

BBC PHILHARMONIC

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Background

Max's association with the Great Manchester area and the BBC Philharmonic could not be stronger. Although Max moved to live permanently in Orkney in 1971, he was born in Salford, which is next door to Manchester and spent his entire childhood and teenage years there. He studied composition at the Royal Manchester College of Music (now the Royal Northern College of Music) and music at Manchester University and formed friendships with his fellow composition students [Harrison Birtwistle \(clarinet\)](#), [John Ogdon \(piano\)](#), [Elgar Howarth \(trumpet\)](#) and [Alexander Goehr](#). They quickly became known as the Manchester School. He attended the concerts of both the Halle Orchestra, whose conductor was Sir John Barbirolli, and the BBC Northern Orchestra, where Sir Charles Groves was the conductor.

Max himself had an early association with the BBC when, as a teenager, he was invited to write short works for a programme called Children's Hour. His piano pieces were initially performed by Violet Carson, who later became a household name when she played the role of Ena Sharples in the television series *Coronation Street*. Later on he played his own compositions on the radio himself. Max had also been friends with Tony Warren, who was the instigator and who wrote the first scripts for *Coronation Street*. Max and Tony had once created a sketch with Tony writing the words and Max the music. When I once phoned Tony up out of the blue, he started singing the songs of that sketch, as if he had been doing it all his life.

Symphony No 3

The association with the BBC Northern Orchestra began, when the orchestra performed Max's *Symphony No. 2* conducted by Sir Edward Downes, who was principal conductor.

This work had been commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra to celebrate its' centenary, and following the premiere performances in Boston in February 1991, the symphony was toured across the United States.

In September 1991 the BBC Northern made a studio recording of *Symphony No. 2*, and followed it in October by a performance at the Free Trade Hall. These performances were conducted by Sir Edward Downes, the principal conductor.

After that concert, Max and I had a meeting with David Ellis, the manager of the orchestra, who invited Max to write his third symphony. I vividly remember that conversation, because David said that of course the premiere of the new symphony would take place in London because that was where the action was. I responded that of course the symphony should take place at the Free Trade Hall, and that would be where the action was.

In 1982, the BBC gave the orchestra a vote of confidence and expanded it and gave it the new name of the BBC Philharmonic. It was this orchestra, conducted again by Sir Edward Downes, which performed Max's *Symphony No. 3* on 19 February 1985, at the Free Trade Hall. It meant a great deal to Max that this event could happen in his old home town.

Becoming Composer/conductor

Max had been living in Orkney since 1971 and he founded the St. Magnus Festival in 1977. In 1989 The BBC Philharmonic was the visiting orchestra to the festival, and they performed Max's *Black Pentecost* and again this was conducted by Sir Edward Downes

At about this time, Max was starting to be a conductor of orchestras himself. In 1985 he became the Associate Conductor/Composer of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

In July 1991, Sir John Manduell, the Principal of the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, and also the Artistic Director of the Cheltenham Festival, invited Max to be the composer in residence of the festival.

As part of the residency, Max himself was to conduct the BBC Philharmonic. During the rehearsal period in the Cheltenham Town Hall, where the concert was to take place, I was asked to go into a side room with Trevor Green, and Brian Pidgeon, whose titles were respectively Head of BBC Music North and Senior Producer of the BBC Philharmonic. They said that the orchestra was keen to have a relationship with Max, and suggested the post of Associate Composer/Conductor. This was quite a

startling offer. The orchestra had not had such a post previously, and was creating one specifically for Max.

When Max had finished his rehearsal, I talked to him and he was quite overcome, and extremely delighted. The rapport had worked both ways, and Max accepted the offer without any demur. All of a sudden, Max was part of the BBC and was in a position to be able to create works for the same group of people on a continuing basis. This is what he loved doing. He had composed for his own ensemble, The Fires of London, from 1967 to 1987. He was, in 1991, the Associate Composer/Conductor of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra for whom he was writing a series of ten concertos for the principal players of the orchestra collectively entitled the *Strathclyde Concertos*. And now here he was about to embark on this new association with the largest of the ensembles with whom he was connected.

Manchester

Now Max was back in Manchester on a very frequent basis since he had left there to go to Rome in 1956 to study with Geoffredo Petrassi. The headquarters of the whole BBC unit in Manchester was at New Broadcasting House in Oxford Road, where the orchestra rehearsed and made its recordings in its Studio 7. There were green rooms for the conductors and soloists, and a large green room for the orchestral players. The players also each had their own lockers where they could leave whatever they needed. This facility was in marked contrast to the conditions of most of the London orchestras, who had to rehearse in a variety of different halls, and likewise perform in many different halls. As a BBC orchestra, the performances were either made in the studio, sometimes in other halls in Manchester and sometimes in other towns, appearing at festivals, such as the one in Cheltenham. Sometimes there was an audience at the studio recordings. All of the recordings were broadcast. Sometimes the broadcasts were live, as, for instance, at the Promenade Concerts at the Royal Albert Hall in London.

The administrative offices were on another floor of the building. My main dealings were of course always with those in administration. My main contact was always with Brian Pidgeon who decided what the programmes would be, and how the rehearsals would be laid out. Wendy Orton was Brian's secretary. Roger Turner was the brilliant librarian who came to the rescue in many emergencies. Marie Cottelton arranged Max's hotel booking. In the early years Malcolm Warne-Holland was the orchestra manager, and when he left his place was taken by Fiona McIntosh, with her assistant Sue Lelliot. Amanda Dorr was in charge of public relations, mainly in the Manchester area. Martin Maris steered educational projects.

At the time when Max joined the orchestra, he had a flat in Edinburgh in addition to his home on the island of Hoy in Orkney. He would start his journey to Manchester from his Edinburgh flat having already travelled from Rackwick on Hoy to Stromness on the Mainland and thence on down to Edinburgh. You would think it would be a simple matter to take a train directly from Edinburgh down to Manchester, but this was not the case. He had to go on the train to Preston in Lancashire, where he changed to take the train to Manchester. These kinds of travelling difficulties on the train from one major town in the UK to another major town were in marked contrasts

to the kinds of train journeys I took on the continent, where one could always reckon on going from one major town to another without having to change.

In other words, Max setting out from his home to reach Manchester was a major undertaking and could not happen on the spur of the moment. Everything had to fit into an organised schedule well in advance. This was a difficulty for Brian, who often would have liked Max to fit in with a last-minute concert he had arranged somewhere, but was unable to ask Max to come to Manchester at the last moment.

Nevertheless there were a large number of concerts both in Manchester and elsewhere. It took a while for Max to find the hotel in Manchester which suited him best and this was the Midland Hotel. This was convenient because it was a short walk down Oxford Road to the BBC Headquarters and studios. The Midland Hotel was very fond of having fire alarms at all times of the day and night, and on many occasions I remember standing shivering on the pavement in front of the hotel in the night in my dressing gown. Luckily I never experienced any fires. It seemed as if the lobby of the Midland Hotel was the meeting place for everyone, including the great and the good, and on one occasion George Best sat at the table next to us causing great excitement all around.

At the start of Max's time with the orchestra, the main concert hall was the Free Trade Hall, but closed to become an hotel. Meanwhile the Bridgewater Hall; was built right across the road from the rear entrance of the Midland Hotel, and this also was very convenient. All in all, apart from the long journey, Max felt comfortable on his visits to the orchestra.

The main reason for this was his extremely good relationship with the musicians.. This, as I said previously, was what he loved doing best. He felt that whatever work it was he was conducting, whether it be his own music or that of other composers, the musicians would do their best to go with him. Max had told Brian right from the start that he did not want to conduct late nineteenth-century German composers such as Wagner, Brahms or Richard Strauss, but there was still plenty of other repertoire. Max had to learn to conduct his own works as if they had been music composed by another composer. My job, as well as making all the travel reservations, was to make sure that Max was in possession of the conductor's score in good time for him to work on it. Max liked to purchase his own score so that he could make all his own markings on it. He could always have asked Roger Turner in the BBC Philharmonic's library to hire to let him have the score which came with the orchestral parts, but Max preferred the other way. There were often difficulties in obtaining scores for purchase from music publishers.

Sir Charles his Pavan (1992)

The first work which arose out of this collaboration with the BBC Philharmonic was *Sir Charles, his Pavan*. As mentioned earlier, [Sir Charles Groves](#) had been the conductor of the BBC Northern Orchestra during the time Max attended their concerts as a schoolboy, and subsequently, as conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, he had been very supportive of Max and had programmed his works on several

occasions. When Sir Charles died in June 1992, and Max took the opportunity to compose a short work in his honour which the BBC Philharmonic performed at a concert at the Royal Northern College of Music. The tune which Max used was one which he had written himself when he was twelve years old, and which he now brought into use. It was an excellent way to start, bringing together all these associations. *Sir Charles his Pavan* was published by Schott Music, whose Creative Director was Sir Charles' daughter, Sally Groves. Schott Music had been Max's first publisher, and this work brought Max and the company together again. The first performance was on 22 September 1992 at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester

Sixtieth Birthday Concert – Big Trouble – 1994

Max was to be sixty in September 1994, and the BBC Philharmonic wanted to make it a special event, by performing Max's opera *Resurrection* in a concert performance. The concert was to take place at the Royal Northern College, and would of course be recorded by the BBC for future transmission. At the same time, a recording would be made by Collins Classics, with whom Max had a recording contract. The BBC Philharmonic and Chester Music, the publishers of this work, were to host the party after the concert.

The moment that Brian and Trevor said that they wanted to put on this special concert for Max's birthday, I instantly said I would help them, as I knew that there was bound to be trouble along the way. I explained that, while Brian was perfectly used to having singers work in a concert where there might be one or perhaps two singers, who would sing from their scores, it would be an entirely different matter trying to put together one of Max's operas. The forces required were altogether unusual. There was indeed an orchestra, and that would not be a problem. But everything else had its own particular cause for anxiety. There were seven singers – six male and one female – each of whom was required to sing multiple roles. In addition there were to be four singers who would form an electronic vocal quartet. These singers required special techniques for microphone singing. Not easy to find. There were to be dancers. This in itself was difficult. While dancers could be seen by the audience at the concert, they would not be heard by the listening audience when the concert was broadcast. Did these dancers therefore need actually to be part of the cast at all? And finally, there was the rock band with its own rock singer. This band had to have a leader who would create the music that was played based on Max's own skeleton writing. Max had done this with a view to making it possible for any rock group that was brought in to play their own music, and feel free, within the confines of the very basic notes Max had sketched out for them.

I knew that all of this would constitute an enormous extra burden on Brian who simply would not have time to cope with all the ups and downs of bringing in such a cast. So I was happy to offer my services, knowing all along that it would be a hard road to tread. And thus it proved. I suggested to Brian that he make an order to Chester Music, of thirty-six copies of the vocal score. I worked out that twelve singers were needed, and one way or another, two-thirds would drop out before we arrived at

the final line-up. I can't say why it is that when there is an opera on hand, somehow the original singers fall by the wayside.

The four singers of the electronic vocal quartet were drawn from the regular ranks of working singers, but they were never what Max had in mind. In the first instance, Brian had suggested local singers from the Manchester area who worked in the rock/pop field and who 'could read anything'. I tried to explain that Max's rock music was rather more complicated, and that these singers would encounter a considerable degree of difficulty, and suggested a sort of trial audition of just one of the rock numbers to see how they got on. It was a disaster. They couldn't handle even one of the numbers, let alone the twenty-four which occur throughout the opera. What Max wanted was the group, led by Terry Edwards, called the Electric Phoenix which he had heard at Dartington. That group had used the state-of-the-art electronics. What we got in the end were four perfectly good singers, but they did not have those required microphone techniques. So that was, alas, below what Max had in mind.

But it was the rock group which caused the most trouble, not only to me, but all round. Brian had suggested that Steve Martland, a composer with whom he had worked, and who, it was claimed, had considerable experience in the rock field. Steve would use the musicians in his own group. Max was not too sure, but yielded to Brian's suggestion. Steve was called in and Max explained to him what was required by way of him writing the songs based on Max's own skeleton notes. Steve said that this would not be a problem, and Max asked him to let him have one of two of the songs just to see that he was on the right road before he launched into the rest of the numbers.

Then the trouble started. Steve did not come up with anything at all. The time was passing. Week after week and then month after month went by, and there was still nothing from Steve. I kept phoning Steve's manager, and he kept repeating that something would arrive soon. Then Brian kept up the pressure, but that didn't work either. I then started pestering Sally Groves of Schott Music, who were Steve's publishers. We had daily conversations, whereby I enquired as to whether she had spoken to Steve, to which she replied that she had, and then whether Steve had said anything about producing the required music, and she said that no word about it had been mentioned.

I could see that Steve was never going to produce anything at all for Max, and that we were going to have to find another rock band and rock singer, and that it was going to have to be done quickly. It was Brian who was going to have to tell Steve's manager that the engagement with him was not going to happen. I also knew that the final date for which such a sacking would be legal, would be six weeks prior to the concert date. Well before that Brian contacted Steve's manager informing him that as nothing had been received from Steve, the engagement with that group would not go ahead.

Within one minute of the manager receiving that notification, he was on the phone to me. After the deafening silence of the previous months, this was exactly what was expected. The manager ranted and raged, and said that all the musicians had been booked and that he would have to pay them if they were un-booked and that he was going to sue the BBC on the matter.

Brian then told me to go ahead and find another group to fill that slot. I turned to Mark Glentworth, who had been our percussionist in The Fires of London for the last two years of its life. Mark had great experience in this field and was absolutely reliable, and would be able to quickly produce those very samples of the music which Max wanted. Mark set about bringing together a rock group, and chose as his singer Mary Carewe, who, as it happened, was the daughter of John Carewe, who had also been one of the conductors of The Fires. Mary was a brilliant rock singer, and exactly what Max wanted. Included in Mark's group was Greg Knowles, the long-time percussionist of The Fires, prior to Mark. So, finally, the line up was complete, and the concert duly took place, and it was a very special evening.

Steve Martland and his manager went ahead and sued the BBC Philharmonic. Both Brian and Trevor were very much inclined to just give and to pay the money. I saw things differently, and I was furious that the BBC should just cave in like that. The agreement between Steve Martland and The BBC as to the band being booked had been absolutely clear, and the conditions had not been fulfilled. I draw up all the necessary evidence to give to the BBC's legal department. A date for the trial was fixed. I told Sally Groves that she would have to be a witness in the case giving evidence against her own artist, but she agreed that she would do it, because she knew exactly what the true situation had been. The day of the case drew very near, and then, one week beforehand, Steve Martland and his manager withdrew, and the case never materialised. What a lot of unnecessary bother.

Tour of the USA 1995 coupled with The Beltane Fire

The orchestra was now in discussions about a possible tour of the United States under the auspices of CAMI (Colombia Artists Management Inc.). Mary Jo Connealy had organised two previous tours with Max. The first was with The Fires of London in 1985, and the second with The Scottish Chamber Orchestra in 1988. Mary Jo was now keen to arrange yet another tour with Max, and Trevor Green was equally keen to expose the orchestra to the most important North American classical music market. All such tours take a long while to organise. Mary Jo worked closely with Richard Knowles at the orchestra. Yan Pascal Tortelier, who had become the orchestra's Chief Conductor after Sir Edward Downes had left, was to share the conducting of the tour with Max.

The last of the five works was to be *The Beltane Fire*. It was forty minutes long, and it was to have its world premiere on the tour. The inclusion of a world premiere of a major work of Max's on a tour needs explanation. In 1991 The Royal Danish Ballet brought Max's ballet *Caroline Mathilde* to the stage in Copenhagen. This was the second collaboration between Max and the Danish choreographer Flemming Flindt. The first had been *Salome* performed in the Circus Building of the Tivoli, also in Copenhagen in 1978. Max had greatly enjoyed writing these ballets, and so when in 1991 he was invited by Peter Schaufuss, yet another Danish choreographer and Ballet Master of the Deutsche Oper Berlin, to write yet another ballet, he eagerly accepted. Schaufuss recommended that Max could collaborate with [David Bintley](#), the resident choreographer at the Covent Garden Royal Ballet. Max and David had several meetings together in my flat. Max felt that after his experience with *Caroline Mathilde* and *Salome* he had learned enough to be able to write the scenario. Max and David had agreed that the subject of the ballet would be Beltane, the annual May Day festival of Ireland and Scotland which had almost completely died out. Unfortunately, after many and prolonged discussions, David and Max were unable to agree, and they both withdrew from the project.

But while he was working out the scenario, Max had already composed a good deal of what he thought of as the ballet, and he suggested to Brian at the BBC that he could write this as an orchestral work for the BBC Philharmonic. Brian was delighted, and Max wrote what he called a choreographic poem for orchestra as a BBC commission.

The honour of the first performance was given to Boston and Symphony Hall. Boston was always going to be one of the major dates on any tour of the USA. As far as Max himself was concerned, he had formed a close relationship with the Boston Symphony Orchestra which had commissioned firstly his *Symphony No. 2 (1981)* and subsequently his *An Orkney Wedding with Sunrise (1985)* for the Boston Pops, both of which had experienced unprecedented success.

The tour, which was to last for four weeks in March and April 1985 was to start on the West Coast and gradually work its way eastwards. Mary Jo had done a tremendous job in the organisation of the tour. Trevor had predicted that spirits and enthusiasm would fall in the third week, but this prediction failed to materialise, as everything was made as comfortable as possible and that there was no room for any

complaints. Brian had hoped that he would not end up with twelve performances of the *Trumpet Concerto*, because all of the concerts were to be broadcast on the BBC, and having all these concertos piled up one upon the other would make things difficult. In the end, Brian ended up with exactly what he did not want, namely twelve performances of the *Trumpet Concerto*, with the Håkan Hardenberger as the soloist. Max has written the concerto for [John Wallace](#), who had first performed it with the Philharmonia in Japan, and in London, when the concert was attended by [Leonard Bernstein](#), in September 1988. *St. Thomas Wake*, which was one of Max's popular works in which the orchestra ruminates on memories of Max's childhood experiences in World War II while a foxtrot band occasionally interrupts; *Cross Lane Fair* and *Symphony No. 5* which were Max's most recent orchestral compositions

The Beltane Fire takes the form of a symphonic suite of a series of dances. Max weaves different kinds of music together, such as folk fiddling and mainstream orchestral writing. Underneath everything there is somehow a sense of disquiet. It is a drama of love and also of the conflict between old beliefs and the rationalism of the Reformation and of ritual as a wild rampant machine. It hadn't been so long ago that young men rushed through the Beltane fire to prove their virility. Yet again Max gives wonderful opportunities for members of the orchestra to show off their skills which they certainly did at the premiere in Symphony Hall in Boston.

For all the time leading up to the tour, and on the tour itself, I worked very closely on every aspect with Mary Jo and her office in New York, and with everyone in Manchester, especially [Trevor Green and Brian Pidgeon](#) and Richard Knowles. The tour was very important for the orchestra, as it was the first major tour of this kind it had ever undertaken in such prominent venues such as the Avery fisher Hall in New York and Symphony Hall in Boston. The concerts were extremely well publicised across the USA by [Sheila Porter](#), who was acknowledged as the leading exponent in the field of public relations, and who was able to obtain a significant presence in all the major media outlets. At Trevor Green's invitation, Margaret Ann Sporr, one of the governors of the BBC came on the tour to have an inside view of how the orchestra functioned. The orchestra's profile had taken several leaps forward.

Mavis in Las Vegas

Towards the very end of the BBC Philharmonic's tour of the States in March and April 1995, I went into the newspaper shop across the road from the Lincoln Centre in New York to purchase an English newspaper, which I ha been sorely missing for several weeks. It was the Independent, and my eye fell upon a story on the diary page.

My attempts to contact Sir Peter Maxwell Davies last week during his 15-date, coast-to-coast US tour with the BBC Philharmonic proved unexpectedly problematic. I rang the Flamingo Hilton, Las Vegas, at 9am US time, by arrangement, and asked to be connected to the composer's room. "I'm sorry," replied the receptionist, "I just lurve your British accent, but could you just repeat the name more slowly, please." I repeated it. "Davis? How do you spell that, please? Oh, Day-vees." Short pause. "I'm sorry, we have no Mr. Day-vees registered."

I suggested we try Maxwell. Then Peter. Then Sir. "I'm sorry, What's 'sir'". "It means he's a knight of the realm. He's a famous British composer, he's giving a concert in Las Vegas tonight and he's meant to be staying at the Flamingo Hilton."

"I'm sorry, but if he's a famous British composer, what's he doing staying at the Flamingo? No one stays at the Flamingo if they can afford to stay at the Las Vegas Hilton. Shall I transfer you there?" She does. I repeat the routine. Same result.

Forty minutes of to-ing and fro-ing between the composer's British and American press agents solved the mystery. Maxwell Davies had been in the Flamingo all along registered as Mavis. Guess they had some problem with his accent.'

I decided not to tell the rest of the crowd about this article until the end of the tour which was in a couple of day's time. Then in the hotel in Washington DC, after the last concert, I solemnly read it out to Max and Brian and Trevor, Richard, Malcolm and Mary-Jo, and we all laughed hysterically. It was so absurd. Obviously the computer had conflated Maxwell Davies down to Mavis. Max immediately decided that he wanted to write a piece about this mythical character called Mavis, which he duly did, and the BBC Philharmonic performed it at a concert at the Royal Northern College of Music in March 1997.

For obvious reasons I offered the American premiere to the Boston Pops Orchestra, and it was eagerly accepted by their new chief conductor Keith Lockhart. And it was played during the 1987 Boston Pops season.

Shortly after that, I was contacted by Susan Dangle, on behalf of the Pops orchestra who said that they would like to make another film, exactly on the lines of *An Orkney Wedding*, but that this time the location would of course again be in Las Vegas. The date to do this was set for February 1998, just a couple of weeks after Max and I returned from the visit to the Antarctic. [Bill Cosel](#) as director and Peter Hoving as cameraman would again be in charge. Susan did a superb job of organising the filming and obtaining all the necessary permissions. Those few days I spent in Las Vegas were amongst the most absurd, and the most perfectly enjoyable I have spent. Mavis appeared in the form of Julie Grayson, who Susan had gone to Las Vegas to audition. This Mavis was Max's muse. She and [Max moved around Las Vegas](#). We all stayed at Caesar's Palace Hotel, and I remember the long corridors and finding people in the lifts at six in the morning just finishing their all-night stints on the slot machines and roulette tables. [Mavis and Max's adventures took them around town in a fifties open-air Cadillac](#), to the Liberace Museum, with his way over-the-top costumes exhibited in glass cases, to the [Graceland wedding chapel](#), with an Elvis Presley look-alike minister, and me having a one-second cameo playing the harmonium. The final apotheosis of the whole expedition came, when Susan had arranged for the [lights on Caesar's Palace to flash out the words Mavis in Las Vegas](#). My cup ran over. The film, roughly the same length as *An Orkney Wedding* and was again first shown on WGBH and then nationally across American television stations. This outing proved that not everything I did for Max and The Fires was fraught with problems and anxiety. I think you could safely term my visit to Las Vegas on that occasion counted as a perk.

Childhood Memories in Salford - - (1) Cross Lane Fair (1994)

Max had decided that he wanted to write a series of occasional pieces for the orchestra which depicted his childhood and youth in Salford and Manchester. Max would walk along the corridors of the BBC building listening to the musicians practising before their rehearsals. One day he heard an unusual sound. It came from Mark Jordan, one of the clarinetists. Max asked him what instrument it was he was playing and Mark told him that it was Northumbrian Smallpipes. Max loved the sound of these pipes. He had already written his by-now famous work *An Orkney Wedding, with Sunrise* which featured the Highland Pipes. Max thought he would love to write a work for Mark, who was a champion on the Northumbrian Pipes. But playing these pipes as well as the clarinet were not Mark's only talents. He was also a juggler. Max, who was always happy to include drama into a situation, wanted to be able to show Mark off in as many ways as possible. The Fair at [Cross Lane](#) was the one which Max had been taken in the late 1930s as a small child. The fourteen minute work is in nine sections, in which the pipes with the orchestra represent the curiosities such as the Ghost train, the Bearded Lady and Five-Legged Sheep. The orchestra represents the Fair Ground with its roundabout (carousel), steam organs and swings. Mark, the piper, is encouraged to juggle by the ever-increasing fervour of the Bodhran (Celtic Drum) performed by Rob Lea, a member of the percussion team of the orchestra. Max relates that at the end of the day he was tired out and was carried home fast asleep on his father's shoulders. It was first performed in St. Magnus Cathedral when the orchestra was invited for its first visit to the St. Magnus Festival in Orkney in 1994, and taken on the tour of the USA a year later.

Childhood Memories of Salford – (2) Throstle's Nest Junction 1996

This was the second of the pieces recounting Max's memories in Salford and Manchester. The junction is a railway bridge over the Bridgewater Canal which connects Runcorn in Manchester and Leigh in North West England, where Max attended Leigh Grammar School. The canal was commissioned by the Duke of Bridgewater to transport coal from his mines in Worsley to Manchester. Max's uncle John's job was to move the bridge aside as the ships moved through the canal. In the piece, Max musically describes visiting his uncle John with his mother, and hearing the roar of the trains. In the latter part he walks along the canal. This all takes place near to Trafford Road which is where Max lived, so all these adventures were close at hand. The first performance was given in the Bridgewater Hall in Manchester on 16 November 1996

Childhood Memories of Salford - (3) Swinton Jig -1998

Someone had given Max the Swinton Jig which had been composed by a coal-miner in Swinton in the mid nineteenth century. Max had spent most of his childhood in Swinton, and this gave him the chance to recall what this childhood experienced during the war, when much time was spent in communal air-raid shelters and where concerts were given to help pass much of this time. Some of the items in these concerts included people playing on an upright out-of-tune piano, a banjo, bones,

concertinas, and people sang songs and danced. Musicians in the orchestra were found who could play these instruments, and I remember bringing some bones back from Ireland myself to give to one of the percussion players. There is a Cor Anglis solo which recalls a very large lady who would walk through the streets singing a very sad tune with a very large voice. The first performance was given in the University of York on 23 November 1998

Childhood Memories of Salford – (4) Spinning Jenny - 1999

From 1945 to 1952 Max attended Leigh Grammar School. Leigh was a former cotton town which came into prominence with the development of the Spinning Jenny, a spinning frame with multiple spindles. Max remembered what was left from the time of the high industrial revolution, with a lot of women operating machines in long rows, and roaring furnaces. Altogether the impression was one of noise. Once again Max interwove sounds and threads of the popular music of the time onto the foundation of one of his magic squares of twelve. The first performance was given at a Promenade concert at the Royal Albert Hall, London on 23 July 1999.

In November 2004 Max received the [Freedom of the City of Salford](#).

An Orkney Saga

In July 1997 Max moved into another cycle of works for the BBC Philharmonic which bore the title Orkney Saga. This was inspired by an exhibition at the 1993 St. Magnus Festival in Orkney, in which [14 huge canvasses](#) commissioned from contemporary artists were hung in the nave of St. Magnus Cathedral in commemoration of the crusade to Jerusalem in 1151, - 'the most famous recorded voyage that the Orkneymen ever made'. Under each banner was displayed an epigrammatic caption by the George Mackay Brown, which together outlined the journey led by Earl Rognvald II of Orkney, a nephew of Saint Magnus the Martyr, through gales and sieges to reach Jerusalem and Byzantium, then back home passing by Rome, the Alps and Denmark. Max envisaged a series of 14 compositions, each prefaced by, and reflecting, the text of one of the banners. The first, "Fifteen keels laid in Norway for Jerusalem-farers", depicts the building of the ships for the voyage and suggests the spiritual pilgrimage to be undertaken. Max originally wanted the cycle to be called *Sails in St. Magnus* but after serious complaints from the publishers, Boosey & Hawkes, who thought it sounded like a sale in a shop, Max agreed to change the title to *Orkney Saga*. Thus commenced the second cycle for the BBC Philharmonic and had its first outing at a Promenade Concert in July 1997. In the event, Max only composed four of the fourteen works originally envisaged.

An Orkney Saga I 1997

'Fifteen Keels laid in Norway for Jerusalem farers'

First performance – 25 July 1997

Royal Albert Hall, BBC Promenade Concert, London

An Orkney Saga II 1997

'In Kirkwall the first red Saint Magnus Stones'

First performance 23 October 1998

New Broadcasting House, Oxford Road Manchester

Orkney Saga III 1999

'An Orkney Wintering. Stone poems in Orkahowe "great treasure"'

First performance -17 January 1999

Butterworth Hall, Arts Centre, Warwick University, U.K.

Simon Butterworth, Saxophone

An Orkney Sage IV never appeared

An Orkney Saga V – 2000

'Westerly Gales in Biscay, Salt in the Bred Broken'

First performance 17 July 2000

St. Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall, Orkney

St. Magnus Festival Chorus

Tenemos, with Mermaids and Angels 1999

The decision to write this work was Max's admiration and affection for Richard Davis, the BBC Philharmonic's principal flute. It had not been part of any schedule, and then, all of a sudden, Max told me that he had started writing what he at first called 'just a small piece', but which later turned into a far more substantial concerto in one movement for flute. . Max was evoking the area exactly where he had recently gone to live on the north of the island of Sandy, having moved from Rackwick on Hoy. "It is not too difficult, with narrowed eyes and a childlike effort of imagination, to see the seals below the house and the seabirds above it as mermaids and angels" The first performance was at the Royal Concert Hall in Dublin on 17 May 1999 with Richard Davis as the flute soloist

Symphony No. 7 (2000)

When Max started to write this symphony, he already had a commission to write a further one which would be the *Antarctic Symphony* which he knew would be much more 'Antarctic' than 'Symphony'. He felt that this one would be more the last of the cycle of his own symphonies, which had started with his first, and gone on through all the subsequent ones where he had drawn on his own examination of the classical symphonies, both from study and from latterly, his being involved by conducting these works, but working things out in his own way. This would be the second symphony he had written for this orchestra. The first of these, *Symphony No. 3* had been written when he had been, as it were, an outsider. This time, he was right in the midst of everything. The symphony is a four movement creation. It was first

performed as part of at the St. Magnus Festival, in Orkney, as part of the orchestra's second visit to the St. Magnus Festival on 28 June 2000.

Recordings for Collins Classics

Max's coming together with the BBC Philharmonic in July 1991 had coincided with his recording contract with Collins Classics. During those years of Max's contract, he made many CDs, many of them with the BBC Philharmonic. Owing to the substantial number of concerts that Max conducted with the orchestra, it was possible to programme the works which Collins wanted to record. Most of these recordings were made in Studio 7 at the orchestra's home at New Broadcasting house in Manchester. There was always either a concert or a studio recording, and then the Collins Classics team in the shape of Veronica Slater as the producer, and as the engineer came into the Studio to make their own recording. Veronica Slater was the producer that Max had chosen when he signed the Collins contract. He had known Veronica since she had been a long-standing BBC producer. Then, later, when he had been the Director at the Dartington Summer School of Music, he had worked closely with Veronica on all his projects. Veronica, in turn, favoured John Timpeley to be her sound engineer. Max trusted Veronica to get what he wanted, and she need to have someone who would get exactly what she wanted to hear.

Of the works which Collins recorded, all of them, with two exceptions, were works which featured, quite naturally, an orchestra. The two exceptions were operas. The first of these, *The Lighthouse* (1979) had been written for Max's own ensemble, The Fires of London, to a commission from the Edinburgh Festival and first performed in 1980. But no recording had followed, and Collins saw an opportunity to work with members of the BBC Phil to make the recording. At that date, in 1994, Dennis Simons, the leader, had left the orchestra to go to the USA, and their new leader, Yuir Torchinsky, had not yet been appointed, and so there was a gap. Brian asked me if I could suggest a suitable person to play the violin for the recording. I was exceedingly happy to recommend Beverley Davison, who had been the violinist of The Fires at the time of the premiere of *The Lighthouse* in 1980. The orchestra was delighted with her and immediately offered her the post of the leader, but she turned it down. The recordings which the BBB Philharmonic were

St. Thomas Wake: Foxtrot for Orchestra
Caroline Mathilde: Concert Suite from Act I of the ballet
Caroline Mathilde: Concert Suite from Act II of the ballet
Black Pentecost
Stone Litany
The Beltane Fire
Chat Moss
Cross Lane Fair
Ojai Festival overture
The Turn of the Tide
Sir Charles His Pavan
Symphony No. 1
Symphony No. 2
Symphony No. 3

The Lighthouse
Resurrection

The BBC Philharmonic was the orchestra which Max's enjoyed working with most.