

## MASTER OF THE QUEEN'S MUSIC

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### [Introduction](#)

An extraordinary letter arrived in the post on 20 February 2004. It came from Sir Robin Janvrin, the private Secretary to The Queen. It said that The Queen had asked him to approach Max, in the hope that he might consent to be Master of the Queen's Music. He said that a long period of consultation had disclosed widespread support for his nomination, reflecting his remarkable record as a composer and as a communicator of music in general. At the end of the letter, he said that he hoped that Max would accept the appointment, and if he had any questions, he gave his phone number as a contact.

Michael had brought the letter in to me, and I asked him what it was about. He said that it was 'different'. Different it certainly was. It had come completely out of the blue. I knew of course that Malcolm Williamson, the previous incumbent, had died some while previously, but not for a single moment did it ever cross my mind that Max might have been considered.

My first instinct was that of course Max would decline the offer. He had frequently expressed his republican views, not in any kind of negative way, but just that those were his feelings in that direction. Max was at his home in Sanday. I reached for the phone and dialled his number. We had a lengthy daily talk at eight every morning to discuss everything, and for me to get his opinions on all the various matters. After that morning talk, we rarely had any communication for the rest of the day other than in some kind of emergency circumstances. My phoning him in mid-morning would definitely signal that something unusual was up. I read Sir Robin's letter out to him. There was a long silence on the other end of the phone. Max started to ask me some questions, none of which I was in any kind of position to answer, other than making reference to the letter itself. Then Max indicated that he seemed to be in favour of accepting the offer, and said that I should fax him the letter. Max did not have a fax himself in his house as he had always hated the idea of having such a machine in his home, because of the noise it made. However, he had agreed that I could send faxes to the local shop, and that the shop would also fax Max's replies to me. The question of the fax machine had always been a bone of contention. Communication to Orkney was not a particular problem if you lived on Mainland - that is the main island of the Orkney Islands. However, Max had lived first for many years on the island of Hoy, and subsequently on the island of Sanday, and regular mail to and from these islands always took a couple of days longer. Thus, when you take into account the fact that it would take time for Max's answers to be received back to me, it meant that any idea

of a rapid response was impossible. So the fact that faxes via the shop could be exchanged was certainly an acceptable compromise as far as I was concerned.

Max faxed me back the draft of his letter of acceptance for my comments. I suggested that he send the letter to me, so that we could be sure that I received it. Somehow letters do get lost in the post, and these letters are generally important ones. I received Max's letter of acceptance, and then phoned Sir Robin Janvrin to tell him that I had this letter and that there was good news. He then asked me if I would like to see him. I replied that I would. He then asked when I would like to come. I said 'now'! To my astonishment, he said that would be fine. He told me to go to the man on the gate at Buckingham Palace and I would be told where to go. All of this had the air of total unreality. I left my desk and went to Earl's Court Station and got on the Piccadilly Line to Green Park, and walked through the park with all the millions of daffodils in full flower. I arrived at the gate of Buckingham Palace and gave my name and found myself walking through the courtyard through a door and then into a waiting room with a photograph of the Queen. Just a few minutes later, Sir Robin came to collect me and we went through into his room. I was received with the utmost cordiality and helpfulness. Sir Robin was clearly delighted that Max had accepted. I was not sure what the next moves would be, or indeed what those moves might be. At first I was somewhat nervous as to whom I was to be in contact with on any kind of regular basis. It was arranged that this was to be with Christopher Geidt, who was Assistant Private Secretary to the Queen, and, in particular, Mr. Geidt's assistant, Sophie Densham, was to be the regular point of contact. All this chain of command, as it were, was established very early on. Once all of this was established I felt much more relaxed, as prior to this I had visions of bobbing on the fringes and no useful dialogue of any kind being continued.

Michael made an appointment to have a meeting with Alan Reid, who had the superb title of Keeper of the Privy Purse. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the exact financial parameters of Max's appointment. Michael and Alan Reid agreed that Max was to have an annual stipend for his position as Master of the Queen's Music. It was arranged that if he had to make a journey from Orkney to London on Palace business, whatever that might be, his expenses would be paid for. So, right from the start everyone, including Max, knew where we stood. If Max wanted to write a work as part of his appointment, that was fine. Equally, if the work envisaged were to be something substantial, than arrangements for the funding of that work as a commission would have to be made outside the scope of what had been agreed,

The first meeting at the Palace with Sir Robin, Christopher Geidt, Max, Michael and me was on March 18, while the audience for Max to meet The Queen had already been fixed for May 20.

### **Commemoration Sixty – Concert of Reconciliation**

As soon as Max had agreed his acceptance of the position of Master of The Queen's Music I asked him what thoughts he had in mind to make this new position relevant. Max said 'I haven't a clue – some commissions maybe'. By this he meant giving commissions to other composers. I had been giving some considerable thought to the

matter, and had discussed it extensively with Michael. Although the original letter of the offer had stated that it would not be necessary to compose any music for any state occasions, these state occasions were clearly ones which would always been in everyone's mind, and would therefore afford good opportunities for all kinds of possibilities for compositions by Max. I was born in October 1935, and was nine and a half years old when the war in Europe ended on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945, and along with everyone else in the UK and the world, it was a date emblazoned into my memory. Looking at the ten years ahead of Max as MQM the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2005 would mark the sixtieth anniversary of the ending of hostilities in Europe. Would it not be a good idea to do something, with music, for this occasion? But I didn't like the idea of some kind of victory concert, whereas a concert of reconciliation seemed to make much more sense,. Many other anniversaries following this first one stretched ahead. The first of these would be the Queen's own eightieth birthday in 2006; the Queen's and Duke of Edinburgh's sixtieth wedding anniversary in 1947; the birth of Prince Charles in 1948; the sixtieth anniversary (Diamond Jubilee) of the Queen's accession to the throne in 2012, and likewise the sixtieth anniversary of the coronation in 1953. All these events, which in my mind were state and royal occasions, were the items which I presented to Max. There were other suggestions as well, of a more general natural and not specifically royal or state orientated. Max responded most positively to the very first idea, namely a concert of reconciliation, and he said, "yes, I would like to write a work finishing up with *Dona nobis pacem*."

I made a list of the suggestions, and Max and I went off the Buckingham Palace for the meeting with Sir Robin Janvrin and Christopher Geidt. The most important item, namely the concert of reconciliation, was discussed extensively. Max explained that he wanted to have a concert which would encompass music from several nations on opposite sides of the conflict. These nations would be the UK, the USA, France, Germany and Japan. Max would compose a special work for the occasions and he would conduct the whole concert himself. It was at this meeting that Sir Robin explained that Max would receive his annual stipend and that he would be expected to give an annual report as to what he had done and was doing as Master of the Queen's Music. It was also at this meeting that it was suggested that a new annual award would be set up in honour of music. At first suggestions was that it was to be called the Queen's Gold Medal for Music, but then it was changed to the Queen's Medal for Music. A committee of experts in the musical field, with Max as the chairman, would be assembled for the purpose of choosing who the recipient of the new medal would be.

For my part, I was informed that it would be Christopher Geidt to whom I would regularly report on day-to-day matters, and that it would be Mr. Geidt's assistant, Sophie Densham, who was to be my point of contact. This was the all-important key person so that all messages on either side could be conveyed through her. There were no problems of any kind at this meeting. All the matters were aired and thoughts expressed. The minutes were taken and we were told that the various suggestions would be passed on to the Queen for her to voice her opinions. I quickly realised that Her Majesty took great interest in everything and would never wave things through as a matter of course, and that it would be her stamp on whatever it was that happened.

From my point of view, the matter of the greatest urgency was the possibility of a concert in the summer of 2005, which at that point was roughly fifteen months away.

In the music business, fifteen months is tomorrow. For so many reasons, everything has to be booked a long, long way ahead. For instance, in Max's case, many of his commissions were arranged and signed five years ahead. Artists who are in demand need a long lead-in time. A concert hall had to be secured. The same applies to orchestras and to venues. So it was essential to know if the suggestion for the Concert of Reconciliation would go down well with The Queen.

The next meeting at the Palace was on 20 May, the day of [Max's audience with The Queen](#) which had been arranged by Paul Havill. As I was to drive Max to the Palace, and that Max, Michael and I would all attend a meeting with Sir Robin Janvrin and Christopher Geidt, it was arranged that Michael and I would wait in the palace while Max had his audience, and then the three of us would proceed to Sir Robin Janvrin's office for the meeting. It turned out that the suggestion for the Concert of Reconciliation had in fact found particular favour with The Queen, as had that for the Queen's Medal for Music, and it was to be along these two lines that we should all proceed. The word 'proceed' meant, as we could see, that the impetus and push would come from us and that we would say how we were getting along and report to the palace. This meant that all the ideas, and the execution of those ideas, would be in our court.

It is all very well to say that there will be a Concert of Reconciliation, but how can it be made to happen? Any kind of a concert needs a great deal of funding, and a concert with orchestral works and a chorus is going to need, obviously, an orchestra and a choir, and these have to be paid, and where was the money going to come from to pay for these bodies? The stipend which Max was to receive would be a drop in the ocean compared to the money required to underwrite the concert which we had conceived. Michael came up with the excellent idea of making an approach to The Royal British Legion, which is the organisation which helps the whole Armed Forces community through welfare, comradeship and representation as well as being the Nation's custodian of Remembrance. Michael would suggest that they could put on the concert which would be in aid of their own charity. I phoned up and made an appointment for a meeting with them, and on 15 June 2004 Michael and I went to the head offices of The Royal British Legion in Pall Mall and met the Secretary General, Ian Townsend, and Bill Clerk, the Director of Administration. Michael put forward the whole plan which had been approved of by The Queen. They liked it. They agreed. It was a short, very successful meeting. Henceforth, I would be in touch with Nick Hamner, who would be dealing with all aspects of the concert. His boss was Teresa Greener, whose job, I suppose, it was to be Operations Manager.

Now that the funding to pay for the artists was assured by the Royal British Legion, the next step was to go ahead and book all the artists. Chief amongst these would be the orchestra, and I strongly felt that this should be the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Max had held the position of Composer/Conductor with the RPO from 1991 until 2000, and it seemed entirely appropriate that they should be the orchestra for this auspicious occasion. I phoned up their manager [Ian Maclay](#), who had brought Max into the RPO in the first instance, to ask if he would be interested and he accepted without hesitation. The RPO did not have their own choir, so we opted for the very excellent London Symphony Chorus for whom Max had written *The Three Kings* a few years earlier. But Max was not finished with his requirements for the work he was planning to write. He wanted to have a brass band. Since his appointment as MQM,

he had been taking notice of, and listening to, brass bands, and he wanted to incorporate this sound. I suggested that the Royal British Legion's own Central Band, under the leadership of Ted Whealing would be ideal, especially as this was the band which played for The Queen aboard the royal yacht Britannia and she would be very familiar with Ted. The Queen had, at Max's audience, suggested to Max that he go to visit the Royal Military School for Music at Kneller Hall, and this he had done, with the most enormous amount of pleasure. The trumpets from Kneller Hall were to be brought into the action. Finally, Max was most anxious to have children's voice in the mix, and what better could there be than the choir boys from several choirs. Six choirs were selected. Three of them belonged to the Queen's own chapels and the other three were the main church choirs in London. The six choirs were:

The Chapel Royal St James's Palace, choirmaster Andrew Gant  
The Chapel Royal, Hampton Court, choirmaster Carl Jackson  
St. George's Chapel Window, choirmaster Timothy Byram-Wigfield  
Choir of Westminster Abbey, choirmaster James O'Donnell  
Choir of Westminster Cathedral, choirmaster James Baker  
Choir of St. Paul's Cathedral, choirmaster Malcolm Archer

However, it wasn't until October that I felt secure enough about the hall that I was able to contact these choirs and ask if they would be prepared to participate. With Kneller Hall and the three royal chapels, we felt sure that the Queen would feel at home.

The commission for Max to write the new work was shared jointly between The Queen, as part of Max's stipend, The Royal British Legion and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, which was itself celebrating its own sixtieth anniversary.

This then, was to be the cast for the great event. Gigantic! Overwhelming! Daunting! Thrilling! All had readily agreed to take part. But when was this to be? The Queen doesn't arrange her diary earlier than six months ahead. Six months is as nothing in planning classical musical events, as I have noted earlier. Eventually, and after much heart ache, the Methodist Central Hall, Westminster was booked for 6 June 2005. The Central Hall had several serious disadvantages, chief amongst which was its size, seriously restricting the number of the size of the audience to 2,300, plus the fact that it was undergoing a complete renovation, inside and out, which was due for completion at the start of May 2005. But in the circumstances of being restricted to last minute bookings, and of not being able to go forward without a hall, we were lucky to be able to secure the hall.

The two principal people with whom I worked constantly on this project were Nick Hamner from the Royal British Legion, and Else Tetavossian from the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Nick's boss was Teresa Greener, and she attended the first meeting I had at my office. But it was Nick who was doing the day-to-day work. His brief was within the Legion itself. Elsa's work was organising the contracts for all the participants. Any project requires a vast amount of communication, sometimes from minute to minute. I suppose you could say that the larger the project the more frequent the communications.

Max was very firm on the works, other than his own, which would comprise the rest of the programme. Max decided that as the Central Band of the Royal British Legion was to be involved, it would be a good idea for them to have another work, and, moreover, that he would compose one for them. This would be a short work lasting under five minutes. Ted Whealing was, throughout all this period, a great help on many issues. The specifically brass world was not one with which Max had had much experience, and so Ted's advice was very welcome. Max had wanted to give the brass band work the title of *Banners of Hope*, after the banners which would be paraded through the hall with the band at the commencement of the concert, But Ted advised that this could not be done, because they were not banners, and so the title of *Beacons of Hope* was settled upon, which, frankly, I much prefer.

Buckingham Palace informed us that the Queen doesn't like concerts to be any longer than ninety minutes and also that she doesn't like intervals. So these were the parameters into which the programme had to fit. I didn't think that if the concert were to exceed ninety minutes, anyone would be sent to The Tower of London, but on the other hand, nobody wanted to incur the Queen's displeasure. The works were all tailored to fit in with the timings, and, so long as everything kept moving along at a decent pace, we would come in within the specified ninety minutes. Ted Whealing was to conduct the *National Anthem* and *Beacons of Hope*, and Max himself was to conduct the rest of the concert.

The programme which Max chose was:

1. NATIONAL ANTHEM: **Arne**

Royal Philharmonic orchestra

2. U.K.

BEACONS OF HOPE: **Maxwell Davies** *World Premiere*

Central Band of Royal British Legion

3. Russia

LIEUTENANT KIJE SUITE: **Prokofieff**

(a) Birth of Kije

(b) Kije's Wedding

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

(*The Lieutnant Kije Suite* by Serge Prokofieff is in five movements and is taken from the 1933 film. These are two movements from this suite)

4. Japan

NOSTALGHIA: **Toru Takemitsu**

Mayumi Fujikawa, violin

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

(*Nostalghia* was by the Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu, and Max had given the first performance of this at the Edinburgh International Festival in 1987 with Yehudi

Menuhin as the violin soloist. For this concert, the violinist was to be Mayumi Fukiyama)

5. Germany

OVERTURE: LEONORE 3: **Beethoven**

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

(This overture was the third that Beethoven wrote for his only opera *Fidelio* in 1806)

6. France

SUITE L'ALISIENNE: **Bizet**

(a) Adagio

(b) Farandole

Royal Philharmonic orchestra

(The two movements are from The *L'Arlisienne* Suite which was taken from the incidental music written in 1872 by Georges Bizet to the play by Alphons Daudet)

7. U.S.A

FANFARE FOR THE COMMON MAN: **Aaron Copland**

Brass and percussion of Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

(*Fanfare for the Common Man* was written by Aaron Copland in 1942. Max knew Aaron Copland well.)

8. U.S.A

ADAGIO FOR STRINGS: Samuel Barber

Strings of Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

(*Adagio for Strings* is probably the best known American work in classical music, which had began life as the second movement of a string quartet in 1936 but was later arranged as a piece for string orchestra in 1938.)

9. U.K.

COMMEMORATION SIXTY: **Maxwell Davies** – *World Premiere*

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra,

Central Band Royal British Legion

Kneller Hall Trumpets,

London Symphony Chorus, Choirmaster Joseph Cullen

The Chapel Royal St James's Palace, choirmaster Andrew Gant

The Chapel Royal, Hampton Court, choirmaster Carl Jackson

St. George's Chapel Windsor, choirmaster Timothy Byram-Wigfield

Choir of Westminster Abbey, choirmaster James O'Donnell

Choir of Westminster Cathedral, choirmaster James Baker

Choir of St. Paul's Cathedral, choirmaster Malcolm Archer

(Max chose his own texts for *Commemoration Sixty*, which were from some chapters in Isaiah, and from the Latin Mass.)

10.

THE LAST POST

John Wallace, trumpet

(As the concert was to honour and remember the fallen in the war, *The Last Post* was of course to be included, and the trumpeter could only be John Wallace, who had worked so closely with Max over many years, including Max writing a *Trumpet Concerto* for him. This was to be John's last appearance before his retirement as a performing artist.)

11. REVEILLE

Kneller Hall Trumpets

Once we had the actual date fixed, the next job was to secure the dates for the rehearsals. The fact that there were so many organisations involved was going to make this tricky. In the event, there wasn't too much trouble with any of the organisations, except, that is, with the choir boys. The six choirs were each going to contribute ten boys. This restriction had to be made because the number of participants on the platform was going to be so large, there simply would not be enough room, even though the boys were much smaller than the adults and did not take up too much space. Whenever I would phone up the choirmasters to try to fix a time for the first get-together with Max, there would always be a date problem. If two or three of the choirs could manage the Monday, the others were unable to fit that in. And so it continued, on and on. I had always been used to the difficulty of fixing rehearsal times from my days managing *The Fires of London*, but nothing was proving as intractable as the situation with the choirs. As the months went by, I began to understand what the very real problem was. This was the period when almost all of the boys would be taking their entrance exams to their public schools, and everything in their schools, towards the end of May and the beginning of June, was geared to this fact. The irony of the situation was that I knew perfectly well that all the boys would be brilliantly trained and would have no difficulty with what they had to sing, and that this first rehearsal with Max was by way of being just a formality, but nevertheless it was not possible to let this rehearsal be glossed over and not happen at all.

Another factor in the presentation of the concert would be one of security. The Queen, of course, has her own security team, and this was being taken care of by the Palace. But, the Prime Minister, Tony Blair and the Leader of the Opposition, Michael Howard, and the leader of the Liberal Democrats, Charles Kennedy, had all accepted the invitation to attend the concert. This meant yet another level of security was necessary. And then, just to add flavour to the equation, the Ambassadors of the USA, France, German and Japan were also going to be present. In other words, it was a security nightmare. Remember this was 2005 and it was only four years after *Nine-Eleven* as it is called in American numbering, although to this day I always find it difficult to think of the month before the actual day. Security surrounding the American Ambassador was to be at the very maximum.

Behind all of these arrangements was the nagging fear as to whether the renovation of the Central Hall Westminster would actually be ready, as had been promised, by the

beginning of May. Everyone knows that there are always delays with builders. What would happen if the Central Hall was, in fact, not finished in time for the concert? I couldn't bear to think about it, but it was always there not so far from the front of my mind.

There were several meetings at the hall. The whole building was in total disarray. It is a circular building, which makes finding one's way around in normal circumstances difficult. Think of the Royal Albert Hall. But with no obvious entrances or exits, or steps to go up and down, I was in a state of total confusion on each occasion. I should mention that my sense of direction is usually quite or even very, good. I kept telling myself that it would all work out alright and that the Queen would be shown directly to her place and there would not be any problem.

One of the meetings with everybody was to decide where the Queen and her party should sit. The general feeling was that she should be placed right in the front of the seating downstairs. The thinking on this was that this would be the place where the Queen could be seen by the largest number of people. I pointed out that whilst this was probably true, there was going to be an extremely loud noise emanating from the platform to the extent that the royal party would be totally deafened if they sat so close, and that the musical experience would therefore be an unpleasant one.

I thought I would try to get a view from the upstairs balcony and exited from the downstairs area. It took me a very long time to find my way around and then to reach the upstairs area. I went to the front row of the balcony and sat down. I could hardly see over the railing, and I knew that The Queen was quite short and that she would have even more difficulty than I did in seeing over. I then suggested to the hall officials that the best would be if they could build two raised boxes at the front of the upstairs seats, one either side of the central aisle. This would give prominent places for both the royal party and for the political and diplomatic party. Everyone seemed to agree, and the hall officials said that the two special boxes would be constructed at a suitable moment. That statement made me feel somewhat apprehensive. When would the suitable moment occur? But it was good to know that carpenters were on hand for whatever might prove necessary.

As a new platform had to be made, we had another meeting to discuss this. The first suggestion was entirely unsuitable for the purposes of this concert. The front area was very narrow, hardly allowing for more than three desks of musicians on either side of the conductor. It was pointed out that the orchestra would be having at least six desks of first violins on one side, and similarly six desks on cellos on the other side, and that this new platform needed to be much, much larger in all its dimensions to even begin to accommodate all the musicians and singers who would be participating. Again, there didn't seem to be any problems with the hall being able to make whatever was requested.

Even so, space for the participants was going to be a very considerable problem. For *Beacons of Hope*, Ted Whealing's band would be a marching band, and would enter through one of the rear downstairs doors and march towards the platform and then in front of the platform and exit down the other aisle to the other rear door. However, there would not be any room for them on the platform which they had played this piece. In order to participate in *Commemoration Sixty*, they would need to be seated

in the upstairs audience gallery nearest to the platform. Likewise, the ceremonial trumpets from Kneller Hall would be seated in the front row of the upstairs gallery on the other side near to the platform. There would still be an enormous crush on the platform itself. The London Symphony Chorus would field some one hundred and fifty people, and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra would have around eighty musicians, and there were the sixty choir boys. But this concert was all about inclusion, and somehow everybody was going to have to be fitted in. At no point in any of these discussions was there any animosity from anybody. Everyone was just doing their best to ensure the best possible outcome.

There was a further meeting at the hall to discuss security. Edward Young, who, as Assistant Private Secretary to the Queen, was in charge of the royal security. He certainly knew his job. It was decided that an airport-style checking system for ticket-holders would be made and everyone's bags would have to go through this apparatus. Marksmen with rifles would be placed on the roof of the building. Every aspect of this concert was on the largest possible scale.

I was anxious that this concert should be noticed by more than only the people who would be present. To this end Michael and I went to talk to BBC television to see if there was a chance of a telecast of some sort, either live or later, but there was no interest. However Roger Wright, the Controller BBC of Radio 3 instantly saw that this was a especially important concert, and gave us a broadcast. We also asked Sally Groves, the boss at Schott, who were publishing *Commemoration Sixty*, if she would consider underwriting the cost of making a private recording of the work, so that we could put it on our MaxOpus Website, where we were selling CDs and Downloads of Max's music. Sally generously agreed, as did The Royal Bank of Scotland, and so between them we had enough money. We asked the producer/recording engineer Gilad Limor, who we had previously used extensively to make the recording.

Nick Hamner was reporting that the sale of tickets for the concert was going well, and that it would be a sell-out. I told him that he should reserve a number of seats for the Palace, because as well as The Queen and Prince Philip and their entourage, other members of the royal household were anxious to attend. These matters were encouraging. And, at long long last, after months of difficulties, we finally found a slot where all the boys choirs could come together for Max to work with them. However, there were further problems concerning the boys. What should happen to the boys on the day of the concert itself in between the rehearsal and the concert? One couldn't just let them go off anywhere. A special room in the hall was designated for the purpose of accommodating the boys during that crucial in-between period.

Schott, the publishers, were doing an heroic job in producing the material. Copies of the full score were needed for Joseph Cullen, the choir master of the London Symphony Chorus, and for all six of the choir masters of the boys' choirs. Schott told me that it was the largest score, in terms of physical size, not numbers of pages, that they had ever had to deal with, and this in turn caused several problems in dispatching it. But everyone coped brilliantly well.

And what about the renovation to the Central Hall? Of course it ran over. Throughout every single day during May I was in an agony. I remembered that in November 1979 I had visited Victor Marshall, the Artistic Advisor of the Dallas

Symphony Orchestra in Texas. This was just a few weeks after the brand new Myerson Hall had opened in September. He was naturally extremely proud of this wonderful new hall, and he described to me how, three weeks before the opening concert, all the 30,000 square feet of travertine marble which made up the entrance hall was still in Carrara in Italy. The mind boggles. On a somewhat lesser scale, the day prior to our concert, the two boxes which I had asked to be made were not there, and my shoes were getting stuck in the varnish which was still being applied to the floor.

D-Day the 6<sup>th</sup> of June arrived. The nerves which I had had throughout all the months did not subside. So many people had pulled together to make this a memorable and satisfying event and every single detail had been attended to. But things can always go wrong. They did not. The concert was sold out. The public arrived and went through the not one but two security checks. All three of Max's publisher was present. There was Janis Susskind from Boosey and Hawkes, James Rushton from Chester Music and Sally Groves together with Dr. Peter Hanser-Streker, the overall boss of Schott who had come from Mainz in Germany. Somehow all the participants fitted into their various slots on the platform and the audience seats. The choir-boys of course looked magnificent in their various costumes, as did the trumpets from Kneller Hall. The specially built boxes were in place. The varnish on the floor had dried. I could even see a route from the main entrance up the stairs to the balcony. I had absolutely no musical worries at all. The Royal party arrived to be met by the representatives of the Royal British Legion. My job, at that point, was over. I kept looking at my watch the whole time as I was always aware of the ninety minutes' stricture, but everything had all fitted in at the rehearsal. And so the concert proceeded.

There I was sitting in the audience, just a few rows behind the boxes, with all the important people around. Everyone played and sung their hearts out, and especially wonderful was the climactic hopeful ringing out of the choir-boys with their feeling of hope

A short reception for The Queen and Prince Philip to meet representatives of the participants of the concert was arranged and was to take place in a small room somewhere to the back of the area around the platform. In order to get there, the Queen had to walk the whole length of the balcony from her seat at the front of the balcony. This walk was, in many ways, the climax of everything for me. The Queen seemed to be in wonderfully good spirits, smiling and laughing and waving at the audience, who responded of course in similar vein. The Queen had enjoyed herself. I knew it. I could feel it.

One boy from each of the choirs was allowed to be presented to The Queen at the reception. I had arranged to meet Veronica Campbell, who was one of the people who had trained the boys at St. Paul's Cathedral, and to take her to where I thought I knew this room was. I waited at our due spot, but somehow she did not turn up. And so I thought I should get myself to the room, which I did. By the time I got there, I had missed my chance. Never mind. We had done it. It had all happened. Magnificently.

I didn't say a word to Max that evening, but the following morning I phoned him and asked him how he felt. He just said one word. "Happy." This was the first and only time I ever heard him say anything remotely like that.

The Royal British Legion made money on the concert for their charity.

My greatest debt in the organisation of the concert was to Nick Hammer and Elsa Tatevosian. The day after the concert I invited them to lunch so that we could have our own special post-mortem. Our relief was palpable. Else was used to arranging the RPO's concerts, and she, and also Ian Maclay, both remarked that it would be totally impossible to undertake such an event more than once every five years or so. In my book, once in a lifetime is enough. Once it was all over, I wondered to myself what all the fuss was about.

### **Garden Parties**

Almost immediately after the meeting at Buckingham Palace on May 20, I was contacted and informed that one of the duties they hoped that Max would take on as MQM was that of invitations to the July summer Garden Parties for the classical musical world. There would be three parties at Buckingham Palace, and one at the Palaces of Hollywood House in Edinburgh. There should be five invitations for each of the three London parties, and five for the one in Edinburgh. Each invitee would be entitled to bring one guest. Young children were not allowed. I draw up lists of names to suggest to Max. He would of course know all the musicians, but possibly not the administrators, although I always told him who he would be meeting when he attended any event. It was important to include all aspects of the classical music sphere, such as Max's publishers, the orchestras, ensembles, music colleges and choirs and to spread it as widely as possible. These people lived in many parts of the United Kingdom. Some of those in Scotland choose the London option over the one in Edinburgh.

The complication arose from the fact that I felt it would be a pity to put a name down on the list, and an invitation would be sent, and that person would not be free on that particular day. As there were three slots, if someone could not manage on one day, they might be able to on another one. As absolutely every single person that I contacted was overjoyed at the thought of being invited, and of bringing their wife, or partner, or parent, or child, I was always extremely happy to be the person who was bringing about this source of enjoyment. I was the messenger of good news.

It proved to be a lengthy business on each of the three years that I was involved in this process. The reason was because it took a long time, for instance, for the first person I approached to be able to give me a definitive answer, as he or she had to find out whether the other person involved was free. As the number was strictly limited, I was not able to move on to the next person until I found out whether there would be a slot or not. I made things more difficult for myself by going down this path, but I was keenly conscious of how disappointed someone would be on receiving such a unique and delightful invitation and not being able to accept it owing to other previous commitments.

The parties themselves were superb. Everything was done with military efficiency, but at the same time the atmosphere was casual. Everyone wandered around in the grounds, while the band played well-known songs, and sandwiches and cakes and tea was constantly available on a very long buffet which was manned by an army of people who helped you. There was no long waiting for the refreshments. The queues moved very quickly. The weather on the day which I attended was glorious and everyone was hugely enjoying themselves. The garden parties were one of the stranger aspects, as far as I was concerned, of Max being MQM.

### **Christmas Carols – Lullay my Child / An Heavenly Song**

Towards the end of 2004, an additional thought was thrown into the mix. Michael suggested to Max that it might be a good idea to write a carol for the Queen every year for the ten years he was to be MQM. Max liked the idea instantly. It was not necessary to obtain any kind of permission for this. Andrew Gant, choirmaster of the Chapel Royal St. James's Palace, had contacted Max immediately upon his appointment as MQM, and had floated several ideas of cooperation. It seemed that Andrew was the ideal person for this scheme, and upon being approached, his responded positively. It was all very well for Max to write the music, but I am not sure how proficient the Queen is to ready music in her head. She needed to have the sound, and that meant a recording. The plan was for Max to write the carol, and to give it to Andrew who would teach it to the choir. It would then be put into the service before Christmas, and then, after the service, the carol would be recorded. The recording engineer would then make a disc which would be despatched to the Queen in Balmoral, where she always spends Christmas.

It was the most horrible rush. Max wrote the first carol which was called *Lullay my child, and weep no more*. The choir, under Andrew Gant, had no difficulty in learning it, and all went smoothly. The recorded disc was rushed to Buckingham Palace, where they were able to forward it on to Balmoral. I wish that we had started the whole process even a few days earlier, but it was a good idea and it needed to be done. This set the precedent, and Max followed it up the following year in 2005 with the carol *An Heavenly Song*, and this time we knew the ropes and what had to be done by when, and everyone was under considerably less pressure.

### **The Queen's Eightieth Birthday – The Golden Rule/ A Little Birthday Music**

I arranged for Max to meet Andrew Motion, the poet Laureate with a view to them doing something together. Max met Andrew, and they discussed what they might do for the Queen's eightieth birthday which was in April 2006. Andrew wrote the poem *The Golden Rule* and the work was performed in St. George's Chapel, Windsor by the Choir of St. George's Chapel, Windsor – the Queen's own choir. Timothy Byron-Wigfield conducted. There was a live relay on television of the service.

The same poem, namely *The Golden Rule*, was used for the other work which Max composed for the Queen's birthday in 2006. This was an altogether different piece of music and was to be called *A Little Birthday Music*. Nicholas Kenyon, the director of

The Proms, was going to programme the work. The date for this special concert was 19 July 2006. The forces on this occasion were to be the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the trumpeters of the Scots Band, and the 250 children's voices of eight different choirs from London and Birmingham, and conducted by Jiri Belohlavek. And, wonderfully, the Queen had agreed to attend. The Queen had only been to a Prom concert once previously in all her reign. An additional excitement of the evening was that the Queen's Medal for Music was to be presented to the baritone [Bryn Terfel](#), who was singing in another work that same evening. The first Queen's Medal had also been presented at a Prom concert the previous year to the conductor Sir Charles Mackerras. Nicholas and his Prom office were doing all the arrangements, including fixing the choirs, for which I was very grateful. Ronald Corp, renowned as a chorus master, went around to the various schools bringing them all to the same standard.

The concert was to be televised live, including the Queen making the presentation to Bryn Terfel. The Queen would be sitting in the Royal Box, of course, but contrary to expectations, she would not make the presentation in the Royal Box, but on the platform of the Royal Albert Hall. This would entail the Queen making her way through the vastness of the hall. On the day itself, there were carpenters busy with laying a new red carpet backstage.

It was hot. Some say it was the hottest day in a hundred years. Everyone was expiring. Fans were being waved furiously. Sweat was rolling down people's faces. The Queen alone appeared to remain cool. The Prom audience, lead by the children's voices, sang the two verses of God Save the Queen with huge gusto. It was wonderful for the Queen to be present at a concert with such a huge audience.

The concert started with *A Little Birthday Music*, and the chairs were placed on the platform, and the royal party, including Max, came and took their places. The presentation of the medal was a surprise for the audience. Max came to the front and made the announcement that Bryn Terfel was to get the medal. Bryn Terfel then came on and sang two Welsh songs, and The Queen then gave him the medal. The chairs were then cleared, and the Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh made their way back to the royal box. There was a reception in one of the upstairs rooms of the Royal Albert Hall to which representatives of all those who had participated were presented to The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh. The Queen looked as fresh as she had all through, and it was a memorable occasion for all.