Poulenc,* BBC Two
12 January 1991	*The Tower of Dreams* [on Charles Koechlin], BBC Two
1992	* *Stutzpunkt Berlin* [on Aribert Reimann], for German television
10 October 1992	'The Secret Island' [on Sergei Rachmaninov], *Music on 2*, BBC Two
31 December 1992	*I'm a Stranger Here Myself* [on Kurt Weill in the USA], BBC Two
1993	*Der Himmel auf Erden - Die Welt der Hildegard von Bingen*, Hessischer Rundfunk
27–28 December 1994	*Verdi – a Life in Two parts* [with Mark Elder], BBC Two
1997	*American Dreams: Stephen Collins Foster und seine Zeit*, [on Stephen Foster], for German television
1997	*War in allem war* [on Mendelssohn]

21 June 1998	*Der Flug der Eule* [on Gaetano Donizetti with Mark Elder], Hessischer Rundfunk
7 August 1999	* 'The Triumph of Time' [on Harrison Birtwistle], *Masterworks: Six Pieces of Britain*, BBC Two
2001	*Between Two Worlds* [on Erich Korngold], Hessischer Rundfunk
2001	* *Oliver Knussen: Sounds from the Big White House*, independently produced
6 January 2002	* *Memoirs of an Outsider* [on Hans Werner Henze], BBC Knowledge
2004, screened 26 November 2005	* *Getting Scorched* [on Mark-Anthony Turnage], BBC Four/Hessicher Rundfunk
2007	* *Nigel Osborne: Finding the Music*, independently produced
2009, first screened 28 January 2012	* *Towards and Beyond* [on Jonathan Harvey], independently produced
2012	* *David Matthews* [short film on String Quartet No. 3 for the RPS], (https://royalphilharmonicsociety.org.uk/composers/commissions/past-projects-composers/encore/encore-on-camera)
2016	* *'and who knows you can do it…'* [Colin Matthews at 70], independently produced (https://colinmatthews.net/audio/knows-can-barrie-gavin-documentary/)
2017, first screened 31 August 2018	* *A Passage from India* [on Brian Elias], independently produced

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** denotes a portrait of a recent or living modernist composer*

My first encounter with Gavin's treatment of modernist music was in a film broadcast in 1999 as part of the BBC Two series *Masterworks: Six Pieces of Britain.* The subject of the film was the composer Harrison Birtwistle (born 1934) and his 1972 orchestral work *The Triumph of Time*, which as a student in the 1990s I had first got to know through performances by Sir Simon Rattle with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. But Gavin's film brought with it a new appreciation of what I was hearing. In particular, I was struck by a section that occurs relatively early on in the film (clip: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p09097z2). Here, Birtwistle describes in an interview how he consciously distanced his work from the mainstream of contemporary English music that he would have heard when growing up, including the metaphysical pastoral idiom of composers such as Vaughan Williams. The musical extract that follows (from Rehearsal Number 8 in the score[3]) is based around lyrical material given to the oboe. The sound of the oboe against slowly unfolding string harmonies is one of the quintessential sounds of the English pastoral tradition, but Birtwistle subverts this convention by accompanying the oboe with dissonant, grinding harmonies for muted brass and resonant metallic percussion. Doing so causes the established pairing of oboe timbre (signifier) with bucolic landscapes (signified) to become unmoored; it creates a semiotic vacuum waiting to be filled. Heard in the concert hall (or as part of a complete recording), this moment accrues its significance from its place within the work as it unfolds; positioned out of context within a documentary, Gavin's choice of visual imagery enters into dialogue with the music (and surrounding interviews/narrated text) to generate new meanings.

[3] A perusal score of the work can be found at https://www.universaledition.com/sir-harrison-birtwistle-64/works/the-triumph-of-time-5330.

Specifically, Gavin presents footage of highly accelerated processes of organic proliferation and decay, often at the microscopic level (Figure 1 is a still from a time-lapse depiction of an insect cocoon decaying and becoming home to fungus). When superimposed on the music, I found myself attending less to the continuity provided by the oboe line and more to the teeming details in the accompaniment, so that the glistening sound of the percussion and juddering, shimmering time-lapse imagery of fungal growth came together to imbue the passage with a sickly surreal quality. At the same time, the scientific, instructive nature of the imagery resonates with the quasi-objective treatment of Birtwistle's pastoral oboe, and I was reminded strongly of the alternative tradition of viewing nature as 'red in tooth and claw'.[4] The music is not 'about' the organic processes we see in the images. But these images offer a vivid *metaphor* for the music, a way of hearing the music *as* something that emerges from the interaction of media.

Figure 1: Screenshot from The Triumph of Time *(1999)*

This metaphorical interaction inverts the usual relationship between music and image in documentaries (for an overview of the typical functions of music, see Corner 2002, 2015; Rogers 2015). This claim holds true even when situating Gavin's work within the genre of *music* documentaries, in which music is the notional subject matter (See Edgar et al [eds], 2013 for an

[4] The phrase is often attributed (incorrectly) to Tennyson; Birtwistle's own response to nature is closer however to that found in the poetry of his near contemporary and fellow Northerner Ted Hughes (1930–98).

overview of documentaries on popular music). Specifically, Gavin's composer portraits are framed so that the music is heard less in the context of a composer's history, but rather, mediated representations of the music are used to tell us something about the composer's artistic life.

The emphasis on metaphorical *interpretation* – of using telling images that lead to active meaning formation – is one of Gavin's most significant contributions to discourse surrounding contemporary music. Moreover, I shall claim that metaphor functions as a fulcrum between content (the interpretative meaning construction) and form (portraiture), offering a new way to theorize representation in documentary. To make and sustain this argument, I shall first tease out what I perceive as some of the values underpinning Gavin's work in order to situate his filmic portraits against the background of the musical culture to which the composers belong, as well as the documentary traditions that his work is in dialogue with. From here, I shall theorize briefly what I mean by metaphor in this context (both multimodal and as a portraiture technique), before concluding with a close reading of Gavin's metaphorical imagination in practice.

BARRIE GAVIN IN CONTEXT

Gavin belongs to a generation that includes composers such as Jonathan Harvey (1939–2012), Peter Maxwell Davies (1934–2016), Harrison Birtwistle and Richard Rodney Bennett (all of whom have featured as subjects in his films). This generation of musicians and artists was, as the cultural historian Andrew Blake has observed, 'part of the heroic culture of the 1960s, during which a self-proclaimed radical avant-garde forced its way into the Establishment' (Blake 1997: 4–5). William Glock (later Sir William), another of Gavin's subjects, played a significant role in the definition of, and institutional support of, this culture. It was Glock who founded in 1948 the

Bryanston (later, Dartington) summer school, through which the most up-to-date musical thinking from mainland Europe could be disseminated to a young, receptive pool of musicians. In the 1950s, Glock edited *The Score*, the music journal he founded, and served as chair of the Music section of the Institute for Contemporary Arts. In the latter capacity, he booked the celebrated January 1956 concert by the New Music Manchester group, and thus brought Maxwell Davies, Birtwistle and others to national attention (see Rupprecht 2015). In 1959, Glock became controller of Music for the BBC, and from 1960 he ran the Proms. In this time, policy (commissions, programming and promotion) favoured (so-called) progressive music (see Glock 1991 for a first-hand account of this period). It was in this environment, where close examination of serious, committed music could flourish, that Gavin joined the BBC in 1961 (as assistant film editor) and subsequently developed his trade. Although the primary focus of this article is to explore the emergent meanings within specific documentaries as illustrations of Gavin's practice, rather than to situate Gavin historically, some understanding of how his work is aligned with other trends in documentary engagement is necessary.

Gavin arrived at the BBC during a period in which the broadcaster was re-evaluating and re-thinking the role of documentary on television as a medium for information and entertainment (Boon 2017; Walker 1993; Wyver 2007). This rethinking can be felt in the development of documentary techniques as well as more general editorial philosophies. In the first instance, the work of filmmakers such as Denis Mitchell and Phillip Donnellan 'employed layered voices, imaginative blends of music and audio effects, and allusive juxtapositions of sound and image to develop a self-consciously "poetic" form of small-screen documentary'

(Stevens and Wyver 2018: 253).[5] Although Ieuan Franklin has warned against the 'danger of reductionism in grouping together and categorizing the heterogeneous films from this creatively fertile period in the British television documentary' – his list includes Mitchell and Donnellan, as well as John Boorman, Michael Croucher and John Ormand – he highlights nevertheless their relationship to the 'resurgence of the poetic and disjunctive aesthetic and humanist structure of feeling' (Franklin 2014: para 8). One might extend this list to take in the work of later figures such as Dennis Marks, Nigel Finch, Gina Newson, Peter West and Geoff Dunlop. Close examination of the relationship between this grouping and Gavin's documentaries is beyond the scope of this article; a fuller historical survey would explore in greater detail the points of connection and divergence in the techniques employed by filmmakers of the period.

The ways in which filmmakers developed how documentaries might achieve their effects exists in counterpoint with top-down institutional priorities. The BBC One arts magazine series *Monitor* (1958–65) offered an early example of the sense of purpose in the Corporation at the time.[6] Ken Russell has claimed that '*Monitor* was and still remains the one and only English experimental film school ever, and Huw Wheldon was its guiding genius' (cited in Dickinson 2015: 70). Wheldon, who edited the programme between 1958 and 1962 (staying on as principal

[5] Stevens and Wyver note the parallels between Mitchell and Donnellan's work and that of later BBC filmmakers of the mid-1960s and 1970s, such as Robert Vas and Mike Dibb (2018: 253). See also Pettitt (2000) for an exploration of Donnellan's later career.

[6] For more on *Monitor* and its impact, including its more experimental content, see Clegg (2018), Hill (2015), Irwin (2011) and Wyver (2016).

interviewer and anchor until 1964), spoke in 1964 of the three principles that underpinned his editorial philosophy on the show:

> (1) responsibility towards the subject matter: television must be true to the subject, it should not distort or belitte; (2) responsibility towards the audience: television should try to be accessible, it must not condescend; (3) responsibility to the medium of television itself; the medium should be used constructively and creatively. (Walker 1993: 49)[7]

Such principles are reflected in the discussions that shaped the content of BBC Two prior to its first broadcast in 1964 (compare with Boon 2017: 326–29). Gavin was part of the new channel from the outset, working with Humphrey Burton (who became the BBC's first Head of Music and Arts the following year). Most significantly, Burton was the first producer of *Workshop* (1964–69), the series to which Gavin made numerous contributions. Reflecting the Glockian ethos of music at the BBC in this era, *Workshop* displayed a 'comfortable elitism' in its aspirations and content (Boon 2017: 339), with Gavin's 'Pierre Boulez: Portrait–Analysis–Performance' (first broadcast on 22 August 1966) a notable example of this approach (Boon 2017; see also below).

Wheldon's editorial principles, along with the priorities of the group of filmmakers discussed above, speak to an ethical imperative that shaped the 'heroic culture of the 1960s' more widely in its response to modernism. This was part of a broader strategy designed to carve

[7] If Wheldon's principles encapsulate his own personal approach to documenting the arts, we must not forget that documentary-makers' taste for redefining the form means that many other formulations are possible. However, given the correspondence between Wheldon's suggestions and Gavin's own practice, it is worth noting them here.

out a space for British musical modernism that drew productively on the moral and historicizing tendencies of early twentieth-century modernism (see Venn 2009). Thus we find a major compositional figure such as Alexander Goehr – another member of New Music Manchester – writing in 1979 (during a period in which Gavin was busy with numerous portraits of contemporary composers – see Table 1) that

> [m]odernism might be seen as embodying a kind of moral stance, a philosophical position, as opposed to any concern with the contemporary, the merely new, at any particular time. Modernism may be seen as representing a philosophy which says that an individual experience, an individual perception of truth, is to be set above the collective values of society. (Goehr [1979] 1997: 95).[8]

Or, take Hugh Wood, another composer of the 1930s generation, praising the Italian composer Luigi Dallapiccolla, stating that '[h] is music has seriousness and integrity and – it's such an English word, I'm afraid – *decency*' (2007: 68, original emphasis).

Gavin's output embodies the same values as those espoused by his composer and BBC peers, as well as the filmic techniques of his directorial colleagues, and he has shown a remarkable fidelity to such values even as the televisual social and economic landscape has altered almost beyond recognition. Take, for instance, the second of Wheldon's principles: that of responsibility towards an audience. The use of visual imagery to interpret metaphorically the

[8] One is reminded here of Dai Vaughan's 1976 discussion of the 'artisan constructions of meaning' in the then-contemporary television documentary, and how television's absorption of techniques from *cinema verité* 'related strongly to *individual* rather than *general* truth'. Citations from Corner (2008: 15–16).

music one hears points to the accessibility of Gavin's work; nevertheless, a refusal to condescend to the implied viewer requires them to play an active role in meaning construction that places value on the individual experience.[9] This, I would contend, situates Gavin's work at a considerable remove from contemporary mainstream television documentaries. Simply put, Gavin's work retains a 'concern with the *pictorial creativity* of documentary, the organisation of its visual design and the "offer of seeing" it variously makes to audiences', in contrast to more recent trends that position the emphasis (I would argue) much more upon 'the satisfactions offered by various modes of *narrative*, documentary as story-telling' (Corner 2008: 21–22; original emphasis).

To understand these distinctions in practice, it is instructive to compare *Towards and Beyond*, Gavin's 2009 portrait of another of his peers, the composer Jonathan Harvey (1939–2012),[10] and *Sacred Music* (2008–10), the first four-part series of which was first broadcast on BBC Four in March and April 2008. (The latter stands metonymically in this argument for

[9] As Thomas Austin and Wilma de Jong observe, viewing strategies of such implied viewers – mediated by the choices of filmmakers – are integral to the perception of documentaries *as* documentaries (Austin and de Jong 2008: 3). Thus 'what makes a film "documentary" is the way we look at it […] to see a film as documentary is to see its meaning as pertinent to the events and objects which passed before the camera' (Vaughan 1999: 84–85, cited Austin and de Jong 2008: 3).

[10] The first public screening of *Towards and Beyond* was on 28 January 2012 as part of the BBC Total Immersion event dedicated to Jonathan Harvey's music. This reflects the shift in the dissemination of Gavin's work from broadcast television to festivals and the like.

mainstream contemporary television documentary practices.)[11] The structural metaphor for *Towards and Beyond*, Gavin's voiceover narration tells us, is that of a journey 'into the mind and music of Harvey'. The composer's workroom is used both as a point of origin for the documentary; as the physical and psychic landscapes traversed in the documentary spiral ever further outwards, we keep returning back to the workroom as a point of focus. We see the composer in the workroom in a contemplative mood; his subsequent Buddhist-influenced philosophical musings establish the tone and level of discourse (see Figure 2). The self-reflexive relationship between the origination and organization of the chosen images (Corner 2008: 23; Nichols 2010: 194–99), mediated by the music, is part of a directorial strategy that constructs an implied viewer who is informed, imaginative and willing to work creatively in order to interpret the music and words that they hear and the images they see into a coherent whole.

Figure 2: Screenshot from Towards and Beyond *(2009)*

By way of contrast, the first series of *Sacred Music*, broadcast a year before *Towards and Beyond* was produced, constructs a very different relationship between viewer and content. *Sacred Music* is presented by the actor (and former St Paul's chorister) Simon Russell Beale. As with *Towards and Beyond*, the governing metaphor is that of a journey, but here the direction of travel is not inwards, into the creative imagination, but rather outwards, in the manner of an eighteenth-century Grand Tour. Russell Beale presents himself as an eager student, keen to

[11] For an overview of more recent modes of documentary engagement, see Hill (2008).

discover (as he describes it in the narrated introduction to the programme) 'the stories behind [the] wonderful music' he sang as a child. Thus, in full 'participatory mode' (Nichols 2010: 179–94) he embarks on a literal voyage around the major centres of sacred music in Europe to learn more about the 'lives and the beliefs of those who sang it, and those who composed it' (clip: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p09098lk). In Corner's terms, the 'origination of the image' lacks the self-reflexivity of *Towards and Beyond*, presenting the viewer with images that are implied to be 'captured' rather than 'constructed' (Corner 2008: 23). The result is thus a narrative mode of presentation, in contrast to the pictorial creativity witnessed in Gavin's work. Russell Beale acts as a surrogate for the implied viewer – there is thus no further need to create such a viewer through directorial strategy – and this viewer is constituted as an everyman with a limited familiarity with music history and even less music theory. Accordingly, Russell Beale's 'discoveries' are fed to the *actual* viewer, of whom little by way of creative engagement is required. There is an uneasy and somewhat disingenuous tension between Russell Beale's persona as a student and the persona he adopts elsewhere in the series. Such a jarring shift in discursive voice can be gleaned from the second episode (broadcast 28 March 2008), in which the affected ignorance Russell Beale adopts when interviewing a choirmaster on a motorcycle ('what is it that makes Palestrina's music so special?') cuts directly to a voiceover in which Russell Beale suddenly takes up an authoritative narrating voice ('From his humble origins in this small town, Palestrina found a way to express his faith through music so eloquently that, five centuries later, it still inspires composers today'; clip: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p09098nc). Whilst the interview touches on issues of the significance and musical character of Palestrina's work, the enduring image (for me, at least) is

the shot of the choirmaster's boots and flared trouser bottoms as he asserts that Palestrina was just 'a regular guy' (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Screenshot from Sacred Music*, Series 1 Episode 2*

The imagined viewers for these two clips, and the modes of engagement that they elicit, are radically different: one presupposes an engaged and an active co-producer of meaning; the other a passive observer, willing to be told what the music means (or might mean).[12] It is the difference between 'looking through' and 'looking at' something, where the former

> involves a reflexive mode of engagement. It is observation of ourselves experiencing something; through [this] second-order observation we can transform the experience, taking it to an "imaginary space" without losing touch with what is real about the experience to begin with. (Hill 2008: 225, citing Corner 2005: 52).

This comparison is neither intended to set one up as a straw figure against the other, nor to hold one up as intrinsically 'better'. Rather, I would like to use the divergent approaches

[12] Bill Nichols describes the 'constituency of viewers' and the assumptions they bring to bear on their viewing habits (2010: 33–41). Such assumptions (a 'documentary mode of engagement') exists, of course, in dialogue with the modes of engagement actualized by the documentary maker.

described to reflect on the implications of the more fundamental cultural shift that has played out over the last half century, and what this means for an understanding of Gavin's approach to his composer portraits. The two models of documentary engagement described above have a long pre-history: one might point to the Grand Tours enacted within Compton Mackenzie's *The Glory That Was Greece*, or Kenneth Clark's 13-part *Civilisation* (1969) as important models for *Sacred Music.*[13] Similarly, Gavin's pictorial creativity resonates with trends in British arts documentaries associated with 'a specific moment in television' during which 'intellectuals and artists genuinely tried to speak to a large audience, using television, and also when things could be shown on television in visually innovative and exciting ways' (Masschelein 2018: 345). Nevertheless, whilst recognizing that there remains a multiplicity of modes of documentary engagement, the competition for viewers' attention has led to a 'cross-fertilization of documentary and drama, information and entertainment in factuality' (Hill 2008: 230). Simply, the distance we can observe between Gavin's recent work and a documentary such as *Sacred Music* is reflected in the increasingly marginal position afforded to discussion about serious music in our contemporary society, for such discussion sits uneasily in the contemporary documentary landscape.[14] As Michael Chanan, one time a junior colleague of Gavin's at the

[13] See Wyver 2018 for a discussion of the historical development of techniques associated with virtual travel in British documentaries. A key difference between *Sacred Music* and its predecessors, however, is that Russel Beale's persona is that of the celebrity everyman, a proxy for the uninformed viewer, rather than that of a public intellectual, such as Kenneth Clark.

[14] Mike Dibb, who worked as a director at the BBC contemporaneously with Gavin, offers a similar diagnosis of shifting trends in documentary. See Masschelein 2018: 358–59.

BBC, has observed (from the perspective of the start of the twenty-first century, and with reference to the sorts of modernist composers that Gavin explores):

> By the end of the 1960s, twenty-five years after the relaunch of television at the end of World War II […] a young critic could get to make films about new music and new attitudes. Today, more than half a century into the age of television, the whole Darmstadt school [including composers such as Boulez, Stockhausen, Berio and Nono, all of whom Gavin has profiled] has been relegated to an esoteric niche which the small screen more or less ignores, and its radical subversions have been replaced by a return to the broad-based idiom which it is accused of having tried to expel. (Chanan 2002: 368)

The assertion of individual, radical subversions in Gavin's work, held up against the broad-based populism of something like *Sacred Music,* is what contributes to its identity and particular value.

The RPS's citation for Gavin's Honorary Membership highlights similar qualities in Gavin's film-making, noting that 'the hallmarks of his work are the care and attention to detail which he invests in each and every subject, and his ability to demonstrate insightful authority and profound understanding'. However, the citation adds the qualifier, 'while always allowing the music to speak for itself' (Royal Philharmonic Society 2017). Chanan would probably describe this as one of 'two misconceptions' about the presentation of music on television. In fact, Chanan's argument stems from his discussion of an example of Gavin's 'innovatory style' in the filming of Beethoven's string quartets for the Beethoven bicentennial in 1970, in which the focus on the bodies of the instruments rather than the players invited censure from 'one of the

department's senior administrators' who felt it to be a 'maltreatment of the classics'.[15] Chanan continues:

> The first [misconception] is the supposition that the director of the television presentation is categorically not an artist; even if artistry is involved, the creative prerogatives of the artist are out of order. The job is to be a transmitter of other people's creativity. […] The second misconception is the idea of neutrality of style: there is no such thing. Whatever form of interpretation or presentation is adopted implies some attitude towards the material in question. (Chanan 2002: 370–71)

My central claim follows on from Chanan's, and acts as a corrective to the RPS citation: one of the most significant aspects of Gavin's portraiture is not his ability to allow the music to 'speak for itself'; he is first and foremost a wonderful *interpreter* of this repertoire. His background of working for the BBC at an especially 'creatively fertile time' informed his subsequent imaginative use of visual metaphor that 'implies some attitude towards the material', and importantly one that invites the viewer to participate – within the limits defined by the visual ideas – in meaning construction.

VISUAL METAPHOR

How is this 'attitude towards the material' realized? My concern here is not to claim uniqueness for Gavin's use of visual metaphor (which is, after all, a common technique in arts

[15] This is likely to have been part of 'It Must Be', the third of a three-part *Music on 2* series broadcast on 14 June 1970.

documentaries), but to sketch out a theoretical framework through which his application of it to modernist music can be approached. Metaphor, as Ricoeur reminds us, is situated between poetics (structure and linguistic techniques) and rhetoric (the act of persuasion). In metaphorical constructions, certain ideas are paradigmatically replaced (unexpectedly) by others in order to suggest, or persuade others of, new meanings. In this sense, metaphor is not simply a substitution of terms on the basis of similarity (as was the conventional view); they provide new information (Ricoeur 1977). Paraphrasing Ricoeur, Michael Spitzer has noticed that 'the [verbal] imagery of metaphor inspires thought; it sets into motion imaginative reflection in the reader' (Spitzer 2004: 99). Certain cognitive linguists would argue that metaphor is even more pervasive, structuring our entire experience. When faced with an abstract concept (such as time, or music) we seek to ground it in metaphorically in more familiar territory (see, e.g. Lakoff and Johnson 1980). When we seek, for instance, to understand time (the *target domain*) in terms of metaphors of space (the *source domain*), as in a phrase such as 'let's leave the past *behind* us', we can talk of *cross-domain mappings.* Metaphors, whether artistic or experiential, can be multimodal (see Forceville, 2008, 2009): cross-domain mappings underpin such multimodal metaphors, as when, for instance, visual imagery (the source domain) is used to ground our experience of aural imagery such as music (the target domain), especially when such mappings are to inspire imaginative thought.

Conceptual metaphor theory has found its way into musicology through the work of, amongst others, Michael Spitzer, Nicholas Cook (2001) and Lawrence Zbikowski (2002). Cook and Zbikowski both employ the terminology and diagrammatic representations of derived from Turner and Fauconnier (1995), and in particular the use of *conceptual integration networks* to model *conceptual blends* in which two separate domains are brought together to generate new

(metaphorical) meanings. Building on his prior work on multimedia (Cook 1998), Cook offers a representation of his analysis of a 1992 commercial for a Citroen car, in which certain *attributes* of the visual imagery of the car (cutting rhythms, energetic motion etc.) combine with attributes (tempo, articulation etc.) of Mozart's overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* to create a *blended space* in which a particular *emergent meaning* arises (one that suggests that the car is agile, precise, prestigious and so on – see Figure 4).[16] Whilst the conceptual integration network of Figure 4 can only ever be a heuristic representation of more complex cognitive workings, it nevertheless captures something of the dynamism of multimodal metaphors and cross-domain mappings.

Figure 4: Conceptual Integration Network for a car commercial (Cook 2001: 183)

Such dynamism can be observed in the opening minutes of 'The Explorer', Gavin's portrait of the composer Roberto Gerhard (1896–1970) first broadcast in 1971 as part of the series *Music on 2* (1965–73). Early on in the documentary, Gavin superimposes an image of an RAF aeroplane in flight over music drawn from Gerhard's Symphony No. 3, 'Collages' (1960). The footage in question begins with the wing of the plane as it slowly passes in front of the sun (causing lens flare), situated above the clouds (see Figure 5). The music at this point consists

[16] Cook's focus on attributes of source domains rather than the domain in its entirety helps him avoid a common misconception of conceptual metaphor theory (i.e. that not all aspects of one domain need be mapped onto another). For an overview of criticisms of conceptual metaphor theory, along with empirical support for its explanatory power, see Gibbs 2011.

primarily of high, sustained sounds; there is no bass. The combination of visuals and music suggest a suspension of motion, lightness and floating (see Figure 6; clip: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p090980w). It might be argued – with some justification – that Gavin's choice of images here are constrained by compositional paratexts: 'the original idea for the work occurred to Gerhard whilst he was on a return flight from America and flying at about 30,000 feet over the Irish coast' (Conway n.d.). Nevertheless, there is still much to be done in the selection of precisely what footage of aeroplanes one might include, how they relate to the music to illuminate the metaphor of flight and how they are to be combined (cross cutting rhythms, etc.).

Figure 5: Screenshot from The Explorer *(1971)*

Figure 6: Conceptual Integration Network for The Explorer (1971)

Yet the origination of images (Corner 2008) cannot wholly be reduced to compositional paratexts; Gavin retains control of creative decisions. This much remains clear when one encounters the reuse of images, as when Gavin uses the same footage of flight in 'The Explorer' in his portrait of Stockhausen, 'Tuning In' (broadcast in 1980 for BBC's *Omnibus*). Here, the clip is much shorter, part of a fast-moving montage of images portraying the speed of travel in modern life (other images include rockets and images of the Earth from space). The music that these images accompany is that of Stockhausen's 1966 composition *Telemusik*. The

electronically generated sounds – buzzes, pulses, distorted fragments from vaguely recognizable sources and rapid shifts between sounds as if someone was turning a radio tuning dial – combine with the visual imagery to suggest notions of the future, of (technological) progress, of rapidity of motion (see Figure 7; clip: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p093bwdk).

Figure 7: Conceptual Integration Network for 'Tuning In' (1980)

Observing how the same footage creates different meanings depending on the music that accompanies it suggests that it matters less that the origination of certain imagery might have been suggested to Gavin by paratextual information about pieces or composers, and more how the 'organisation of the image' is realized. The origination and organization of the image – Corner's 'planes of visual organisation' – are, rather, ways into understanding the *cognition* of a documentary and the types of truth claims that documentaries might make (Corner 2008: 22–25). But metaphor as a mode of cognition is not about truth, but rather new ways of understanding, of interpreting. This is perhaps no more apparent than when considering the nature of truth claims about music. For Lawrence Kramer, '[i]f meaning begins with (forms around, clings to) a truth claim (implicit or explicit, real or fictive), then music has no meaning in the ordinary sense' (1990: 5). Yet as music is (for many, self-evidently) *meaningful*, it requires interpretation to disclose its meanings. Kramer continues: 'to argue that meaning begins with a truth claim is merely to give a restrictive definition of meaning', and where a text such as music 'does not give itself to understanding [,] it must be made to yield to understanding' (1990: 5–6).

The re-use of footage from 'The Explorer' in 'Tuning In' is thus an interpretative ploy to create new understandings (new meanings), precisely because the range of attributes of a given image is not exhaustible; the specific conjunction of image with music causes different attributes to become active agents in meaning construction. The same is true if a given musical passage is combined with different images: for all of the *potential meanings* of a musical idea – the potentially infinite combinations of the varied attributes of a passage – specific *actualized* meanings arise in a particular metaphorical context (see Cook 2001 for discussion of how discussions of the recapitulation of the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (1822–24) give rise to diverse but equally plausible readings, depending on the verbal imagery being employed). This points to a fundamental aspect of the types of emergent meaning found in Gavin's portraiture: the images and sounds on their own do not generate meanings (in the sense of objective truth claims), but rather it is their combination that gives rise to Gavin's subjective interpretation, a metaphorical mode of understanding that he invites the viewer to experience and evaluate.

PORTRAITURE AS METAPHOR

This subjective and interpretative stance provides a means of linking visual metaphor with Gavin's use of narrative techniques associated with the genre of portraiture. As the film scholar Paul Arthur has observed, the 1960s bore witness to 'the accelerating growth of portraiture as a mode of filmic organization and as a cultural signifier' (Arthur 2003: 94). For Arthur, the 'longer takes and relatively straightforward handling of the camera' of portraiture 'are preferred over the

use of montage – an essentially *metaphoric device'* (2003: 94; emphasis added).[17] Yet the representational aspects of portraiture in Arthur's account are not as unmetaphorical as they might first appear. As Michael Kennedy observed, when appropriating the term 'portrait' for his monograph *Portrait of Elgar*, 'a portrait should be a recognizable likeness of the sitter […] and it also reflects the painter's own view of, and approach to the subject' (1987: 9–10).[18] This subjective element to portraiture was certainly true for Ken Russell's 'television biographies' of composers, including one on Elgar for *Monitor* (first broadcast 1962). Russell's inclusion of dramatized scenes, including those for which there was little or no factual evidence, was part of a strategy for representing what Russell felt was 'the spirit of the composer'. For John Hill, this is 'an ambivalent formulation that partly suggests that it is the music itself, rather than the composer's life, that provides the key to an understanding of the composer' (Hill 2015: 459).[19] Although there are considerable differences between the approaches to portraiture in Russell and Gavin – the latter does not include fantasy elements or dramatizations, for instance – the

[17] The relationship between metaphor and montage, especially in relation to Eisenstein's writings, is discussed in Whittock 1990: 70–79. On the use of montage in the documentaries of Denis Mitchell, and its subsequent influence on British documentaries, see Franklin 2013.

[18] Indeed, in portraiture throughout Western history (whether in painting or, more recently, photographs and films) 'the viewer is not only confronted with the "original", "unique" subjectivity of the portrayer, but also that of a portrayed. Lina Nochlin has expressed this abundance of originality tersely: in the portrait we watch "the meeting of two subjectivities"' (van Alphen 2001: 47).

[19] I shall return to Ken Russell's composer portraits in the conclusion to this article.

importance placed on music as a mode of understanding is common to both. By using music as the source domain to better understand the target domain (the composer), the portraiture becomes inherently metaphorical.[20]

Gavin's 'Pierre Boulez: Portrait–Analysis–Performance' (the first of a number of collaborations with the composer), manifests many of the qualities of the 1960s portrait as defined by Arthur. The viewpoint favours 'frontal mid-range compositions in which a subject's face and hands are privileged foci' (see Figure 8; clip: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p09099s8); the setting is broadly 'vernacular', in the sense that it takes place in the studio where Boulez is rehearsing and later performing his *Improvisation II sur Mallarmé* (1957); this setting also plays a 'role in defining the subject's identity' (2003: 95). More pertinent, when considering Gavin's subsequent portraits, is the use of intertitles to divide the documentary into three sections: 'portraiture', 'analysis' of the composition and a 'performance' of it. The analysis of the composition acts as a metaphor for the compositional process and creative act; this, in turn, suggests a mode of listening to be adopted during the performance. Rather than simply 'hearing' the music, we hear it 'as' an expression of the composer's creativity, mediated by the previous portrait and analysis sections.[21]

Figure 8: Screenshot from Workshop: *'Pierre Boulez' (1966)*

[20] This is in contrast to the use of a composer's life to understand the music, as was the case, say, in Russell Beale's *Sacred Music*.

[21] On the essentially metaphorical nature of 'hearing as' see Spitzer 2004: 30–32 (on analytical 'hearing as') and 83–85.

Typically, Gavin's later composer portraits combine one or more of the three categories introduced in the Boulez programme. For instance, 'Towards Antara' (for *Omnibus* in 1987), is structured around an exploration of the creative impulses behind *Antara* for chamber orchestra and live electronics (1987) by George Benjamin (born 1960). Here, the focus is primarily on 'analysis', though by way of a technically ambitious conclusion, the closing performance of the work was broadcast simultaneously on television and on BBC Radio 3 (clip: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0909895). 'Dust in the Road', produced for the BBC as one of four *Sound on Film* programmes (1988; clip: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p090990v), focuses on the work by the same name composed by Michael Finnissy (born 1946). As in 'Towards Antara', rehearsal footage provides a point of continuity against which interviews with the composer discussing their thought processes can be juxtaposed. 'Dust in the Road' also concludes with a full performance of the work under discussion. In both of these cases, the composer is presented metaphorically through an examination of the creative act and its realization in a complete work.

A different balance between portrait, analysis and performance can be found in the film about Luciano Berio, 'Line through the Labyrinth' (BBC *Omnibus Italia*, 1977; clip: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p090985r) Portraiture occurs here through the use of brief vignettes (with curt titles such as 'Biography', 'History' and 'Politics'). Weaving between these snippets of Berio's life and thought is rehearsal footage of his *Linea* (1973). These glimpses of the rehearsal process, and the conversations that arise between the performers, provides a connecting thread through the programme, and is self-reflexively described by the narrator

(metaphorically) as representing a line through Berio's complex artistic world. There is little teasing out of an 'analysis', or the thinking behind musical decisions (as in 'Towards Antara' and 'Dust in the Road'). The concluding performance of *Linea* is thus less an invitation to follow the development of musical material (although one can readily do this) but rather to hear the work as a metaphorical illustration of Berio's musical personality set against the volatile background of recent Italian history and avant-garde art.

Elsewhere, the balance can be decidedly shifted towards portraiture: in a documentary such as *Oliver Knussen: Sounds from the Big White House* (made independently by Gavin in 2001), the emphasis is on biography and musical personality. This results in a rather more conventional musical documentary format, in which music is used to illustrate the composer's life, rather than the composer's life being used to illustrate the music (as was the case in 'Line through the Labyrinth'). Special mention must be made too of the more experimental non-linear portraiture of *One Foot in Eden* (1977). Here, on-screen titles make clear that the subject is first and foremost Orkney (as seen through its landscapes and people) and secondarily about the music of Peter Maxwell Davies (who is only heard and seen in person very briefly, and whose music provides the principle accompaniment to the images we see; clip: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p09098k6).

When considering Gavin's composer portraits, we might therefore detect across the various films certain commonalities as a result of the broader categories of 'portrait', 'analysis' and 'performance'. However, each film finds its own form and balance of these elements in order to offer Gavin's interpretation of the subject matter. This resulting reworking of form and content also brings with it a greater use of montage than is typical for the prototypical portrait (cf Arthur 2003), suggesting something of Gavin's particular stance towards this genre. In

particular, it is the ways in which metaphor as a mode of cognition provide Gavin with a way of representing his subjective response to the 'spirit of the composer' that we come close, I feel, to a definition of Gavin as a portrait artist.

'The Explorer' (1971)

Having offered an overview of Gavin's approach to metaphor in both form (portraiture) and content (multimodal metaphors), I shall conclude with a close reading of the opening minutes of 'The Explorer' (1971). This was the first of Gavin's designated composer portraits to focus on contemporary music; in it, his ability to combine narrative with tellingly metaphorical imagery is clearly revealed.

The subject of 'The Explorer', Roberto Gerhard, had died only the year before. The subtitle of the portrait, 'a film in praise of Roberto Gerhard and his music' makes clear the subjective nature of the portrayal. The central formal metaphor is that of the collage, perhaps suggested by the subtitle of Gerhard's Symphony No. 3 (the first music we hear), and described in the narration thus:

> 'This portrait of Gerhard will be a collage of elements drawn from his music, from the memories of those who knew him best, and from his own thoughts about his work, taken where possible from radio broadcasts, and read elsewhere by the narrator'.

Collage has been described as the twentieth century's 'single most revolutionary formal innovation in artistic representation' (Gregory Ulmer, cited in Cran 2014: 4). Although it emerged in the visual arts, its practices have informed artistic approaches across a range of

media. Gerhard's use of the term collage refers at least in part to the use of magnetic tape within his third symphony in addition to a full orchestra. The indeterminate nature of the taped material, as well as the means by which the sounds were assembled, link back to the pioneering work of Pierre Schaeffer and *musique concrète* (see Delaune 2008). Gavin's own use of the term collage would appear to point to ways in which he cycles through the different types of material at his disposal, juxtaposing them in order to bring out new meanings through their interaction.[22] Collage as a (narrative) technique also brings with it a demand on those experiencing it, assuming the type of active, engaged viewer described above. In Rona Cran's formulation,

> [t]he act of decoding subsequently required by the viewer or reader constitutes an intellectual and emotional challenge whose rules of engagement necessitate not necessarily the discovery of any specific message, but, rather, the gradual discernment that each artwork, novel, poem or song is uniquely and subjectively regulated by viewers or readers themselves. (Cran 2014: 4–5)

In short, Gavin's use of collage is calibrated such that poetic, rather than factual, truth comes to the fore. Gerhard's musical aesthetics are thus translated into televisual formal structure.

With this in mind, it is now possible to situate the example discussed earlier within the larger context of the introduction to the portrait (which I shall treat as a metonym for the portrait as a whole). Clip: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p093bw5m).

[22] There is, in fact, a broadly linear historical thread running through 'The Explorer', pointing also to more conventional biographical techniques.

0:00 The portrait opens with images of the countryside: tree-tops and then corn swaying in the breeze, followed by longer distance shots of a sun-drenched rural landscape; the parched ground and mountains make it clear that this is not from the United Kingdom. There is no indication of whether the imagery is contemporary or not. The cutting rhythm is slow; there are faint twitterings of birds in the background. After eighteen seconds, the narrator is first heard, providing the viewer with a framework through which to interpret that with which they are presented: 'This film is about a composer, Roberto Gerhard. His story begins here, in Catalonia, in the north east of Spain, and ends, far away to the north, in England. All his life he looked for new means of expression, new forms of creation'. Through the narration, the rural imagery is given a location (Catalonia) and the suggestion of a certain point in time (Gerhard's birth and upbringing). The pastoral, lyric timelessness of the opening is then made to form an opposition with the search for a 'new means of expression' that characterizes the modernist artist (Pound [1934] 1971). This tension between the old (timeless) and new (modernist) forms a crucial thread through the portrait.

00:39 The pastoral imagery continues. A female voice is heard (it is later revealed that this speaker is Gerhard's widow, Poldi). The speaker recounts the discovery of a note written by Gerhard shortly after his seventieth birthday, describing his happiness at having 'arrived'. In conjunction with the previous narration, this anecdote collapses the distance between Catalonia in the past and England in the present; words and images bookend the composer's life.

00:53 The pastoral tranquillity is brutally interrupted by the sound of a dissonant trumpet (taken from the opening of Gerhard's Symphony No. 3). There is a momentary conflict between image and sound; the emergent meaning is perhaps one of strife, or of a dramatic staging of the motion from past to present. This latter reading is supported by the subsequent shot of sunrise over a cityscape – a motion from the rural to the urban. The sun acts as a pivot between images of old and new; the conjunction of images and music suggest that for all of the sudden abrasiveness of the music (a battery of percussion soon joins the trumpet), there is, somehow, a connection between these contemporary sounds and musical tradition.

1:02 The images then cut to the wing of an RAF plane during take-off, leading to the scenes of flight described above. In its immediate context, the sudden focus on aviation technology reinforces the modernity of the music. The RAF symbol on the wing of the aeroplane gives rise, however, to certain other affordances. Viewers familiar with the symbol (which most, if not all, of the likely UK viewers in the early 1970s would have been) would recognize the military connection, and in conjunction with the dissonant music one might assume violence is an underlying multimodal metaphor (is the aeroplane on a bombing raid?).

1:10 There is a cross-fade from the aeroplane to a close up of the rising sun (Figure 9) over which the titles are presented. The transition (a) reasserts the sun as a connecting thread through the introductory sequence and (b) suggests that violence as a *potential* emergent meaning is not in fact *actualized*; the viewer is required at this moment,

therefore, to make a different kind of sense of what they are seeing and hearing. Crucial for the way in which Gavin's collage-like portrait is created in "The Explorer'', however, is that the potential meaning of these images (violence) is *later* actualized when we learn that Gerhard was forced in to flee Spain during the civil war (leading eventually to his relocation to Cambridge). Past and present are thus entwined in the emergent multimodal meanings, impelling the viewer to make imaginative connections between them.

Figure 9: Screenshot from The Explorer *(1971)*

1:18 This is the sequence described above and in Figures 5 and 6. Gerhard's inspiration for his Symphony No. 3 came from witnessing sunrise on a transatlantic flight, an image that struck him 'like the blast of 10,000 trumpets' (compare this with the opening of the piece at 00:53) (Conway n.d.). Gavin's portraits often draw, with varying degrees of explicitness, on imagery suggested by the composer (as in *The Triumph of Time* extract discussed above). Such cues from composers might serve as a starting point for Gavin as he assembles his portraits, but they neither constrain the choice of imagery nor dictate the ways in which interact with, and afford meanings with, other images. Although 'The Explorer' does not mention Gerhard's inspiration for the Symphony, it does later draw on his analogy of musical form and aeronautical flight. As with the way in which the viewer is left to connect the violence implied by the music and RAF aeroplane and the Spanish

Civil War, the fuller implications of the opening sequence's aerial shots are only realized later on in the portrait.

2:15 A musical crash leads to a cut to the outside of a suburban English house (cf Arthur's discussion of the 'vernacular' in portraiture). Gavin's images have completed the journey from Catalonia to England promised by the opening narration (consider too the metaphor of a spiritual journey in *Towards and Beyond*). (The musical arc, in which the central element is high, sustained and lacking a bass, helps enact this journey to the extent that it is mimetic of taking off, flying and landing.) There is a cut to a photograph of Gerhard working on tape recorders, helping to contextualize the electronically generated sound heard in the music. At 2:41 the image cuts to another view of Gerhard's compositional studio, tape machines in the foreground and a Spanish guitar on the wall in the background (Figure 10). The music fades out at 2:43 to accommodate the narration described above; what is perhaps most pertinent here is that this final image inverts the motion in the first minute from pastoral (timeless) Spain to modernity (city scape); here, modernity (technology) occupies centre stage, and the resonances of Hispanic musical cultures and traditions sit innocuously on the periphery.

Figure 10: Screenshot from The Explorer *(1971)*

The opening of 'The Explorer', therefore, offers a blend of portraiture (we learn some rudimentary facts about Gerhard's biography) and hermeneutic analysis (the relationship between music and flight, and the ways in which the visual imagery brings out aspects of the

music's traditional and modern elements). But it achieves this obliquely, offering the viewer tantalizing and rich multimodal metaphors that require interpretation, and which – collage-like – only realise their potential when considered in conjunction with other elements in the documentary design. And in doing so, 'The Explorer' offers in a nutshell the dynamics of Gavin's portraiture technique and his elevation of the individual experience of truth over the collective, and point to the ways in which Gavin was to develop his art over the subsequent four decades.

CONCLUSION

Gavin's approach to the televisual presentation of musical modernism was shaped by the ethos and culture of the 1960s, and in common with a number of his peers is characterized by a generosity of intellectual and emotional spirit. His use of visual metaphors, situated within a rigorous but never formulaic formal scheme of 'portrait', 'analysis' and 'performance', offers viewers the opportunity to engage creatively with the subject matter. If Gavin's approach (as of that of his contemporaries) is out of keeping with the more narrative, entertainment-driven orthodoxies of the past few decades, it nevertheless honours the viewer with its refusal to condescend.

The approach to the interpretation of visual metaphors in this article applies not just to Gavin, but could be extended to analyse other documentary approaches. For instance, Russell's idiosyncratic television biographies of composers, and the means by which he also seeks to approach the 'spirit of the composer' (Hill 2015: 459) seems ripe for analysis using such tools. There is also a historical dimension to such study: has, for instance, the visual language of

creative metaphors in music documentaries evolved over the last half decade? Are there differences of metaphorical approach for different musical genres (on popular music documentaries, see Edgar-Hunt et al 2013)? The importance of metaphor as a mode of cognitive understanding in documentaries is still under-explored, theoretically; the example of Gavin's work indicates the riches that such an examination might uncover.

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Television Programmes

For specific episodes by Barrie Gavin, see Table One.

Aquarius (1970–77, UK: ITV).

Civilisation (1969, UK: BBC).

Masterworks: Six Pieces of Britain (1999, UK: BBC).

Monitor (1958–65, UK: BBC).

Music on 2 (1965–73, UK: BBC).

Omnibus (1967–2003, UK: BBC).

Sacred Music (2008–10, UK: BBC).

'The Gothic Revolution' (Series 1, Episode 1; 21 March 2008).

‘Palestrina and the Popes’ (Series 1, Episode 2; 28 March 2008).

Sound on Film (1988, UK: BBC).

South Bank Show (1978–2010, UK: ITV; 2012–, UK: Sky Arts).

Soviet Music (1990, UK: BBC).

Sunday Night (1965–68, UK: BBC).

The Glory That Was Greece (1959, UK: BBC).

Workshop (1964–69, UK: BBC).

Contributor Details:

Edward Venn is Professor of Music at the University of Leeds. His research focuses on the analysis and interpretation of twentieth-century and contemporary music. He is editor of the journal *Music Analysis* and is on the editorial board of the *Journal of Music and Meaning*. His monograph *Thomas Adès: Asyla* was published in 2017 by Routledge, who have also recently issued his *The Music of Hugh Wood* (Ashgate, 2008) in paperback.

Contact: School of Music, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JS

Email: e.j.venn@leeds.ac.uk

Orcid reference: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5146-9568.