

SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

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Background

In the 1960s, Peter Maxwell Davies (hereinafter referred to as Max) had one or two very nasty experiences with conducting orchestras. The professional conductors who were supposed to conduct the premieres of his works pulled out at the last moment, claiming that the work was too difficult for anyone to cope with. So Max was called in at the last moment to cope with the situation, which he was not in the slightest bit qualified to do. It was no surprise, therefore, that the orchestras resounded negatively to Max and to the work in question. For several years Max retreated entirely from any suggestion of conducting any group of musicians other than his own ensemble The Fires of London, with whom he felt comfortable. One of the orchestras which had invited Max to work with them was the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, but Max had given his same negative answer to their manager, [Michael Storrs](#).

In 1983, there was a sudden cluster of first performances of Max's works for chamber orchestra. The first came in June at the St. Magnus Festival in Orkney. *Into the Labyrinth* was commissioned by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra featuring the tenor [Neil Mackie](#) and conducted by [James Conlon](#). The SCO liked their new piece so much, that they decided to programme it at the start of their autumn season, even though it had not been scheduled. In August *Sinfonia Concertante* had its premiere at the Proms, commissioned and performed by the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields and conducted by [Neville Marriner](#). In October came *Sinfonietta Accademica*, commissioned by the University of Edinburgh to celebrate its 400th anniversary. Again it was performed by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and was conducted by [Edward Harper](#).

In December 1983, [Michael Storrs](#) phoned and explained that the orchestra was about to make a recording of the two works in which they had been involved, namely *Into the Labyrinth* and *Sinfonietta Accademica*, but that owing to contractual difficulties, [James Conlon](#), who was to conduct the recordings, was not allowed to do so, because he had an exclusive contract with a record company.. Michael asked if Max would step in to take over so as to allow the recording to go forward, and to allow the musicians not to lose work. Max was at first very alarmed owing, as I have described, his reluctance to conduct any kind of musical ensemble other than The Fires. But then he began to come round to the idea, reasoning that the orchestra already knew both the pieces and had performed them, so he would not have to enter into the choppy waters of actually teaching them the work.

At the first break of the first day of the recording, Michael came to me to tell me that the musicians were really enjoying working with Max, and to ask whether Max would consider doing a live concert with them. I said that I could not possibly answer for Max, and he would do better to make the request to Max himself, which he did - there and then. Max was obviously greatly surprised at this reaction, which was so entirely different from any previous ones, and he cautiously accepted Michael Storrs' invitation. What emerged was a series of four concerts, each concert being repeated at the four venues which the SCO performed, namely Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness. Max was to share the concerts with Mitsuko Uchida. In each concert Max would conduct his own works written for chamber orchestra – the three which had been premiered during 1983, plus the much earlier *Sinfonia*, commissioned and performed by the English Chamber Orchestra, and conducted by Colin Davis in 1962. In the rest of the concert Mitsuko would conduct and play two Mozart Piano Concertos, one either side of Max's piece. This series of concerts took place during 1984 to 1986, and a firm and very warm relationship between Max and the SCO was forged during this period. Also during this period, Michael Storrs left the SCO and his place was taken by [Ian Ritchie](#).

It was Ian who, very early on, as the manager of the SCO, asked Max if he would consider becoming the Associate Composer/Conductor of the orchestra. Max, who by now, felt very at home, accepted. Ian suggested that Max should not only conduct his own works, but should also conduct the regular repertoires which the orchestra played. Max's first outing in this department in 1984 was with Mozart's *Prague Symphony*. Max loved the experience. He felt that in conducting Mozart's work himself, he was so much better able to realise Mozart's composing method. It was a great lesson for him. And so, by July 1986, shortly after the success of his first concerto, the *Violin Concerto*, coupled with the position he now had with the SCO, Max felt he had thought through exactly what it was that he wanted to do in his position. And that was to write a series of ten concertos for the orchestra of which he was now an integral part.

The Strathclyde Concertos

Breathtaking as Max's idea was, it all made a great deal of sense to me, and I said that I would go ahead immediately to discuss the matter with Ian Ritchie. I phoned Ian the following morning and asked for an urgent meeting with him, together with Donald MacDonald, the chairman of the SCO. The day after that I was on the plane to Edinburgh and got together with Ian and Donald. I put Max's proposition to them, and both of them were instantly greatly excited and enthused by the whole project. There were no 'ifs' or 'buts'. They both wanted the project to happen. Ian had recognised the potential of having Max work with the orchestra, not merely as window-dressing, which was so often the case with having composers working with orchestras, but as a fully integrated and essential component of that particular orchestra. Donald, who was a banker, was the power-house behind the orchestra. He was a working chairman, as well as financially supporting the orchestra. It was his great passion, and both he and his wife Louise, gave a great deal of time and energy to doing whatever they could for the orchestra. I was of course delighted that Max's idea had received such a warm welcome from the two most important people.

Ian then set about making this idea into a reality, and, as was his way, he got on with everything brilliantly and efficiently. At that time, in 1986, the SCO repeated each concert in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness. As far as Max was concerned, this was heaven on earth. It meant that the piece that he had written would have a chance at improving almost immediately after the first performance. This was the situation he had with his own ensemble the Fires of London, as they toured extensively, which meant that the works became repertoire rather than tentative newcomers.

Ian contacted the Strathclyde Regional Council, which operated in the Glasgow area. He also put the scheme to the Scottish Arts Council. Then, in what seemed a matter of days, but in reality it might have been a few weeks, Ian emerged the plan fully in tact which would be as follows:

‘Max would write ten concertos for the leading members of the orchestra over a period of several years. Associated with the premiere of each concerto would be an educational project which was designed to introduce young people to the excitement of composing their own music. For each of the concertos, a young Scottish composer would be appointed composer-in-residence with one of the educational divisions of the region. Over a period of eight to ten weeks, the composer-in residence would work with groups of students, mainly from secondary schools, though some primaries and special schools would also take part. The composer-in-residence would explain the techniques which Max would use in that particular concerto, and he would help the young composers to shape their own musical ideas into the finished piece for the shared performance. At this performance, all the schools' compositions would be brought together in a programme which ends with the première of a longer piece commissioned from the composer-in-residence. All the pupils who would take part would then attend the première of the latest concerto. Each of the ten divisions would have their turn in hosting the pupils' performance’.

The person who would be in charge of putting this whole educational programme together would be [Kathryn MacDowell](#), who was in charge of educational at the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Max was absolutely delighted that his idea had blossomed into something much larger, and that it was educational. Max had a long history of being in the forefront of music education for children, having made a very considerable name for himself in this area from the time he worked at Cirencester Grammar School in the later nine-teen fifties and then writing a string of works for children to perform at the St. Magnus Festival in Orkney which he had founded in 1977.

All of the negotiations were arranged by Ian Ritchie with the Strathclyde Regional Council and the Scottish Arts Council. There was one contract for each of the concertos with the Scottish Arts Council, and another for each of the associated educational projects, which was with the Strathclyde Regional Council.

Max's mother had died in June of that same year, having suffered a stroke in 1984 and had not recovered. At that point in his life, Max felt that he had to draw a halt for a short while to composing the opera *Resurrection*, and he plunged straight in to writing the first of the Strathclyde Concertos, as they were now to be called. More

correctly, the first one was to be named *Strathclyde Concerto No.1 for Oboe and Orchestra*. The principal oboist in the orchestra was Robin Miler, who had been a founder member of the orchestra. The SCO developed out of the Scottish Baroque Ensemble, largely out of the instigation of the wind players, who wanted to play repertoire with larger forces and also to be conducted. The SCO gave its first concert in January 1974 and Robin was one of those initial wind players. Max had been writing works for The Fires on London since 1967, and that ensemble did not have an oboist, and so you might say that Max was suffering from a form of oboe-starvation. Well, at the very least, he was raring to go writing a work for oboe and for Robin.

Max wrote the work quickly and finished it before the end of the year. I was also lucky enough to have an ideal person who would write the piano reduction. This person was [Alan Boustead](#), who had already done a couple of reductions for Max. Everyone has their own idea of what an ideal piano reduction ought to be. From Max's point of view, he felt that this reduction should not even attempt to replicate the orchestra part on a piano. The reduction was to be used entirely for preparation and rehearsal purposes and should have enough information to give the soloists a lead to know where they were and where they were going. Alan fulfilled these requirements wonderfully well. So everything was in place for Robin to get on and learn the concerto, and to give the first performance in Glasgow in April 1988 and for the educational aspect of the young Scottish composer-in-residence working with the children to take place.

In writing this, and all the subsequent concertos, Max met with each of the soloists, and used his time when conducting the orchestra to discuss the various technical points arising during composition. This method proved very fruitful for all concerned.

There was a great deal of interest in this first of ten concertos. The media were throwing around comparisons between Bach, with his Brandenburg Concertos and Hindemith and his many concertos. A television documentary showing the progress of this first Strathclyde was made by Siva and Rob Underwood. The American premiere took place at the Ojai Festival in California in June 1988, where Max was the composer-in-residence, with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and the American oboist Stephen Colburn. The SCO with Robin again and Max conducting, performed the concerto at the Proms at the Royal Albert Hall.

In October and November 1988, the SCO undertook a tour of the USA and Canada. Max conducted all the concerts, and *Strathclyde Concerto No. 1 for Oboe* and *Into the Labyrinth* were the two works of Max's that were performed. The tour was arranged by [Mary Jo Connealy](#) at CAMI (Colombia Artists Management Inc.) I had worked very closely with Mary-Jo on a tour by the Fires of London in 1985, and she was most anxious to be able to continue with Max, and touring the SCO was a golden opportunity. Much of the finance for this tour was provided by the Dunard Fund, which sponsored much of the SCO's activities. The money behind the Dunard Fund came from the philanthropist [Carol Høgel](#), an American who lived in Edinburgh and whose generosity did much to enhance the musical life in that town.. The American tour was extensive, and this first Strathclyde concerto was performed in San Francisco, Stamford University, Sacramento, Lajolla, Torrance, Los Angeles and

Kansas City.. Thereafter, the concerto was taken up by other oboists and other orchestras.

Once the first concerto had been launched and the whole project was well on its way, the other nine followed in due procession. No exact date was put on when Max would write these works, nor was any hint given as to what the one after the next one would be. Looking at the series retrospectively, everything seemed to fall into place quite easily. Max wrote the concertos for the members of the orchestra he had encountered in his early days with them. They had remained in the orchestra. The concertos panned out as follows:

Strathclyde Concerto No. 1 for Oboe and orchestra
April 1988

[Robin Miller](#), oboe

Strathclyde Concerto No. 2 for Cello and Orchestra
February 1989

[William Conway](#), cello

Strathclyde concerto No. 3 for Horn,, Trumpet and Orchestra
January 1990

Robert Cook, Horn, Peter Franks, Trumpet

[039 Robert Cook, Peter Franks, Edinburgh 1990.doc](#)

Strathclyde Concerto no. 4 for Clarinet and Orchestra
November 1990

[Lewis Morrison, clarinet](#)

Strathclyde Concerto No. 5 for Violin, Viola and String Orchestra
March 1992

[James Clark, violin, Catherine Marwood, viola](#)

Strathclyde Concerto |No. 6 for Flute and Orchestra – March 1992

[David Nicholson](#), flute

Strathclyde concerto No. 7 for Double Bass and Orchestra
November 1992

[Duncan McTier](#), double bass

Strathclyde Concerto No. 8 for Bassoon and Orchestra
November 1993

[Ursula Leveaux](#), bassoon

Strathclyde Concerto No. 9 for Six Woodwind instruments and String
Orchestra

February 1995

[David Nicholson](#) – piccolo
[Elizabeth Dooner](#) – Alto Flute
[Maurice Checker](#) – Cor Anglais
[Lewis Morrison](#) – E Flat Clarinet
[Ruth Ellis](#) – Bass Clarinet
[Alison Green](#) – contra bassoon

Strathclyde Concerto No. 10 – Concerto for Orchestra.
October 1996

Once each of the concertos had been launched, they all had a number of different outings in addition to the first run in Scotland. Some of these initial performances were with the SCO itself, but several were taken up by other orchestras in other countries, either working with their own musicians in the orchestras, or bringing in soloists.

Strathclyde Concert No. 4 was performed the night before Margaret Thatcher left being Prime Minister. I was chatting to Max merrily on the phone about the previous evening, and then Max quietly announced “she’s gone!”

Strathclyde Concertos Numbers 5 and 6 had their premieres on the same day in March 1992

Strathclyde Concerto Number 7 was performed by Duncan McTier who was not a member of the orchestra. This was due to the fact that [John Steer](#), the principal double bass, sustained a horrific accident to his hands. It was thought that he would not be able to play again, but luckily he was able to continue his career, but was not able to perform the more virtuosic aspects of a concerto. John insisted that Max must write a concerto for the double bass, and invited his friend Duncan McTier to do the honours. Max wrote a special part within the concerto especially for John, so that he would not be left out. John played in the orchestra for all the performances.

Strathclyde Concerto Number 9 was a concerto for all those woodwind instrumentalists who never get a chance at kind of soloistic activity. Max was absolutely determined that every instrument which the SCO used would have a concerto. This meant that Lewis Morrison and David Nicholson got two cracks at the whip, as it were, but the other four sat in the second position in the wind section.

No. 10 was the *Concerto for Orchestra*, and Max saw to it that every single player, including all the strings, had at least a couple of bars on their own.

Ian Ritchie, the driving force behind the whole scheme, left the SCO in 1991 and Roy McEwen took his place and brought the project to its conclusion.

The publishing of the ten Strathclyde Concertos was shared equally between Boosey & Hawkes and Chester Music.

The first two of the concertos were recorded by Unicorn Kanchana. The last eight were recorded by Collins Classics with whom Max had a contract which commenced in 1990. All were quickly available for the public to purchase

The ten Strathclyde Concertos brought musical works into the decimal system, as opposed to the previous batches of concerti in earlier times, which had been in units of six, being half of one dozen.

Symphony No. 4

In 1985, after Max's *Symphony No. 3* Ian asked Max if he would write a symphony for his orchestra. Thus the surroundings of this new fourth symphony were ones in which Max felt very much at home. He knew all the members of the orchestra personally and professionally very well.

Max felt he wanted to continue down his own symphonic path, and the fact that the orchestra was a chamber orchestra and not a full strength symphony orchestra, was not an impediment for him, and he would not reduce his symphonic ideas. It was just that things would not sound so loud. As was the case for Max with his extremely busy schedule of composition, the first performance did not take place until September 1989 at a Promenade concert. The orchestra had several invitations to the Proms down the years, including some with Max, and on this occasion they were to bring not an existing work to be heard in London for the first time, but a world premiere. Max was always extremely grateful to the Scottish Chamber Orchestra who were always very patient with him in those early days of his coming to grips with what it meant to conduct music by other composers. Whilst of course Max was extremely well versed in the classical repertoire from a listener's point of view, it was an entirely different matter to be on the podium in charge of directing the course of the music itself, and he felt these experiences to be exceptionally good composition lessons for himself. Thus in the fourth symphony, he was able to combine all these skills which he had learnt, and to bring them to bear in the composition.

Although the work had been asked for by Ian Ritchie on behalf of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, the actual commission was from Christian Salvesen, the giant transport and logistic company which had been started in 1872 in Leith, just outside Edinburgh by the Norwegian Christian Salvesen himself. The company took a great interest in their commission all the way along, and arranged for a great party in London following the premiere itself. The Scottish Chamber went on to give several performances in Scotland itself in April 1990. These were immediately following the extraordinary happening of all Max's first three symphonies being performed at a Max Festival at the Southbank Centre in London in March and April 1990. Max dedicated the work to [John Tunnell](#), who had been the leader of the orchestra for all those years when Max was serving his apprenticeship, and who had been so helpful to him, and who had recently died.

Ojai Festival Overture - 1991

In 1988 Max was invited to be the composer-in-residence at the Ojai Festival in California. He formed a strong relationship with that festival, and they re-invited him again three years later. This time, however, Christopher Hunt, the artistic director, asked Max if he would write a short occasional work. The Scottish Chamber Orchestra was invited to be the orchestra for that year's festival. The funds for this commission were provided by [Robert Davies](#), an orange-grower in Ojai.

Max took the opportunity to write a work with a strong American flavour, paying tribute to two American composers who were friends of his – Aaron Copland and Leonard Bernstein.

The first performance was at the Libby Bowl, Ojai, California, on 1 June 1991

A Spell for Green Corn: The MacDonald Dances – 1993

[Donald MacDonald](#), the very active chairman of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, commissioned a work from Max for the twenty-first birthday of the orchestra, and for Max's own sixtieth birthday.

The 'spell' which is the one quoted from *An Orkney Tapestry* by the Orcadian poet George Mackay Brown. 'Let not plough be put to acre except a fiddle cross first the furrow'. It is an ancient blessing on the crops.

In '*An Orkney Wedding, with Sunrise*' of 1985, Max had been very successful in combining popular with sophisticated music, and 'Spell' carries on that tradition, although the Orkney rite which is depicted is very different. Max imagines the fiddler, the leader of the orchestra, dancing through the fields, accompanied by friends who are the rest of the orchestra. [James Clark](#) was the leader for the first performance in Glasgow November 1993

Donald added something unusual to the occasion. At the same time that he commissioned Max to write the music, he also commissioned a painting to be painted by the Scottish artist John Bellany, which gives that atmosphere of the fiddler in the fields.

The Jacobite Rising - 1997

Jacobus is the Latin for James. It was King James VII of Scotland, who was also James II of England, who was deposed in 1688

"I don't know much about music, but I am well-known in grocery circles". These were the words with which [Sir Alistair Grant](#) introduced himself to me over the phone in November 1994. I was quite taken aback. I didn't at that time know it, but it appeared that Sir Alistair was an extremely big shot in the supermarket world. He was the boss of the supermarket chain Safeway which, at the time, had over four hundred stores around the UK. Sir Alistair explained the reason for his call. In the past few years, he had immersed himself in Scottish matters, being a Scot himself, but having spent a great deal of his life in England. But latterly that had all changed and

he was moving his interests northwards, and one of those interests was the upcoming year of 1995, which would be the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of what was commonly known as the Jacobite Rising.

In 1603 James VI of Scotland succeeded Queen Elizabeth to become James I of England. This started the Stewart dynasty in England. In 1688 James II, a Roman Catholic, was deposed by the Glorious Revolution. In 1715 James II's son, Prince Charles, known as The Old Pretender, led an attempt to regain the throne, but failed. Thirty years later in 1745, his son, Prince Charles Edward Stewart, known as The Young Pretender, and also, more commonly, as Bonnie Prince Charlie, made a further attempt to once more claim back the throne for the Stewart dynasty. He fared better than his father, but he too was defeated. The Scots have always celebrated the 1745 Rebellion, and here, the following year, 1994, the really big anniversary loomed into view.

Sir Alistair, or Alistair as he insisted I call him, had discussed the matter as to how the event should be suitably remembered, and the idea of having a statue made was high on the list of possibilities, but Alistair rejected that notion, and thought that a piece of music should be composed. Max at that time had been living in Orkney since 1971, and had the reputation for having written a large number of works celebrating the landscape and the seascape and the history and the people of Orkney, and so I suppose his name would have naturally come up in any discussions. But here we were, almost at the end of 1994, and Alistair was suggesting that the new work might be performed within the following year, that is, 1995. It was clearly going to be impossible. Max had a huge number of works piling in on him, especially those for the BBC Philharmonic and the Royal Philharmonic, where he was the Associate Conductor/Composer in both cases. I explained this to Alistair before even putting the matter to Max. Alistair's reaction was immediate. "I will wait" he said.

As Max had been associated with the SCO since 1985, it would seem natural that if Max were to write a specifically Scots work, it would go to this orchestra. The initial discussions with Alistair were made over the phone, but I arranged for him to meet Max personally, so that they could thrash out the details. Max was keen on the proposal, and it was quickly decided that the work would be for chorus, and that the SCO would be able to use their own most excellent Scottish Chamber Orchestra Chorus. The soloists were to include the tenor Neil Mackie and baritone David Wilson-Johnson, both of whom had worked extensively with Max both in *The Fires of London* and as soloists in other of Max's works, and the soprano Lisa Tyrrell who had had a leading role in Max's recent opera *The Doctor of Myddfai*. The mezzo was Margaret MacDonald who was introduced by the SCO

Alistair was extremely interested in every aspect of the commission, and most especially that of what the text should be. He and Max had many conversations, but there were no problems as they were both in agreement. There would be a mixture of old and new writing. The work would open with the Orcadian Edwin Muir's (1887-1959) poem *Dream and Thing*. Next came *Charles Son of James* by Alexander MacDonald giving an account of the rising and bemoaning the fact that the conditions of a soldier were hard and the weapons he was given were old and rusty and not expected to be any good. The next item was the song *Hey Johnnie Cope* which has become a folk-song also giving a somewhat one-sided and not very accurate account

from the Jacobite point of view of the Battle of Prestonpans which was one of the battles of the uprising, and which is at once both comical and poignant.

This was followed by the Gaelic poet of the time, Duncan MacIntyre with his *Song of the Battle of Falkirk*. The final two items were *Spring Offensive* by the famous World War I poet Wilfred Owen, and finally, last, but by no means least, *Hallaig* by the Gaelic poet Sorley MacLean who was still alive. Alistair was most particularly interested in *Hallaig*, which MacLean had translated himself into English. *Hallaig* is named after a deserted township located on the south-eastern corner of the Hebridean island of Raasay, Sorley's birthplace. It is a reflection on the nature of time and the historical impact of the Highland Clearances – the forced displacement of people in favour of sheep during the 18th and 19th centuries - leaving an empty landscape populated only by the ghosts of the evicted and those forced to emigrate. *Hallaig* is by far the longest of the six sections and is the heart and soul of the work, and it meant a great deal to Alistair who was in constant contact with MacLean. Sadly, MacLean died in 1996 a year before the performance of *The Jacobite Rising*, but Alistair kept in close communication with MacLean's family.

Alistair felt that the word 'rebellion' should not feature in the title, as he felt that would be inappropriate, and so the title quickly came to be, and has remained, *The Jacobite Rising*.

Taking Max's compositional commitments into consideration, the date for the first performance was fixed for the end of 1997, which is two years after the 250th anniversary, but luckily I had pointed that out to Alistair in our first conversation and so that was not a problem. During the three years from that initial phone-call and the first performance, there were several changes in Alistair's life. In 1997, he retired from Safeway, which had been sold to Morrisons, another up and coming supermarket group. His interest in Scotland and matters Scottish had intensified and he had become the Chairman of Britain's largest major brewery group Scottish and Newcastle. Their headquarters were in Edinburgh, on what is now the site of the Scottish Parliament, and it was there that I went to visit him on several occasions. He was also the Chairman of the Bank of Scotland. Once we had entered into the run-up towards the performances in October 1997, Alistair threw himself into every aspect of the big event, and I had numerous phone-calls and visits, both to his London home and to his Edinburgh office. This event was going to be a major factor in his whole life, but I am sure that he gave the same care and attention to detail to every project in which he participated.

The Scottish Chamber Orchestra always gave two performances of each of their programmes. Although the SCO was based in Edinburgh, the first of the two performances was at the City Halls in Glasgow, whilst the second, for the most part, was at the Queen's Hall in Edinburgh

And so it was that the premiere of *The Jacobite Rising* took place in the City Halls in Glasgow on 15 October 1997. But as far as Alistair was concerned, the real premiere was the following evening in Edinburgh. There was a suitable room in the Queen's Hall for receptions following concerts, and Alistair wanted his reception to be the mother of all receptions. I believe that the suitable phrase for important personages is "the great and the good", and this certainly applied in this case for great and good

personages in Scotland. As James Waters, who had previously worked at the SCO and who was now the second in command at the Edinburgh Festival, remarked to me, that he had seen impressive turn-outs for important concerts at the Festival, but he had never seen anything to equal this. But for Alistair it was Sorley MacLean's relatives, in whom he was chiefly interested, and they were there and they all hugely enjoyed the evening. From that first phone-call all but three years earlier, Alistair's project had come to its successful fruition. As he said in his speech – "I haven't had so much fun since opening over four hundred supermarkets". He had obviously enjoyed himself all the way along.

The opportunity for a further performance arose quickly. The St. Magnus Festival in Orkney, which Max had founded in 1977, had, by now, a tradition of giving one concert in each festival featuring the local choir, whose choir master was Glenys Hughes, who was also the Festival Director. The Choir was used to singing the major choral works in the repertoire, and there was no reason why they should not tackle Max's new work. The BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra was to be the visiting orchestra for June 1998, and so it was that *The Jacobite Rising* was performed, and the four soloists were the same as for the original in October the previous year, with Martin Brabbins being the conductor. Alistair was to give a lecture on the work prior to its performance. I had arranged to meet him at the airport in Kirkwall, and to drive him to his hotel and thence to the hall where his lecture was to take place. I waited at the airport and saw everyone off the plane, but Alistair was nowhere to be seen. I was most concerned. This was totally unlike his behaviour, as he was most punctilious with all his appointments. I thought that there might be a message for me at his hotel, but there was nothing there either. It was all most strange. Max and I decided that he, Max, would give the lecture in Alistair's stead, and this he did. Max was always magnificent in his lecture-giving, and he was in this case, giving all the background to what he had written. I attempted to reach Alistair's home, but was unable to get any replies, and I did not receive any message concerning the non-appearance during the rest of the few days of the Festival. When I arrived back London, I was able to spend more time in making phone-calls, and I finally found someone who was able to tell me that Alistair had been suddenly taken ill and had been rushed off to hospital to have an emergency operation. This of course was the explanation for his no-show.

Sea Elegy - 1998

Alistair had recovered well enough to be very much present at the next performances of *The Jacobite Rising* which took place in December of that same year – 1998. Max had been commissioned to write a choral work for the twenty-first birthday of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra itself, and for Max's sixtieth, and Max used the identical forces as for *The Jacobite Rising*. The work was called *Sea Elegy* and it was settings of four of George Mackay Brown's poems about the sea. The SCO took the opportunity to bring back Alistair's piece, firstly in Glasgow City Halls and subsequently at the Queen's Hall in Edinburgh, and of course Alistair was thrilled to be there, and indeed he gave another reception, this time not at the rooms in the Queen's hall, but a sit-down supper. I was summoned by Donald MacDonald, the Chairman of the SCO, who expressed his disquietude of the fact that Alistair appeared to have commandeered the whole proceedings, which he rightly thought of as being an SCO evening. However, all the ruffled feathers soon subsided, and peace was restored.

Scottish Chamber Orchestra

Alasdair provided the money for the recording of both *The Jacobite Rising* and *Sea Elegy* by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and which were issued on the MaxOpus label and sold through the MaxOpus website.

Sir Alistair Grant died of cancer in January 2001.

Max became Composer Laureate of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra.