

The 'Appassionata' Sonata in *A Diary for Timothy*

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The opening of the 'Appassionata' Sonata is almost inaudible in Humphrey Jennings' *A Diary for Timothy* (1946). Often regarded by critics as one of the key works in Jennings' wartime documentaries (Anderson, 1961 – 2; Hodgkinson & Sheratsky, 1982; Jackson, 2004; Beattie, 2010; Logan, 2011), *A Diary for Timothy*, filmed between 1944 and 1945, records 'images of Britain at home and at war' for a new-born baby; it depicts 'a nation on the brink of victory, but uncertain of its postwar objectives', thus offering 'British cinema's most self-conscious engagement with the process of readjustment demanded by war's end' (Plain, 2013, p. 214). About 10 minutes into the film, the camera shows a man listening to a radio report on the British force's struggle in Arnhem, where an airborne force has been surrounded by the German army. Behind the voice of the newsreader comes, almost eerily, the first few notes of Beethoven's Piano Sonata in F minor, Op. 57, or, more commonly known, the 'Appassionata'. The music only becomes clearer towards the end of its first theme. When the theme moves to G flat major with the camera cutting to a close-up of two hands gliding over a Steinway & Sons grand piano, what originally seemed to be background music turns out to be somebody's actual performance. It slowly zooms out — as the steady beat of repeated low D flat and low C sets up the second motif — and we recognize Dame Myra Hess at the piano, dressed completely in black, playing the sonata. It zooms out further and shows a stage surrounded by the audience. In bar 20, the camera zooms in and focuses on Hess's expression: frowning slightly, she follows the juxtaposition of *fortissimo* and *piano* by lifting her eyebrows every now and then. When the steady beat re-emerges in E flat in bar 24, a shot of the concert poster shows that this performance is one of the National Gallery concerts during the Second World War. The billing is '5th Birthday Concert, Myra Hess'; the date is Tuesday, 10th October 1944, with Elena Gerhardt's recital to take place the next day. Before long, we are led back into the gallery, not towards the stage but into the audience. The camera pans across the rows of listeners, male and female, old and young, military and civilian. Eventually it stays on an attentive young woman just when the A flat major second theme unfolds its warm lyricism. Yet it does not last long: as the minor mode is reimposed in bar 42, the camera goes back to the pianist and then her hands. No sooner does Hess start the three trills in bars 44 – 46 than the same newsreader's voice floats in, reiterating the endurance of the soldiers in Arnhem: 'For the last three days', his voice has a certain mechanical clarity against the music's downward passage at its *pianissimo*, 'they have had no water, very little but small arms and ammunition, and rations were cut to one sixth. Luckily or unluckily, it rained, and they caught the water in their capes and drank

that.' The end of his sentence is interrupted by the A flat minor explosion in bar 51, with the image cut to a street corner in London: a hose, a small pool of water, a bus, a pedestrian walking by, and incessant rain. Other shots of the city follow — houses in rubble, a man on the rooftop relaying the slates, another group of men busy with more repairs. 'It's the middle of October now', the voice of the commentary suddenly emerges, 'and the war certainly won't be over by Christmas, and the weather doesn't suit us. And one third of our houses have been damaged by enemy action.' His voice is low, his pace slow. He starts to comment on the music: 'They do like the music that the lady was playing; some of us think it's the greatest music ever.' The semiquavers of the high treble and the slowly descending bass eventually end on A flat in the *pianissimo* bar 65. 'It is German music', the commentator continues as the main theme, this time in E major, recurs, 'and we are fighting against the Germans.' At this moment, there is a montage sequence, during which the shot of urban rubble is overlaid with Hess's hands on the piano. The commentator announces: 'There is something you have to think over later on.' The end of his sentence overlaps with the silence in the latter part of bar 70. When the music shortly resumes, it cuts to a shot of heavy rain, the volume of which seems to be turned up a level and almost obscures the music. The commentary continues: 'Rain, too much rain, and it's even wetter under the earth.' The camera follows accordingly, showing coal mines, accompanied by the E major cadence in bars 73 – 75, though less and less clear. Just before it can resolve into an E major triad, the sound of drilling bursts out.

To read this two-and-a-half-minute passage of the 'Appassionata' Sonata as a recording of Myra Hess's performance accompanying a montage of images would be to obtain only a fraction of its meaning. The interweaving of Beethoven's music with speech and sound creates a listening experience that is literally and ideologically polyvocal. This chapter aims to tease out its nuances. Examining how the BBC report, the sounds of rain and mining, the commentary, and Hess's performance of the 'Appassionata' overlap and become juxtaposed against one another, the chapter analyses the clashes of ideas crystallized in this auditory complex. Instead of regarding the other auditory elements as subordinate to Hess's Beethoven, it reads them all as contributors to a dialogue between multiple parties across national, class, and generational boundaries. In so doing, it argues that the components in the 'Appassionata' passage are mutually interrogative, producing a self-consciously ambiguous and multivalent narrative. If scholars are more familiar with the ways in which Jennings' works use images to document and explore the

complexity of twentieth-century Britain (Jones & Searle, 2013), the chapter reveals how the 'Appassionata' passage achieves this through a variety of sounds.

This chapter therefore scrutinizes a passage of the film frequently cited but not yet extensively examined by critics. It argues that it is both more experimental and complicated than previously thought, countering Alessandra Marzola's interpretation of the scene as a moment of 'hypnotized listening'. Reading the images of the audience as a depiction of people's 'subjugation to the frozen version of history fed by patriotic discourses', Marzola misreads the mood of the passage as sheer 'melancholy' and fails to acknowledge the interplay of various sounds (2013, p. 134 and p. 135). By analysing how the overlap of sound, music, and speech generates meanings contingent on different wartime experiences, the chapter also gives another example of Jennings' experiment with the auditory suggestiveness of a documentary. While *Listen to Britain* is often noted for its portrayal of the nation by representing its discrete soundscapes (Corner, 2002, pp. 359 – 61), the 'Appassionata' passage in *A Diary for Timothy* provides a no less innovative exploration of the creative possibilities opened up by sound and music. In many ways, as the chapter aims to demonstrate, the auditory experimentation of the 'Appassionata' passage suggests an awareness of differences across various demarcations in British society. It thus differs from the sense of communal bonding, created by what Lara Feigel calls 'across-class montage', employed in *Listen to Britain* (2010, p. 105). Although it would be simplistic to conclude that the confrontation of different identities is better evoked by sounds than by sights, what the chapter intends to highlight is that Hess's playing of the 'Appassionata', rather than being simply affective and non-referential, makes an ideological intervention in contemporary debates about Britain's future.

Additionally, the chapter addresses issues relevant to historical musicology. In her recent review article, Kate Guthrie (2013) asks how it might be possible to write a musical history that investigates the contentious relations between music and ideology in the Second World War, without reiterating the myth of the democratization of art music during the war, or subscribing to the characterization of wartime musical activities as extraordinarily distinct from those in peacetime. This is not to say that the chapter is using the 'Appassionata' passage as a representative model to show how art music was being performed and consumed at the time. Instead, by acknowledging that the documentary has both propagandist and anti-propagandist dimensions, the chapter perceives the passage as a specific musical moment produced by the contributions of many. That is to say, the chapter assesses this part of the documentary as an epitome

of contemporary collaboration between artists. These include not only Jennings and Hess, but also the actor Michael Redgrave, the writer E. M. Forster, the producer Basil Wright, the cutter Jenny Hutt (interestingly, not Jennings' long-term collaborator the editor Stewart McAllister), plus the documentary's composer Richard Addinsell and many others in the Crown Film Unit and in the Ministry of Information. In so doing, it explores how the end result does not simply delineate Jennings' vision, but represents all these individuals' negotiation with the politicization of music and aesthetics, thus offering a case study of a unique form of wartime engagement with music.

This was not the first time when a concert of Beethoven's music had been extensively featured in Jennings' films; nor was it the first time the director included Hess's performance in his work. As such, the 'Appassionata' passage echoes previous musical moments in Jennings' *The Heart of Britain* (1941) and *Listen to Britain* (1942), reflecting his perception of music as a form of art particularly expressive of human emotions during the war. In 1941, when working with McAllister on what later became *Listen to Britain*, Jennings' working notes reveal his belief that, as 'war involves everyone', the 'hearts' of British people

need music. All kinds of music — classical music, popular music, the nostalgic music of a particular region and just plain martial music to march and work to. For music in Britain today is far from being just another escape: it probes into emotions of war itself — love of country, love of liberty, love of living, and the exhilaration of fighting for them. Listen (cited in Logan, 2011).

The passage projects a patriotic vision of the diversity of musical activities in wartime Britain, partially redressing the cliché that England is a 'land without music'. It extends people's love of music beyond leisure by underlining the proximity between music and public morale. Celebrating a sense of democracy in people's choices of music, the passage presents music as a spirited expression of humanity and suggests a perception of the nation in accordance with the official narrative as the stronghold of civilization. This illustrates Jennings' championing of music's communal value of being testament to wartime living experiences. For example, in his notes on the London Symphony Orchestra for an unmade film in 1948, a performance of *A London Symphony*, conducted by the composer Ralph Vaughan Williams, led Jennings to write that the music 'is of us, written for us, written about us'; it 'says' how 'we as Londoners had all been through' (1961 – 2, p. 18). While this is an observation on the specific musical work by Vaughan Williams and its significance for Londoners, Jennings' words

also articulate an interest in capturing, during a rehearsal or a performance, 'moments' of 'the emotional and cathartic effect' of music on audiences and musicians (1961 – 2, p. 17). Such an emphasis on music's expressivity of individuals' shared experiences within a community is both in line with and more nuanced than the administrative view on music's role in documentary-making at the time. According to Muir Mathieson, then the Music Director of the Crown Film Unit, music provides 'entertainment' as well as 'help[s] to humanize the subject', 'mak[ing] the film less intellectual and more emotional' (1948, p. 323). Jennings' repeated thematizations of music in his documentaries thus express a more personal concern for and engagement with music.

The 'Appassionata' passage in *A Diary for Timothy* exemplifies Jennings' belief in music's expressivity, but the intervention of human speech also self-consciously tests it. A comparison with the Mozart concert in *Listen to Britain* reveals how *A Diary for Timothy* here is more experimental in exploring and problematizing the expressivity of music and sound. Similarities are many and obvious. The sequence of shots (of performers, audiences, and poster) through which the concert's specificity is established and the performance is unfolded is almost the same; although the mood evoked by Mozart's Piano Concerto K.453 is different from that of the 'Appassionata', how music subsequently turns to accompany images of the London city and how music is cut by harsh industrial sounds in the end are similar. Yet the BBC report about Arnhem, and the film's commentary written by Forster, give the 'Appassionata' passage more layers. That is, Hess's performance of the sonata, when listened to as a non-verbal narrative in relation to the verbal narratives provided by the two human voices, becomes interactive with them. The meanings of its music are modulated by and responsive to the overlaid words. In this respect, in the 'Appassionata' passage, it is not merely sound that comments on image; words participate in this interplay, complicating the scene's emotional appeal and ideological positioning.

It is worth emphasizing here that the 'Appassionata' passage is an edited segment. In 1945, the film of Hess's complete performance of the first movement of the sonata was released by Crown. Although moving to the front to capture Hess's expression occasionally, the camera stays mostly behind her from the audience's side, zooming in every now and then on her hands to showcase her virtuosity; there is no shot of the audience. The version of her performance in *A Diary for Timothy* features shots of Hess from different angles; images of the wider stage, the poster, and the audience give the music its time and location. Yet these details do not just mark a moment in the war: the BBC report helps to situate the concert within *the* specific context of the

withdrawal in Arnhem, thus highlighting the chronology of the events. The way that the first few bars of the sonata emerge behind the report creates an impression that the music is extra-diegetic, serving as an accompaniment to the voice of the newsreader. As the newsreader informs Timothy, his family, and all other characters, about the British force's struggle in Arnhem, the half-veiled entrance of the sonata heightens the tension of the fighting. The sombre F minor suggests that this moment in October in 1944 was a frustrating setback for Britain from the almost foreseeable route to victory. The beginning of the movement, according to Barbara R. Barry, creates a 'discourse of conflict' that hinges on the Neapolitan pitch — the supertonic G-flat — as it is the 'most powerful agent for engendering tension and deflecting tonal direction' in the sonata's opening phrase (1992, p. 207). The following compression of the phrase, plus the four-note motif insistently repeated in the bass, creates an urgency. In many ways, then, the 'Appassionata' plays an emotive role when it first appears in the documentary. Accompanying and taking up the narrative of the BBC report, the music augments the tension described in the news, reflects the anxieties of those listening to it in the documentary, characterizes the war in late 1944 as conflict unresolved, and conveys to the viewers the tumult of ongoing fighting at the front.

However, if the music evokes struggle, it also encodes heroism. Critics have interrogated the alignment of Beethoven and his music with the concept of heroism and its political resonances, analysing how the 'Appassionata' and the other works from Beethoven's middle period have been repeatedly used as illustrative of the paragon of the heroic (Burnham, 1995; Dennis, 1996; Pederson, 2000; Head, 2006). The emotive power of the sonata when it first appears in the documentary after the BBC report is thus steeped in tragic heroism; the news about how soldiers, who were 'men of no ordinary calibre', resolutely and defiantly withstood enemy attack, strict rationing, and poor conditions in Arnhem becomes the music's programme. The part of the report about how rain saved these 'tough' soldiers reappears in the middle of Hess's performance, thus framing the music as a celebration of British endurance and resilience. Compared to the film's theme (composed by Richard Addinsell) a short ascending phrase of F-sharp – G – B – C-sharp – E played by a solo violin, whose dissonance and irresolution conjure up a haunting sense of uncertainty, the 'Appassionata' manifests a spirit of tenacity and virility. The relationship between the BBC report and the 'Appassionata' is therefore one where the latter accompanies, extends, and glorifies the former. From the announcement of the withdrawal in Arnhem, to the music that builds up conflict and releases energy, the sonata, though

entering the scene secretly, amplifies the volume of the struggle but also characterizes it as heroic.

The fact that this 'virile' Beethoven is played by Myra Hess is significant. While Beethoven's work was a staple in Hess's repertoire, an anecdote told by the broadcaster John Amis is revealing: he recalled how Howard Ferguson once heard Hess's performance of the sonata and 'mutter[ed] in awe', 'What the devil has got into the old girl' (1990, p. 85). Even if said jokingly between friends, Ferguson's words suggest a perception of women playing Beethoven as transgressive. By presenting her confident mastering of the sonata on stage in the absence of men, the documentary portrays Hess as a potent symbol of resistance. Hess, in her black dress, calm and steadfast, not only becomes associated with the characteristics of the soldiers in Arnhem, but also stands as a figure of authority, around which the stability of the Home Front pivots. The minimalistic aesthetics of Hess alone at her piano in *A Diary for Timothy* signals an independence. This sends out a message distinct from her sharing the stage with an orchestra in *Listen to Britain*. As well as it simply being a different spatial arrangement because it is a piano recital, it is the mental fortitude of the individual that the 'Appassionata' passage implies, whereas the concert scene in *Listen to Britain* puts more focus on the community and its adjustments of peacetime conventions to the condition of war. It is also noteworthy how, compared to the shots of cracked windows, of sandbags and fire buckets, and of the Queen in *Listen to Britain*, here, in *A Diary for Timothy*, Hess singlehandedly embodies endurance, with a disciplined audience under her control, as if the fight — implicit too in the music — required a final effort from everyone. What is particularly conspicuous is how the camera follows the narrative of the music to construct a contrast between gendered characteristics: it is exactly at the unfolding of the warm lyricism of the second theme when the camera introduces to the viewers the attentive young woman. Though both are static, Hess is self-assuredly commanding in her 'public' role whereas the young woman is understandably docile in her 'private' listening to the music. If, as Susan McClary has argued, 'the conventional schemata of tonality and sonata' prescribes the 'triumph' of the 'masculine' and the 'resolution' or 'containment' of the 'feminine' Other (1993, p. 332), the shot of the young woman is destined to be brief before the camera returns to the theme of struggle and resistance, either embodied by Hess herself or presented through images of a shattered city being gradually rebuilt.

Jennings' portrayal of women has been called 'passive' (Thomson, 1993, p. 59), but what we have seen in Hess's performance is a woman prominently undertaking

social responsibility. It is possible to suggest that the documentary reflects women's contribution to war and their rising social status; one might also note that the young woman in the audience is shown later in the film making a tracing of a housing plan, thus being represented as one who actively contributes to the reconstruction of Britain. More importantly, the war was as much between nations as between ideologies. The documentary is using Hess's performance to present Britain as a sanctuary of art, where she, a Jewish woman, and Elena Gerhardt (who relocated from Germany in the 1930s) could continue their lustrous musical careers. This propagandist characterization of the war as a battle between continuation and annihilation of 'culture' was common among liberal intellectuals at the time. In a radio broadcast to India in 1943, Forster said that 'in the heart of a war and close to destruction, great music is being upheld.' For him, 'great' music is German music: 'They ban German music, we don't' (2008, p. 218). Forster is building on, as well as moving away from, the widely circulating notion about Germany's musical supremacy and the perception of the German national character as musically intelligent and aesthetically sophisticated. Similarly, Hess's performance of the 'Appassionata' forcefully displaces Germany from its musical traditions and instead centralizes Britain as the place where 'great' music still burgeons in wartime Europe.

Beethoven becomes the point of contention: if his music could be perceived as a shared expression of heroic confrontation against predicaments, it was also recognized as explicitly German. Following this logic, the intrusion of the commentary is unsurprising, but, read alongside what precedes its appearance, it produces unease. The commentary first takes up where the BBC report ended: there is still more fighting as the war does not seem to approach its end as previously predicted, and many of 'our' houses have been damaged by 'enemy action'. This reference to the 'enemy' seems to galvanize the commentary to contemplate Anglo-German antagonism, prompting the interrogation: 'They do like the music that the lady was playing; some of us think it's the greatest music ever. Yet it is German music, and we are fighting against the Germans. There's something you'll have to think over later on.' Although this comment does not undermine the rationale and righteousness of the British war effort, it is anti-propagandist in a way as it disputes the perception of Germany (rather than the Third Reich) as an adversary. Up to this point, the 'Appassionata' passage seems to encourage heroism against hardship and looks forward to victory in the near future over the 'enemy'. The commentary problematizes aspects of this position by refusing to indulge in the glorification of endurance and exposing the difficulty in future reconciliation between the two countries. More importantly, it voices hesitation and gestures towards, if not explicit pacifism, at

least a degree of dilemma, thus problematizing the call for violence when the BBC newsreader closes his report by saying 'All right, water and rations didn't matter. Give them some Germans to kill.' The commentary therefore questions heroism: although not pacifist, it highlights the German identity of the music to challenge the simplification of the war as a conflict between national cultures and to force a self-reflexive examination of nationalism and patriotism.

Intriguingly, what seems to have polarized critical opinions is less the message the commentary wants to convey and more the tone and accent of the commentator: from condemnation of the commentary as suggestive of 'smugness, insensitivity and unwitting class arrogance' (Jackson, 2004, p. 305) to derision of the role of the commentator as 'a mealy-mouthed schoolmaster' (Thomson, 1993, p. 59); from some mild bemusement about the commentary's 'kindly' 'condescension' (Hunter, 2010, p. 90) to an interpretation of its 'dominant tone' as 'ruminative, reflective and questioning' (Beattie, 2010, p. 110). While the functions of accent, dialect, and language in constructing identity and demarcating boundaries between communities in wartime films have recently attracted critical attention (Fox, 2006), what the various responses to Michael Redgrave's voicing of the commentary demonstrates is the irreducible mediation of subjectivity in a viewing and listening experience. In the end, it is one's own background — and the way in which one perceives the historical moment within which the film is placed — that determines how he or she will perceive Redgrave's voice. A question pertinent to our discussion of the 'Appassionata' passage, and one that critics have so far not asked, is whether we can really regard Redgrave as the commentator. Reading a script written by Forster and addressing Timothy the infant in an avuncular manner, there is a performative quality in Redgrave's voice. Philip C. Logan's description that Redgrave 'intones' and speaks 'with theatrical inflection' reveals how it is more than plausible to read Redgrave as impersonating Forster (2010, p. 267 and p. 266). In this case, he is not commenting, or simply narrating a script, but acting a part.

This allows us to have a better understanding of the documentary as a 'dialogue' between generations. Given that Redgrave, alongside Jennings and the producer Basil Wright, were in their late thirties at the end of the war, the commentary's message that the upcoming years would be the time when 'we' step back and 'you', Timothy and other babies, take charge, seems, if not irresponsible, at least unnecessarily resigned. If the collective 'we' refers to the generation of Forster, who was 66 at the time, it seems possible, then, to interpret the didacticism and condescension of the

commentary as symptomatic of the rhetoric of the seniority. On the one hand, it is not explicitly interventionist because questions are raised for 'you' to ruminate on in the future, but not answered. On the other hand, for all its reticence, some of its messages are prescriptive as they articulate clear value judgments, such as the remark, 'some of us think it's the greatest music ever'. However, to read it autobiographically also risks reducing the commentary to Forster's personal advice. It is to neglect its echo with Forster's 1910 novel, *Howards End*, in the sentence, 'It will be generally admitted that Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is the most sublime noise that has ever penetrated into the ear of man' (1997, p. 25). I am not suggesting that the documentary's commentary achieves the same level of ambiguity as the novel's narrator does. Rather, as the narrator in *Howards End* is often read semi-satirically, we perhaps need to take cautiously the commentary's championing of Beethoven. That not all but only 'some' of 'us' worship Beethoven's work reveals, not just differences in taste, but, in the context of the documentary's overarching concern with issues of class, the privileged access to 'culture'.

In the frequently quoted letter from Forster to Wright, written after the former viewed the rough copy, Forster critiqued the implications of choosing a middle-class baby as the protagonist of the film: 'the film comes out with a social slant' (1985, p. 212). We do not know, as many have acknowledged, how Forster's letter might have prompted any revisions of the film, but there are traces in the final result that suggest an attempt to redress the 'slant'. That the commentary makes it clear in the beginning that Timothy is among the 'lucky ones' can be read as one of Forster's strategies of foregrounding the discrepancy between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. The paralleled wartime experiences of the miner, the engine driver, the gentleman farmer, and the pilot also suggest that the documentary results from a wariness of the pitfall of making Timothy as the representative (Eley, 2001, pp. 835 – 6). The 'Appassionata' passage, though seemingly preoccupied purely with Anglo-German antagonism, makes class conflict conspicuous at the end by cutting the sonata to the harsh sounds of mining. This particular sequence deserves a close reading. First, a shot of a man and a horse walking past a rainy street is accompanied by amplified sounds of rain, the commentary's words 'Rain, too much rain', and the music. The commentary changes into a matter-of-fact tone, 'look at the place where Goronwy has to cut coal', when the camera moves underground. As the drilling silences the music, the camera cuts to a shot of Tim in his cot, who is told by the commentary that he is kept warm indoors by the fire. There is a challenge here, in both words and images, suggesting

that though the rain seems everywhere, baby Tim does not, and cannot, become as wet as Goronwy, or indeed as the man on street. The issue is not so much failed sympathy or empathy as difference in physical environments, which encodes different social strata, and which entails different experiences. What underlies the demarcation of classes, the commentary and the images seem to suggest, is the material limitations of one's circumstances.

It is evident, then, that this limit is also auditorily dramatized by the editing of sounds, voices, and music. Rain serves as an important motif here. As if the words of the commentary were not sufficiently evocative, the heightened sound effect augments the sense that the rain percolates down into every pore of the earth. However, not only do images and words inform us that it is not a shared experience, both the voices of the BBC report and of the commentary also exemplify how, even if experienced, the natural phenomenon produces different significations. For the soldiers in Arnhem, as the BBC report informs us without sounding unnecessarily rousing, the rain perhaps signifies luck. The commentary at first laments the bad weather that has disappointed our wish for a quick end to the war, and later becomes elegiac before ushering in the shots of the mines. What seems common and natural — after all, it is simply rain — becomes conditioned by local specificities and endowed with individual feelings. That the 'Appassionata' is cut short by the drilling and remains unresolved can thus be read as an awareness of the exclusivity of Beethoven's music during the war. For all its professed openness to war-stricken Londoners, many did not have the opportunities to attend the National Gallery concerts in person, let alone show appreciation of Beethoven's sonata as 'some of us' do. This leads us to recognize that the documentary's politicization of the 'Appassionata' is the result of the contemplation of a cultured minority. The frisson of shock created by the contrast between the piano music and the mining sound suggests an alertness to 'the outside': beyond the makeshift but nevertheless sheltered space of the National Gallery, there are many who hear other sorts of sounds during the war.

The 'Appassionata' passage thus produces a moment where the lesson offered by the sagacious 'us' to the innocent 'you' is haunted by an awareness of the existence of others. This is not to gloss over the commentary's didacticism, or to pretend that Redgrave's tone is not condescending to some. What needs to be emphasized here is that each of the auditory elements in the passage appears to undercut one another, refusing to sustain a grand narrative. The BBC report's urge to use violence is restrained by the commentary's challenge to nationalism; the music's glorification

of heroic endurance turns into a state of elegiac resignation after the incessant rain; the heightened sense of virility becomes in discordance with the general uncertainty evoked by Addinsell's scores; and the way the drilling overwhelms the sonata offers an allegory of social differentiation. The interweaving of speech, music, and sound in the 'Appassionata' passage places conflicting viewpoints alongside, and against, each other. The result is a constellation of ideas, irreconciled and problematic, resisting homogenization and demanding investigation. In this respect, what 'we' offer is simply one of the voices within the polyvocality of the passage. The commentary may be most audible in one's viewing experience, but, as our discussion of the 'Appassionata' passage has shown, words do not always yoke images; nor do they silence the repercussions and resonances created by the other sounds.

This understanding of the 'Appassionata' passage provides us with a new perspective on the message conveyed by the documentary as a whole. There is an eagerness to impart to the young the values 'we' believe, but at the same time there is an alertness, not only to the limit of 'our' own outlook but also to circulating ideas and opinions. As such, the documentary seems to hover between two attitudes, exemplified, incidentally or not, by two of the collaborators on the 'Appassionata' passage. On the one hand, its attempt to illustrate ways to contemplate and tackle postwar problems can be traced back to an educational ideal similar to what underpins Hess's organization of the National Gallery concerts. According to Sir Kenneth Clarke, the Concerts were meant '[t]o maintain [a] sense of quality . . . that there are standards which must survive all disasters' (1944, p. 6). If not unreflectively self-entitled, the concerts, as well as the documentary, at least reveal a belief that there are values deemed by an elite minority as worthy to be disseminated to a wider public or preserved for the future generations. The 'Appassionata' passage can thus be regarded as consecrating the cultural status of Beethoven's music: despite, or because of, the existence of all the other sounds and voices, Hess's playing of the sonata is still given a stage, recorded, viewed, and remembered. On the other hand, that the documentary notices difficulties and unveils contradictions, registering how one vision can be at odds with another and how one's experience can be far detached from someone else's, delivers something akin to Forster's notion of 'tolerance'. Regarded as a 'quality which will be most needed after the war', Forster in 1941 proposed 'tolerance' as 'a makeshift, suitable for an overcrowded and overheated planet'; as a replacement of 'love', which 'is a great force in private life' but 'in public affair does not work', 'tolerance', though 'dull', is 'wanted above all between classes, races and nations' because 'it is very easy to see fanaticism in other people,

but difficult to spot in oneself' (1972, pp. 44 – 46). Through its presentation of parallel experiences, juxtaposition of scenes at home and at the front, and allusions to lives beyond the lens, the documentary is a self-conscious examination of identity politics, testing the boundary between self and others, and thus proposing an attitude that accommodates differences. The 'Appassionata' passage sends out a similar message through the interweaving of sound, music, and speech. It does not just re-create the historical presence of sounds once heard; it also suggests an ideological openness attuned to the coexistence and intersection of diverse forms of human relationship.

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