

**THE FIRES OF LONDON  
(FORMERLY THE PIERROT PLAYERS)  
1967 – 1987**

1. [The Pierrot Players and The Fires of London – a history 1967-75](#)
2. [Eight songs for a Mad King - 1969](#)
3. [Vesalii Icones - 1969](#)
4. [Miss Donnithorne's Maggot - 1974](#)
5. [Ave Maris Stella - 1975](#)
6. [Arts Council Contemporary Music Network Tour - 1975](#)
7. [Charity Commission 1975-76](#)
8. [Peter Maxwell Davies' Disappearance/First visit to Orkney – January 1976](#)
9. [Television relay of Eight Songs for a Mad King](#)
10. [North American Tour – October-November 1976](#)
11. [Latin American Tour – March- April 1977](#)
12. [First St. Magnus Festival/ The Martyrdom of St. Magnus June 1977](#)
13. [Tour of Hungary – October 1977](#)
14. [Residency at Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich – April 1978](#)
15. [Le Jongleur de Notre Dame 1978](#)
16. [Touring The Martyrdom of St. Magnus 1978-79](#)
17. [Tour of Australia and New Zealand March 1980](#)
18. [Musicians Union Strike Prom July August 1980](#)
19. [The Lighthouse – 1980](#)
20. [Touring The Lighthouse – Summer 1981](#)
21. [Arts Council Contemporary Network Tour – 1982](#)
22. [Image Reflection shadow - 1982](#)
23. [Sacra Umbra Festival - Sept 1982](#)
24. [Birthday Music for John 25 - Jan 1983](#)
25. [Britain Salutes New York Festival – April 1983](#)
26. [The No. 11 Bus –March 1984](#)
27. [Tour of North America - November 1985](#)
28. [Other Composers](#)
29. [Elliott Carter/Hans Werner Henze](#)
30. [Fires Farewell – January 1987](#)
31. [Composers performed by The Fires of London](#)
32. [Principal Players and Associates of The Fires of London](#)

**Note**

In my memories of The Fires of London, hereinafter referred to as The Fires, I will attempt to give the main outline of the history and chief events during my period as Manager from October 1975 until January 1987. There are of course thousands of other details which I will not be mentioning. There were numerous one-off concerts, and changes in personnel which are not mentioned

The large tours always gave the most amount of work, and they are the ones in which the group came together at its best, due to the repetition of the works, which naturally

improved performance, and in which the group, under Peter Maxwell Davies' leadership was able to project its' unique identity.

In managing any kind of ensemble, there are three items which cause a vast amount of additional work and worry. These are new music, theatrical works and touring

The Fires involved coping with all three of these, the whole time, and all at the same time. Someone once asked what punishment could be given to Hitler to make him realise what pain and havoc he had caused in the world. The answer was – “send him on tour”. I concur with this.

I am writing all these reminiscences under individual headings. However, because I had two hats on, one as manager of The Fires, and the other as Max's manager, I was intimately involved in the creation of several new works which Max wrote for The Fires, and so some of these memories are doubled up elsewhere under each of the individual works. Where this occurs, I have made mention of it.

### **The Pierrot Players and The Fires of London – a history to 1975**

The ensemble was called The Pierrot Players, named after Pierrot *Lunaire* by Arnold Schoenberg, which was a core work of its repertoire, having been conceived and put together by the composer Harrison Birtwistle (referred to as Harry), together with Stephen Pruslin (the American pianist of the group - always known as Steve), Alan Hacker, the clarinetist and the composer Peter Maxwell Davies (hereinafter referred to as Max). The four of them discussed the frustrations arising out of the difficulties of obtaining performances of contemporary music at a highest level. The major organisations tended to either ignore composers who were not yet established, or not to treat the new compositions with sufficient diligence and attention which might have been expected from their high level of competence and experience. What was needed was a group of musicians who would always be performing the works of composers who was one of them, and with whom they could make the journeys of exploration together.

The group was chosen and assembled in 1967 to give performances in concert venues of chamber music written by its own composers. It was decided that a key work of contemporary music should be included in its repertoire. This was to be *Pierrot Lunaire*, by Arnold Schoenberg, a song-cycle of twenty-one numbers to be performed by a female singer, [Mary Thomas in \*Pierrot\*](#) costume. However, unlike other groups which performed this work, the protagonist would be in costume. Steve thought up the name of *The Pierrot Players*, combining Pierrot together with 'players' giving the idea of theatricality as well as musicality.

The musicians that comprised The Pierrot Players were those of the original for which Schoenberg had written it. These were violin doubling viola, cello, flutes, clarinets and piano. To these five players was added a percussionist. The ensemble stayed with this combination, occasionally adding players, especially a guitar, as was necessary for specific works. During the years 1967 to 1970, Max wrote a considerable body of work; including many arrangements of 'early' music to cheer the audience up at the start of concerts, works with a reciter, and two show-stopping

music-theatre works. Harry's focus was elsewhere as he found his energies directed towards writing works for larger forces than the very small group, and in 1970 he left.

The group decided to continue as previously, but to change its' name. Once again Steve came up with the brilliant solution as to what the group should be called. The word 'London' was there so that people would know that the group was centred on London, and the word 'Fires' draws images of flames evoked by the great Fire of London in 1666. The name gave rise to a host of inflammatory headlines down the years. Thus in 1971 The Pierrot Players was re-launched as [The Fires of London](#).



*The Fires of London logo*

Louise Honeyman, well versed in orchestral managing and fixing, took over as manager from [James Murdoch](#), the Fires' first manager who returned to his native Australia. The Fires thrived under Louise's management, but in 1974, she resigned to set up her own agency for fixing musicians. Manfred Fox, a friend of Max's was brought in, but his heart was not in it, and the impetus to move forward was lost, and things dropped away

### **Eight Songs for a Mad King 1969**

'Theatre' was a crucial element from the start. In 1968, Max wrote *Missa Super L'Homme Armé*, a parody Mass for male or female singer or reciter, who should be costumed. The costume would be that of a religious figure, but the opposite of the gender of who would be singing or reciting. It caused a great stir, but that was nothing compared to what happened in April 1969 with the premiere, at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, of [Eight Songs for a Mad King](#). It was a sensation which resounded not only through the entire contemporary music world, but through all the world of classical music itself.

In 1965/6 Max had spent a year teaching composition at the Elder Conservatory in Adelaide in Australia where he met the writer Randolph Stow. In 1969 Max was thinking of the next work he would write for The Pierrot Players when he and Randolph travelled together to meet [Sir Steven Runciman](#), who was an old friend of his. Sir Steven showed them a [mechanical miniature organ](#) which played eight tunes, which once had been the property of George III. There was a scrap of paper which had been sold with the organ which stated 'this organ was George III for birds to sing'. Randolph Stow imagined the torture of King George, dressed in his purple dressing gown, and night-cap, trying to make the birds sing, or trying to sing along with them himself

Randolph Stow's text includes known quotations from the King himself. They are intended sometimes as monologues (as the King listens to the birds singing), and

sometimes as dialogues (when his tortured mind invests the birds with different characters). *Eight Songs* had originally been intended to be performed as the previous works by the Pierrot Players, with the king in costume, standing still. But in a flash of inspiration, Max had decided that it would be an idea to have the birds sitting in cages, and the king interacting with them. A designer was brought in, and the cages constructed following a drawing by Max.

The birds are represented by the flautist, the clarinetist, violinist and cellist; sitting in cages, they also play mechanical birdsong devices, while the percussionist represents the King's keeper (the percussion part is sometimes shared by the keyboard player, who otherwise alternates between piano and harpsichord, acting either as continuo player or musical commentator).

As well as their own instruments, the players have mechanical bird-song devices operated by clockwork, and the percussion player has a collection of bird-call instruments. In No. 6 - the only number where a straight parody, rather than a distortion or a transformation, of Handel occurs - he operates a didgeridoo, the simple hollow tubular instrument of the aboriginals of Arnhem Land in Australia. The keyboard player moves between piano and harpsichord, sometimes acting as continuo, sometimes becoming a second percussion part, and sometimes adding independently developing musical commentary.

Roy Hart, the South African singer and actor, known for his flexibility and the great range of his singing voice, sang the role of the king. He was the ideal choice to create this role.

Despite the shouts of 'rubbish' at the first performance, the success of that premiere was legendary.

### **Vesalii Icones 1969**

Following the unpredicted success of *Eight Songs*, Max began to think of another work which could increase the number of theatrical works for The Pierrot Players to perform.

Max had conceived the idea of writing a set of fourteen dances based on the [illustrations by Vesalius](#), the 16<sup>th</sup> century Belgian anatomist physician, when he (Max) bought a facsimile edition of *De humani corporis fabrica* (1543). The idea of superimposing the Vesalius images on the fourteen Stations of the Cross (which were slightly modified to include the Resurrection), came later.

The Dancer makes a journey around The Stations of the Cross, while the musicians add deeper meaning, with the important cello solo part adds intensity, and the other instruments creating distortions and commentaries. As the journey reaches its end, there is a foxtrot for the dancer as Antichrist.

James Murdoch the manager of The Pierrot Players in 1969, suggested [William Louthier](#), a key member of Martha Graham's New York dance company. Louthier proved an ideal choreographer and performer.

*The Fires of London*

Vesalii Icones was also first performed at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, where the Pierrot Players were now acting as their own presenters, also caused a sensation.

### **Miss Donnithorne's Maggot 1974**

When in 1974 The Pierrot Players were to make a tour of Australia, it was suggested, that, as the centre-piece to the Adelaide festival, Max should write a new theatre work. He turned to Randolph Stow, his collaborator of *Eight Songs*, who was Australian. Stow suggested that Miss Havisham, from Dickens' *Great Expectations* as the model. It seems as though Dickens got his inspiration for this character from Miss Emily Donnithorne who lived and died in Sydney. She was jilted at the last minute, and became a recluse. She never changed from the wedding dress in which she awaited her bridegroom who failed to show up. She never left her house again.

*Miss Donnithorne's Maggot* also has eight songs, like *Eight Songs for a Mad King*. She rants and raves in the remnants of her wedding cake, which is decorated with the instrumentalists. [Mary Thomas](#), resident singer with the Fires of London, sang the title role. At that original production in Adelaide in March 1974, there was an enormous cake, out of which Mary jumped. However, it was evident that subsequent performances could not encompass such extravagances, and a simple, touring version, consisting of one elegant chair, and Mary's wedding dress, was devised instead.

### **Ave Maris Stella – 1975**

The many works that Max had written since the formation of The Fires had all been either music-theatre works, arrangements of 'early' music, settings of poems, or solos or duos for the individual players. By 1975 he felt that he wanted to write a work that would break new ground in many ways. His first intention was to take the chamber music group that was The Fires, and give it the same focus as that of a string quartet. He also gave the marimba, which is a pitched-percussion instrument, equal voice in the musical argument, and not one of a colouristic resource, which is how percussion is usually employed. Max also felt that the presence of a conductor would disturb the flow of the musical thought, and that therefore the work should be unconduted. He wrote the work as a tribute to the musicianship and virtuosity of those players with whom he had collaborated for so long. It was the first large-scale work that Max wrote during the first winter of his recently re-furbished home of Bunnerton, (described by George Mackay Brown as 'incredibly perched on a high ledge above the Atlantic'). *Ave Maris Stella* was quickly established as one of the master-pieces of contemporary chamber music.

### **Arts Council Contemporary Music Network Tour – November 1975**

In July 1975 I had agreed to be the road manager for a tour of the UK in November. I did not realise that I would become the actual manager of The Fires just a few days before the tour start. As the road manager, I had requested all the necessary information from Manfred Fox, the incumbent manager. However, I had not received a single piece of information just twelve days prior to the commencement of the tour. I did not even know which towns would be visited, let alone in which venues or which hotels had been booked.

I visited Manfred, and he handed over twelve files, each with a single sheet of paper. It would seem that paperwork was not uppermost in the running the organisation. The single sheet was a letter, written by Steve, not Manfred, to each of the venues. It was a short list of items which needed to be provided by the venues to be ready and waiting upon our arrival. Or, I should say the arrival of the road manager, who would check and carry on from there. But there was not a single reply to any of these letters. All I could do was to contact the venues themselves to see how they were getting on. The result of each enquiry was the same right across the board – nothing whatsoever had been done about anything. I was immediately encountering the same problem that I would be facing for the following years.

The Fires were a small ensemble of six players, performing in a concert space. As far as the promoters of the concerts were concerned, this would be no different to any other such small ensemble. They had to make sure that a piano was on the platform, and the required number of chairs and music stands, and, give or take, that was all that was necessary. Except that this was precisely NOT what The Fires were. Yes there were six musicians. What about the conductor? What about the singer? And, most particularly, and crucially, what about the music-theatre element? The word ‘theatre’ denotes theatrical lights coming on and going off, so that different atmospheres are created. These are items which concert promoters simply do not come across. And, as I found, unless firm and strong instructions are given, and checked, the promoters are overwhelmed, and do nothing, and hope that ‘it will be alright on the day’.

The line up of the Fires for the tour was:

Peter Maxwell Davies, conductor

[Mary Thomas](#), mezzo-soprano

[Judith Pearce](#), flutes

[Alan Hacker](#), clarinets

[Duncan Druce](#), violin, viola

[Jennifer Ward-Clarke](#), cello

[Stephen Pruslin](#), keyboards

[Gary Kettel](#), percussion

The programme which was to be taken on tour consisted of three non- theatrical works in the first half, with the second half being Max’s *Miss Donnithorne’s Maggot*, which was its first outing in the U.K.

The first concert was to be at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, and the Arts Council tour was to follow directly. The lighting for all the venues was to be provided by Mark Pritchard, who hired the necessary equipment, and loaded it into his van. He would do the tour driving around together with Gary Kettel, who was the Fires’ percussionist. In order that Mark could set up his equipment in each of the venues, it was necessary that the correct amount of voltage and electricity should be assembled. And it was in this department that things went so badly wrong. When I started to make contact with the venues, there was an almost universal blank. They didn’t have the slightest idea what I was talking about. Alas, neither did I. All this was entirely new. Mark was always brilliant at his job, provided he had what he needed upon entering the building. If not, there, a terrible scramble ensued. It was always a question of time. Mark needed sufficient time before the rehearsal in which to set up. But, if things were not

in order on arrival, he would have to spend a great deal of that time in somehow obtaining what was needed. This was my main difficulty.

But there were others difficulties. Aside from the lighting, the only prop was to be a chair, which should not be too simple, nor too padded or comfortable. It was around and upon this chair that Mary Thomas as the crazed Miss Donnithorne was to cavort. The request for this chair had been requested on Steve's list, but not one of the venues had even thought about finding such an item until we arrived. There was not enough time to do this. Even a day in advance would have made all the difference.

As the tour was ongoing, it meant that it was not possible for everyone to return home to London after each concert. They would have to drive on to the next venue, and this meant spending nights in a hotel. Not a single hotel had been booked. I was in a total frenzy attempting to make the bookings for everyone across the period of the twelve concerts.

From everything I have written, it will be evident that none of the preparations necessary for the smooth running of the tour had been done until the moment I received those twelve sheets from Steve. I was going to have to compress what should have taken me probably several months, into a matter of a handful of days. It was in this condition, as road manager for this tour, that I arrived at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1975 as manager of The Fires.

Max had obviously told everyone in the group that I was now to be the manger. They all knew me, and I knew them. But whereas I had previously been on the fringes of their consciousness, here I was, suddenly, right bang in the middle of everything. It was certainly terrifying for me, as I am sure that it was bewildering for them. I had to learn everything suddenly all at once. Mark was in charge of the lighting, but there were finesses as to, for instance, how to lay out the chairs and the desks. With a string quartet, for instance, you have four chairs and four music stands. The musicians come on, and slightly adjust their furniture. But with an ensemble with lay-out requirements which change for each and every piece, not to mention the theatrical element, there are always major moves. I learnt that the flautist, Judith Pearce, needed an extra chair next to her, onto which she put her additional instruments of piccolo and alto flute. I found that Alan Hacker needed a space in which he could put his additional clarinets. The cellist Jennifer Ward Clarke had to have space in which she could put the piece of wood with holes in it on the floor into which she could stick the spike of her cello. Gary Kettel would arrange his own percussion instruments somewhere at the back, whilst the position of Steve's piano was always crucial. Then, when it came to the second half, which was theatrical, the musicians sat to one half of the stage, with their lighted music stands, all set up by Mark, whilst the other half of the stage, with the chair, was where Mary would whirl and twirl around. As they say in one of the many platitudes, I had a very steep learning curve.

Starting on the first of November, 1975 the tour took us to Cambridge, Abbotsford, Keele, Liverpool, Bangor, Aberystwyth, Lancaster, Plymouth, Exeter, Blackburn, Manchester and Huddersfield. Almost all of the venues were connected to universities or organisations of higher education. Apart from the theatre in Cambridge, none of the halls were equipped for lighting, and Mark had trouble with each and every one of them. Mark and Gary travelled in the van. Alan Hacker, who was paraplegic and

wheel-chair bound, drove with one other person. I drove my Peugeot car with Max and Steve. My car was not reliable. I had been having trouble with it for many months, and had taken it in for a good service and mending. We had one day off after the date in Lancaster. . Everyone except me decided they would return to their homes in London, and make their own ways to the next date in Plymouth. As I was driving on the motorway, my car broke down, and both the car and I were carted off. The car was taken to a garage where they told me it would take many days to repair. I had to hire another car on the spot. All of this would have been annoying enough, but a further pressure was added, due to the fact that I had all the music which Max and Steve needed in my car, and if I didn't make it to Plymouth, we would be in big trouble. I did not enjoy any of this one little bit.

Just before the start of the concert in Cambridge, Duncan Druce, who played violin and viola, and who was also a composer, and who indeed had one of his pieces on the programme, came to me to tell me that he did not have his part for Max's piece *Psalms 124*. He had left it at home. As it happened, Max used to conduct this work without a score, so he didn't have one to hand. But Max sat down, there and then, and wrote out the part for Duncan to play. In one fell swoop the pattern of what was to happen in future was shown in a glaring light. One or other of the musicians invariably forgot to bring the part of one of the works to be performed, either to a rehearsal or to a concert.

We somehow got to the end of the tour. I was exhausted. I had learned what I had to do in the hardest possible way. Perhaps it was better this way rather than gradually feeling my way in. Then I repeated to myself, like a mantra, and rather like Scarlet O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind* "I will never allow this kind of lack of preparation again – everything that should be in place will be in place". I was now ready to become the manager, and face the problems.

These troubles were not the only memories forged into my brain. Driving around with Max and Steve was entirely delightful, and I got to know both of them in a way which would never have been possible if we hadn't spent so much time together. I could see that there were factions within the group, but this I had already known from five years previously, when I had accidentally been appended to Harry Birtwistle for just one month. There were huge difficulties with Alan Hacker, who was a complete inspiration in the way that he seemed to completely ignore his disability, and to carry on as normal. In those days the legislation for the disabled concerning accessibility to public places was not what it is today, and many times there was just no way to get Alan in his wheelchair up to the desired level, and he had to be carried up out of his chair. Everyone in the group gave willing hands to help on all these occasions.

I noticed that the audiences passionately loved Miss Donnithorne. It was always an over-the-top success. Mary was always superb in spite of having a terrible cold for three of the performances. She was the ultimate professional, and managed to find ways around her difficulties arising out of the cold. I also notice how poorly the concerts had been advertised. Nobody knew anything. I remember one forlorn composer turning up having travelled from Denmark for the purpose, and spent the entire day asking everyone in that town where on earth the concert by The Fires was to take place, and finding absolutely nobody who could ever give him any information. Clearly The Fires were not a hot ticket. Again, I resolved that in future I

would not only obtain the concerts, but would make sure that they were advertised. What is the good of concerts where nobody turns up? It takes a lot of work, but that is what it is all about. At a later press conference to launch another Arts Council tour, the tours, by many new music groups, were collectively spoken of as “a series of one night flops”. Well, The Fires were not a flop. I had seen that, and I was not prepared to have them thought of as such.

### **Charity Commission - December 1975- May 1976**

After I returned home from the Arts Council Tour, and was eventually able to retrieve my ailing Peugeot (which never even remotely recovered), I turned my mind to the practicalities of what had to be done now that I was the manager. Was this a question of what had to be done or what I thought I had to do? The answer, as is usually the case, was a bit of both. After James Murdoch had departed as manager, Louise Honeyman took over, and was in the position for over three years, during which The Fires had prospered and toured, mainly in Italy, where Max had good connections, and there had been some concerts in Sweden and in Australia, where, as I have mentioned, Miss Donnithorne had her first outing. Louise left after the Australian tour and Manfred took over. I believe that he did not have any management experience but crucially, his mind and heart were not on the job. Things very quickly slipped away from the grasp which Louise had had. It doesn't take long for matters to go downhill. This was the situation into which I found I had landed. I asked Manfred to supply me with the rest of the paperwork connected with The Fires, but this was simply not forthcoming. I phoned constantly to try to get the most important documentation, namely the bank statements and cheque stubs to be able to know what the financial situation was. Then, in addition to the frustration of not being able to get anything from Manfred, another huge blow descended. I received a cheque from the LOCB (the London Orchestral Concerts Board) to pay for the concert which had been at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on 31<sup>st</sup> October. This was to be the very first cheque to be paid into the new account I had opened at my own bank at Lloyds which was to deal with The Fires. The bank manager called me in to see him and told me that he was unable to accept this cheque. He explained that the cheque had been made out to The Fires of London Ltd., but that as the account I had opened was for The Fires of London, and that the company was not a limited company, the cheque could not be banked until the entity, known as The Fires of London, became a limited company. The LOCB only sent cheques to their clients who were Registered Charities, and that the charity was incorporated to become a limited company.

What on earth could this mean? Both Louise and Manfred had presumably been successfully banking incoming cheques which enabled them to pay the fees and run things. Presumably their bank managers had not raised this particular issue. I tried to find out what this was all about, and no information on this or indeed any subject was coming forth from Manfred. Steve told me that to the best of his knowledge The Fires had become a registered charity some while back, but he was not sure. I then turned to Max's publishers, Boosey & Hawkes. [John Andrewes](#), who was in charge of promotion at Boosey & Hawkes, was the person in the firm who was closest to Max. John told me that some years previously he had asked Isador Caplan, who was Benjamin Britten's solicitor, and senior partner at the solicitors firm of Forstye Kerman, if their firm could do some work, pro bono, for The Fires. Benjamin Britten

was Boosey & Hawkes most important living composer at that time, hence the connection. I made enquiries and found that there was a Mr. Williams who was dealing with The Fires., and I arranged to have a meeting with him in the first week of December. After quite a while of general conversation, during which I understood that this had been an on-going matter for four years, but which was, it seemed, as yet, unresolved. I thought that I should get down to the nub of the matter.

- Has there been any correspondence with the Charities Commission?
- Yes
- How long has this correspondence been going on?
- For four years.
- Are the Fires a registered charity?
- We are within an inch of success
  - An inch is as good as a mile – is the answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’?
  - No.

There we had it. Four years and nothing whatsoever to show for it. The frustration I was experiencing on all sides in this matter now erupted into fury. This was a delay too far. I could barely contain my anger as I realised that the matter had been allowed to linger for this huge amount of time, and that nothing had been done, and that somehow or other everyone, including the LOCB, had assumed that The Fires had somehow become a Registered Charity somewhere along the way. But it was not so. Mr. Williams assured me that the matter would henceforth be expedited.

My meeting with Mr. Williams took place in the first week of December 1975. For the next two months I bombarded Mr. Williams with phone calls and letters, and not once did he respond. The unbanked cheque meant that I was not in a position to pay the musicians for that Queen Elizabeth Hall concert at the end of October. At the same time, Manfred Fox was not sending me any bank statements or stubs which I was constantly requesting. In a word, this new job was proving perfectly horrible.

Finally in early February, my patience was exhausted. I had not heard a single word from Mr. Williams since our meeting. Clearly, he was avoiding me, and was not going to reply. I decided to take matters further. I wrote a letter to Isador Caplan, as the senior partner at Forstye Kerman, and explained the story as I had understood it to be. The result was instantaneous. The morning after I posted my letter, I received a phone call from Peter Parker, another solicitor at Forstye Kerman, informing me that as of that moment he was now in charge of my case. He had the file in front of him, and he was proceeding forthwith with the Charities Commission. At last, at long last, for me a matter of a couple of months, but for The Fires a story going back for four years, something was going to happen. I realised that things would not be resolved overnight, and that it would take some time, but at least things would move. In March, Manfred Fox finally submitted the bank statements and cheque stubs. This revealed that The Fires had made nothing but losses. I asked him how he thought he was going to repay those losses, and received a muffled non-descript answer. Far from the expenses of The Fires being paid for from the “kitty”, - no such kitty had ever really existed. In fact, everything was all a big, worrying mess. This was a mess which I was somehow going to have to sort out.

During the months after that February explosion Mr. Parker left Forstye Kerman to start up on his own, but I let him continue with the case, as he was dealing with it and it seemed that progress was being made, and I did not want to change things at this point. Then, finally, after what seemed an eternity, but which in fact was only three months, the great news came through that the Charity Commission had granted The Fires charity status, which enabled them to receive cheques from government bodies, such as the LOCB. It also meant that The Fires were a Limited Company. Finally, I was able to pay in that wretched cheque into the new account at Lloyds. . It was a red letter day.

Under the law of the Charity Commission, The Fires had to have a Council of Management, which had to have an Annual General meeting once a year, and two other meetings during the year. John Andrewes was to be the chairman of the Council of Management, and other members would include Robin Howard, who was the founder and director of The London Contemporary Dance Company at The Place in Euston, and Jasper Rootham, who was appointed treasurer, and who had been deputy Governor of the Bank of England. Both of them were brought in by John Andrewes. The Council appointed Max as the Artistic Director of The Fire, s and me as the secretary and manager of The Fires. Michael, my husband, was appointed business advisor. Max was mightily pleased by the outcome, as things had always been shaky and nobody really ever knew who was responsible. Now there was a proper structure, and Max's place within that structure was clearly defined.

### **Max's disappearance – January 1976**

In January 1976 there was to be my first concert after the Arts Council tour, and again this was to be at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. The rehearsals were to take place at the usual venue, which was the Craxton Studios in Kiddepore Avenue in Hampstead. This was an ideal location. The studio itself, which had a gallery above it, was large and airy. There was another room which could be used for anything, but which, in our case, was used for where the break was held – lovely tea and coffee and biscuits served on a long table, around which we all sat and gossiped and laughed. There was always a lot of laughter going on at Fires rehearsals, most of it initiated by Steve, who was a great wit, and who was able to conjure up stunning one-liners in almost any situation. As *Ave Maris Stella* was to be on the programme, and the other work was *From Stone to Thorn* which likewise was never conducted, Max did not attend the rehearsals. But we did hold Friends of the Fires party at Craxtons at the same time as the rehearsals.

Steve phoned me up in a complete panic. It seemed that Max had left and gone to his home in Orkney, telling Steve that he could not face the up-coming concert, or anything that would happen thereafter, and that he would now stay permanently in Orkney and devote himself entirely to composing, To say that this was a blow and a shock would be worthy of an English under-statement. All the plans that I had been putting into place came crashing down on my head. There was absolutely no way to contact Max. He lived on the remote island of Hoy in the Orkney Islands (off the north-east coast of Scotland). He did not have a telephone. Steve and I talked and talked and we came, resolutely, to the conclusion, that the only way out of this was

for both of us to go and present ourselves personally to Max, and to talk through the whole situation.

We first had to concoct a new programme for the concert at the Queen Elizabeth hall. It would have to be one in which there was no need for a conductor, as it was in his capacity as conductor that Max had chosen not to appear. Steve was excellent at programming, and between already existing works for the players, and other contemporary works, something was cobbled together. Worse was trying to put a face on Max's non-appearance, and a cocktail of various lies were presented to all the anxious enquiries as to Max's health. We somehow struggled through, and then we immediately set off to Orkney.

The journey was straight forward. The four o'clock train from Kings Cross arrived in Edinburgh at 10 pm. Then there was the overnight train from Edinburgh to Inverness. The morning train from Inverness to Scrabster on the North coast of Scotland was the milk train – very slow and stopping every mile or so. A bus from Scrabster took us down the road to the port at Thurso, in time to catch the large roll-on roll-off ferry, which took two hours into Stromness on the mainland of Orkney. The total journey was almost exactly twenty-four hours. Steve explained to me that we would both be staying with Max's friends in Stromness – Archie and [Elizabeth Bevan](#). I was very concerned that our hosts had absolutely no idea that they were about to receive to uninvited guests. Steve assured me that we didn't have to worry.

When we stepped off the ferry at 4pm in Stromness in mid-January, it was already dark. There were many things I had to learn about Orkney, and one of them was that in the winter it gets dark very early indeed, but that, on the other hand, in mid-summer it barely ever gets dark at all. We walked along the main street, and I felt as if I had entered a completely new world. I knew that we were still in the United Kingdom, but you could have fooled me. It was a strange place, unlike anything I had ever seen before, and, over the next days, this strangeness increased. We arrived at the Bevan's house. Steve walked up to the front door and opened it and let himself in. He didn't even knock to announce his presence. That was how things were in Orkney. Front doors were open, and everyone was free to enter. I did wonder about burglars, but I was assured that no such creatures existed. Archie Bevan was the deputy head of the secondary school in Stromness and his subject was English. He and Elizabeth had lived in Orkney all their lives. It was a momentous meeting for me. Steve hastily explained how we came to be here. The Bevan's house was where Max stayed on his journeys backwards and forwards from Hoy, and also to purchase his weekly groceries. Max had to come to Stromness in order to catch the ferry which would take him to Scotland, and then down to wherever he had to go – for the most part always to London. Archie and Elizabeth listened to our tale of woe concerning Max, and they were naturally worried and upset.

The following morning, Steve and I made our way to the harbour again where this time we caught another much smaller boat. The pilot of this vessel was called Stevie, and indeed Max had written a little piano piece for Archie and Elizabeth's young daughter Ann called *Stevie's Ferry to Hoy*. This ferry took us past the island of Graemssay and into Hoy. At the Hoy landing we were met by Jack Rendall, who had been phoned by Archie to alert him of our arrival. Jack lived in the same valley as Max, and he had a car. Jack had been born in the valley of Rackwick, some five

miles from where we landed on Hoy. He was a bachelor and there had been some newspaper articles about him as being ‘the loneliest man in the UK’. All the other inhabitants of Rackwick had long since left and he was alone. And then, some four years ago, Max had also come to live in [Rackwick](#), Jack used to drive any visitors who Max had to and fro from the ferry to Rackwick. Steve knew Jack, as he had been to Rackwick a few times previously. The drive was glorious and then we came to a full stop, which was where Jack lived, at the head of the valley.

As there was no more roads, we would have to make the rest of the journey on foot. We had our luggage with us, as we were expecting to spend the night at Max’s croft. We set off. Steve assured me he knew the way. He did not. We walked and walked, and then [we found ourselves at the bottom of a huge cliff](#). I knew that Max’s croft was at the top of a cliff, not the bottom. There was nothing for it. We had to climb up – with our luggage. This was by no means the most comfortable expedition I have undertaken in my life. It was coupled with the worry about what Max might do or say when we finally did reach our goal. We scrambled up the enormous cliff and finally made it to a flat part which was indeed, Max’s garden. Max was astonished to see us, especially having regard for the extraordinary way in which we had both made our appearance.

Max was very welcoming. It was my job to do the explaining. I was the new-comer onto the scene. Max had fled owing to unbearable pressure of composition. He was in the throes of attempting an entirely new area of composition – a symphony. And it was to be a very large work. His acute distress was the birth pangs of the composition, but this latest infant was having trouble in being born. And so he had fled from all his responsibilities connected with The Fires.

Max took us down to the beach and we walked along and I talked to him for a very long time and tried to map out what the future months would bring which, frankly, as far as The Fires were concerned, was very little indeed. The situation on that beach was magical. Gradually Max relaxed, and little by little, the wholly negative approach turned to neutral and then, slowly, into a positive nod.

We went up to the croft, which was called Bunnertoon, and Max agreed that he would continue, and that I could continue my work to manage The Fires. The adventure had resulted in an excellent outcome. I had seen Max’s background in Orkney, and how he lived, which was essential. Steve and I stayed the night, and the following morning Max walked with us to Jack’s house and then Jack drove us to the ferry and we landed again in [Stromness](#) – mission completed.

We stayed the night again with the Bevans, and this time there were some friends of the Bevans there. There was a couple called [Tam McPhail](#) and [Gunnie Moberg](#) who had only recently arrived to live in Stromness. Tam was an American and Gunnie, who used her maiden name Moberg, was an artist and photographer. Also there was the Bevans’ closest friend, the Orcadian poet and writer [George Mackay Brown](#). Thus, within the space of 24 hours or so, I had been to Max’s home, and had met all the people who were closest to him. The following day, we went to the harbour again to catch the ferry. We had succeeded. Max was not going to withdraw from The Fires, and I would be able to continue what I had started merely a couple of months previously.

## **Television relay of *Eight Songs for a Mad King* - 1976**

On July 26 1976, Max's music-theatre work *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, performed by Max and The Fires was to be seen on BBC television as part of a Promenade Concert at the Round House. As I was the stage manager as well as the manager of The Fires, I was always responsible for setting the platform for each work to be performed. In contemporary music this is always very complicated, but even more so when the work concerned is in some way theatrical. And *Eight Songs* was decidedly theatrical.

The violinist, cellist, flautist and clarinettist of The Fires each sat in a cage which was made up of strips of plastic, held together at top and bottom by two-semicircles each forming a circle. The pianist of the group sat at his piano, and the percussionist was at the back of the grouping. The protagonist, the King, or, as Max always put it, the person who thought he might be King, who on this occasion was the Canadian bass/baritone Donald Bell, was dressed in kingly garb with his wig askew. As well as the filming of *Eight Songs*, the whole concert was being broadcast live on BBC radio, as was always the case with all Promenade Concerts.

My great worry was how I was going to be able to arrange the platform with the cages in the twenty minutes from the end of the first half to the commencement of the second half. I was not doing the work myself. I did have helpers, but I was giving all the instructions, and at that early period of my time as manager of The Fires, this was to be my first outing with this work, and I had absolutely no experience in how to put everything together. Barrie Gavin was the director for this television programme and during the rehearsal in the morning, the change over from the first half to the second half took eighty minutes. Barrie was endeavouring to set his cameras in the suitable positions to make the shots, but as everything was taking so long, there was a great deal of shouting and a lot of angry words were passing around. It was clearly going to be a nightmare when it came to the performance. It was at times like these that I always wondered how I had wandered into these kinds of situations. Luckily, however, the expected catastrophe did not take place. My helpers were obviously very quick learners and they had mastered the putting together of the cages, and came the moment, everything was up and ready in eighteen minutes. I nearly cried with relief.

## **North American Tour – October-November 1976**

However, there were yet more clouds on the horizon. At the famous meeting at Max's flat opposite Kings Cross station, when he had asked me to be the manager of The Fires, I had been told that there wouldn't be any problem about dates, as they just rolled in as a matter of course. But the facts were that nothing could be further from the truth. When I eventually managed to obtain the sparse paper-work from Manfred Fox, it turned out that as far as dates were concerned, the cupboard was all-but bare, and that there were hardly any concrete dates in the diary. By concrete, I mean a date for which there was a signed contract. Indeed, an article had recently been written in *The Times*, extolling the great virtues of The Fires, and what a marvellous

institution it was, and how it must not be allowed to disappear, and that 'something must be done'. What that something was to be was not stated. What could be done?

I went to see Annette Morreau who worked at the Arts Council and who had initiated and was in charge of the Contemporary Music Network tours, of which the one we had undertaken in November 1975 was one. She told me that the Arts Council would not give money for administration to be able to keep The Fires going. The groups which they, The Arts Council supported had, somehow, to survive themselves. The Arts Council might give money for specific projects, such as those tours, or other projects for which funding could be applied, but they would not underwrite the administration costs of any of their clients. So, as there was no money in the kitty, what was supposed to happen? As far as the Fires were concerned, not only was there no money in the kitty, there were debts which had to be paid. Steve generously said that he would pay for the debts, and as far as the administration was concerned, Michael and I would pay for the running costs. Tony Fell, the managing director of Max's publishers, Boosey & Hawkes, gave £500 as a donation. This was the situation into which, once again, I found that I had landed.

There were only three firm dates in the diary for 1976 one in Edinburgh in February, one in Guildford in March under the auspices of Surrey University and one very big date at the Promenade Concerts in London with *Eight Songs* at the Round House, which was a venue which the BBC used in those days for the smaller scale concerts, and most particularly for contemporary music. Otherwise there was a vague pencilling for a possible tour of the United States and Canada in October and November.. And otherwise the cupboard was bare.

It seemed to me that the essential matter was to try to firm up the US tour. The agency in the US which was to deal with the tour was called Sheldon Soffer Management and I arranged to meet Sheldon himself as he was visiting London. He told me that he had told Manfred that he would take on The Fires for a tour and had given him the financial conditions. This was an excessively tight budget for a period of four weeks, with five concerts in each of those weeks. This would be a colossal amount of work and performing for The Fires, and a tiny amount of financial reward for that great amount of work. But, as the diary was more or less empty, at that stage it was better to go along with the financial stringency, than to have no work at all.

One positive factor was that the year was 1976 and this was the bi-centenary of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, and a great fuss was being made on both sides of the Atlantic. The Fires would get support from the British Council which, at that time, did not operate at all in the United States, as they concentrated most of their efforts in Eastern Europe, and to a certain extent in Latin America and some places in Africa. The British Council would cover the trans-Atlantic fares. Once we landed in the States, all expenses would have to be met by the money which would be given to us by Sheldon Soffer.

Crucially, whilst there was money to pay for the six musicians, for Mary and for Max and for me as the manager, but there was no money at all for anyone to do the lighting or for a road manager. Thus, it quickly became evident that I was going to have to take on both these roles. I saw the horizon opening out for me as having three jobs all at the same time. I was beginning to find my way as a manager. I had experience

during that first Arts Council as road manager. But I had absolutely no experience whatsoever in coping with the lighting. I didn't have a clue. It was all a yet more daunting and terrifying prospect. Either we accepted Sheldon's offer with all its drawbacks, or we declined, and where would that get us nowhere as far as The Fires as a group was concerned, or as far as promoting Max's music was concerned. My hands were tied behind my back. There was nothing for it but to accept Sheldon's offer. Once again, I determined that in future we would hope to be in a stronger position for bargaining at an earlier stage, so this kind of noose would not be put around our necks again. But once we concluded the deal with Sheldon Soffer, I found working with him and his excellent team was a very pleasant experience. I spent the whole of 1976 putting the tour together. I now knew what had to be done, having had to learn to swim in deep water on the Arts Council tour.

Now some difficulties connected with the players reared their heads. The first of these occurred at the concert at Guildford which was being recorded for later transmission by the BBC. At that period during the 1960s and 1970s, drinking was a known problem amongst brass and percussion players. We only had one percussion player and that was Gary Kettel. Gary certainly drank a great deal, but he was always all right for the show. However, on this particular occasion he was not, and there were a couple of slips and inaccuracies during the performances which certainly were audible. Max was furious, and told Gary, right there and then that it might be better if he no longer played in The Fires. It is more than probable that Gary might have wanted to withdraw himself, and this was a suitable peg onto which the separation could be hung.

There were no hard feelings. Gary was most amenable and helpful in finding a suitable replacement. This was going to be difficult in a group as small and as intimate as The Fires. We needed the long-term person, but we also needed someone who would take on the US tour. The biggest stumbling block to finding the right person was *Ave Maris Stella*. This was the ultimate chamber music work which had become the Fires' calling card, but it was unperformed. Moreover Max had written this work with Gary's special skills on the marimba in mind, and there were not so many percussionists around who had that kind of expertise on the marimba. Gary asked his colleague Terence Emery at the BBC Symphony Orchestra if he would consider joining The Fires. Terry said that he could not do this, but that he would be prepared to play on the US Tour. This was an enormous relief, because at least it would give us time, and then, when the tour was over, we could address the subject of a replacement for Gary without further undue stress.

My next trouble was my endless worry about Alan Hacker. I used to have nightmares about what might happen to him on such a tour. It was going to be a fitness test of the highest order for even the able bodied musicians. But how on earth was Alan going to be able to cope with such a strenuous and relentless tour? From the moment we had agreed to Sheldon Soffer's ludicrous terms, I started my campaign in trying to see if Alan would accept not to come on that tour. It would not be unprecedented. He had not been on the tour to Australia, when Tony Pay, who worked in the London Sinfonietta and the Nash Ensemble, had taken his place. I started my phone calls. Each and every time Alan refused point blank. It was out of the question that The Fires would tour the US without him. As he would frequently say - "after all, I am the

fittest paraplegic clarinetist in the business". Indeed this was certainly true, as I wryly smiled to myself.

I must say that this was something which haunted me night and day. This horrible situation lasted for several months. In July, at the time we were rehearsing for the Prom, I called for a special meeting with the group. It was always difficult to find times to do anything other than actually rehearse, and it was hard enough to find times to rehearse when everyone was free together at the same time. It was now only three months before the tour was due to start. At the meeting, several members supported Alan's point of view that he should be on the tour. They suggested that money should be found for a carer, as it were, to assist him for all his special needs on the tour. Clearly there was no money for this. Max firmly stated that he was going to go ahead with the tour as it stood, no matter what. He said that he was terribly worried about Alan and that he hoped that Alan would see reason and would decide not to go on the tour. The meeting was concluded with things still hanging in the air.

Two days after the meeting, Alan informed me that he was resigning from the Fires forthwith, and that he was taking up a new job teaching at York University commencing in October. I felt utterly woebegone and more than extremely annoyed. Here I had been pleading for months and months, when all the while Alan had been negotiating another life for himself, one which would, in all honesty, be far more suitable for his condition than the one of a free-lance musician.

So whilst the worry about Alan's health on the tour was removed, I had less than three months to find a replacement. *Ave Maris* was still going to be a problem, but a much lesser one, as the clarinet was a more straight forward instrument in this context. But I still needed to find a brilliant clarinetist who would just happen to be entirely free for the weeks of the tour plus the rehearsal period. Alan did not help in finding his replacement. Tony Pay warmly recommended David Campbell, a young player who had only recently left the Royal College of Music, and had done quite a bit of work with the BBC Northern Orchestra, as it was called in those days. There was no possibility of David playing with the rest of the players to see if they would like him,, and so I arranged for David to play to Max at the Dartington Summer School where he was teaching at the time. Max didn't mind in the slightest that David's style of playing was totally different from Alan's, which was most distinctive. Max was not looking for a carbon copy of Alan, which would, in any case, have been impossible to achieve. David passed the test with Max, and so, thankfully, I now had the two replacements for Gary and for Alan with Terry and with David. The other members of the group stated emphatically that they reluctantly agreed to David as a temporary replacement to Alan for the purposes of the tour only, but under no circumstances was he to be considered as being a long-term member of the group. I found this attitude towards David most unwelcoming and unfriendly.

Meanwhile the arrangements for the thousands of details for the tour were going ahead. Everything had to go through Sheldon Soffer and his staff, as they were the people who were in touch with the promoters. My relations with the Sheldon Soffer team were most cordial.

My awful experiences on the Arts Council tour had taught me that whatever was needed at each venue in the way of instruments or props or lighting, had to be known

about and worked on well in advance, and that everything should be ready and waiting for the moment that we would arrive, and could start to ‘get-in’ and to put everything together ready for the rehearsals. The works which were to be performed on the tour were:

Miss Donnithorne’s Maggot - Peter Maxwell Davies  
Ave Maris Stella – Peter Maxwell Davies  
Antichrist - Peter Maxwell Davies  
Missa Super L’Homme Armé – Peter Maxwell Davies  
Bach: Two Preludes and Fugues – Peter Maxwell Davies  
Purcell: Fantasy & Two Pavans – Peter Maxwell Davies  
Pierrot Lunaire – Arnold Schonberg  
There were also works by two young British composers -  
Bruce Cole and Dominic Muldowney

The group on tour was:

Peter Maxwell Davies, conductor  
Duncan Druce, Violin, viola  
Jennifer Warde Clark, cello  
Judith Pearce, flutes  
David Campbell, clarinets  
Terry Emery, percussion  
Stephen Pruslin, keyboards  
Mary Thomas, soprano and reciter  
Judy Arnold, manager, road manager, lighting

The repertoire which Max had written in the early years of The Fires made huge requirements of instruments above and beyond those which the musicians carried themselves. The Bach and the Purcell works needed a harpsichord. *L’Homme Armé* needed a barrage of instruments – a harpsichord, a harmonium or chamber organ, a celeste, and an out-of tune piano, as well as numerous additional percussion instruments. *Ave Maris Stella* needed a four octave marimba, whereas most marimbas are of a smaller kind. As far as *L’Homme Armé* was concerned, any one of these four keyboards would have been enough to tax the ingenuity of the promoter, but all four together was going to be an enormous challenge. Almost all of the venues at which we were to perform were at universities, and, as Terry explained to me, all these were exceedingly well endowed with large percussion departments, so there should be no difficulty as far as the marimba was concerned. But the keyboard instruments were of a different kind of difficulty, because these kinds of things were not on any kind of list of requirements which any promoter would have previously seen, and they might well not know, in the commercial world, where to obtain them.

Meanwhile there was the pressing question as to how I was to learn the basic elements of stage lighting for Miss *Donnithorne* and for *Pierrot Lunaire*. *L’Homme Armé* was also a sort of theatrical work, which, Mary Thomas certainly recited in costume, but no special lighting effects were needed. Bruce Cole, whose work we were to perform on the tour, came to my rescue. As well as being a composer, he was also totally au fait with stage lighting and had done quite a bit of it himself in a professional way.

He lived round the corner to where I lived in Highgate, and he used to come over in the unprecedented heat of that 1976 summer, and give me lessons. It was all perfectly horrible. Before I could even learn what I had to do, I had to familiarise myself with an entirely new technical language. How on earth would I ever cope with such things, and how would I be able to deal with the hardened stage people and the unions that I would encounter,? Oh dear! And what, I asked myself, had this to do with my being a manager? Well, I suppose a manager has to manage, in whatever circumstances they find themselves.

The dealings with the Soffer team were not a problem. Everything was done by what these days are called snail mail. Phoning was expensive, as were telegrams. There was nothing remotely like faxes, let alone emails. It was also ponderously slow, as the post between the UK and the USA was surprisingly inefficient. Every question either way had to be referred on to each promoter, who would invariably respond with a different set of questions. I had sent detailed specifications as to the requirements for each of the venues, which might not always be clearly understood.

The first concert was to be at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire on the East Coast. After criss-crossing the US and Canada both up and down and east to west and back east again, the final concert was to be at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) in Cambridge, which was in Boston, also on the East Coast. I arranged these transatlantic booking through American Express Travel Service in the Haymarket. The money for this, coming through the British Council, was flagged up as Great Britain's Manifestations of the Arts as a Tribute to the United States of America, and the person representing the British Council on this project was Tom Petzal, who alerted me to how difficult the unions were going to be.

Once we arrived in the States, it was the Sheldon Soffer team, in the shape of Mary Lou Tuffin and Bill Hendrickson who took over all the arrangements. They booked the flights, they booked the hotels, they booked the coaches to pick us up from the airport, and to drive us to the venues and/or the hotels, and then the coaches to take us onwards to whatever parties there might be after the concerts and then back to the hotels. Then, the following morning – always very early (which is what I had worried about with Alan, as he always had to get up at least two hours earlier than everyone else) - the coach would collect us from the hotel to take us and all our luggage, including our portable instruments, to the airport in time to catch the earliest plane to wherever it was we were going. Mary Lou and Bill had to make sure that the venues had all that long list of instruments ready on the stage awaiting our arrival. It wasn't enough to say that they had been booked. They had to be there. For the two music-theatre works which needed lighting, the necessary lights and over-head hangings had to be there. No two concerts were alike. Each one was a case of Pick-and-Mix according to the preference of each of the promoters. I was always agitating to have things firmed up, but, as Bill would frequently point out, the concerts at the end of the tour were quite a way away, and we had to concentrate on the ones nearest at hand.

Sheldon had done us proud as far as the quality of the promoters and halls were concerned.

The concerts were

*The Fires of London*

Dartmouth College, New Hampshire  
Brooklyn Academy of Music – New York  
Wesleyan College - Connecticut  
Wabash College – Indiana  
Brooklyn Academy of Music – New York  
North Western University, Evanston – Illinois  
Colorado College – Colorado Springs - Colorado  
University of California at Los Angeles – California  
Vancouver East Cultural Centre – Vancouver – Canada  
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation – Studio recording  
University of California at Santa Barbara – California  
University of California at Berkeley – California  
University of Utah – Salt Lake City – Utah  
University of Texas – Austin – Texas  
University of Tulsa – Tulsa – Oklahoma  
Kohler - company town - Wisconsin  
York University – Toronto - Canada  
Dalhousie University, Halifax – Nova Scotia – Canada  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts

The first concerts were all centred on New York and we stayed at the Empire Hotel, round the corner from Carnegie Hall, and made journeys to BAM (Brooklyn Academy of Music). Steve stayed with his parents. In the middle of this run, we did an air trip to Indiana and then came back to New York. This seemed crazy to me, as indeed it was, but I realised that if the dates did not fit, one had to work around it. It was during this time I was able to go into Sheldon Soffer's office to do all the fine tuning. I was certainly happier with this personal contact that we established.

At each venue there were the unions. Some were stronger than others. In principle, as the coach would draw up to the artists' entrance, the local stage hands were on hand to remove the instruments from the coach. Then another set of hands would carry those instruments into the building and place them on the stage. The instruments which we had ordered in advance were, for the most part, ready and waiting. I had suffered so badly on the Arts Council Tour due to the lack of preparation, that I was definitely verging on the hysterical to make sure that we were not caught in an impossible situation of having to frantically search around for what might be missing. Both Terry and Steve would both work on placing their instruments as required for each piece, whilst I would set about my job as being in charge of the lighting and talking to the local lighting team.

The halls in which we performed were a totally different kettle of fish to the ones on the Arts Council tour. It wasn't necessary for any additional lighting to be brought in. Everything that was required was there. Yes, you could say that these halls had enormously much better facilities. But I was very nervous. Again, different people, I would suppose from different unions, were assigned to different jobs. Some of them would hang the lights as I told them, while others would position them to be pointing where I told them, and yet others would sit by me during the rehearsals and the performances to push the appropriate buttons as I directed them when the cues came up. The numbers of people I would have to be dealing with varied enormously. Sometimes it was just one person, and sometimes it could be as many as a dozen.

Invariably, the more people there were to do the job, the slower it went. The one-man team would shin up and down his ladder, rush here and there, and everything was done in a flash, whereas the twelve-man team would shout instructions to each other, and things went less smoothly. Moreover, I was severely handicapped by the fact that although Bruce Cole had taught me the basic language and words to describe each object and each function, these words these were different in England than in United States. If I said something which was not understood, I had no way to explain what it was that was needed, if I did not have the correct terminology. But somehow we managed. The twenty-one poems of *Pierrot* were performed with the lighting in the three colours of white, red and blue. *Miss Donnithorne* was much more complicated with a lot of lighting cues, which had to be done exactly at the right moment in the piece. You could say that I was a great expert in this very small area by the end of the tour, although when I took the job on, this kind of activity was not on the horizon.

With the exception of the hotel in New York, where one could not expect to get good value for money, the hotels were roomy and comfortable,. Not that I spent much time in any of them But for me, the best thing about the tour was the audiences. These were large numbers of people in the large halls, and all of them enthusiastic. This is what the tour was about. The promoters had done their proper publicity and it showed. The Fires were able to be shown off in a brilliant way. Touring by contemporary music ensembles was extremely rare if not unheard of. No equivalent American ensembles ever managed to give any concerts outside of their own local area, whereas here we were covering the whole continent.

I was in a constant state of anxiety, worrying about whether the coach would turn up at five in the morning to take us to the airport, and then whether the coach that met us would be able to find their way around the university campus to the precise door at which we had to alight. This was always difficult as these drivers really did not know their way, and the campuses were always large and bewildering. Then came the tussles with the lighting men, and hoping that the instruments would be on stage, and that Steve would be around to fix everything, and to tell the piano tuner how to de-tune the piano so as to make it out of tune. In the end I knew what I had to say for this, but I always left the poor tuner scratching his head wondering why on earth he had to DETUNE a piano when he was always employed to TUNE one.

The worst incident was when a burglar broke into Terry Emery's room in Evanston and stole his wallet with everything in it, and we had to have a lot of police action following this. We all somehow got through it, although it was enormously taxing and tiring. The run of five concerts in a row, ending up in Vancouver, Canada, looked as if it would just be too much, but Vancouver turned out to be the best concert of the tour. It was the audience that made it so. They had been looking forward to the concert of The Fires as if it were a visitation from heaven, and as the group walked onto the stage, there was a roar of approval and you could see their spirits visibly lift and they gave of their best.

At the very last concert at MIT, Mary was to recite *Pierrot*. Max and the musicians came onto the stage at one side, and Mary was to enter a couple of minutes later. However, she just did not appear. Time passed and something was obviously wrong. I dashed out from where I was stationed for the lighting and tried to find my way back-stage. I rushed around looking for Mary, and eventually found her, all in her *Pierrot*

costume, but she was hopelessly lost. I was somehow able to guide her to where she had to get on to the stage. This had all been a considerable delay, and naturally everyone was nervous. Mary started, but she could hardly contain herself from continuously giggling, which naturally affected everyone else. I suppose this was the relief at having finally reached the last concert and we had all survived.

But the old order was breaking up. Towards the end of the tour, one by one, three of the group gave me their resignations. Judith Pearce was leaving because her bassoonist husband was moving to play with an orchestra in Switzerland and she wanted to be able to spend more time with him there. Jenny Ward Clarke was leaving because she had a young daughter, and she vowed she would never go on a long tour like this again. And Duncan Druce said he was going to take up a teaching post in Yorkshire. Again, frankly, I think that whatever the reasons that were given were, the real reason for this wholesale exit was due to the confrontation over Alan Hacker, and they had not liked the fact that Max has put his foot down. Also, they may well not have liked me. Be that as it may, I arrived back in England with only Steve as the remaining member of the Fires and with David Campbell having done the tour and knowing the repertoire

So what now? This was a crisis and emergency. The Fires of London as it had been for all those years no longer existed. I had to set about finding a new group. [David Campbell](#) had passed his test on the tour with flying colours, and we needed to look no further. Judith Pearce strongly recommended Sebastian Bell, who was the flute player in the London Sinfonietta, and Max knew his playing and that went ahead swiftly. Max and I had attended a student concert, at which the leader of the orchestra had been Beverley Davison, and I asked her to come for an audition and Max was delighted with her. I asked around about a cellist and invited a couple of people to an audition but the dates of what we had in the book did not fit, and we arrived at Lesley Shrigley Jones, who had not long finished at the Royal Northern College in Manchester. As far as the percussion was concerned, again I asked for several people to come to an audition, at Craxton's as usual. Gary Kettel was on hand to help with this audition, and the unanimous verdict was that it should be Gregory Knowles, also from the Royal Northern College. Gary was most enthusiastic, and made his recommendation in a typically Gary-like way, saying that Greg was "the best percussionist he had heard since me"! All this was done quickly in January 1977.

### **Latin American Tour – March and April 1977**

Another huge tour was looming. The British Council had called me into see them, and they told me that they wanted to tour The Fires. I didn't know what this might mean, and it was most exciting. But I had to report that the old group no longer existed, but that we were in the throes of forming a new one. They told me that they did not mind who the personnel would be, so long as Max was there and the musicians were chosen and approved of by Max. This was comforting. The tour was to be in just a few months – in April and May 1977 and it was to be to Latin America.

This tour of Latin America was to be a very different affair to the one for the United States. The first and most important difference was that it was a tour sponsored by The British Council, which would be the one central organisation through which

everything would flow. We were given all the financial conditions from the start, and there was no question of any kind of negotiations. Everything would be paid for by the British Council. This consisted of

- All travel – air fares and internal coach trips. We had a baggage allowance.
- All hotels – bed and breakfast. All extras to be paid for individually
- All fees, which were very good
- Per diem allowance for each of the days.

I was told that a member of the British Council staff would be travelling with the group, and it would be he with whom I would be making all the preliminary arrangements, and he would be liaising with each of the individual British Council people in each of the countries. It was thus that Brian Eastman entered my life. And what a bonus that was. Here, for the first time, was someone who was with me in ‘management’ with whom I could discuss everything, and try to solve all the problems. There would not be any allowance for a road manager or a lighting technician, and so once again, it was going to be me who was doing those jobs. But at least I now had some kind of experience to be able to contemplate this new adventure in a more confident way than the North American trip.

The preparations for this tour were totally different to the previous one. Brian had taken several groups on tours, and he was well aware of what was needed. As always with *The Fires*, we seemed to stand outside the usual run of ensembles. Because of the music-theatre element, the venues in which we would be performing were going to be theatres rather than concert halls. . This would mean that, in theory, the lighting problems would be considerably less, because everywhere would be suitably equipped, and nothing would have to be brought in. On the other hand, the vast resources of percussion instruments, which had been available to us in the North American universities, would not be on hand. Consequently, the repertoire which we would take with us was altered to fit this situation. But, we could not drop *Ave Maris Stella*, as this work, rightly, was our calling card, and this meant we had to take the marimba, which had been donated to *The Fires* by Marie Currie, a friend of Max’s with us.

So began my first discussions with Greg as to how we would achieve this. Greg told me not to worry and he would take care of it. He would arrange for a flight-case to be made for the marimba, and all would be fine. Greg was very young, and inexperienced. He was hardly out of college, and really had virtually no knowledge of what would, or would not be possible. Five days prior to our departure on 19 April, I arranged for the whole group, with Brian Eastman, , to get together, and to bring their instruments and luggage, so that we could meet and check that all was in order. It was not. Greg arrived with the flight-case for the marimba. It was gigantic. It was enormous. It was impossible. Greg had mistakenly thought that he would fit the marimba, as it stood, all in one piece, into one container. Percussionists are used to wheeling their marimbas off stage and into a waiting van, and then off the van at the other end and onto the next stage. But this journey was not going to be like that. This new case would have to be trashed, and three smaller ones made in its stead. There were only five days left. Greg got it done in those days..

The group on tour was:

Peter Maxwell Davies - conductor  
Beverly Davison – violin, viola  
Leslie Shrigley Jones, cello  
[Sebastian Bell, flutes](#)  
David Campbell, clarinets  
Stephen Pruslin, keyboards  
Gregory Knowles. Percussion  
Mary Thomas, soprano  
Judy Arnold, manager, road manager, lighting  
Brian Eastman, British Council

The repertoire for the Latin American Tour was:

Antechrist – Peter Maxwell Davies  
Ave Maris Stella – Peter Maxwell Davies  
Bach: 2 Preludes and Fugues – Peter Maxwell Davies  
Miss Donnithorne's Maggot – Peter Maxwell Davies  
Kammersymphonie – Arnold Schoenberg  
Pierrot Lunaire– Arnold Schoenberg

This meant that the repertoire was more compact, and that we didn't have *Missa Super L'Homme Armé* which had caused so many problems with both keyboard and percussion instruments in North America. The only instrument that would need to be brought in, outside of course of the grand piano, was to be the harpsichord

The towns in which we were to perform were to be:

Caracas – Venezuela – 2 concerts  
Sao Paulo – Brazil  
Salvador – Brazil  
Rio de Janeiro – Brazil  
Curitiba – Brazil  
Porto Alegre – Brazil  
Buenos Aires – Argentina  
La Plata – Argentina  
Lima –Peru – 2 concerts  
Guanajato – Mexico – 2 concerts (Festival)  
Mexico City – Mexico  
Bogota – Colombia – 2 concerts

It was politically a very unsettled time on the whole continent. The various dictatorships in the different countries were taking strong action against their dissidents in various ways. Originally, we were to have concerts in Chile, which had all been fixed and had been put in the schedule, but at the last minute Max felt that he would not be able to perform there, owing to the extremely repressive nature of the regime, and so everything had to be re-arranged. The British Council were none-too-pleased at this proposed change of plan. I think that Max was right to take this stance, because there were shocking things going on at that time, but I also think that

he could have made up his mind about this earlier in the proceedings, and not given all the trouble to the British Council having to re-arrange everything with his withdrawal.

Before we set off for Latin ~America, the new group had given two public performances, which had included some of the works to be performed on the tour. The two works which Max was not going to conduct were to be, of course, *Ave Maris Stella*, and Schonberg's *Kammersymphonie*. Steve and David Campbell were now the stabilizing factors. The four new players in the group fitted in very easily, and the fact that the exposure was going to be in places which were further afield away from the main musical centres, namely Europe and North America, greatly added to the lessening of pressure.

I felt an enormous sense of responsibility. For the first two tours, I was the new kid on the block, but now I would be looking after three very young people going on their first big professional trip. Bas Bell was older and he had enormous experience in his travels with the London Sinfonietta, and this too was a steadying factor. It was my own feelings that I was worried about. I knew that I would be frustrated throughout the trip. Latin America was like that. If things were to happen at all, they certainly would not happen on time. I would be constantly agitated by the lateness of everything. One factor which would relieve the pressure was that the journeys had all been booked so that we would never have a performance on the same day as travelling by air, and almost every single journey was by air. Thus, however long a flight would be delayed, we would always have until the end of that day to arrive at our destination, and we would be able to start again on the following day. Additionally, as well as having Brian Eastman to be on hand to help me, as manager and as the road manager, there would be the local British Council team to give aid where necessary. These matters were of great consolation to me in my overall worry about being able to deliver the goods – i.e. that the show would happen in the appointed venue on time. For all the weeks in advance of our departure, I repeated to myself, over and over, like a mantra, "I will not lose my temper. I will not lose my temper". Whatever would or would not happen, I would maintain my self-control.

We had to check in early at Heathrow in order to weigh in the percussion owing to the overweight. The journey to Caracas was through Miami in the U.S.A. and I had thought that we would have a long wait there, but as it turned out, the authorities were very difficult there, and, far from having an excess of time, we only just made the flight on to Caracas. Our arrival there was in the early hours of the morning, and it coincided with the arrival of two other jumbo jets, and so the whole of that very hot and sticky airport was heaving with a mass of tired and very grumpy, and distinctly hysterical humanity. There were only two customs officers on hand to deal with all these people, and there was absolute chaos. Luckily some British Council officials came to our rescue, and they got us through the melee quickly. In those first minutes of the tour, my worse fears about how things would not run smoothly seemed about to be fulfilled, and that, equally quickly, following that first horrible impression, the fact of the British Council being on hand to smooth things through was equally apparent. The tour had started.

The following day was a rest day for the group – a total luxury which could only happen because this whole tour was being sponsored by the British Council. There

was a swimming pool at our hotel, and everyone availed themselves of it. Everyone except Max, who doesn't like swimming, and me, likewise, but in addition I had to go to the theatre, which was the Teatro Muncipale to discuss the lighting. Here was to be my first trial. I had somehow or other to convey what I thought ought to happen, remembering that in spite of my so-called 'experience' in the U.K. and in North America, I was still a novice, and frankly didn't really know what I was talking about. Luckily, again, I had Andrew Moore, a British Council officer, on hand to help me with translating my requests into Spanish. Together we had terrible fights with the lighting technicians over the spotlight for Pierrot *Lunaire*. This was not going to be easy, but somehow in the end we achieved a satisfactory result. My first impressions of Caracas, which were obviously gained from driving around from the airport and the hotel and the theatre, were that it was one big slum. However, this first impression changed dramatically when we went to the reception that evening given at the beautiful home in the quiet suburbs of Donald Huntley, who was Commercial Councillor and Chargé D'Affaires at the British Council. Over all, throughout the tour I was conscious of the enormous discrepancy between the way in which the poor and the rich lived. I was most impressed and highly delighted at how well turned out all the group were at this reception. I had previously only seen them in either working or travelling clothes, and I was quite surprised to see the men in shirts and ties, which was *dé regueur* at that time. I was very proud that not only were they marvellous artists, but that, even at their tender ages, they understood how to present themselves

The following day the lighting proved very difficult and although we had our morning rehearsal, we had to continue well into the afternoon. The problems never were musical problems. They were only technical ones, which was my department was. As I had predicted and feared, every single thing was going to take much, much more time than it should have done. And thus it was, also, with the start of the concert. We were due to start at 9pm, but nobody came to tell us to go on stage. Nothing happened. I waited, and walked up and down the corridor looking for someone – anyone - to give us the nod. But nothing happened. And so, after waiting for over half an hour, I decided to take matters into my own hands, and just told Max and the group to walk onto the stage. This set a precedent for the whole tour. It did not seem to matter that concerts did not start on time. It would appear that nobody cared if the concerts did not start at all. But there was an audience there, so presumably they were hoping to be able to enjoy that evening's entertainment. But getting started was apparently not part of the plan. Well, if this was how it was going to be, then so be it. When we eventually did start the concert, I thought that the response from the audience was very positive, and they appeared to be enjoying themselves.

The following day we were given a lunch party at the home of the Ambassador, and again, it was a beautiful place with a pool and the sight of parrots in the garden made one feel that somehow we really were in a very exotic environment. Then on to the Teatro Muncipale for the second concert, and each time the drivers appeared to go via a totally different route, although this might be because the whole terrain was new to me. Again there was a delay in the start, but by now I had got the hang of things and I was expecting it, and after some thirty minutes or so when nobody came, I just told everyone that it was time to start.

We left Venezuela for Brazil where we were to have five concerts in all. We had a stop-over in Rio de Janiero where I had meetings about all the forthcoming concerts

with the British Council officials, led by Ted Moss, At all the venues, we had wonderfully attendant British Council helpers. I had struggles with the lighting technicians, whether I was attempting to converse in Portuguese (in Brazil) or in Spanish (everywhere else). I found myself in the most extraordinary situations when giving my lighting cues. The theatres were, on the whole, rather old, and the lighting boards were in some strange places. On one occasion I was placed inside the prompters box where the orchestra would have been – had there been an orchestra. Whenever the players had finished tuning and were ready to start, their signal to me was a major/minor chord. On this occasion, as I was in a position to actual see the whole group, it was arranged that Greg would give me a discreet nod. However, when they were ready, there was no discreet nod. Instead Greg gave a massive pantomime writ-large thumbs-up, which could be seen in the last row of the balcony. I was laughing so much I could barely get through the concert.

At breakfast, on the morning of our departure from Porto Alegre, after the last of our Brazilian concerts, the British Council officer accidentally poured coffee down Max's trousers, scolding him badly. Max naturally was not exactly delighted. Then we took our flight to Buenos Aires in Argentina. I was sitting next to Max on the plane and we discussed the fact that so far the tour had gone remarkably well and were chatting about Schumann's Eusebius and Florestan, when I suddenly felt really terrible. Within a second I had fainted clear away, and I had vomited all over Max. The dreaded South American bug had struck, and I was its first victim. This was the second time in just a few hours that Max had unpleasant things happen to his trousers. Luckily he still had another pair so that he could carry on regardless. Max was very kind about, it and never made any kind of a fuss, at least, not to me. When I came to, I came round to find myself on the floor of the plane, with the faces of the group staring anxiously down at me. The stewards and Brian Eastman took over. I was simply not in position to organise even the exit from the plane upon landing. We all got to the hotel, and I went thankfully to bed, knowing that I would almost certainly not be able to get out of it for at least the next twenty-four hours, if not longer. Well, at least I was not a performer, which would have made the situation much worse.

I don't remember too much those days, except for the fact that I had a never-ending one of those famous Latin-American soccer matches going on inside my stomach. It was awful. The group was taken to see the magnificent Teatro Colón, generally considered to be one of the major concert venues and to have one of the best acoustics in the world, and they took photographs. Their cameras were immediately impounded, and the films ripped out, before their cameras were returned to them. The reality of the political atmosphere in Argentina was showing itself. Whilst I was confined to my bedroom, I had a visit from Ellen Rothenberg, who was a close friend of my own friend Iris Brendel, who was brought up in Buenos Aires. She told me the most distressing story of how her daughter and son-in-law and grandson had been taken away by the authorities, and that she – Ellen - had been phoned up by the authorities in the middle of the night, to inform her that that they had retained the two adults, and that she should now come to collect her grandson. This she did, and was now fully in charge of him, whilst her own daughter and son-in-law had completely disappeared. This, again, in an uncomfortably vivid way, demonstrated the reality of life in much of the Latin American continent at that time.

As well as the concert in Buenos Aires, there was another concert in Argentina in La Plata, a very long coach-ride away. In the theatre in La Plata, my position for the lighting was one floor down from the stage level. Someone on the stage level gave a signal to the man standing next to me, so that I was supposed to know when each next cue was due. To say that we were not very precise in the lighting is an understatement. At the rehearsal, Brian Eastman kept on mouthing to me from the stalls where he standing, and when I came up on to the stage level – “why aren’t the lights going on?” and I replied, in desperation “I don’t KNOW why the lights are not going on”. I had no idea. I felt very vulnerable, and most definitely not in control. But, in the evening we were much surprised to see a bursting full house despite the weather conditions, and the audience was very appreciative. Three weeks after our concert in La Plata, that same theatre in which we performed, burt down.

All of these positive responses were a great encouragement to the group, who were quickly getting to know each other as well as becoming familiar with the repertoire. All the way along we received magnificent hospitality from the local British Council officers. There were always hold-ups and hang-ups along the way, as, for instance, in Lima in Peru, when the issue of finding a key to open the harpsichord for the *Bach Preludes and Fugues* emerged as a major drama.

One by one all the members of the group had attacks of the dreaded, bug, but none of them were as violent as mine had been,. Until, that is, when Lesley Shrigley-Jones, our cellist, became very ill indeed in Mexico City. I was called to her room in the middle of the night, and it was quite clear that this was something terribly serious. The first issue, after arranging for medical help, was that of the performance that very evening. After that, there would be the problem of how we would manage to move Lesley with us on to Bogota in Colombia, and then home to London. But first things first.

It was still the middle of the night when I tapped on Max’s door, and told him the situation, and asked what the immediate solution might be. He looked at me and immediately said “I will have to re-write *Miss Donnithorne* without cello”, and instantly took out his pencil - he always writes with a pencil -and started making marks on his score. I must say it was extremely useful to have the composer on hand, and especially a composer who was able not to panic, and to make instant adjustments. I informed the British Council, who had arranged a lunch-party for the group to meet local ex-pats and composers. This lunch party had to be abandoned, because it was necessary for the whole of the hastily re-arranged programme to be rehearsed. The first half was to be made up of solos, duos and trios with music which I had asked the group to bring along in the case of just such an incident. The second half was to be our old friend *Miss Donnithorne*, but minus the cello, with the cello part re-distributed among the other players. The old adage of “the show must go on” never seemed more appropriate than on that occasion. What kind of a show it was, is another matter. Everyone showed their true professionalism. *Miss Donnithorne* sounded very strange indeed to my ears. But The Fires had delivered a performance.

It was quite clear that Lesley would not be well enough to perform in the last two concerts in Bogota in Colombia. Brian and I phoned the UK to get a replacement. I had brought with me the list of players, with their telephone numbers, on whom I might call if an emergency occurred. I phoned Marilyn Samson, who knew much of

the repertoire, having worked with The Fires on previous occasions when Jenny Ward Clark had not been able to play. Marilyn had three young children and a husband who was not at all well. It was five in the morning UK time when I phoned her. I told her what the situation was, and asked whether she would be able to join us. She asked me when that would be, and I replied “right now”. She didn’t hesitate for a moment and immediately agreed to do it. I told her that she should go to Heathrow where a ticket, which the British Council paid for, would be waiting for her. I told her not to bring her cello as she would be able to use Lesley’s cello. Marilyn’s sheer professionalism made me want to burst into tears. There was no fuss. No bother. She just got on with the job. I can’t begin to imagine what kind of arrangements she had to make on the spot to cope with her family, but whatever these were, she flew to Miami that same morning, and then on to Bogota, where Brian and I went to meet her at the airport. We fell on her as if she were an angel from heaven. The group had travelled on to Bogota, with Lesley having to be wheeled on and off the plane in a wheelchair. She was completely incapacitated. The only work with which Marilyn did not know was *Ave Maris Stella*, but by this time, the whole group knew the work so well, they were easily able to accommodate her. By now, it had been well established that the idea that *Ave Maris Stella* could only be performed by those first six players for whom it had been written, was well and truly shown to be inaccurate.

We gave the last two concerts in Bogota, which turned out to be the roughest of all the towns we visited. One member of the group had his watch snatched from his wrist. Throughout the tour, I had somehow managed not to scream my head off at all the unwarranted delays, and vicissitudes. However, at the restaurant after the last concert, there was an inordinate delay in bringing the food to the table, and I rushed at the waiter like a bat out of hell, pouring all my weeks of frustration onto the poor man, who just happened to be in my line of fire at that particular moment. My main concern was how to get Lesley home. She was in a terrible state and hadn’t eaten anything for days. I had watched the couple of dry biscuits beside her bed remain uneaten for days. I phoned Lesley’s parents to warn them that she was not too well, without giving them a true picture of her condition. I suggested that her father come to Heathrow to pick her up, as it might be difficult for her make her way onwards to Manchester where she lived.

The last leg of the trip home was from Bogota to London stopping off in San Juan in Puerto Rico. After a long delay at Puerto Rico, when we finally took off. We had hardly been going for a few minutes, when the plane started to shake violently, and it was clear that something was terribly wrong. We were going to crash. Beverley Davison threw herself across me, sobbing and shrieking violently. Of course I was scared stiff as all of us were. Que sera, sera. The plane return to the airport and made a very fast landing on one wheel – as we were told. . At least we were on the ground. Thereafter we had to wait for several hours in some sort of corridor while alternative arrangements were made. Certainly the conditions were not at all comfortable, but were certainly better than what had seemed to be the alternative. Eventually we were put on a plane to Madrid and thence onwards to London. I had phoned Michael, my husband, to tell him of what was happening, and he in turn was in touch with Lesley’s father, who was coming to London to pick her up. I suppose that the families of the rest of the group were making their own enquiries to Heathrow. We all arrived back, with Bas Bell wheeling Lesley off the plane into the arms of her father. We were all exhausted, but had been pleased with the wonderful tour with so many

brilliantly played concerts which were attended by full and enthusiastic audiences. The date was the 24 May 1977.

Rehearsals for *The Martyrdom of St. Magnus* started the following week.

### **The First St. Magnus Festival, coupled with The Martyrdom of St. Magnus June 1977**

*(Note: the first part of this account is repeated in the chapter on [The St. Magnus Festival](#))*

The twin peaks of starting the St. Magnus Festival and of putting together Max's chamber opera *The Martyrdom of St. Magnus* were now right in front of me. I had been working on both these projects for the best part of eighteen months. The two were separate, but inextricably linked. Max had told me he wanted to start a festival in Orkney almost in the first week of our association. He had also told me that he wanted to write an opera about the patron saint of Orkney. Both of these seemed completely impossible and out of the question. But the commission of the opera by the BBC meant that there was a solid base on which to build the festival. It was The Fires who were going to perform the opera. Without The Fires, there could not have been an opera, and, without the opera, there could not have been a festival. Or, at least, not the festival which Max had in mind. Both were nothing less than daunting.

I had got used to music-theatre. Or, at least, Max's music-theatre works. What this meant was the group of six musicians, set to one side of the stage, with the protagonist, a singer or a dancer, doing his or her stuff on the other side of the stage. The theatre was in darkness, and the stage was lit. The musicians played from parts on lighted music-stands. My job, as the so-called lighting technician, had been to give instructions to the resident lighting technicians in each of the venues. But now, with an opera, things were going to be altogether much more complicated in every way. Firstly there were going to be twice as many musicians. Secondly, instead of just one protagonist, there were going to be five singers for the *Martyrdom*. Additionally instead of the one singer, as for instance in *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, wearing one costume throughout, the five singers were going to have a total of twenty-six costumes which they would be constantly changing.

I am glad to say that my own immediate responsibilities were vastly reduced. We now had a stage manager on board in the shape of Kris Misselbrook, who had contacted me, of his own accord, and offered his services. I didn't have any idea what a stage manager did, but as the opera was looming large on the horizon, I deemed this to be a most excellent idea, and he was taken on board. Secondly, I recruited Mark Pritchard, who had come on our first Arts Council tour in November 1975, to be our lighting technician. And finally, and importantly, to hold everything together, we had the actor [Murray Melvin](#), a friend who Max had met when writing the music for the Ken Russell films of *The Boy Friend* and *The Devils*, who was to direct the opera. I could hand everything in those departments over to these people. I had to get the musicians and singers together. I had to arrange for the singers to have fittings for

their costumes. Boosey & Hawkes, Max's publisher, would provide the parts. Max had himself written a vocal score on the bottom of each page of his score in order to save time, and each of the singers were given this score from which to learn their part, and to work with their own pianist, in advance of coming together for the rehearsal.

Mary Thomas was to have the several roles of the mezzo, and the four other singers were all from the Ibbs and Tillett agency. I had worked with Robert Rattray on this. I had thought that it would be safer to have everyone in a single agency, so that future conversations would always be with only one person, who would have the latest up-to-date information, rather than spreading things around, which was a risk. Murray would choose his own designer for the production, and he would work with him or her. This turned out to be Sue Plummer, and she, in her turn brought in her own assistant in the person of Claire Mitchell. One can see that now there were to be a large number of people involved. This was to be a very different kettle of fish to the small group what had travelled around North and Latin America.

The opera was to be performed in St. Magnus Cathedral, which is the most northerly cathedral in Britain, and which was founded in 1137. The bones of St. Magnus are right there in a pillar in the Cathedral. The performance was to be the very first item in the three-day festival. It was to commence at nine o'clock in the evening in order to get the maximum amount of darkness so that the lighting would be effective, but at that time of the year, it never really gets dark, but this was the best we could do. My two contacts in Orkney were [Archie Bevan](#) and Norman Mitchell. Norman taught music at the Kirkwall Grammar school, and was the choir master in the cathedral. Archie, who I had met on my previous visits, was also a teacher at the Stromness Academy.

Norman was co-founder of the festival with Max. He and Archie were in charge of arranging things locally for the festival. The main item for this was arranging for local hospitality for all of The Fires. There was no money for any hotels. As this was to be the very first festival, there was no precedent for anything. Nobody knew what the festival would be like, or whether they should open their homes to a whole bunch of people, and musicians to boot, about whom they knew nothing. This might be dangerous. Everything was new to all of us. The opera was new. The music was new. The festival was new. Who knew what might happen? One had to have faith, and to stick with it. I wanted to have a get-together with everyone involved in London to tell them all about the opera and the festival. In the event, only a very small handful of people turned up at my house in Highgate for the intended tea party. As this was not an official rehearsal, they didn't want to spend their time. Another disappointment was that I found it difficult, if not impossible, to get any response whatsoever out of Norman Mitchell. He didn't reply to any of my letters or phone calls. So I had no idea what, if anything was going on in Orkney. It seemed I would just have to hope for the best. As long as I was able to put the whole package together in London, and to transport it to Orkney that was as far as my work would be able to take me.

The rehearsals at the BBC's studios in Delaware Road in Maida Vale were lively. There were no problems as far as the music was concerned. All of the musicians were present and correct. The BBC provided a lavish selection of percussion instruments, all available right there on the spot. We had a studio to ourselves. There was, however, considerable trouble with the provisions of the props and costumes.

Everything was by no means ready, in spite of the fact that everyone had had the best part of eighteen months to prepare. As I quickly learnt, this is par for the course for every single production that ever happens. For whatever reasons, the people concerned do not seem to think it incumbent on them to prepare well in advance, and hope that they will be able to rustle up everything that they need at the last moment. And then they find that everything is not available and then all the troubles start. As it happens, I don't think like that nor do I act like that, and neither does Max. If he has a dead-line, he knows what that means, and he meets it. This was one lesson that I learned, and I forever afterwards had to cope with this kind of a situation.

Hence, when Max would come up to me during the rehearsals, and whisper in my ear asking me why such and such a prop was not there, I had no idea whether this was because Murray and Kris had decided that it would not be there at all, or whether it was just that Kris had not yet gone about obtaining it. Certainly, throughout, I felt as if both Max and I were being side-lined as far as the visual aspect of the opera was concerned. But finally the production came together, and we gave a performance to a selected private audience in the Maida Vale Studios before everyone set off for Orkney.

Once we landed at Kirkwall, which was almost my most triumphant moment, as I then knew that somehow, barring something disastrous happening, the opera would actually take place and that the festival could begin. Coaches came to take us from the airport to the Cathedral. Everyone jumped into cars which were waiting. So far so good. But where was everyone going. I simply could not get anything remotely approximating to a list from Norman Mitchell. From then on, I had to only hope that everyone would turn up as per the schedule which I had provided.

All the company behaved well in spite of the hideously cold weather and no heating being provided in the cathedral, as this was June, and the heating was switched off in April, and even if the weather was dire, the rules were not going to be changed, but the authorities were persuaded and the heating was eventually turned on for the performance. This made playing and singing difficult. There were no cafes in the vicinity where everyone could have gone to have a warming cup of tea. Frankly, it was all pretty bleak. Even though there had been the general announcement that a new and exciting event was about to take place, the centre of Kirkwall was by no means awash with bunting and bustle of any sort. There was one notice which announced the presence of a "Booing Office", Maybe this typographical error was intended. The tickets for the performance of *The Martyrdom* were to be free, as this is the way that the BBC had set thing up, so that the cathedral was by way of being a BBC studio and this was going to be a studio broadcast.

The stage crew were getting the cathedral ready, with the ramps leading up to the specially erected stage area. Max, as conductor, was to stand on a pedestal behind one of the pillars. This pillar, as it happened, was the one in which the bones of Magnus were placed. The players were distributed widely from right to left in front of Max. The performance area was exceedingly tight. It would not be possible to have benches on which the singers could change their costumes on the stage, as the stage itself was so tiny. The costume changes would take place off stage. I had hoped that there would be extra help for the stage crew available, but as this was the first festival, and there was no precedent for this sort of thing, this did not happen.

Like everyone else, I had been billeted to stay with a local family during my stay. This family was called Rosie, and they lived a few minutes walk away from the cathedral, which made my coming and going very easy. There was to be a dress rehearsal on the Friday, which was one day before the premiere itself on the Saturday. This, too, was to be an open rehearsal and no fee was to be charged. I suggested to the two teenage girls in the Rosie family that they might like to attend the dress rehearsal. They vigorously refused my offer. I asked them why they did not want to go. They replied that they had been told that it was to be nasty modern music and that it would be boring. I asked them if they had ever had any boring evenings in their lives and they said that they had had many of those. So I said that they might just try out yet one more boring evening, and they reluctantly agreed.

All was now set. All of the musical preparation had been done in the BBC studios in London. As the first sounds at rehearsals in the cathedral began to emerge, my first response was one of shock. It seemed to me as if at least half of the opera was missing compared to what I had been hearing in London. Then gradually my ears became adjusted to the sound. But the magnificence of the cathedral itself quite outshone any disappointments I might have had. The dress rehearsal went off without any kind of incident, and I returned home, very late to the Rosie household to find the two girls waiting up for me. They had attended the dress rehearsal, and they both thought it was the most wonderful thing they had ever experienced. I was stunned and elated. This was the public that Max had been aiming at, and he appeared to have struck his target. At that moment I knew that the seemingly impossible idea of starting a festival, and of mounting an opera in such a remote and difficult place was going to come off.

There were going to be a large number of critics who were going to attend the performance. Earlier on in the year I had persuaded Boosey & Hawkes to give a launch party in London and invite the media in the hope that this would entice them to come to Orkney. This strategy worked. All the national and the Scottish newspapers sent critics. A special programme was being made for the BBC Radio. A television documentary programme was being made by the British Council. The BBC was of course recording the performance for future broadcast. The whole project caught everyone's imagination. I had asked Gunnie Moberg, the local photographer and friend who I had met on an earlier visit, to be on hand and to take pictures of everything so that she would be able to give some photos to the press. A review with a photo makes much more impact than just a mere review with words.

There wasn't anything to do on the day of the performance itself except to wait until nine o'clock. In the afternoon, as we were wandering around the cathedral, Max came up to me and said "I can't find my score." I asked him which score. He said "the one with all my markings in it. The one I am going to conduct from." Oh dear. This was seriously bad. Thereupon, we started to crawl on our hands and knees throughout the cathedral trying to locate the missing score. Eventually, after what seemed an inordinately long time, we discovered it, and the anxious time passed.

I did have one moment of panic as I looked everywhere to see if George Mackay Brown was going to be at the performance. George was notoriously shy, and didn't like to mingle with crowds. But he had slipped in at the back at the last minute. [Mary Thomas, as Blind Mary](#) in the opera, started her low moaning bewailing the state of things in the civil war. Then the trumpets sounded aloft in the triforium. [The opera](#)

[and the festival had started.](#) It was all over in a flash. There is no interval. The nine scenes run continuously. Max emerged from behind his pillar to take his bow. He was as white as a sheet. All the emotion and pressure on him was clearly visible. He had delivered his big baby. We had done it. I rushed out of the cathedral to the phone box which stood to the left just outside the shops, and phoned Michael, my husband, It was still broad daylight.

There were two more days of the Festival to go. The Fires were to give another concert. The Edinburgh String Quartet was to give a concert. Norman Mitchell was to conduct children from Kirkwall Grammar School in a concert. All this passed in a haze. The weather suddenly changed from being the coldest that anyone could ever remember in June, into blazing heat. It would have been impossible to even contemplate any of the ideas without having The Fires as the backbone to the whole project.

The following month, there was a second performance at the BBC Proms at the Round House in Camden town. This was a far less challenging environment than the one in Orkney, but it still caused the stage crew some difficulties. But that was always going to be an issue. The Fires were attempting to mount performances which were in venues for which they were not suited, and they would have to make them work. The media were overwhelmingly positive in their response to *The Martyrdom*. The Fires had entered a new phase.

### **Tour of Hungary – October 1977**

We were to go to Hungary. The British Council was supporting this tour with funds given for the fares and for the fees. We were to perform *Miss Donnithorne* as the main item in the second half, with a new work by the Hungarian composer Zsolt Durko in the first half, along with Max's arrangements of the two *Bach Preludes and Fugues*. Kris was coming along with us in charge of lighting and stage management. It took the devil of a long time to secure the contract which finally arrived on a flimsy sheet of paper. The Hungarians were very picky in all the details. This was to be my first foray into any of the countries in Eastern Europe and I was nervously looking forward to it. We were assigned someone from Hungary to travel everywhere to look after us. Maybe this was to supervise whether we were behaving ourselves properly. As always, there had been a list of items which the local venue had to provide for us, and these items should all be waiting for us on the stage. The moment of my entering into the venue was always one fraught with anxiety. What would I find there? I came into the Franz Liszt Academy in Pecs. The main requested item was a harpsichord for the Bach. What did I see standing proudly on the stage as I walked into the hall in the afternoon? It was not a harpsichord. It was a harp.. Also, the lighted music stands which we had requested for *Miss Donnithorne* were not in evidence either.

My heart sank. I explained to our minder that what we needed was not a harp but a harpsichord, and that we could not perform the work in the second half of the program unless we had the lighted music stands, such as the ones which the musicians use in the orchestra pit when playing for an opera. We both pointed angrily at

contracts which each of us held in our hands. Our minder said that it would be impossible to obtain a harpsichord or music-stands at so late a stage in the proceedings. I told her that unless we did have these items, we would not give the concert at all. She disappeared and I spent an anxious couple of hours. She later came back, all smiles, with the missing items. She explained there had been a misunderstanding over the translation of the contract.

The following evening we were in Szeged. This time there was a harpsichord, but no music stands. Once again our minder left in a hurry and came back with the stands. I was worried about our impending concert in Budapest, which was two days later. This was to be at the Franz Liszt Academy. I had many friends who were Hungarian musicians, and this building, with its hall, had been their focal point. I impressed on our minder how important it was to ensure that everything would be in order immediately we entered. It was not. Yet again, there were no lighted music stands. Our minder was covered with embarrassment, and she quickly disappeared. But she did not return. It was getting late. Kris had to fix the lighting, and to put the lighted music stands in the correct places. The music stands finally arrived, but only exactly at the starting time of the concert. I told the organisers that we were not ready to start, and that the assembled audience would have to wait outside until we were ready. Everyone was agreeable, and nobody made any fuss. We started one hour late. The concert was a great triumph. Everyone loved it. I was exceptionally pleased to be able to show what we could do in a country which was deprived of freedom.

The day after the concert, Michael received a phone call from Joan Chissell, who was a friend, and the music critic of *The Times*. She had been in Budapest to review the concert. She told Michael that I had badly let the country down, because I had kept the audience waiting to begin for over one hour. She gave the concert a good review, making mention of the late start. I give this story to show how differently the same incident can be perceived. I did not break our friendship with Joan.

### **Residence at the Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich, April 1978**

I was able to get an introduction to Claus Schultz, who was the Dramaturg of the Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich, which was the main opera house in the town. The position of dramaturg was one which was new to me. There are three people who run the opera houses in the German speaking world – that is to say in Germany, Austria and German-speaking Switzerland. These three are the Intendant, the General Music Director (GMD) and the Dramaturg. The Dramaturg is by way of being the artistic advisor in all matters. He also writes the extensive notes for the programmes. He is very influential in pointing the direction of the house. I spoke to Herr Schultz shortly after the premiere of *The Martyrdom*, and he invited *The Fires* to Munich for a guest visit in April of the following year.

The Staatsoper had a small theatre on its grounds, as well as of course the very large main opera house. This small theatre, called the Marstall Theater, was where they put on small-scale productions. It was absolutely ideal for all the small-scale theatrical works which Max had written. Herr Schultz said that he not only wanted to have *The Martyrdom* but that we should also perform *Eight Songs* and *Miss Donnithorne* as a

double-bill. This was to be the most exciting opening in Germany. I knew that Germany was the place where, to put it crudely, I might get the most amount of business. The reason for that was simply money. Germany spent untold amounts of money on the arts of every sort. There was a building in every German town, however small, which would house opera (with its own orchestra), stage plays and ballet. But, in order to get into the system, as it were, I needed to have the credentials of German reviews from the German Press. And I could not have these unless I had some exposure in Germany. And, here was my opening. And it was to be not in any old small German town, but in one of the top houses in the whole country.

*The Martyrdom* team was in place, and, within that team, we also had Mary and Michael Rippon, so no extra people needed to be brought out. We also had the excellent wardrobes that Clair Mitchell had asked to have made, and we had our technical crew. This would be the first time we would be going abroad in this fashion. I can't say that I had any disasters to report. The only negative thing was that I counted twenty-eight stage hands that were to assist Kris and the team, and the progress was so slow that Kris sent them away. Otherwise, we had two performances of the opera and two performances of the double-bill. The Intendant of the Bayerische Staatsoper, August Everding, probably the top man in the German theatre, was delighted, and was most effusive with his praise and enthusiasm. *The Martyrdom* is very explicit in its showing of what a repressive regime does, and I had wondered how it would down there in Munich, which had been the heartland for Hitler and the Nazis. Max and I paid a visit to Dachau, the concentration camp just outside Munich. We didn't say a single word to each other as we walked around. That evening, at a party, a man from the British Council conversationally enquired how I had spent my day and I told him that I had been to Dachau. "Oh", he said, and did you enjoy yourself". I did not reply as I was so shocked.

We had the most wonderful press from all the critics, and, for the first time, the reviews from all over Germany were in German. I was able to use these reviews when I started in earnest to visit the opera houses in Germany, and it was upon this basis that I was able to build Max's career in Germany.

### **Le Jongleur de Notre Dame – June 1978**

The following year, Max presented *The Fires* with yet another challenge. He was going to write another music-theatre work – not a chamber opera – to feature the talents of a friend of his called Mark Furneaux. Mark was an Australian mime who had become a juggler. Or so he informed Max, whose imagination took over, and he envisaged a piece with dazzling juggling. This was to happen at the second St. Magnus Festival, in June 1978.

Max again wrote his own libretto. He took the well known story of the street juggler, who, being poor, cold and miserable entered into the monastery to become a monk. The other monks did not accept him, and gave him menial tasks to perform and taunted him. On the birthday of the Virgin Mary, all the monks gave gifts. The juggler, having no gifts other than his juggling, performed in front of the statue of the Virgin Mary. The statue comes to life, and accepts the gifts, but the shock is so great for the juggler that he dies. Max re-adjusted the story. The juggler does enter into the

monastery. The other monks make fun of him, and there are pantomime acts between the monks and the juggler, as they gave him household duties to perform. There are processions in front of the statue of the Virgin Mary. Then each of the monks performs a virtuoso act on their given instrument. The juggler creeps in, and he gives a virtuoso display of juggling in front of the Virgin Mary. The other monks catch him at it, and rush off to find the Abbot to report to him. All are in horror when the statue comes to life, and starts to play her violin – another virtuoso display. The Abbot translates the meaning, saying that she accepts all gifts, however humble, but that the juggler should not hide his gifts within the confines of a place such as a monastery, but should be out in the world where he brings joy to many people. The other monks then all accept the juggler, and he leaves the monastery. The outside world is represented by an ensemble of twelve children playing wind and percussion instruments. This ensemble accompanies the juggler as he enters the monastery at the start of the work, and again as he leaves. The juggler exits through the audience, out of the hall and into the street, with balloons and bunting being released from the ceiling, or where ever, to conclude in an explosion of joy as all ends well.

The work was to feature Mark Furneaux as the juggler, and Michael Rippon, one of our baritones in the *Martyrdom*, and by now a regular in *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, as the Abbot. The flute player, clarinetist and percussionist are all costumed as monks, and the violinist as the Virgin Mary. The baritone is the only singing voice as the Abbot. The juggler is of course silent as himself. The keyboards and cellist are the continuo. The children's band was to be from the Stromness Academy School. This was in line with the fact that he had written *The Two Fiddlers*, an opera which the children from Kirkwall Grammar School to perform in this second festival in 1978. No adults took part in this opera. Max was always most anxious to actively involve as many children as possible. The show was directed by Pamela Howard who was a big shot at the National Theatre, and I must say I found her most objectionable – very bossy and not at all helpful. Mark was to have a wonderful juggler's costume which was designed by Doreen Watkinson.

We rehearsed in a most unsuitable place. Whenever we had theatricals, I had the greatest difficulty in finding rehearsal rooms. This was a continuous problem. The Craxton studios were ideal for the straight chamber music repertoire, but not for the theatricals. Church halls were good, except for the fact that we were not able to leave all the paraphernalia of the productions in those halls over night, as they were used for Boy Scout meetings and the like, and we had to remove everything, which was a great bother. There was a lot of slapstick in the *Le Jongleur* and much water splashing about, and this did not fit at all well with the shop which sold precious objects, which we hired for some of our more sedate rehearsals. The lady who owned the shop was not at all pleased with the goings on.

The Fires themselves were reluctant to don costumes. They felt uneasy doing anything more than their accustomed excellent playing. But we all soldiered on in the attempt to realise Max's vision. The great problem, however, was Mark Furneaux himself. Whilst he had told Max he was juggling, he had omitted to state, that his juggling had not reached a proficient, let alone a dazzling, state. In a word, he was absolutely no good at all. The whole show builds to the climax, where the juggler shows all his tricks to the Virgin Mary, but, alas, Mark did not have any tricks.

Another, much lesser, problem was the fact that [Beverley Davison](#) would have to sit still on her altar for a good forty minutes or so, until the moment when she comes to life. It was completely impossible for Beverley to sit still for such a long time. So the altar had to be built where Beverley would be hidden behind curtains until her big moment. Max was not at all happy with this, as he had bargained on the fact that the Stromness Academy Hall, where the show was to take place, had its own built-in altar, as it was a converted church. As this was the second festival, the Fires felt at home. What I enjoyed the most was the fact that as the players all had to do their comedy routines, and the audience started to laugh, they all fell into their roles with the greatest aplomb, and really enjoyed themselves, and what they were doing. Beverley sat quietly on her altar behind the curtains until her big moment, and she played her big virtuoso number superbly, as Max surely knew she would. Alas, Mark let us all down. It might have been enough to ruin the whole show, but somehow it wasn't. It carried through, and everyone was highly delighted. This show demonstrated a very different kind of Max's theatrical personality, where all the previous theatrical works had been very serious indeed. This was a comedy and might even be called family entertainment.

There was a second performance at the Edinburgh Festival, a couple of months later, this time in the St. Mary's Cathedral, which was course large, and the performance was on an altogether different dimension. Once again, even with Mark, The Fires pulled it off. In the large space of the Cathedral, the sight of the balloons cascading down at the end brought tears to the eye.

Clearly I had to get rid of Mark. Unfortunately, I had signed a contract with him to take part in a number of any future performances which might happen. Max absolutely refused to allow Mark to do any more performances, and we had to find another juggler. I had to somehow pay Mark off. This was a bitter lesson which I learned. *Le Jongleur* became, in essence, the quintessential Fires work, and it made an excellent contrast to the serious works in any of our all music-theatre programmes

### **Touring The Martyrdom of St. Magnus – 1978-79**

The great trial for The Fires was the extensive touring of *The Martyrdom*. After the initial performances in Orkney and at the Round House, I felt that I was in a position to offer *The Martyrdom* anywhere, both at home and abroad. The first round of performances came very quickly, as the Arts Council put it into their Contemporary Network Tour in January 1978, and it was snapped up by the various venues, and we were able to get five performances at the Hope University in Liverpool, in Carlisle Cathedral, in Durham Cathedral, at the Leeds Playhouse and Bristol Cathedral. Then, in April and May 1978 we had a very large number of performances; in St. Mackar's Cathedral in Aberdeen, in Glasgow Cathedral, organised by Anthony Phillips; twice at the Marstall Theatre in Munich as part of a week-long Gast Soeil; twice at Haakon Hall in Bergen in front of King Olaf of Norway, and at the Theatre Royal in Bath All these were conducted by Max himself.

But before the performances which were due in June, he suddenly informed that he was pulling out and that he wouldn't be undertaking the next round, which were to be

in four in churches the Holland Festival in Amsterdam, The Hague, Eindhoven and Rotterdam, and one in The Flanders Festival in Belgium, and at The Snape at the Aldeburgh Festival. All these performances were conducted by the American conductor [Richard Dufallo](#), who I knew had conducted some of Max's works in the USA. Thereafter, the performances in July were conducted by Jan Latham Koenig, a brilliant pianist who was just embarking on a conducting career. These were at the Everyman Theatre at the Cheltenham Festival, at St. Michael Chapel at the King's Lynn Festival, at the Nell Gwyn Theatre at the Hereford Festival. This long run of performances had all happened without incident. Because all these dates were spread over many months, it was impossible to retain everyone involved as singers and players in *The Martyrdom* for each and every performance, as they already had other dates. More singers had to be brought in, and the same applied to the players. They all tried their best to make *The Fires* their first priority, but sometimes this was not possible. The biggest difficulty was with the brass players, all of whom were involved with their London Orchestras. But I was able to get some extraordinary players during this period, chief of whom was the already legendary Maurice Murphy, who was now principal trumpet with the London Symphony Orchestra. I was rather nervous at approaching such famous players, but they were all very receptive, and they all came along and did wonderfully. Max always wrote thrillingly for the trumpet, and I think that they frankly enjoyed themselves. And it did *The Fires* no harm at all to be known to have star players in their ranks. We did, however, have one unfortunate incident. In Bergen, John Butterworth, who was our horn player, thought he would like to take a trip on a fjord, and looked up the timetable which he misread. The return ferry did NOT return on the day he went on it. He had misread the timetable and thought that that was the day it DID return. I don't know by what means he managed to get himself back for the performance, but somehow he did. And then on the morning of our departure, the group left in two parts. I was in the first contingent. As I arrived home, I was contacted by [Sverre Bergh](#), the manager of the Bergen Festival, to tell me that the group that was in the second contingent had sprayed the material from the fire extinguisher all round one of the hotel bedrooms, completely ruining it. The hotel had complained to the Festival, and the Festival had naturally complained to me. All this had been done by the brass players, since their drunken out-of-concert activities at this period were well known. It was all very embarrassing and difficult. This incident did NOT do *The Fires* any good.

One of the most memorable of those *Martyrdom* performances was the one at the Warsaw Autumn Festival in September 1979. The ensemble, consisting of the twelve players in the group, plus the five singers, the conductor, who on this occasion was Jan Latham Koenig, were to fly to Warsaw from London Heathrow two days prior to the performance, while the technical crew, consisting of stage manager, lighting man and wardrobe mistress had set out earlier from London to drive to Warsaw with all the props, costumes and lighting. I had the communal visa for everyone in my group. The negotiations for this date had been extensive, as was always the case with any of the countries in the Communist block. I had asked everyone to arrive at Heathrow half-an-hour earlier than our usual check-in time, as I knew that there could be a crush at that particular terminal. Unfortunately, four of my groups failed to check in, as they had not followed my instructions, and had arrived too late. They shouted at me from the back of a very long queue, but they were not allowed on to the plane. Meanwhile, Davies, our flute player, told me that she had left her passport at home. I somehow

managed to get her through all the different officials and stewards, and on to the plane. To this day, I don't know how I did it.

Upon arrival in Warsaw, [Philippa](#) was whisked away into a sort of no-man's land. I phoned up the British Consulate, and arranged for someone to come to the airport to give Philippa a temporary passport, to allow her to continue into the country itself. But there still remained the four men who had been left behind, three of them singers and one musician. Clearly they were not going to arrive in Warsaw that day. The following day I went to the airport to await their hoped-for arrival on goodness-only-knows what plane from goodness-only-knows where. They had to make their own travel arrangements. I was hopping mad. As I had the communal visa, they would only have been allowed into Poland with my showing the visa to the authorities. I waited all day. My hopes rose each time a plane was announced, and then they fell again as nothing happened. Finally, on the last plane of the day from somewhere in Germany, I forget where, there was a loud shout from the other side of "JUDY" , and I knew they had finally managed to get there. All my intense anger evaporated with the sheer relief. I remember that performance of *The Martyrdom* being extraordinary, with the audience in the Teatre Dramatyczny bursting at its' seams. I knew that that audience in Warsaw was hungry for the message of that opera, and there were large numbers of people waiting outside who were unable to get tickets. But with all the anguish I had experienced, it was all more than well worth it in the end. The Fires were now getting known as a theatrical troupe.

### **Tour of Australia and New Zealand - March- April 1980**

I started negotiating with the organisation which was to bring The Fires to Australia in 1976. The organisation was Musica Viva. The tour was to be in March 1980. The man in charge was Kim Williams. The Fires had had a successful tour in 1974, and I was anxious to build on it. I had started the correspondence even before we had done the big tour of the United States and Canada in 1976. However, the tours in North and Latin America had given confidence, and at least I knew what we were talking about and what I was aiming for. The negotiations were very extensive. Musica Viva was a brilliant organisation, and was used to doing big tours all over Australia for ensembles. The Fires were an ensemble. But it was an ensemble like no other. It made huge demands. It was a theatrical company. It was going to venues for straight concert performances. There were huge difficulties. We knew we would be taking *Eight Songs* and, after the success of *Le Jongleur*, it seemed highly appropriate that we should also include it, sometimes, but not always, as a double theatrical bill. It meant that we would be able to include local school children in all the venues, which would always be a good thing. Max had a big track record in Australia. He had spent one year teaching in Adelaide in 1964-65, and many of his students had gone on to important positions throughout Australia. Kim Williams wanted to include commissions by Australian composers. One was to be *Incredible Floridas* by the very well established composer Richard Meale, and the other was to be a work called *Laikan* by Ross Edwards, a favourite student of Max's, who had studied with him both in Australia and in the UK. This work featured a big part for Greg on the marimba. The repertoire which we took was:

Dances from *The Two Fiddlers* – Peter Maxwell Davies  
Renaissance Scottish Dances- Peter Maxwell Davies  
Kinloche his Fantassie – Peter Maxwell Davies  
Ave Maris Stella – Peter Maxwell Davies  
Eight Songs for a Mad King – Peter Maxwell Davis  
Le Jongleur de Notre Dame – Peter Maxwell Davies  
Laikan – Ross Edwards (Australian composer)  
Incredible Floridas – Richard Meale (Australian Composer)  
Kammersmyphone – Arnold Schoenberg

Negotiations were tricky. Each and every meal had to be accounted for. Where there was to be a party after a concert, money had to be knocked off for that day, as it counted as a meal. The new juggler was Mark Solity who had the superb stage name of Rhubarb. Every time I phoned him up, I did so enjoy his wife answering the phone, and calling “Rhubarb”. I still laugh to this day. Rhubarb was an infinitely better juggler than Mark Furneaux had been, but then this would not be difficult, since Mark had been so bad. He definitely did have tricks, including juggling on a monocycle. Michael Rippon was to be our baritone, both in *Le Jongleur* and in *Eight Songs*. But, very much at the last moment, Michael’s agent, Richard Apley at Ibbs and Tillett, phoned me up, and said that Michael had been invited to sing Leporello in *Don Giovanni* at the New York City Opera, and it was just what he needed, and he was pulling out of our tour, having signed the contract in July 1979. This was not the most delightful situation I wanted to find myself in. I couldn’t insist that the contract be met, as I was always aware that all the artists had their own careers to look after. Not having Michael in the team would be a great loss, as he was always a most outstanding performer, if not perhaps the easiest person to get on with personally. Yet again, I had to come up with someone who would be free for the whole tour and rehearsals, and who would be up to the enormously high standards of The Fires. The fact that our repertoire was new music and that therefore there would not be many people around who knew it was an added difficulty. Luckily we did have just such the man, and this was Donald Bell, the Canadian baritone, who had sung *Eight Songs* on many occasions, including with The Fires at our Round House Prom concert in July 1976, and he had been coached in the role by Jan Latham Koenig. He was already a member of our family. I was able to get him, and he was delighted to join us. Our ten-man Fires team for the tour was now:

Beverley Davison –violin, viola  
Alexander Baillie, cello  
Philippa Davies, flutes  
David Campbell, clarinets  
Stephen Pruslin, keyboards  
Gregory Knowles, percussion  
Peter Maxwell Davies, conductor  
Donald Bell, baritone  
Rhubarb (Martin Solity) – mime/juggler  
Kris Misselbrook – stage management and lighting  
Judy Arnold – manager and road manager

Philippa has joined us in early 1978 after Bas Bell had left to concentrate all his efforts in the London Sinfonietta/ Sandy Baillie had joined us after Lesley Shrigley Jones had left. There were to be three concerts in New Zealand under the auspices of the Music Federation of New Zealand run by Elizabeth Airey. I was so delighted to have Kris on board doing all the technical things in a proper professional way, instead of by me, muddling through.

The tour was to start in Perth, and continue on around Australia to all the major cities, with the exception of Darwin, and to make a side trip to New Zealand, and then return back to Sydney, with a couple of side trips from there, and then back to the U.K. We would be away for almost five weeks, including the long journeys to and from Australia. After touring *The Martyrdom* during 1978 and 1979, only having ten people to look after felt very compact and manageable.

Kim Williams came to be with us in our first concert in Perth, and to accompany us on much of the tour at the beginning. We had been in constant contact for the best part of four years. I was forever explaining why we needed this or that, about which he was puzzled, and to try to explain that our shows were not straight forward concerts, and that because we had theatricals, things would always be tricky. Kim was in touch with all the promoters in each venue, passing on all my instructions, and hoping against hope that they were all read and understood and acted upon. Our flight to Perth took us, with stops in Paris and Dubai to the brand new airport in Singapore, which was a wonder. On resuming our places on the plane, Max and I waited for the rest of the group to join us. But nobody showed up. I was getting extremely anxious, and reported to the pilot that we were expecting eight more people who should be on our flight, but who were not there. After a very long wait, they eventually showed up. They had somehow been taken to another flight entirely, and were waiting for Max and I to show up, and began to ask questions, when it transpired that they were in the wrong plane, and had to be collected and brought to our correct plane. Luckily the mistake was noticed in time before their plane took off to goodness-knows-where.

We had a wonderful day in Perth to rest and to try to catch up with the time difference. There was a swimming pool in the hotel. In fact there were swimming pools in virtually all the hotels on the tour and this was a great bonus for the group. We met up with the composer Tony Payne and his wife, the singer Jane Manning who was doing a residency in Perth, and there was much joyful splashing about in the pool.

Then we started to rehearse at the Perth Concert Hall, and I saw that we did not have a harpsichord as had been requested. Kim was furious. He had given the instructions, and they had not been carried out. He said that nothing ever went wrong on his Musica Viva tours. A harpsichord was needed for Max's two arrangements of early music – *Scottish Renaissance Dances* and *Kinloche his Fantasie*. In the end, a harpsichord was located, and we were able to start the tour in proper style.

Our next port of call was to Adelaide, as part of the Adelaide Festival, which was the pivotal point of the whole tour. The festival was a big international event, where important groups, such as The Fires, would be brought out to Australia, always a long

distance from Europe or the United States. With the Adelaide Festival as the focus, the other dates around the country, and in some instances to New Zealand, could be added on. I was rushing with Rhubarb through the streets of Adelaide which was thronging with crowds, when suddenly he stopped. He bumped straight into someone. This was a lady who had been part of a juggling troupe of which he had been a part of, many years previously. It turned out that this lady had since become a nun in a convent, relinquishing her life as a street entertainer. That day was the first time she had been out of the convent and in the streets for a very long time. And at that precise moment, she bumps into Rhubarb, who has the role of a juggler who gives up being a street entertainer and goes into a monastery. And at that moment, she and Rhubarb collided. Rhubarb insisted that his old friend come to our performance that evening. Of all co-incidences I have encountered in my life, and there have been many, nothing can compare with this one.

We had two concerts in the Adelaide Festival at the Adelaide Town Hall. The second one was to have *Ave Maris Stella* as the closing item. I was sitting in the back row of the stalls. I always liked to sit in on the performances, and not stay back stage. After all, the performances were the reward for all the hard work that had gone into making them happen at all. Suddenly, roughly half way through *Ave Maris*, the lights in the Town Hall went out. There was total blackness. I got up and somehow managed to grope my way round the hall to backstage where Max and the players were standing. Everywhere was in pitch black. Max said that we would not stop the performance. He went on stage and said "Ladies and gentlemen. There has been a blackout, as you will have noticed. We intend to go on with our performance. Please will any of you who have torches please come forward to the stage to lend them to us". There was movement in the audience. Many people walked towards the stage, and handed over torches. James Murdoch, my predecessor as manager of The Fires, was one of those who emerged out of the audience at that point. For the life of me, I can't think why so many people would happen to have torches in their handbags or about their person, but they did. Six people with torches stood behind the six players of *Ave Maris*. I stood behind Greg. The atmosphere was electric, even if there was no electricity in the hall. It was somehow like the atmosphere of the blitz during the war. There has never been a more emotional performance of the piece. This work always communicated so well to the audience, but this occasion was special. For me, it was the highlight of the tour. "The show must go on". The newspapers were full of the incident the next morning. Nice publicity. I don't think I want to go through that one again. Poor Kim Williams was dumbfounded to think that, yet again, something had gone wrong on his tour.

There was other news in the papers. Kim told me that there were strikes all over Australia by the crews loading and unloading the luggage onto the planes. He said that it was very likely that we might not be able to continue the tour. Now, we always insured against non-performance for all our concerts. But, in this one particular instance, because everything was going organised centrally by Musica Via, we had decided not to insure. This was going to be a major disaster. I phoned Michael and told him the situation. He told me to leave it with him. Michael contacted our insurance man, who was Carl Flesch, son of the great violinist and teacher Carol Flesch, with whom we did all our insurance business for The Fires. Carl asked Michael when the tour was to be. Michael explained that the tour was already underway. Carl then said that was like locking the stable door after the horse had

bolted. Michael then contacted the Australian consul in London, and asked them to tell him about strikes that were occurring in Australia. The Australians don't like the idea that the world would know that they have a lot of strikes, and he said that, to the best of his knowledge, there were no strikes such as the ones which Kim Williams had reported to me. Michael asked him if he would sign a paper to that effect, and he said he would. So Michael went to collect that piece of paper, and then he took that paper to Carl Flesch, who then contacted his Lloyds and was able to cover our insurance for the rest of the tour. Michael phoned me in Adelaide to give me the good news. I was immensely relieved. As it happened, those strikes did continue, but they were always in places other than where we were, and we were able to continue the whole tour as planned.

The next stop was Melbourne. The instructions that we had given for *Le Jongleur* was, that each of the promoters was to supply a local children's wind and percussion band for the beginning and the end of the piece. The sets of parts had been sent to Kim, and he had distributed them to all those promoters who were having *Le Jongleur* in their programme. The children were to turn up at the venue with their teacher at roughly 5pm, so that Max could take them through what they had to do in the hall, and rehearse with them. It had worked well so far. The children arrived. I asked them

-- "Where is your teacher?"

-- "What teacher?"

-- "The one who had been teaching you what to play"

-- "Nobody has been teaching us, We were just told to turn up with our instruments."

Oh dear. Now what?

I called out to Greg, who had arrived earlier than the rest of the group to set up in the Dallas Brooks Hall. I told him that he had to instantly stop getting his instruments ready, and to teach the children. Greg called out "Come on chaps". And he got down to work. He was totally brilliant. He got them to the level of performance which turned out to be the best on the whole tour. The day was saved. Poor Kim could not believe that yet again, something had gone wrong. It was as if there was a curse on the tour. But, after that incident, nothing else did go wrong. Everyone had obeyed their instructions. We had our three concerts in Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland, with a couple of days rest, during which Max, Kris and I took a short holiday, which was a most unusual event during a busy, crowded tour.

We returned to Sydney for two concerts, one of which was to be in the world famous opera house, which was huge. But finding one's way around inside the house was a nightmare, and I was terrified of all of us losing our way. When the players returned to the stage after the interval, Philippa indicated to Max that she had forgotten to bring her part with her, and that she would need to go and fetch it. She got up to make her way off stage. But the way things are done in that opera house is, that once everyone is on stage, they close the panels surrounding the stage. So Philippa got up, and was desperately trying to find some gap through which she could go, all to no avail. So Max spoke out. "Our flute player is attempting to get off stage. Will someone please open the panels to make this possible". And the panels opened, and Philippa rushed out, and in due course returned with her part, quivering

all over. Naturally there was a huge round of applause when she took her seat, and the second part was able to commence. The opera house was completely full. It was a most satisfactory feeling to be able to give that concert even in those circumstances which Philippa had to undergo. All the way along, at each venue, people would come backstage to say hello to Max. These were a mixture of former students, old friends and colleagues, and the writer Patrick White, who Max knew. James Murdoch had come to Adelaide and was in evidence again in Sydney. The libretto of *Eight Songs for a Mad King* was by the Australian writer Randolph Stow, who lives in England, as was the libretto for the other music theatre work which had had its world premiere on the Fires' previous tour of Australia – *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*.

The tour ended just at the beginning of April. On 1<sup>st</sup> April there was an exchange of telegrams between me and Barry Iliffe at the British Council in London. The previous year, I had played an April Fool. I had sent a letter to the British Council and to the London Orchestral Concerts Board and to the Arts Council. I had asked for a vast sum of money to purchase a plane for the Fires. David Campbell had an uncle who was a pilot, and he arranged to get me some diagrams and some of the lingo, which I put into my request. I received wonderful letters in return all completely in the spirit of the April Fool, and somehow it got around, and all the letters were read out on the BBC. Now Barry Iliffe wanted another April Fool. So I got Kim Williams to send him a cable, explaining that the Fires had all been kidnapped and were held at such and such hotel in Fiji and would the British Council please send some ransom money. Back came the cable that “due to the cuts” there was no money for ransom, and all they were able to send would be a coat hanger. All these cables were sent with public money. It was a fitting end to a wonderful tour.

### **Musicians Union Strike- July- August 1980**

The Fires were to have an important Prom concert at the Royal Albert hall. It was to be the second night of the Proms. The first night always went to the BBC Symphony Orchestra on the Friday. At that time, Gennadi Rhodestvinsky was the chief conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and [Robert Ponsoyby](#), the director of the Proms, was most anxious that he should participate in a Fires concert, which was of course a great honour for us. Robert didn't allow Rhodestvinsky to work with any other orchestra, but the Fires were different. The Fires were to be greatly expanded to forty musicians and four male singers to be able to perform *Renard* by Stravinsky. The other half was to be Max's music, which he would conduct. This was to be *Seven n Nomine*, a work for ensemble, larger than the usual Fires, plus *Miss Super L'Homme Armé* where the Reciter was to be the actress Vanessa Redgrave,, who had had performed it several times previously and had made the recording, and the last work was to be the *Boy Friend Suite*. Yet again, I was suddenly in a different zone. I was greatly helped in recruiting the extra players by my own players, who were fully on the scene, and knew who they could recommend. I was helped with the singers by David Sigall at Ingpen and Williams. I was lucky in knowing almost all of the agents from the time when they had started on their own careers in the management business, and so I was coming to them almost in a personal rather than in a professional way.

But storm clouds were gathering. The BBC had eleven full time orchestras, and they were threatening to cut them, and the Musicians Union was going to do everything in

their power to prevent this catastrophe. Their aim was to strike at the highest profile musical event in the calendar, namely the BBC Promenade Concerts, which was a series of events known to millions of people, even those who took no notice of classical music in general. As in all these matters, I was very nervous. I went to the BBC and asked them to give me a document which stated that, in the event of there being a cancellation of my Prom for any reason, I would still get paid. This would enable me to pay the musicians, even if there would be a strike. They gave me the document. I couldn't see any other way of holding the musicians to the date, when they could accept other work if it looked like the strike would go ahead. Every time there was any change in the situation, I had to make roughly forty phone calls. There was no such thing as emails, or faxes in those days. If there was to be a strike, the first victims would be those at the start of the Proms. The BBC Symphony Orchestra's concert would go, because all their players would be on strike in any case. The big question mark was what would happen to the free-lance players, such as The Fires. Our first rehearsal was to be on the Wednesday 15 July at the BBC's Maida Vale Studios, where we had rehearsed *The Martyrdom of St. Magnus*, and every day thereafter until the day of the concert on Saturday 19 July. The Musicians Union were phoning me to tell all the musicians NOT to turn up to the rehearsals, as they would be paid by the BBC. On the other hand, I was phoning all the players and telling them that they should turn up to the rehearsals. The person with whom I was in contact at the BBC was Chris Samuelson, who had been there for donkey's years. I felt as if I was in the middle of a tug of war. I explained to the players that unless they turned up for rehearsals, and, moreover, were seen to be at the rehearsals, they would not get paid. I lost a great amount of sleep. Greg phoned up and asked if he could just rush by Maida Vale Studios past what would turn out to be a picket. I was constantly on the phone, this way and that way. Finally, on the evening of Tuesday 14 July, I was in contact with everyone to ask them exactly where they would be early on the following morning, which was the date of the first rehearsal. At 7 am I got a call from Chris Samuelson to say that the BBC had cancelled the concert, and that there would therefore not be any rehearsals that day and nobody need show up. I made all my phone calls. No rehearsals. No concert. I had to phone Vanessa Redgrave's manager in the United States to tell her that the concert had been cancelled, but that she would be getting her money nevertheless. It was rather amusing because when we had asked for her in the first place, the American manager said "what is a Promenade Concert"? We here in the UK of course think that everyone knows what a Prom is. But this is clearly not the case.

In one way it was a relief that the BBC had pulled the plug, but on the other hand, it meant that we were not able to do our concert. I was able to receive the cheque from the BBC as per that piece of paper I had. I then phoned the Musicians Union to ask if it would be alright if I were to pay the players with money I had received from the BBC. They replied that it was all right because it was The Fires of London who was paying, and not the BBC. No comment.

It took about one month for the strike to be settled. The BBC did disband several of their orchestras, but not all of them. So this, as is usual, was a compromise. There was a concert organised by the players to show that they could put on concerts themselves, and it was widely supported. But this is all very well for one concert. Things are far more difficult in an ongoing situation, and what is needed is always strong continuity.

After the Proms were over, I was invited to lunch by Chris Samuelson. I had been the one in the firing line. They were very kind but I felt badly bruised and battle-weary and I hated having been in conflict with the players, who were being told one thing by the Union and another thing by me. Not a happy experience. We did a Prom the following year, but with a different programme

## **The Lighthouse – August – September 1980**

[John Drummond](#) followed Peter Diamand as the director of the Edinburgh Festival in 1979. Peter had been in charge from 1966 to 1978. They were epic years in the history of the Festival. I paid my first visit to The Festival in 1967, not least because Sylvia Rosenberg, violinist and teacher, Peter's wife, was a close friend of mine. Thereafter I went more or less every year. The events were always stunning, and it seemed as if the whole musical world was drawn to Edinburgh during those weeks at the end of August and into September each year. Peter had invited The Fires twice to the Festival, once in 1976 and then again in 1978, when they performed *Le Jongleur*.

I first met John Drummond at the premiere of Max's ballet *Salome* in Copenhagen in November 1978, when he had just been appointed to the post. It was not long after this when John contacted me to tell me that he had obtained a wonderful sponsorship for the Festival from the famous Scottish brewery Tennent Caledonian, The sponsorship, given over three years, was to create a new work. Each year there would be money given to a creator – a composer, or playwright or choreographer etc. – and also money to an ensemble of his or her choice, to bring to life that work which had been created. John wanted to give the first year's money to Max, and the ensemble would, of course, be The Fires of London. In terms of prestige and opportunity to be able to exhibit what the Fires could do at the highest level, this could not be bettered. Our great event would take place in the 1980 International Edinburgh Festival.

Max had an idea for another chamber opera. Although he lived on the island of Hoy in Orkney, he frequently stayed with [Archie](#) and Elizabeth Bevan in Stromness, at the west end of the Mainland island of Orkney. A few doors along the road from the Bevans was a house, which had once been the dwelling of the lighthouse keepers, who worked for the Northern Lighthouse Board. This company, also just along the road in Stromness, housed its supply ship The *Pole Star*.

There was a well known story about the mysterious disappearance of three lighthouse keepers from [Flannan Isle](#), way out in the Atlantic Ocean in the Outer Hebrides in December 1900, which had been immortalised in a poem by Wilfrid Wilson Gibson. The supply ship called the Hesperus, which was based in Stromness, went on its routine tour of duty to the Flanna Isles. When they arrived at the Flanna Isles lighthouse, it was empty. All three beds and the table looked as if they had been left in a hurry, and the lamp, though out, was in perfect working order, but the men had disappeared into thin air. Max changed the name of the island from Flannan to Fladda. He was worried that there might still be some relatives alive who would be upset, and he wanted to avoid any offence or distress. I remember the Bevans raising the point when the idea was first mooted. People are very sensitive to these matters in the

Northern and Western Islands. Max gave his idea to John Drummond, who was delighted with it,

The first thing that was needed was a budget and this had to be based on what Max said. This meant knowing how many singers and how many musicians would be involved. Max gave an outline, and Michael, my husband, made a detailed budget and gave it to John. Max went ahead and wrote the libretto. When it was finished, Max, Michael and I went to John's London office in St. James's street for Max to read the libretto to John. As it unfolded, I kept looking at John in despair. What had come out was absolutely nothing like what Max had said it would be. Far more performers were to take part. Michael had to quickly make an entirely new budget. I thought that this was just as well at this point in the proceedings and not much later. There were going to be three singers – tenor, baritone and bass – and twelve players. The singers would double the roles of the lighthouse keepers and of the officers on the ship. There was an additional role, and that was of the Officer at the Court of Enquiry. This was to be a horn, playing from the audience, asking the questions. The three officers would give their answer to the questions. The horn player would learn this part by heart, and not play from any part.

The Fires now had a very considerable track record as a small opera company, if you can call it that. We had a nucleus of players and several singers who had worked with us. The twelve players consisted of our core six, plus Tim Walker on guitar. In addition there was to be a trumpet, horn, trombone, viola and double bass. The trumpet was to be John Wallace, the horn to be John Butterworth, both of them veterans from *The Martyrdom*. In the end, John Wallace did not do it. He had been asked by his orchestra, the Philharmonia, to do a whole string of solos in Spain. He was very reluctant to tell me about having to withdraw, but I told him that of course he should do the solos. He suggested his colleague Jock Miller instead. The trombonist was to be David Purser, the viola Cathy Stevens and the double bass Robin McGee. Neil Mackie and Michael Rippon were to be the tenor and baritone, whilst the newcomer as bass was to be David Wilson Johnson, known to all as Jumbo. Max had met Jumbo at Dartington and had asked him if he would join the team. It was John Drummond who suggested that [David William](#) should be the director. David was both an actor and a director, and he had directed several operas, and John thought he would be entirely suitable. David, in his turn brought in Finlay James as the designer of the set, and Mick Hughes as designer for the lighting. Clair Mitchell would design all the costumes except for those of the officers, as this needed a special tailor for uniforms. Kris Misselbrook, our stage manager, brought in Ace McCaron and David Wilson, who was the partner of one of my predecessors, [Louise Honeyman](#), to help him with the stage management and lighting. There remained the crucial question of the conductor. In normal circumstances, there would be no question that it would be Max who would conduct. But, since his withdrawal from the performances of *The Martyrdom* in the summer of 1979, Max had indicated that he would not be participating so much in being the conductor of The Fires. It was necessary to fix on a reliable conductor, and this was to be Richard Dufallo, who had leapt in so ably at the last minute. Richard was American, and this would mean an additional cost to bringing him to London, and paying for his stay during the rehearsal period, but we put the situation to John Drummond, and he was agreeable, and so Richard was booked. This whole situation was a very different one to that of the

North and Latin American tours, with me having to do all the jobs. Here we had a team of expert professionals.

The whole residency at the Edinburgh Festival was, to that point, the summation of everything that we had been working towards within *The Fires*. There were to be four performances in five days. Additionally, the core *Fires* were to have two morning chamber music concerts. But the people that I was dealing with in terms of putting the production together did not live near at hand. . Max was in Orkney, without a telephone. Kris lived in Glasgow. Tim Anger lived and worked in York. The man who made the costumes lived in deepest Wales. But we did have meetings. I had explained to David William, and he had explained to Finlay James that, as we were a touring company, that whatever set we had would have it had to be highly portable. At the first meeting when I was presented with a mock-up of the set of the lighthouse, I could see immediately that it was going to be colossal. I raised my objections. Finlay turned on me and said “don’t you tell me what to do. This is my design and this is how it will be.” I could see we were heading for trouble, and I should have sacked him at that moment. But I didn’t. I paid bitterly for this mistake. But I thought that this was David’s choice and he knew what he was doing. The fact that this would cause me endless trouble later on in the life of this production had to be ignored. It was my big mistake. This was another lesson that I learned.

Max wrote the opera very quickly, and the publishers were to be Chester Music. Susan Bradshaw made a vocal score which was distributed to everyone concerned. The first of the four performances was to be on September 2<sup>nd</sup>. The venue was to be in the Moray House Gymnasium in Edinburgh. John Drummond had taken this place for each of three unusual productions in each of the three weeks of the festival. Yet again, Kris and his team would have to transform what was in essence a highly unsuitable place into one in which the magic could happen. We were given the dimension of the stage and the pit area. These were being created out of nothing.

The months passed quickly and suddenly we were in August, which was when we would be rehearsing everything in London. I had got over the trauma of the Musicians Union strike in July, and every effort was now concentrated on *The Lighthouse*. The three singers were to have a run through at the British Sound Archive in Exhibition Road in Kensington, before moving over to the church in Warwick Avenue, just by the tube station, to work with David William. Then we would have the rehearsals with the musicians alone, and then the singers together with the musicians. The final rehearsals, when the lighthouse itself was to be brought in, were to be in the hall at the Chelsea Old Church, on the Chelsea Embankment. As usual, I had not been able to find any venue which could accommodate all our needs at any one given time, and we had to keep moving accordingly, which was a great nuisance and much extra work for the stage crew.

All our singers knew that they had to be word perfect at the first rehearsal. We only had five days, which was a ludicrous short time, but the budget restrictions were such that we could not allow for any more time. It was obvious on the first day that Jumbo did not know his part at all. David mouthed across the floor to me “he doesn’t know it”. The following day Jumbo absented himself with a diplomatic illness. . The following day he emerged note perfect. He was a quick study, as they say. David was in full command of his production, and the singers loved working with him.

Richard Dufallo came at the start of the rehearsals with the musicians, and all rehearsals thereafter. There was a lot going on at that first rehearsal with the musicians. Sandy Baillie, our cellist, had asked if he could be excused some of the designated musicians' rehearsals. It was always a problem holding the musicians to rehearsals. Sandy claimed that he did not need all the rehearsals as he was busy with his solo work and did not want to give the time. Max was furious. This was not the behavior of chamber music players. The other players begged that Sandy should be granted his request. I did not want a rebellion just before this huge event in Edinburgh, and so I agreed to let Sandy off for half of the rehearsals. Sandy would send in a substitute.

As I set off for the church on the Sunday morning of the first rehearsal, Michael asked me if I had been in touch with the players recently. I said that I had of course penciled them with all the rehearsal times and places, and sent my usual confirming schedule. Then he asked again if I had actually spoken to them recently, and I said that I had not, but that I wasn't worried because everyone was reliable and this method had always worked without incident. When I arrived at the church hall, John Butterworth, our horn player, was missing. Everyone was always punctual and we always started on time. I became anxious and phoned his home. I was told that John had gone to rehearsal. But he had not turned up at our rehearsal. John was in the BBC Symphony Orchestra. The Proms were on during that period, and it was likely that his orchestra would be rehearsing at the Royal Albert Hall. I drove over to the hall, and there, indeed, was John sitting in the orchestra. At the coffee-break, I went to him and asked him what he thought he was doing, when I had booked him to be with *The Fires* on that day. . He replied that he thought that his first rehearsal was on Tuesday. I told him to show up on the following day, on the Monday. This was a really bad start. Worse was to follow. Sandy Baillie's deputy was not up to the high standard that all the players in *The Fires* were used to working with, and they were seething with rage that Sandy had sent in a dud. As Sandy came along the road for the first time to rehearse, the rest of the group went out to greet him to vociferously tell him what they thought of him. and to demand that he cancel his deputy, and do all the rest of the rehearsals himself. This was a bitter experience for Sandy, who not only did not get the time off that he wanted, but had to pay for his deputy as well. John Butterworth appeared for rehearsal on the following day, but was again absent on the day afterwards. This was a disaster. I should have sacked him. But no one had ever heard of a musician being sacked in such a way. Moreover, it was John who had the all-important role of the Voice of the Enquiry at the Court of Enquiry, and had, supposedly, learned it by heart, and where was I going to find someone else, just at that moment, who would be able to do that, and to step in for all the rest of the rehearsals and performances both in London and in Edinburgh. Once again, I wasn't strong enough - I should have sacked him.

We then moved from Warwick Avenue to Chelsea. The lighthouse had been made and was being moved into Chelsea Old Church. It was a very hot summer's day. Kris came to me and told me that he did not have enough man-power to put up the lighthouse. He needed one more man. Right then and there on the spot. I should have sacked Finlay James but I had not done so. This was the result. There was a small garden at the side of the church in which several people were lying about sunbathing. I went up to one of the men and told him my predicament, and asked him if he would be willing to help out, and that I would of course pay him. To my surprise, he

instantly agreed and went into the church; and became one of the crew. This man not only stayed as a crew member for the rest of the time in London, but he stayed on as an extra man for The Fires for years afterwards. I love that story. The lighthouse was put up. Jumbo, as Arthur, had to climb up and down the lighthouse, as it was he who lit the light up above. I told Kris to mark out the exact dimensions for the musicians so that they would be able to fit into the space that we had in Edinburgh. He said that would not be necessary. I was worried, but things went ahead anyway. We came to the point of the last run through. It was a Sunday morning. Suddenly the church bells started to ring out. Of course they would, wouldn't they? I had to frantically run around to find someone who would be able to stop the bells ringing so that we could continue with our rehearsal.

At last we were all to move on to Edinburgh and the Moray House Gymnasium. STV (Scottish Television) was going to be much involved. There were going to make a documentary about Max, and the putting together of the opera, and, in addition, they were going to take one of the performances, and it was to be telecast two weeks later. This meant that there was much discussion with the two separate sets of television crews. Everything centered on the Moray House Gymnasium. Everyone needed to use the space, and there simply was not enough time for everyone who had things to do to do them. Everyone's nerves were on edge. They were all losing their tempers. Kris needed to set up the lighthouse. Mick needed to fix his lighting.. The television crews needed to fix their own lighting. They had grossly miscalculated, in spite of the fact that Michael had warned them over and over again that they should have a certain number of hours which would be guaranteed to them. They poo-pooed all of this, and said that they were expert in doing these outside broadcasts, and after all they had worked with darts before. In the end, they ran so short of time that they had to work throughout the night, and in doing so, had to pay exorbitant fees. The players turned up, and, as I had predicted to Kris, they were unable to fit into the space allocated for them. This meant that some of the stage had to be cut away in order to allow more space. Someone, I don't know who, had decided to put down a carpet in the pit. Max went mad as the sound was completely muffled. The carpet had to be prized off the floor. John Butterworth did not turn up for the rehearsal for the documentary. Things were getting beyond any kind of a joke.

However, on the Tuesday, we commenced the first of the four performances during that week exactly on time. The moment the last note had played, John Drummond lent across the aisle to me and said "you have got a hit on your hands." I knew it. I had known it all along. Max's hand was so sure throughout. Bu we were not through with our troubles. The following night, the Wednesday, was to be our second performance.. John Butterworth was nowhere to be seen. I commandeered everyone from the festival to rush around to all the local pubs in the vicinity, to see if John was there. We were due to start at 8pm. It was now well past that time. I phoned John's hotel, and asked the lady who answered to go and knock on John's door. She returned and said that there was no answer. I waited for a few more minutes and then phoned the same lady again. I told her to take the key with her, and if there was no reply to her knocking, then she was to open the door. She returned shortly afterwards, to say that she had found John lying on his bed in a drunken stupor, but she had woken him up, and he was on his way to the Gymnasium.

It doesn't need me to spell out what the tension at the Gymnasium was like. Some minutes later, John came in and strode past me. I turned my back on him. It was no good making any kind of a row. We had to start the performance. Somehow everyone staggered through. Somehow John did his solo. It wasn't necessary for me to say one word to John. The fury of his colleagues was doing it all for me. How could he let everyone down like that? What was more; we had two more performances on Thursday and on Saturday. Again, at this point, I should have sacked him. But, again, was there any precedent for this?

Max, Michael and I had been invited to a post-performance supper at the house of Alistair and Dorothy Dunnett. Alistair who was the chairman of Occidental Oil, and I had been to see him some years earlier in the attempt to raise funds to start the St. Magnus Festival. Dorothy Dunnett was the famous writer of historical novels. I did not have anything to eat at that supper because I spent the whole time phoning every horn player I had in my book, to ask them to come to Edinburgh to stand by for the last two performances. I was able to locate one, who luckily was free, and the following day I met him, and gave him a spare horn part. Richard Dufallo went through the opera with him. All this had to be done in secret, because, in spite of all of John Butterworth's appalling behavior throughout, it still was not the done thing to actually sack a player. For the rest of that week, Michael secretly met the player and sat with him until John was well and truly inside the building. The Saturday night's performance was being recorded for future broadcast by the BBC. John was again drunk. The players found it almost impossible to find their cues. The BBC informed me that they would not be able to transmit the very bad recording. As a result, everyone would lose the fee from the BBC which had been promised to them. After that performance, Hamish Swan, the boss of Tennent Caledonian, and who had suggested the sponsorship in the first place, gave a small supper in a restaurant. He was thrilled with the outcome. He had taken a courageous step in promoting this sponsorship, and Max and The Fires had delivered a whopping big success for him. He bemoaned the fact that his only regret was that he had omitted to send a crate of beer for the whole company. I said nothing to give him any cause to alter his view.

On the one hand, we had had a spanking success in Edinburgh, which gave us a wide international platform which would lead to many other possibilities. Max's fame and that of The Fires was spreading far and wide. On the other hand, the experience with John Butterworth had been so dire, and its repercussions would continue. I was determined that I would not pay a penny of John's fee for any of the rehearsals, performances, television relays or documentaries. The recording for the BBC was not being broadcast out in any case. I called a special meeting Council of Management of The Fires, and I told them everything that had happened, and I said "I am not paying". Why should it be that the musician could get away with it, and the employer would just have to shut up? It was many months later before I received a phone call from John, who stated that he had not received his money for *The Lighthouse*. I told him that I would not be sending him any money at all, and I went through all his misdemeanors throughout the rehearsals in London, and the rehearsals and performances in Edinburgh. I then put down the phone, and I reckoned that he would either swallow it and that would be the end of the matter, or he would report me to the Musicians Union, and we would have a great blow up. I knew I had the support of everyone involved, including all the agents of the singers

who had lost their fee for the non-broadcast. John swallowed it. I did not hear from him again. Everyone in the whole music business knew this story. It was the peak of a bad culture, within the ranks of the brass fraternity, which was running rampant for almost twenty years. I like to think that this John Butterworth story was so dreadful that it shocked people into some kind of reform and self discipline.

Two weeks later I went out and bought myself a Sony Betamax video machine, and received a video copy of *The Lighthouse*. In the short time since John Drummond had called me about the commission, here we were, with Max having written the libretto and the music, and it had been performed and televised as an established work of art.

The opera has been variously described as a mystery, a ghost story, a thriller. It is all three. The mystery of what happens to the keepers is never explained. Neil, Michael and Jumbo were all interviewed separately for the radio and they were asked what they thought had happened at the end of the opera, and each one gave a completely different explanation. The lighthouse is now automatic. That is the theme that rings out repeatedly at the end of the opera. Three curiously unusual things happened during the course of our week in Edinburgh. The first was that [David Wilson](#), who was helping Kris with stage management, lost his brother who was swept overboard from a ship. The second incident was, that after one of the performances, a lady came backstage to say that she was the granddaughter of one of the missing lighthouse keepers. She had come to the Festival to see the Tattoo, which was a great attraction, and had noticed that the opera was on, and was astonished to find that her grandfather's story had been played out in this way, and that she was very moved. And, finally, the automatic light on the Flannan Isle lighthouse had gone out on the night of the first performance, and the Northern Lighthouse Board had had to send people to restart it again. These strange kinds of coincidences which frequently seemed to occur with Max's theatrical works continued.

I blame myself for all the troubles. I blame myself for not sacking James Finlay when he refused to make a set which *The Fires* could travel around with. I suffered with the results of that bad decision for the whole duration of the years where we used the production. I blame myself for not sacking John Butterworth immediately after he had failed to turn up for that first rehearsal. But I liked to have a good working relationship with everyone. The singers all had contracts with their agents with whom I dealt. But it was altogether different with the musicians. Everything was done by gentleman's agreement. I would phone up each player and pencil the date and then later on, when everything at my end was firm, I would send a written schedule. Nothing was signed. There was no contract between *The Fires* and the musicians. Every player always turned up on time for each and every rehearsal and performance. They wouldn't be able to survive in the business if they behaved badly as everyone would know about it straight away. But, as I said, there was a drunken culture among the brass players. Additionally, the unions at that time, including the Musicians Union, were strong to the point of over reaching themselves. They supported their musicians whatever the circumstances. This mirrored what was going on in the country generally. When Margaret Thatcher was elected Prime Minister in May 1979, one of her first objectives was to roll back the power of the unions. I was so upset with the whole John Butterworth affair that I was determined to stand up for the employers. I knew that I would have the support of the other musicians if it ever came to a show down. But it never did. The BBC Symphony orchestra approached me to ask what had happened, because John had not turned up

for two of their rehearsals during the time he had come to our rehearsals. He had told them that his car had broken down. Very gently, and gradually, the BBC was able to bring the matter round, as it was always sensitive, and they were able to sack him. It was such a very sad story. John's was a brilliant career totally ruined by his drink problem.

## **Touring The Lighthouse - Summer 1981**

After that first run of *The Lighthouse* at the Edinburgh Festival, things moved fast. I was able to be in contact with those festivals which had ready taken *The Martyrdom*, and I was able to invite others to my flat, and to proudly play them the video on my newly acquired machine. Michael and I went to Florence for a holiday, during the course of which I arranged an appointment to meet Massimo Bogianckino, the director of the Maggio Musicale. He invited The Fires for an extraordinary guest residency at the festival the following May, where we were to perform not only *The Lighthouse*, but *The Martyrdom* and a double bill consisting of *Le Jongleur* and *Vesalii Icones*. These would all take place in the glorious small Pergola Theatre in Florence where Verdi's opera *Macbeth* had its first performance. We would be touring *The Lighthouse*, with add-ons between May and September 1981. Richard Dufallo would not be the conductor, as I could not afford to bring him backwards and forwards to Europe from New York. So we called on [John Carewe](#) instead. John was an old friend of Max's who had conducted a very early work of his many years previously. Max had recommended John, and this was in line with the fact that Max was gradually withdrawing from conducting The Fires.

We were not going to be able to keep the same singers throughout, but I had prepared for that. I had arranged for a second set of singers. During the first run of touring *The Lighthouse* Neil Mackie sang every performance. Michael Rippon sang some of the performances, and when he was unavailable, Christopher Keyte took over. Jumbo sang some and Rodney McCann took over when Jumbo was not available. Beverley had told me that she needed a long rest from playing, and she resigned from The Fires and all her other activities at that time. In her stead came [Rosemary Furniss](#), who had studied with Beverley at the Yehudi Menuhin School. Rosemary was unable to do all the dates we had in the immediate future, and we had several other most excellent violinists in her stead. Likewise it was the same with almost all of the players. Most of them were able to do most of the shows, but where they couldn't, they would send in one of their pals. I was beginning to have the feeling that it was not only that tiny number of those select few musicians would be able to handle Max's music. I was delighted with all of this. The more people who would play Max's music, the better. The new players were happy to be invited. Working with The Fires was an excellent thing to have on your C.V.

After the debacle with John Butterworth, I was in urgent need of more horn players. I thought that I would aim for very young players who had not yet been snapped up by the big orchestras. I held auditions, and emerged with wonderful players, the first of whom was the extremely young Richard Watkins, who was still a student, and technically should not have taken on professional engagements such as the ones which I was offering. I also held auditions for trumpet players, and we found some excellent ones. John Wallace was always there in the background, but I knew that

it would normally be very difficult to get him. But he was a goodly spirit within the Fires, even if in reality he would hardly ever play with us. On the technical side, Kris also introduced Tim Anger, who did both lighting and stage-management. Thus we had three people who were our stage crew and know knew all the productions, as well as David Wilson as a most valuable extra in that department.

First off in May was our visit to Florence. This was my first encounter with Italy on the professional level. The Fires had had a few dates in Italy in their earlier years, drawing on the contacts which Max had built up since he had studied with the Italian composer and conductor Goffredo Petrassi in Rome in the late 1950s. We had a splendid contract with the Maggio Musicale Festival. Anything that resembled a residency, i.e. giving more than one performance, was always welcome for The Fires. It gave a very different feeling to that of a series of one-night stands. Here we would be able to show off a number of our wares in the best possible circumstances. The logistics of the whole operation, with two operas and two music-theatre works were going to be overwhelming. There were a large number of people involved, not all of whom needed to be in Florence at the same time. There was a different schedule and travel arrangement for each and every person in the company. Max had loved the work which David William had done as director of *The Lighthouse*, and he asked him if he would re-do, as it were, *The Martyrdom*. Max had so thoroughly disliked what Murray had done with *The Martyrdom*, and had written a long letter of detailed explanation to tell him so. Now here was a chance to make good. What this meant, in essence, was a new production. Clair Mitchell designed the costumes, so that three singers were able to make the changes as they changed roles. These changes would take place on the benches, visible to the audience, which Max had always asked for but which had not been provided in the previous production. All of this worked very well.

Max also asked David William to re-work *Le Jongleur*, which had never been properly directed. David said that he wanted to choose his own juggler, and so we held some auditions, and found Jonny James, who, at long last, was the dazzling juggler that Max had envisaged all along when he wrote the piece. We still had the glorious costume which Mark Furneaux and Rhubarb had used. And we kept all the monks' habits and the dress for the Virgin Mary.

The last of the four works we were to take with us to Florence was *Vesalii Icones*. This was for solo male dancer and the six players of The Fires, but featuring a large solo part for the cello, which had originally been written Jennifer Ward Clarke. It had received its first performance in December 1969 at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, with the black American dancer William Louthier. The choreography depicts fourteen linked sections which trace a pilgrimage around the Stations of the Cross. The dancer takes up the position of Christ, while also referring to the anatomical engravings by Andreas Vesalius, the very influential sixteenth century Belgian anatomist.

It had immediately become an enormous success. It was part of that first concert I attended at Dartington in August 1970. Subsequently there had been a number of performances, but then they ceased. I am not sure of the reason for this. I knew that it had to be re-introduced into the Fires' repertoire. I sought out William Louthier, who was living in America, and he performed *Vesalii Icones* at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London in May 1980, and again a month later at the St. Magnus Festival, this

time with Sandy Baillie playing the huge cello part by heart. So it was with great confidence that I felt able to put this work into the program for Florence. Max was to conduct the *Vesalii Icones* and *Le Jongleur* program.

The rehearsals for all the works were to be in the church in Rosslyn Hill in Hampstead, yet another new venue for us. All was going well. David William was reworking *The Martyrdom* and *Le Jongleur* together with *The Lighthouse*. All the singers who were to take part throughout the forthcoming summer were at the rehearsals. Michael Rippon remarked that it felt very peculiar indeed to see another singer in his costumes and that he felt that he owned the part and everything about it. Johnny James fitted into his part immediately and the whole work took on a different aspect now we had a really outstanding artist in the role. But where was William Louthier? He did not show up at all during this whole period of rehearsals. I attempted to reach him in New York, but could get no reply. How did I know that he would turn up for the performances if he had not shown up for the rehearsals? I made the contingency that, in the event of him not arriving, we would replace *Eight Songs* for *Vesalii Icones*. Luckily we were now in a position to do this,

Our journey was to have been an air trip to Pisa, and then a coach ride from there into Florence. But, alas, there was a strike in France which meant that no planes could fly over France. And, worse, the strike was not every day. It was, seemingly, a haphazard choice of which day there would be a strike, and you never knew, until the day of travel itself, whether you would be able to fly. I was therefore forced to book two alternative methods of travel for every member of the company, one of which was reimbursed by the insurance.. One was by air to Pisa, and the other was by sea and rail. It felt like organized chaos, with the added uncertainty as to whether William Louthier would appear. The initial outlay for all these tickets was huge. I insisted that we would not move out of London unless we had at least fifty per cent of the whole of the money which would be due to us in the contract paid in advance. Michael, my husband, was, in any case, nervous about Italy and Italian contracts. Although this was my first experience, and most certainly the Maggio Musicale was one of the most respected of Italian institutions, however you still never know. I had heard tales of other British ensembles which had done big residencies in Italy under respectable auspices, and which had never been paid. Such thoughts weighed heavily with me. I remember that when I sent the schedule out to everyone, I asked them all to have patience with any delays of any sort that might occur, as I predicted that we might run into some trouble.

The first and main job was the get-in for the crew. This entailed the setting up of the lighthouse. Additional help in this job was to be provided locally because our own crew was not big enough. This was the inheritance of having a set which necessitated at least six men to put it together. Once the set was up, the very complicated lighting had to be installed. And it was here that we struck the trouble. There was a new lighting system in the Pergola Theatre. The union rules meant that it was the resident lighting team which had to work the system under the directions of Kris and our team, who told them what they had to do; as they were not allowed to touch anything. But the local lighting team did not know how to handle to new system. We were supposed to start rehearsing on the day after our arrival. The first day passed, and then the second and still nothing had happened. We had had absolutely no rehearsals on site whatsoever. And here we were, on the third day,

which was the performance day, and it was four in the afternoon, and the performance was due at eight, and we had done absolutely nothing. I demanded to see Mr. Bogianckino, and I told him the situation. He said that he could not take his own lighting men off the lights. I told him that unless he took his own men off, we would not have a show in four hours time. He got the message. Our crew moved in, and did what was necessary at top speed. I don't like to think what kind of monies passed between Mr. Bogianckino and the lighting crew to sweeten their removal. Christopher Keyte and Rodney McCann were new to their parts, and we had had NO rehearsals. Rodney, as Arthur, had to clamber up and down the lighthouse. We had not rehearsed in London with the actual lighthouse. This was to have happened in Florence. Both Rodney and Christopher had copies of the video, so they knew what should happen, but that is a very different matter to actually doing it on site, and, in much of the opera, in darkness. John Carewe was entirely new to the opera, or, in fact, any opera at all. It was all quite terrifying. But, again, everyone's professionalism showed through.

William Louther did show up. He was one of the unlucky ones who had to travel by rail and he was very grumpy about it. I was grumpy as well, being fed up with the way he had behaved. I don't know what kind of excuse he offered for not coming to London, but I was intent on making sure that we were able to put everything on the stage, and I wasn't going to have any kind of argument at that point. We had a new cellist in the group in the shape of [Jonathan Williams](#), as Sandy Baillie had departed after all the troubles with the rehearsals for *The Lighthouse*. But the dancing was not at all good. William had put on a great deal of weight. Most of the detailed choreography seemed to have disappeared out of the window. And on top of everything, he was drunk. Jonathan, playing the cello as William danced around him, related how great gusts of whisky were floating all around him. Max was furious, and after the second of the performances, he told William that he did not want to have him work with *The Fires* again. William did not take this lying down. He insisted that *Vesalii Icones* belonged as much to him as to Max, and that nobody else was ever entitled to dance it. Now, this of course was nonsense, because the copyright of the music belongs, in the first instance, to the composer, and then to whom he assigns the rights. There would have to be a new choreography. William was not prepared to even contemplate going down that road, and threatened to go to court about it. But I would have to worry about that at a later date.

We had managed our residency with flying colours, and, to my intense relief, I even returned home with the full fee in my pocket. I thought it best to have the cash, even though the worry of walking around with so much nearly made my head blow off. I could not relax until I was safely deposited into the bank.

After Florence the performances ahead were:

Bath Festival

Bergen Festival – two performances

Holland Festival – Utrecht, Amsterdam & The Hague

Aldeburgh Festival – Snape

Sadlers Wells in London – three performances

Helsinki Festival – two performances

The run of three performances at the Sadlers Wells theatre in London was our own promotion. Michael had gone to the Arts Council and spoke to Annette Morreau to ask for special funding to be able to put this on, and we got £10,000. That was a very different matter from our own promotions at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. But things were much easier inasmuch as this was a proper theatre, and we did not have to make do with putting a complicated production into an unsuitable venue. Things went smoothly. The BBC came to make another recording to replace the one which they had been unable to use from Edinburgh owing to the John Butterworth affair. It was a proud moment for The Fires to be able to how off our glorious new opera in London at that famous theatre.

The last of this run of *The Lighthouse* was at the Helsinki Festival at the beautiful theatre which was the Finnish National Opera, built by the Russians during the period of their occupation of Finland. It is a long way from London to Helsinki. Jumbo had told me that he had a date somewhere in the south west of England the night before we had to fly, and couldn't get back in time to fly with us, but that he would follow us later. I could not allow that. It was just too risky. So Rodney did that date. As this was a last minute thing, I had not got the visa for him, and I had to fill that out on the plane as we landed into Helsinki. Kris and the crew had to cross two seas with the van containing the lighthouse and all the props and costumes. Everyone was present and correct. We did our on-stage rehearsal, which, by this time was a matter of course because everyone knew what they were doing. Then, one hour before the show was due to start; Kris came to me to tell me that, somehow, someone has pressed a wrong button and that all the lighting cues had been obliterated. This meant that the lighting cues for the whole show would have to be re-worked by hand. You might say that they worked hard. It was like watching an old movie with everyone staggering around at impossible speeds. Again, they pulled it off. I don't think that I would like to repeat the worry of that hour again.

The fame of *The Lighthouse* had spread. Considerable interest was being shown by opera companies wanting to mount their own productions. This was excellent for Max, but not such good news for The Fires. If a local company could bring in their own singers and musicians to mount a production without the expense of having to bring in a company from the UK, they would certainly prefer to do that. This had been my aim all along.

### **Arts Council Contemporary Network Tour – March 1982**

The fall-out concerning William Louthier at the Maggio Musicale necessitated a complete re-think with regard to *Vesalii Icones*. There was no doubt that Louthier had been superb in his hey-day, and that the work was a great attraction for the public. But all the positive aspect had fallen by the wayside. I now had to look into the world of choreography. My great helper was always Robin Howard, who was on our Council of Management for The Fires.. As Robin had founded London Contemporary Dance, and was always a hands-on director, he was at the cutting edge of everything and knew what was going on. It was Robin who had introduced William Louthier to Max in the first place. Robin recommended Ian Spink as a good person to do the job. I

knew that we had to have more than one dancer who would dance the new choreography. Ian himself suggested three people – Tom Yang, Mark Wraith and Michael Clark. Michael Clark didn't take to it at all, and withdrew after two sessions. But Tom and Mark pressed on.

We were to have a new Arts Council Contemporary Network Tour, in March 1982. We had not been given a tour like this in the UK since my very first one in November 1975. This omission had been a cause of great distress to me. Naturally every group which performed contemporary music was anxious to be included in a tour. I can safely say that The Fires were always the most popular group among the music clubs as they pulled in audiences. The way The Network worked was that if your ensemble, say The Fires, was to be included that season, the Arts Council would notify all the music clubs who would then put in a bid for whichever ensembles they wanted to have in their own season. There might be half a dozen tours during one season.. The maximum number of dates that any one group was allowed to do on a tour was roughly twelve. Once twelve music clubs had bidden for that group, then the offer from the Arts Council was closed. The group then would go to the twelve music clubs and it would receive the subsidy from the Arts Council. The subsidy was for fees and travel. The local club paid for local accommodation. The subsidy was a great boon to the music clubs who were universally operating under very tight budgets. During the barren years, when, for whatever reason, The Fires had not been chosen to be on the Network, I received many complaints around the country. The music clubs knew that if they could have The Fires as part of their season, they would get a full and enthusiastic audience. The same could not be said for many other ensembles performing contemporary music. This is not the fault of those ensembles. The fact of that matter is that in general contemporary music is not a popular item with concert-goers. One of the times when we were not included, was when the Arts Council decided to send the Nash Ensemble, always a brilliant and most valuable ensemble, and included in their program for that tour was our very own *Ave Maris Stella*, of which they had given only one previous performance. On voicing my very considerable objections to this unfortunate decision, I was casually told "of course, they perform it so much better than The Fires". This, to me, was the cold hand of bureaucracy slamming down without any artistic reason. Naturally we survived, but this snub was a great hurt to me and to all the member of The Fires who had slaved for years on this particular work, and to have that comment made was a slap in the face.

I could not really complain. You have to take what you can get. My general feeling was that the Arts Council at that time changed the goal posts. At one moment they told me that I had no need to make a formal application because they always knew what we were doing. Then, another season, they told me that we had not got on to the tour because we had not made an application. Tough luck.

This new tour was to be an all music-theatre program. Rosemary Furniss, who was now officially our violinist/viola player, was not available, and in her stead came Elizabeth Perry. Likewise, Philippa Davies was not available, and her place was taken by the American Kathryn Lukas. David Weaver was our lighting/[stage manager. He had done a few shows with us when either Kris, Ace or Tim were not available. Michael Rippon was to sing *Eight Songs* and Tom Yang and Mark Wraith

were to share *Vesalii Icones* between them. David, Sandy Greg and Steve were all on board, and John Carewe was our conductor.

We were to visit:

London – Round House  
Brighton – Gardner Centre  
Bristol – Arnolfini Arts Centre  
Liverpool – Christ’s and Notre Dame College  
Lancaster – Nuffield Theatre Studio  
Hull – Middleton hall - Hull  
Warwick – Arts Centre Warwick University  
Bedford – Dame Alice Harper School  
Leicester –Phoenix Arts Centre  
Sheffield – Crucible Theatre  
Leeds – Playhouse

These venues for the Network tour were in every respect more suitable for the work of *The Fires* than my first one had been. They had, for the most part, suitable lighting, which made the get-in infinitely easier. Our props were far more extensive than the one chair that we had requested for that first *Miss Donnithorne* tour, and we took everything with us in the van, leaving nothing to chance. The cages which had formed part of that original première production had been resuscitated. There were four cages, one each for the violinist, cellist, flute player and clarinettist. The percussionist stood behind, and the keyboard player (piano, out-of-tune piano and harpsichord) was also outside the four cages. Thus all the players were very visible to the audience. The conductor stood to one side of the stage. All the players, both inside and outside the cages, had lighted music-stands. Michael Rippon, in his costume, sang his part weaving in and out of the cages. At the climax of the work, the King (or the man who might think that he is King) grabs hold of the violin from within the cage and smashes it into a thousand pieces. Of course this violin is a dummy one which has been secreted away during the performance, and which is hastily substituted at the appropriate moment. For this extensive tour, and for all performances of this work, I had to buy a whole lot of very cheap violins. Luckily I found a shop in the Edgware Road towards Marble Arch and I bought a whole bundle of these violins. Michael always did an excellent job in smashing them, stamping vigorously on them just to make sure.

There was nothing very much in the way of props for *Vesalii Icones*. The cellist – this time it was Sandy Baillie – sat on a chair in his red shroud. The other players sat to the side of the stage, with the conductor in front of them. The dancer, in this production, starts off with clothes which he gradually sheds through each of the individual dances. But he stops short of becoming naked.. That is the choreography which Ian Spink created. Each of the fourteen dances begins with the position of the fourteen Vesalius drawings. But at the end, in the last dance, it is not Christ who emerges. It is the Antichrist who bursts forth from the tomb to the mocking strains of a foxtrot,, cursing mankind.

The first concert of the tour was at the Round House in Camden Town, where we had performed twice previously – with *Eight Songs* at the 1976 Proms, and then again the

following year with the London premieres of *The Martyrdom*. Tom Yang was to do the London date, and Mark the next one at Brighton. Then Tom was on again for the Arnolfini in Bristol, and again at Christ's and Notre Dame College in Liverpool. I was more than a little nervous about the Liverpool date owing to the controversial aspect of both the works, but especially of *Vesalii*, and the fact that Christ's was a co-educational Catholic teacher's training college, which had monks and nuns on its' staff. During the performance of *Vesalii* at the Arnolfini, Tom Yang far exceeded what he had been told to do, and took off all his clothes for the last dance. Tom had decided to do what he wanted to do, and not to adhere to Ian Sink's choreography. I was furious. I was more than furious. It is not that I objected as such to the dancing naked on the stage. It was just that Tom had gone much too far. And the next night we were to go to this college in Liverpool where there were nuns, and who knew what Tom would get up to? So when we arrived in Liverpool, I talked to Tom and told him that on no account was he to repeat the previous night's excesses, and that he should strictly limit himself to the agreed choreography. Tom didn't like this at all. He shouted at me with all his might, and told me that I was trying to strangle his artistic freedom. He should be at liberty to do whatever he pleased. He then threatened to withdraw from the performance. I stood my ground. The audience, including a goodly quota of nuns, was sitting in their seats. The performance began. I was in a total agony throughout. What on earth was Tom going to do? Would he defy me and strip naked? In the end, at the start of the last dance, he just walked off the stage, thus stripping the whole work of its climax. I can't think what everyone made of it. From my own point of view, I was only grateful that we had avoided a hideous and embarrassing scandal. There was no doubt that Tom as an excellent dancer, but in no measure as charismatic as William Louthier in earlier days. Tom spent the tour, and all his performances thereafter, attempting to find an alternative solution to not being entirely naked and not compromising his creative urges. Some of the solutions were effective and some of them were downright silly. We did not fall out over this issue again.; The rest of the tour continued without incident.

## **Image Reflection Shadow 1982**

By the summer of 1982, the new Fires team was established, and we had had many concerts. The new string players of Rosemary Furniss and Jonathan Williams fitted in well after the departure of Beverley and Sandy, and there was an especial growing personal relationship between Rosemary and [Gregory Knowles](#). Although there had been some chopping and changing when it came to *The Lighthouse* the previous summer, it once again felt as if the core Fires team was now stabilized.

A couple of years earlier, sitting in a café on a visit to Budapest in Hungary, Max had been delighted by the unusual and twanging sounds of the cimbalom, which is a gypsy instrument much used in that part of the world. It is a box with strings stretched across the top and is played by two beaters striking against the strings. Thus it is a percussion instrument. Max was so enthralled with it, that he declared that he must write a work featuring the cimbalom for Greg. Thus the Fires were delighted when Max announced that he was going to write a new work for them, featuring the cimbalom, and that this work would be unperformed. This meant that the new team would have its very own *Ave Maris Stella*. There was, however, a

flaw in this new project. Greg did not know how to play the cimbalom. Greg did not even own a cimbalom. But Greg, ever willing to rise to any challenge which Max might throw at him, said that he would obtain a cimbalom, and that Max should go ahead and write the new work. Greg went to a friend in Blackpool, who made him the instrument. Max asked if he could have the cimbalom in his London flat for a period, so that he could familiarize himself with it while writing the piece. I arranged for the collection. The moment I saw the beast, I knew that we would be in for trouble. The cimbalom was enormous. It stood on four fat legs, and it required a team of four people to carry it anywhere. Here we go again. Greg learnt how to play the cimbalom and Max wrote the piece. Not for Max breaking Greg in with a nice easy piece. Not a bit of it. Greg had to jump in with a virtuoso piece. It was as if Greg had learnt to play the violin, and then immediately had to play some Paganini *Caprices*.

The first performance was due to be given at the St. Magnus Festival in June of 1982. Following that there would be another performance at the Dartington Summer School of Music in late July and then again at the Lucerne Festival at the end of August. When it came to the St. Magnus Festival, the group told me that they found the new piece, which was called *Image, Reflection, Shadow* – henceforth always to be known by its’ nickname of ‘Image’ – so difficult that they had only been able to tackle the first of the three movements. This was a great blow for Max. The group said that they would certainly be ready with the whole piece by the time they came to Dartington. They were not. This time they played the first two movements. Max suggested that he work with them to help matters along. This the group most ardently refused. They said that they wanted to prepare the piece by themselves, uncondacted, as Max wished, and that they would arrange some extra rehearsals on their own so that they could manage it. This was the whole point of what Max always hoped for in terms of a chamber group. Nobody would even think that a string quartet would have a conductor. But the custom of having a conductor for modern music was so embedded in the culture for more than five or so musicians, that even with the precedent of *Ave Maris Stella*, the fact of the group taking on the responsibility of putting the piece together, was outside of what they had previously thought of doing.

There were more problems connected with the cimbalom than that of being so large and heavy that it required so many people to move it around at all. The main one was that it went out of tune almost immediately, and that it took almost one hour to bring it back into tune again. This meant that every time the cimbalom was about to be used, Greg would need to be at the rehearsal place at least one hour prior to the others turning up. This was not always easy to achieve. I spent many a long hour anxious chewing my fingernails waiting for Greg to show up. We were to have two concerts at the Lucerne Festival, both of them in the morning, and both of them as live broadcasts. This made matters worse as far as the timing was concerned. But, on the due date, at the due time, Greg did turn up, and, at last – at long last- The Fires were able to give the first complete performance of *Image*. It is hard to describe the elation following that event. There could never have been a more significant bonding between all the players. Afterwards, we all went to row on the lake in Lucerne. Well, I didn’t row. I let whoever else was in the boat do the honours. Once again, Max had thrown the greatest possible challenge to all these talented people, and they had picked up the gauntlet and ran with it. *Image* was now ‘their’ work, and they

wanted to perform as it often as possible. Thereafter, during the rest of 1983 and 1984, The Fires performed *Image* in Geneva, London, New York, Orkney (unfinished business there), Bath, Swansea and Huddersfield. However, *Image* did not become a work which could be performed by many different players slipping in and out of the group. The main reason for this was that Greg was virtually the only percussionist, other than those in Hungary, who could actually play the cimbalom. Also, each of the players relied so heavily on their colleagues as to where they got the cues from to come in, that they felt nervous about the thought of someone else stepping in who did not know the ropes of this particular work. But both *Ave Maris* and *Image* personified the serious nature of the work of The Fires.

### **Sacra Umbra Festival – September - 1962**

On 16 September 1982, The Fires had a date at the Sacra Umbra Festival in Perugia. The program was to be *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*, coupled with *Image, Reflection, and Shadow*. On this occasion The Fires were being conducted by John Carewe, not by Max. The group flew out to Rome from Heathrow and were met by a coach which transported all of us to the hotel, which was, as we were told, on the outskirts of Perugia. I didn't take any particular note of the route which was taken, but it didn't bother me, as that was all in the hands of the coach driver. I didn't see any sign of the town of Perugia itself.

The following day, the coach came to collect us to bring us to the Teatrto Morlachi, which is where both the rehearsal and the performance were to take place. We had, of course, rehearsed everything fully in London previous to setting out for Italy. The different elements in the concert were being rehearsed at different times throughout the afternoon. The concert was to start at 9pm, and then the coach was to drive everyone back to the hotel at the end. There is a lot of clearing up to do following a concert, and this was all done by Kris Misselbrook, our road manager/lighting man. I stayed around to help him. The coach arrived to take everyone, and Jack Buckley, from The British Council, suggested that the group should go back to the hotel in the coach and that he would drive Kris and me back to the hotel after we finished clearing up and had a drink with him. I was somewhat nervous about this, but Jack insisted. It was certainly delightful having a drink in an Italian square on a summer's evening, but I kept looking at my watch. Eventually Jack brought us to his hotel and he found that the garage where he had parked his car was closed for the night, and he was unable to take it out. Disaster! Jack then asked if there were any rooms to be had at the hotel, and there were none. We then moved to make enquiries at other hotels, and we found the same at all of them. No room at the inn. Jack then asked for a taxi, and was told that no taxis operate in Perugia after nine at night. By this time things were getting desperate. But Jack was not dismayed. He waved a car down in the road, and had a word of explanation, and somehow persuaded this driver to take us to the hotel. But of course nobody in that car had the slightest idea where the hotel was. True, we had the address, but that means nothing in the middle of the night with absolutely nobody to ask the way. But I was not at all scared because I was not alone, and I knew that Jack and Kris would look after me. Our driver was superb, and we all giggled our way back to the hotel, which appeared to be on the top of some mountain, or, shall we say, hilltop, a very considerable way out of Perugia. I have

absolutely no recollection of anything about the concert itself, but I shall never forget the events afterwards.

### **Birthday Music for John – January 1983**

“How long is the concert tomorrow”? These were the words spoken to me over the phone by Veronica Campbell, wife of David Campbell, the clarinettist in the group on the evening of 24 January 1983. I asked her why she wanted to know. She explained that she was hoping to come to the concert, but as she was feeding her baby, she wanted to make sure about the timing. I said I would phone her back when I had added up the duration of each of the works on our programme.

This concert was to be conducted by John Carewe. Although Max was the Artistic Director and he decided what the contents of each programme should be, he did not always conduct every concert. The concert was to be at the Queen Elizabeth Hall at the South Bank Centre and it was one of the three concerts which we promoted annually ourselves at that venue, with the financial assistance of the London Orchestral Concert Board. I paused for a long while whilst I added up the minutes of each of the works on our programme. The Fires’ concerts were, traditionally on the short side. Moreover, we never gave any encores. Max was very much against encores as he thought the works in the programme should speak for themselves and then there was nothing more to be said. However, when I added up the minutes, I found that the programme we were about to offer the following day was, in my opinion excessively short. I phoned Max to tell him the situation and asked him what we should do. I said that I thought it necessary to add another work. We would be able to do this as we had a considerable number of works which the group could perform with a minimum of rehearsal. Max replied that he would think about it overnight, and he would tell me in the morning. I phoned Veronica back to tell her that at that moment I couldn’t give her a definite answer but gave her an approximate time, adding a few minutes onto my original sum.

I phoned Max again the following morning and he said

- “I am going to write a new work for John’s birthday”. It was [John Carewe’s](#) birthday

I gulped and exclaimed that he might be able to write a new work, but how on earth we were going to be able to make parts and rehearse all this on the same day. He said that he was sure I would be able to manage it. Yes indeed. That was always my job as the manager. Max would make the bite, and it was left to me to chew away. Max said he had thought about the new piece and that he would write it for the three musicians who were not involved in one of the other works, which would give them a time to get started rehearsing.

I phoned Gerard McBurney, who was the composer and dear friend who would always help me out in tricky situations. I told him what Max had in mind, and asked him if he could come to the Queen Elizabeth Hall prepared to write out parts for the new piece as Max wrote it, and also if he could bring along a colleague who

would help him in this task. I was scared. This idea of Max's was going to test the individual and collective skills of everyone concerned. Firstly Max, to be able to write a piece just like that, on the spot. Then Gerard and his friend to write out the parts at speed as each new piece of manuscript paper reached them. And then finally the three musicians who would have to put the new piece together. The idea was that all this should be accomplished by the end of the morning rehearsal which started at 10 am and finished at 1pm.

Everyone duly turned up. Max went into one of the green rooms at the Queen Elizabeth Hall while Gerard and his friend stationed themselves elsewhere, and I was shuttling backwards and forwards between the two locations. Max would hand me a sheet of manuscript and I rushed to the other room and deposited it on Gerard's desk. Gradually, pages of parts started to emerge. The three musicians were Rosemary Furniss as viola player, Jonathan Williams as cellist and [Philippa Davies](#) as flute player. They had been informed of the change of plan. It was not so much a change as an addition. It was certainly a challenge as far as these three were concerned, as there would be a whole new work they had to learn. All three, in true Fires' spirit, did not demur in any way and accepted the fact that they would have to give a public performance of a work that same evening which was at that moment was still in Max's head.

Everyone turned up in good time for the rehearsal which began at 10am and installed themselves in the various locations in the back-stage area of the Queen Elizabeth Hall. In all my years with Max, I had never actually seen him at work composing. This always happened in his home in Orkney. But here he was, pencil in hand over the manuscript paper. Dots appeared to fly onto the page at great speed. I was the errand lady dashing from Max to Gerard and then back to Max whilst John Carewe was conducting the rehearsal on the platform. We were allowed to remain in the hall until 1pm. The players of the new work started their rehearsal during the time the rest of the group were rehearsing the work in which they were not participating. However, they felt that they needed a very considerable amount more time to rehearse, and it was decided that they were return back to the hall at 5pm, and rehearse for another hour and a half or so, prior to the concert which was to start at 7,45pm. All this frantic activity on everyone's part gave me the feeling of those times when Mozart would dash off an overture just prior to the commencement of the opera, and it would be performed right there and then. The work that Max had written was in three movements. I heard noises from the trio that it was exceptionally difficult – how could Max write something so difficult so quickly? – and that they were not going to be able to play the whole work that evening because they didn't have sufficient rehearsal time.

At the start of the concert, Max came onto the platform along with John and the musicians, and made the announcement to the public that as it was John's fiftieth birthday that very day, he had written a new work for this occasion and that it would be played at the end of the advertised concert.

It was all extremely exciting and I was left in total admiration for everyone involved – Max for writing at speed, Gerard for doing the parts at speed and the musicians for rehearsing and performing the first two movements so graciously. The work was

performed for the first time in its entirety by the same three musicians at the Swansea Festival in October 1983.

### **Britain Salutes New York Festival – May 1983**

The Treaty of Paris, which ended the American War of Independence in 1783, was the excuse for what was described as the biggest British cultural show ever assembled outside The British Isles. It was to be a festival of art, music, drama, dance, film and literature, and was to run in New York for six months from May until November 1983. Every artistic institution was mad to be part of it. I was contacted by the UK division of the Festival and informed that they wished The Fires to participate in the Festival. This was a great honour, as it meant that we were right up there with the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal Ballet and the London Symphony Orchestra. The festival had two Patrons. For the Americans it was Nancy Reagan, the First Lady, and for Britain it was Prince Charles, The Prince of Wales. There were separate committees on either side of the Atlantic. . We were told that we were to make all our own arrangements for our appearances. The support was to come from two companies. These were The Tate Company, which had made its money as the sugar company Tate and Lyle. The other was First National Bank of Boston, a multinational bank which was owned by the Swiss company Credit Suisse. All these high-powered names seemed way, way out of our league. What on earth were we doing in such company? But I wasn't about to refuse anything.

We were to have three concerts. The choice of venue was entirely our own. I went to New York to view the possibilities. I knew that we had to have our music-theatre works represented, and that I would need to choose somewhere which would not be too difficult for us. I chose Symphony Space, which was a venue hardly used in those days as it was way up beyond where most of the New York cultural activities take place, that is, not further up-town above Sixtieth Street. Symphony Space was into the Nineties. I was taking a risk, I know, but I had a gut feeling that it would work. We went to CAMI (Columbia Artists Management Inc.) the world-famous artists agency, to negotiate on our behalf. The person dealing with us at CAMI was Peter Gelb, who had recently joined the company. I knew Peter because he had previously worked on Max's *Symphony No. 2* for the Boston Symphony Orchestra's centenary commission in 1981. I also hired [Sheila Porter](#) as our Press Agent. Sheila was a friend, and had previously worked at Covent Garden and for the American agency Sol Hurok, and latterly for Beverley Sills at New York City Opera. But now she was a free-lance, and I jumped at the opportunity to get her services, knowing that if I did not have my own press agent who would work for me, The Fires would not get lost in the shuffle of all the other institutions who would be taking part in the festival

Here was another golden opportunity for The Fires. We would be able to present our four music-theatre works plus our two serious chamber works. What was more, and wonderful to tell was that we would be able to give the world premiere of the work which I had commissioned from Elliot Carter, America's leading classical composer, seven years previously. After the trouble with William Louthier at the Maggio Musicale in Florence in May 1981, we had an entirely new production of *Vesalii Icones*. I got Ian Spink to make a new choreography, and he trained two dances,

Tom Yang and Mark Wraith, so that we would not always be dependent on one particular artist. Both Mark and Tom had given performances prior to our visit to New York. John Carewe would conduct all four of the music-theatre works, and Max would make a cameo appearance as a conductor with his two arrangements of early Scottish works. *Image* and *Triple Duo* would both be unperformed. We would not be able to bring Greg's cimbalom over the Atlantic, but we would hire one locally in New York.

Our three concerts were to be.

April 22

Le Jongleur (with [Jonny James](#) and Michael Rippon)

Eight Songs (with Michael Rippon)

April 23

Kinloche His Fantasie

Image Reflection Shadow

Scottish Renaissance Dances

Triple Duo (by Elliot Carter)

April 24

Vesalii Icones (with Tom Yang)

Miss Donnithorne's Maggot (with Mary Thomas)

There was a great amount of fuss about The Festival. I personally attended two press launches in New York, where I happened to be at the time they were on, and another in London, in the rooms of the Speaker of the House of Commons, at which they were more than a handful of Dukes and Earls. It could not have been more prestigious.

But my job was not the so-called glamour of the press launches. I had to see that we would make the most of this golden opportunity. Although the Festival offered help in many ways, I felt all along that I would do better attending to each item personally, rather than handing it over to someone else, who did not know the ins-and-outs of our special requirements.

Rosemary and Greg had got married just two weeks before the Britain Salutes New York Festival. I reckoned that things would either get twice as good or twice as bad. This was our first genuine Fires romance, which, considering how small the ensemble is, is not bad. I had attended the wedding up in Yorkshire at Rosemary's parents' home. Jonathan Williams drove me there and back, for which I was grateful.

Sheila Porter had arranged for a whole load of interviews for Max and he went to New York a few days ahead and was rushed around all over the place. Max was always brilliant at interviews and always made a big impression. It did the trick. Although Peter Gelb had been fearful that we would not get an audience and papered the first performance (i.e. gave away free tickets), came the time, came the audience. I found it all very thrilling to see three packed houses, the second and third performances were completely sold out. For the second of the concerts, there was an on-stage debate with Max and Elliot, and chaired by Andrew Porter (Sheila's brother),

who was the critic of The New Yorker Magazine. Amongst our audience for the last of the three concerts was no less a person than Leonard Bernstein, who arrived in the most enormous limousine. He had come to set the seal of approval on our activities. Let us not forget that Lennie was probably the most active person in the music business on behalf of the rights of composers. Andrew and Sheila Porter gave a post-concert party at the home of Clare and Barry Brook in a flat opposite Central Park, which was attended by Lennie and his entourage. At one point, Lennie sat down at the piano, with Mary sitting beside him, and they gave unforgettable renderings of popular American songs, but none of Lennie's own.

Of all the triumphs that the Fires had had over the years, this one seemed to me to be the apotheosis. We had brought together everything that The Fires did and stood for, and presented it in the most auspicious of contexts, in one of the two major cities for western culture in the world – New York. We had made our mark in New York, which as everyone pointed out to us, that is a really difficult thing to do. The press was overwhelmingly glowing. We had shown the Americans how these strange animals, which were Max's music-theatre works, could and should be done. We had presented our great *Image*, as the corner stone of what could be done as a chamber ensemble, and we had paid homage to America's greatest composer. What more could you want? The glow stayed with me for weeks.

#### **The No. 11 Bus – March 1984**

After the extraordinary success at Britain Salutes New York, The Fires were on a high. But the ensemble badly needed a new theatrical work to keep up the momentum. After the two chamber opera of *The Martyrdom of St. Magnus* (1977) and *The Lighthouse* (1980) Max had not written any more theatrical works for his own ensemble. There had been other dramatic works, such as the ballet *Salome* and the next opera *Resurrection* had been commissioned for Darmstadt, but there was definitely a gap which needed to be filled. It was the dramatic works which got The Fires the invitations from all over. On the back of these invitations, The Fires were frequently able to add on additional concerts of the purely chamber music works. This is no different from the general trend in audiences. More people go to operas, than to orchestral concerts, which in turn have larger public than chamber music concerts. The theatrical element gives an added element which is appealing.

In tandem with Max wanting to write a new theatre piece for The Fires was his wish to write something for [Simon McBurney](#). Simon was the younger brother of Max's friend and fellow composer, [Gerard McBurney](#). Simon had recently finished studying at the Jacques Lecoq École Nationale de Theatre in Paris, and had emerged as a truly brilliant mime artist. Max was thrilled to pieces with him and found him devastatingly funny and was inspired to the point of wanting to create a work for him. With the thought of his opera *Resurrection* lying ahead of him, Max would want to have a chance to work out some ideas relevant to the black comedy ideas he had for the opera, and this new work would be exactly what was needed. The concept of a London bus ride, with the passengers getting on and off, partly realistic and partly fantastical would be ideal. Simon, performing numerous roles, would be the glue holding it all together. Once again Max would write his own libretto, and would fashion the work around his own thoughts and words. Max took the journey on the

*The Fires of London*

number eleven bus, from Liverpool Street Station to the bus station not far from where he had his London flat in Hammersmith. He took notes of the various stops, people and buildings. Max based his libretto on the sequence of tarot cards, personified as a large cast of characters. The seemingly mundane bus journey, from Liverpool Street to Hammersmith, with a group of apparently banal characters become an apocalyptic one-way trip, culminating in a truly grotesque finale.

The dimensions of what Max had in mind were beginning to emerge. Five of the six musicians of *The Fires* would be passengers on the bus, whilst the percussionist, Greg Knowles, would be the ticket collector. There would be two dancers, and three singers – a tenor, a baritone and a mezzo-soprano – all of whom would play several different roles. The conductor of the work, would be a policeman, dressed in full policeman's uniform. The cast list is as follows:

Pianist – pianist  
2 Mormons – tenor, baritone  
Bus conductor - percussionist  
Charlady – mezzo  
Postman – mime  
Faith – tenor  
Idolatry – baritone  
Workman - mime  
Chastity – dancer  
Lust – dancer  
Businessman – mime  
Patience – dancer  
Wrath – dancer  
Cardinal – mime  
Prudence – dancer  
Folly – dancer  
Charlady's husband – baritone  
Tramp – mime  
Bag lady – mezzo  
Tourist – mime  
Man in Dirty Mackintosh (Flasher) – mime  
2 Skinheads wearing Union Jacks – dancers  
Policeman – Musical conductor  
Ticket Inspector – baritone  
Preacher – tenor  
Telephone Box – mime  
2 Shoppers – mezzo, baritone  
2 bunk rockers - dancers  
Drag Queen – mime  
Sun & Moon – dancers  
Gospel Chorus – mezzo, tenor, baritone

As I became aware of all these details, my heart sank. This was going to turn out to be an enormous undertaking which would be bigger in scale than either of the two chamber operas I had had to deal with. Moreover, this work only had a very small extra financial assistance from the London Orchestral Concert Board., which was a

drop in the ocean. *The Martyrdom* had been commissioned by the BBC and *The Lighthouse* by the Edinburgh International Festival, with appropriate production funds supplied by the St. Magnus Festival for *The Martyrdom* and by the Edinburgh International Festival for *The Lighthouse*. Now, for this new work The Fires were going to have to dig into its own reserves to provide for all the costs involved, both production and musical, and hiring of rehearsal rooms, and the numerous unseen costs which invariably suddenly manifest themselves out of nowhere in these circumstances.

It was quite a job putting everyone together. The six musicians of The Fires were straight forward, as was Mary Thomas for the mezzo role. Mary had started life as a soprano, and as time had gone on, Mary's voice had gradually become lower and Max wrote for her accordingly. The baritone was to be Brian Rayner Cook who had worked with The Fires in *The Martyrdom* and Donald Stephenson, who had not worked with us previously, was the tenor. The two dancers were to be Tom Yang, who had worked extensively with The Fires in *Vesalii Icones* – not without considerable trouble in the early stages of the relationship, and his partner Anne Dickie.

Our 'house-director' at this period was Michael McCarthy, who knew all our productions intimately and each time we had a date, he would bring the necessary productions up to scratch. His assistant in this was Brenda McLean, who likewise was totally au fait with what needed to be done each time. Michael was the artist director of his own company, Music-Theatre Wales, and he was not available for *The No. 11 Bus*, and so Max decided that Brenda would be the director. It was going to be a very complex show, bringing together the several differing aspects of mime, song and dance. Several of The Fires came to me in advance to question the wisdom of engaging Brenda for the director, and I voiced these worries to Max, but he was adamant that Brenda would be able to handle it all.

Clare Mitchell was the designer of the costumes. As we did not have any kind of budget for the making of new costumes, most of what would be worn would be hired from Nathan & Berman, the huge agency for the hire of theatrical costumes. Clare had been with The Fires for many years, starting off with *The Martyrdom* in 1977 and continuing right up to that present time of early 1984. The conductor was Gunther Bauer Schenk, who had conducted several of Max's opera in Germany.

There was trouble at the very start of the first rehearsal. Tom Yang made a speech about how this project was going to be 'collaborative'. I was horrified. That was not the way we worked in The Fires. The director was the person in charge of everything that was staged. Naturally there would always be discussions, but that is an entirely different approach to one of collaboration, where everyone put in their own oar. I called Tom outside and told him my views on this matter and suggested to him that if he was not in favour of working within the stated parameters of this new piece, than it would be best if he left immediately. Tom did not leave, and from then on behaved well throughout the rehearsals.

The next and serious crisis occurred with Clare. In all the years I had worked with Clare, she had never been anything less than a wonderful and charming professional. However, she came to me with what she saw as her huge problem. This was the fact

that Tom Yang was clearly Chinese, and Clare was going to have to dress him up as a BNP (British National Party) skin-head crashing on to the bus with his ghetto blaster and terrorising the passengers. Clare felt that she just could not do this to Tom. I tried to explain that this was theatre, and that, for instance, the role of Othello is hardly ever played by a black man, and that whilst the action is going on, it is the job of the protagonists to convince the audience that they are the part they have taken on. Eventually, thank goodness, Clare relented and agreed to re-join the team again, but those days which she had taken off from the production were nightmarish for me, especially in view of the very large number of costumes concerned.

But the *No. 11 Bus* belonged to Simon McBurney. Max had written it to show off Simon's brilliance and virtuosity in spite of the fact that what he actually wrote turned out to be totally different from what he said he was going to write. Never mind. Simon was brand new and just entering upon his professional career. As far as I was concerned, I would turn up at the rehearsals and double up with laughter even if Simon wasn't actually doing anything at all.

Brenda, as director, did not achieve full co-operation from everyone concerned. It was a difficult task but the feeling of general rebellion was never far off. This new work of Max's did not fall into any convenient category. It was neither a music-theatre work, with a single propagandist, nor a chamber opera. What ran through it was the bus, gloriously fitted out with the seats covered with the material that Michael, my husband had persuaded London Transport to give him.

The Fires gave all three of their annual London concerts at the Queen Elizabeth hall. Frankly, we would have been much better off at either the Purcell Room or the Wigmore Hall, but neither of those two venues had the necessary space to accommodate our theatrical needs, and The Fires was known for putting on music-theatre works and chamber operas. However, The Queen Elizabeth Hall in those days was highly unsuitable for our theatrical pieces. It had only basic lighting, and so we had to bring in our own. The regular staff was not at all used to dealing with companies who put on theatrical works – they dealt almost exclusively with chamber orchestras and chamber music and piano recitals. The kinds of needs that I had were always very considerably more than other companies. Luckily, I brought in my own people who would always know what to do, but it is difficult when you have to work within the situation you find yourself.

Finally, we arrived at the day of the performance itself on 20 March 1984. It was an extremely anxious time for me personally, as my father was very ill, and so all the ups and downs of putting the whole production together had taken on an even more uncertain colour. We had, unusually, a completely sold-out house. The audience laughed and roared their approval throughout. I thought we had pulled it off in spite of everything. But I was wrong. The critics hated every moment of it. I had never experienced such a universally negative response from the critics as this. I was, naturally, confused, as it seemed that it pleased the audience, but it is the ones who write about the things in newspapers and journals who carry the word, and who have to be acknowledged. It was always going to be difficult for me to sell this work within The Fires because the cost to anyone who bought it was enormous, and it could not, under any circumstances, be called an opera, which would have helped. But now

that we had had the thumbs down from the critics, my task was going to be virtually impossible.

In the event, as far as getting work for *The Fires* was concerned, I managed one invitation in the UK to the Harrogate Festival, a pair of performances at the Olympic Theatre in Rome. Elsewhere, in their own productions, *The No. 11 Bus* was performed in Gelsenkirchen in Germany, the Kammeroper Vienna in Austria, the Finnish Chamber Opera, and in France under the auspices of the Atelier du Rhin in Colmar, Strasbourg and Mulhouse.

Max dedicated *The No. 11 Bus* to Michael and to me.

### **North American Tour – 1985**

Not every single person viewed *The No. 11 Bus* with disfavour. Randall Brian, who ran the [Stamford Centre](#) for the Arts in Stamford Connecticut, some forty miles north of New York, was a passionate admirer of Max's, and had come to London to see the new work. Randy was convinced of the worth of the new piece, and wanted to make his business to ensure that it had the North American premiere. He also insisted that this had to be with *The Fires*, no less. His invitation to bring *The Fires* to Stamford with the bus became the basis for *The Fires*' next, and last, tour of the USA. The astounding success that *The Fires* had had with the Britain Salutes New York Festival, meant that they could now be taken on permanently by CAMI, and not just as a one-off under Peter Gelb. We duly were assigned to the Doug Sheldon Davison at CAMI. Doug came to see me in London, and said that he would be aiming for a tour at the end of 1985, and that he was giving the whole project to Mary Jo Conneally, who I met shortly afterwards in New York. This was a most auspicious meeting. I explained to her the whole ethos of what *The Fires* did, and how she would, in all probability, find it very difficult to sell *The Fires*, which was totally unlike any of the other kinds of attractions which CAMI had on their books. Mary Jo tossed aside all my warnings. She told me that she was not interested in working for any easy push-over ensembles. She wanted the ensemble to be a quality production, and she would then be able to convincingly sell them. Mary Jo was someone entirely after my own heart, and, such people are very hard to find.

During 1984, it became clear to me that the advent of Rosemary and Greg's son Christopher would mean that they would shortly be leaving *The Fires*. There were probably many reasons, as there always are, but one of them would be the fact that they were in the same group, which meant they did the same dates, and that it would be harder for them to arrange alternative care for looking after the baby. Be that as it may, it was in October, just at the time we had a date in Rome, that Rosemary came to tell me that she was resigning from *The Fires* and that Greg would be doing the same. They would fulfil the dates for which they had been booked. This meant that we were to lose one third of the group. Some months later, Philippa came to tell me that she too would be leaving, and that she was joining *The Nash Ensemble*. This was another blow. By now we had lost fifty per cent of the group. This was not like it had been in 1976 when Gary, Alan, Jenny, Judith and Duncan had all departed within a matter of months. At that time, which was right at the start of my time with *The Fires*, I many plans and possibilities stretching ahead of us. But

now things were very difficult, and Max was no longer the driving energy behind everything which made it go. But we did have the US and Canada tour ahead of us, and Mary Jo was very keen and very active. We brought in three new players. Philippa suggested Helen Keen, who had substituted for her on occasions. Greg strongly recommended his mate, Mark Glenworth, who had also worked with us. As far as the violinist was concerned, we needed to have auditions. We held these, and Madeleine Mitchell was chosen. I was personally delighted with this, as Madeleine was a pupil of my friend Sylvia Rosenberg.

All of the theatrical works in the Fires repertoire, other than *The Martyrdom*, were going to be performed during the course of this tour. Once again, it was a mountain of a challenge. Mary Jo was well used to touring companies in the US and Canada. She handled orchestras and she handled theatrical companies, so she knew and understood what the problems were for theatricals. She had a brilliant team that she would get together for her tours, who all worked under her instructions..

At my end I had many new artists I had to bring in. Michael Rippon had emigrated and gone to live in Hong Kong. In his stead, for *Eight Songs* and *Le Jongleur* we brought in Andrew Gallacher, who was recommended by Brenda McLean. Simon McBurney only did the first few *No. 11 Bus* performances, and then did no more as he was busy with his own company, Theatre de la Complicité which he had started. Brenda also brought in Anthony Best to be the mime. Both of these two were good, but neither had the brilliance of those they had replaced. Andrew was not mad enough, and Anthony was not funny enough. Jonny James, our juggler, was definitely with us, and earlier in the year he had married Beverley Davison, who had left The Fires in 1980. Neil Mackie, Christopher Keyte and Andrew Gallacher were to sing in *The Lighthouse*. Donald Stephenson, Christopher Keyte and Mary Thomas were to sing in *The No. 11 Bus*, with Mark Wraith and Nicholas Jones as the two dancers and Anthony Best as the mime. Mary was to sing *Miss Donnithorne*. Mark Wraith was to dance in *Vesalii Icones*. These were a lot of works to put together, and Brenda McLean was in charge of all the sung items, and Ian Spink came back to work again with Mark. We were not going to be able to take our original lighthouse with us, and so another, far more portable one had to be constructed. All of this felt like starting again from scratch, except that it wasn't. We knew what kind of end product we were aiming for. Most of the people, if not all, knew the pieces. Bringing the new people in was a different matter to everyone having to learn everything from the beginning. We had videos of everything to show the newcomers what should be happening. Oh yes, and one thing more. Max was going to conduct all the concerts on the tour. I don't think it would have been possible for Mary Jo to sell The Fires in the USA without Max himself being present.

In essence, the tour started in Toronto where we would do the four music-theatre works. Then we were to go to St. Louise, Boston, Washington and Road Island with *Eight Songs* and *Le Jongleur*. Then we moved back for a residency at the Alice Tully Hall in New York, with all the works except *The No. 11 Bus*. Then we moved on for another residency at Stamford, this time getting *The No. 11 Bus* together, and time had been allowed for that by Randy Brian. And, after that, we moved on to San Francisco and Los Angeles for the last two concerts with *Eight Songs* and *Le Jongleur*.

In order to have two portable works to move freely around the country, all the trappings of the original productions of *Le Jongleur* had been scrapped, leaving only the costumes, and a selection of decorative cloths, all of which could fit into all our regular luggage, and which could easily be mounted on a series of tables and chairs which was not difficult for any promoter to provide. The cages for *Eight Songs* had also been dropped. All that was left was the king's costume, and I did ask the promoter to provide the violins to be smashed. Overall, starting out with the music-theatre works in Toronto meant there was enough time for the heavy sets and props and costumes in *The Lighthouse* and in *The No. 11 Bus* to be flown from London and into the US and cleared customs and transported accordingly to New York and on to Stamford. I was unhappy about sending items by air, as there would be a lack of control and supervision during that period. Kris drove the van to the Heathrow, where he was told that he could leave the van overnight before having to check everything in first thing the following morning. I nearly blew my head off, and told him that on no account were he to leave the van unaccompanied for one single second and that he, Kris, would have to spend the night sleeping in the van until he safely handed everything over to the authorities.

All worked out well. We had our residency at the Alice Tully Hall, which hit right at the heart of the classical musical establishment of the US. But quite honestly, I can't say that it had the colossal impact that our Britain Salutes New York appearances had done. Perhaps the novelty had worn off. Perhaps the performances were not as electric, in spite of Max conducting. Perhaps it was the difference ambience at the hall. The company then moved on to Stamford, with Mary Jo herself driving the enormous van herself. Mary Jo was tiny, but was a great bundle of energy, and it was an extraordinary sight to see her climb out of the van in Stamford. Randy Brian had arranged a generous amount of time for the company to re-rehearse *The No. 11 Bus*, and all and sundry availed themselves of these luxurious facilities. Brenda McLean was on hand to put everything together, and to work Anthony Best into the part. I particularly enjoyed the sight of Max dressed up in a policeman's – a British policeman's – uniform. Sheila Porter was again on hand to do all the press for the whole tour. CAMI had been so delighted with what she had done for The Fires for Britain Salutes New York that they had given her a lot more work. Sheila knew very well how The Fires operated and what we wanted, and she obtained extensive coverage right across the whole tour. Nobody was able to say that The Fires had not made their mark.

Once we had finished on the East Coast, we all relaxed into the balmy weather awaiting us on the West Coast, and the change in temperature in late November was delightful. Somehow, there is always a huge change in atmosphere once California is reached. Mary Jo had been with us all the way, organising things with her own team on the road as she went along. In those days, without Blackberry phones and E phones and Emails, keeping in touch with home base was always a major problem, but was always of first necessity. We played our concert at Royce Hall at UCLA, which, to me, had always felt like being in Hollywood – well, in fact it was, which added a dimension of spurious glamour.

And then finally, we were to have our last concert in San Francisco. The campus at Berkley, like all American campuses, was huge and bewildering. Zellerbach Hall was one of the most famous venues in the USA. We had performed there, most

successfully, on our first tour in 1976, nine years previously. It seemed appropriate to finish up there. All was set fair. The group had had a short play-through in the late afternoon, just to get the feel of the place. Mark Glenworth, our percussionist, beckoned me over, and told me that he had not been provided with a tam-tam, which is a large gong on a stand. What they had given him was a small gong of the sort which would summon people to dinner in a hotel. So I told Mark that I would fix this and there would be no problem.

How very wrong I was. The American universities are famously incredibly well endowed with everything, including percussion up to the highest and most expensive degree. As with the previous tour in 1976, I knew that it would not be a problem to ask for a marimba for Terry Emery in *Ave Maris Stella*. I called someone in charge and asked why we did not have the tam-tam as had been requested on the 'items to be provided' requests. I was told that they had been to all the hire places in San Francisco and that they couldn't find one. This was nonsense. They just hadn't thought about it until that very day when it might be possible that all tam-tams were out on hire. I then asked why they hadn't got a tam-tam from their own Music Department. It was explained to me that the Music Department at Berkeley had nothing to do with the department which promoted concerts, which is the department which had hired us. I kept on asking for people higher and higher up the administrative ladder, why it was that the Promotions Department had not contacted the Music Department to borrow a tam-tam for the day. No satisfactory answer was given. I then said that I was going to go myself to the Music Department and I was going to bring a tam-tam to the Zellerbach Hall. I was told that this was not possible as they didn't know if anyone would be available. Mary Jo and I were taken by one high-up administrative staff-member along to the Music Department, which was a long way away and down many confusing paths.

We arrived at the Music Department. On arrival I asked to be allowed to get to the percussion department. I was asked what I wanted, and I told them I wished to have a tam-tam. I was told that it was not sure that the percussion room had a tam-tam. I replied that there was no question whatsoever that there would be a tam-tam. Mary-Jo and I were shown downstairs to what must possibly be the largest room of percussion anywhere in the world. It was in a huge cage and was locked up. I could see my tam-tam inside this cage. The person with us pointed out that that we could not get the tam-tam because the cage was locked. I politely pointed out that he had to go to fetch a key which would open the cage. This he did and returned with the key. The door to Aladdin's cave was opened. We had our tam-tam.

Now we had to get the tam-tam from the Music Department back to Zellerbach Hall. Time was getting on. The young man with the key pointed to a platform onto which we could put our tam-tam. Mary Jo and I and the tam-tam got onto this platform. A button was pressed, and the platform rose upwards. It proved to be a trap floor, and as we got to the top, we found ourselves in the middle of a stage where a group of Indian musicians were rehearsing. At least we were now on ground level. The task ahead of us was to physically carry the very heavy tam-tam and its equally heavy stand across the campus. What followed was nothing less than pure torture. Mary Jo and I groaned every painful step of the way, calling out to each other. She had the stand and I had the tam-tam. But nothing on earth would have persuaded either of us to give up our mission. At long last we staggered into Zellerbach hall, and handed over

the tam-tam to Mark, who was eagerly awaiting it. We only had a few minutes to go before the start of the concert.

*Eight Songs* was second on the program, and thus would be the last item of the whole tour. Mar Jo and I sat next to each other. The moment arrived for the tam-tam. It was one single stroke in the whole work. As Mark made his stroke, Mary Jo and I reached out for each other's hand and we each gave the other one large and hearty shake of satisfaction. Mission completed. We had delivered the tour. As I write this, I can still recall how awful this incident was, and, at the same time how absurd. Why had it been necessary to go through all that hassle, and pain, to be able to produce one exceedingly loud note on the tam-tam? I suppose you could say that it was all part of wanting to make the most and the best of every situation. In one way, it epitomized every aspect of what it was like trying to manage *The Fires* where every detail has to fit into place. At one point, talking to Alan Hacker many years previously, he had said to me that in this business one has to learn to live with loose ends. I suppose you could say that I was never willing to put up with loose ends.

### **Other Composers**

Although *The Fires* was most certainly the group which performed Max's works, and it never gave a concert without at least one important Max work, there was another less well-known but significant aspect of what *The Fires* did, and that was to commission and present new works by other contemporary composers. Max had always insisted on this right from the beginning. He wanted, particularly, to give other younger composers a chance to have their music performed by a group of musicians who would take it seriously, and not downgrade it, as had been his own experience with so many of the larger and more important orchestras. Our own series, which comprised of three concerts at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, was the ideal platform for these new works. Max would tell me the composer he wanted to commission, and I would set about obtaining it. Most of composers, but not all were British, and this meant applying for commission money to the Arts Council. At first, the commissions went through automatically, but later on, the Arts Council tightened up the rules, and they insisted that each new commission had to have three performances, and not just the one. Luckily, in this later stage, we were in a position to guarantee these performances, because we could be pretty sure of giving concerts in the St. Magnus Festival in Orkney and also at the Dartington Summer School of Music. And, if not there, we had other dates around the country.

Many of the composers were young and inexperienced and had no idea what the word 'dead-line' meant. Of course they knew in theory, but not what it meant on the ground. In other words, they would have to deliver on time. I always asked for the parts to be delivered to me in good time for me to be able to distribute them to the players, so that they could work on them prior to coming together for rehearsal, as was the way with chamber ensembles. It never happened. Every single composer was always, but always late, late, late. I would receive the parts at the very last minute. On one occasion I had to go to the Red Star at Euston station to pick up the parts and take them over to the rehearsal where the group was waiting to begin. I found all of this very difficult and discouraging. I had been used to Max, who always delivered in good time. Max was ultra-professional in all aspects. He knew that it takes time for the publisher to prepare the parts from the manuscript, and equally that

the players need time to prepare themselves before they begin to rehearse. I was not able to manage this with any of the other composers. I would always talk to them about it well in advance, but even though in some cases they had two years to meet their deadline, it just didn't happen. . But, being late notwithstanding, we were able to give a goodly number of young composers a start, and to propel them on their way through their careers. I was very proud of this. And after all, composers are not the only people who are late and pass their deadlines.

Some times some member of the group would ask why they would always be playing works by young and unknown composers. Why didn't they get works by well-known composers at the top of the tree? I explained that those composers were, in the first place, expensive, and, in the second, preferred to write for larger ensembles such as orchestras or operas companies. Our Fires was too small-scale for such eminent composers. I also explained that the fact that Max wrote work for The Fires because it was his own group and that he wrote many works for them without commission, and that where there was an outside commission, it came to Max and that he had chosen The Fires to be the group that would perform that work.

### **Elliott Carter/Hans Werner Henze**

However, there were a couple of exceptions, and one of them was the American composer [Elliott Carter](#). I have described earlier how The Fires were able to give the first performance of Elliott's work *Triple Duo* at the Britain Salutes New York Festival in 1983. The story of this began seven years earlier. It was the day after the last concert of the North American tour in October and November 1976. The group had returned home, and Max and I went to New York, each of us to stay with friends privately. Max and I were invited to a party given by Red and Pick Heller, a well known couple in musical circles. One of the people at that party was Elliott Carter. Elliott asked me if Max would consider giving a lecture to his composition class at Juilliard School. I asked when this might be, and he replied "tomorrow morning". Well, this was a bit sudden, by why not? Max agreed to do this, and Elliott went away to make some phone calls. When he returned, I asked him if he would consider writing a work for The Fires. This seemed to me to be an eminently excellent thing to do, and I did not need to ask Max if it would be all right. Elliott replied that he would like to write a work for The Fires, but there was one condition, and that was there would be no specified date for the work to be completed. What he meant was that we could not say that it was for a particular performance on a particular day in a particular year. This meant that when Elliot had written the work, we would be in a position to program it. I replied to Elliott "we will wait". Of course we would wait. To be able to have a piece by Elliott Carer would be a wonderful thing for The Fires. I had not given a moment's thought to how I would pay for this commission. I accepted Elliott's condition and I contacted Elliott's publisher, who was also Boosey & Hawkes, and agreed what the fee would be and that it would be paid in full only on the completion of the work, and that date was to be open.

An idea occurred to Michael as to where we might get the money for the commission. I contacted Lady Rosalyn Lyons, the wife of Sir Jack Lyons, who was a businessman and philanthropist and who had given much money to many artistic projects and institutions. Lady Rosalyn was American, and Elliott was American. Maybe the two

could be brought together. I put the case to Rosalyn, as I now called her. She was much taken with the idea. She had not specifically heard of Elliott, but when I explained that he was the greatest living American composer, she became enthusiastic. I then explained the circumstances. We did not know exactly when the money for the commission would be due, as this would depend on when Elliott wrote the piece. Rosalyn was quite agreeable to the situation. I said that I would always keep in contact with her, and let her know what news, if any, there was. Rosalyn agreed to everything. I had managed to obtain a commission, and I had managed to get the money to pay for the commission. Bravo!

Thereafter, I called Rosalyn every year. Each time we would go for a walk in Holland Park, and I told her that there had been no sign of life from Elliott, at least, not as far as I was concerned. She told me not to worry, and that she would be ready with the money whenever it was necessary. Matters proceeded in this manner until 1982, when Elliott suddenly contacted me, and told me, with no warning, that the piece for *The Fires* was now written, and that it was to be called *Triple Duo*. Hoorah! And the cookie had crumbled exactly so that we could put the world premiere, no less, into the appearance by *The Fires* in the Britani Salutes New York Festival. I hastened back to Rosalyn to tell her the good news. This time there was no invitation to a walk in Holland Park. She told me that the time had now passed and the occasion for which she had been planning to give her husband a present had now passed, and that she would no longer be willing to give the money. Utter disaster! And there was nothing to be done about it. I had no piece of paper with Rosalyn concerning our verbal agreement. I was down in the depths of despair. But rescue from the situation was at hand. Michael spoke to Robert Ponsonby at the BBC and explained our predicament. Robert said that he had long been looking for an opportunity to have the BBC commission a work by Elliott, and here was the very work. The deed was done.

Another work by a notable composer, other than Max, was *Sextet* by the German composer [Hans Werner Henze](#). Hans was a great friend of Max's, and had invited *The Fires* on several occasions to various festivals held in different places celebrating his works. Hans was to write the music for a new film *L'Amour a Mort* to be directed by the French director Alain Resnais, whose reputation had been made by such films as *Hiroshima Mon Amour* and *Last Year in Marienbad*. Hans was to write the music for *The Fires*, and it was to be recorded in a studio, conducted by Hans, with Alain Resnais there giving his advice and comments. This was a very nice date for us, and it would give us a piece by Hans which we could add to our repertoire, and I did not have to find the commission money. The date was set, for 1 August, 1984 and I booked the Olympic Studios in Barnes. These studios were very famous and much frequented for these kinds of movie activities. I had sent Hans a full list of all the percussion that Greg had in his armoury, and told him that if he wrote for any other percussion instruments over and above that list, these would have to be paid for by the people who were employing us, that is to say, Alain Resnais. The cost of hiring percussion instruments is crippling, and I did not want that cost landing on *The Fires*.

Hans was in the United States attending the opening of one of his operas at Santa Fe. He would send the manuscript to his publisher, Schott Music, who would make the parts and forward them to us. These parts arrived the day before we were due in the studio. On the morning of the recording day, Greg phoned me to tell me that he had

looked at his part, and that there were many instruments which he did not have, that is, which were not on the list I had sent to Hans. This was bad. It meant that these missing instruments would have to be acquired forthwith. Percussion Services, which was the firm which we used, was in the East End of London, which was just about as far away as you could get from the Olympic Studios in Barnes. We all arrived at the studios, and I told Alain Resnais that we were short of percussion instruments which would have to be hired. Alain Resnais pulled a face, and asked me to go ahead and get hold of them. I then replied that I could not do that. He asked why not. I told him that I would have to use my Credit Card, and I was not willing to pay for the hire of these instruments, as it was in our contract that any additional instruments would have to be paid for by him. He then said that of course he would pay me back at a later date. I told him that I could not do that. I worried that if I paid out in advance, I would never recoup that money. And so, pulling the sourest face imaginable, Madame Resnais was despatched to the other end of London to pay for the immediate hire of the percussion instruments with her own Credit Card. It was a very large sum of money. All this had taken a long time. Eventually, everyone settled down to make the recording, and Hans and Alain Resnais, and, in particular, the players were delighted with it. They had loved working on Hans' music. After all the trouble, we were able to add *Sextet* to our repertoire. The players were due to receive additional money for doubling, which is what they are entitled to when doing studio recordings. These were in the contract with Alain Resnais. I never did receive that doubling money to give to the players.

### **The Fires Farewell - January 1987**

I sat musing on a bench overlooking the lake in Zurich in October 1986. I was much troubled. I did not see any future for The Fires, other than going over the same ground again, which was not something that a forward-looking ensemble should be doing. From The Fires' point of view, we had no new works to look forward to from Max, and, after the tour of the US in November 1985, his interest in The Fires had dwindled almost to vanishing point. From Max's point of view, things elsewhere than The Fires were blossoming. He had been appointed as composer/conductor of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. In this position he was going to write a series of ten concertos for the principal players of the orchestra stretching over a period of seven or so years ahead. He had moved on. I felt that now The Fires, instead of being an asset to Max, were a hindrance. I had broached the subject of disbanding The Fires on several occasions with Max, but he had avoided talking about it. I knew he thought that if he pulled the plug on The Fires, he would be letting the players down, especially Steve, who had been there from the start, and who was such a driving force within the group. A quotation from Julius Caesar by Shakespeare arose in my mind

*"There is a tide in the affairs of men.  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.  
On such a full sea are we now afloat,*

*And we must take the current when it serves,  
Or lose our ventures.”*

*Julius Caesar Act 4, scene 3,*

This seemed to be that tide and this seemed to be Max's moment to move on from The Fires. Max was in London when I returned from Zurich, and I asked him to come to the flat for a meeting with Michael and with me. I put my case as strongly as I could. I knew that Michael had been thinking along my lines for quite a while, but I was surprised that Max instantly agreed. It seemed to relieve him that somehow this decision had been taken off him. I called an immediate meeting of the Council of Management. Max first explained the situation to them, and then I chimed in with all the reasons. They could see our point of view, and did not really have anything further to add. This was such an unusual decision, that it could only take everyone by surprise. To my knowledge, no organization had willfully decided not to continue. There would be much shock and consternation within the music business. Robin Howard pointed out that we could not just stop, but that we should go out with a bang, not a whimper, and give a big farewell concert. The group had to be informed instantly, and all at the same moment, without anyone having to tell anyone else. The morning after our meeting, I phoned all the six members of The Fires within the space of two minutes that the decision had been taken. I said I would return to them later on in the morning to give a fuller explanation.

The Fires had some penciled dates stretching into 1987, but no contracts had been signed. We also had our own series at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, but we also had the option not to do these. It was decided that we would give the last concert of The Fires at the QEH in January 1987, just three months away. It would be called The Fires Farewell- 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary Celebration, as it was twenty years since their first concert. We hoped that this joy could be mixed with the sadness of the occasion. We had a new work on the program by Ronald Caltabiano, an American composer and friend of Max's. Max himself said that he would write two works. One would be a farewell piece, and the other would be some songs for Mary to sing. We would also have our old warhorse, *Eight Songs*. Max said that he wanted Michael Rippon. I said that I thought that was a bad idea, as it would mean the huge expense of bringing him from Hong Kong, where he now resided. Max persisted that Michael was his favourite interpreter of the piece. So I contacted Michael's manager and booked him.

I was making all the arrangements for the concert, but in this case we would also be having a great party after the concert which was to be given at The Place, which was the home of London Contemporary Dance which was Robin Howard's company. I certainly did not enjoy arranging the party, but it had to be done. It was necessary for people to get together after the show in this particular fashion.

I asked Max how many rehearsals we would need for this concert, and he gave me a large number. I asked him why he felt he needed so many, and he said that it was because of *Eight Songs*. I said that everyone knew the work backwards in their sleep, and then Max said he needed all these rehearsals "because this time we are going to get it right"! I had booked Michael Rippon's return journey from Hong Kong. This was not an open ticket, but one which could be got cheaper because it was booked in advance. A week before the concert, I received a phone call from Michael's agent in

London, informing me that Michael wanted to take an earlier plane than the one which was booked to return to Hong Kong. I said that I could not do that as no changes were allowed on that ticket. I was then told that unless I changed the ticket Michael would not come. I told the agent to stuff it. This was blackmail yet again. Michael's ticket was non-changeable and non-refundable. I knew I would lose all the money for the ticket and also lose Michael, but I would not yield to the blackmail. I asked Jumbo - David Wilson Johnson - who had sung *Eight Songs* on numerous occasions, both for us and elsewhere, if he were free to sing the following week, and he said he would. I then told Michael's agent that we no longer required Michael's services. I was very sad that our relationship with Michael should end on such an extremely sour note, but he had asked for it.

The weather at the time of the concert on 20 January 1987 was totally appalling. There had been weeks of nothing but snow and winds. Max had difficulty in getting off Hoy to Stromness to come down to London. He had only just made it, trudging through the snow for five miles because the road was impassable by car. Ron Caltabiano was arriving by plane from the US, bringing the parts with him. Like so many of his predecessors, he had not managed to send the parts in advance. Max had written his two works. These were – *Farewell a Fancye* for the group and *Winterfold*, set to poems by George Mackay Brown, for Mary and the group including Tim Walker on guitar. When Max finally arrived in London, we set off together towards Craxton's for these, our last Fires rehearsals. But the weather was so bad, that all the buses had been stopped by London Transport. We could only get to Kiddepore Avenue by tube to Finchley Road Station and then to walk. This in itself would not have been so bad, except that we had to make our way, with much difficulty through the snow and ice, and Max had left his snow boots in Orkney, and he only had a flimsy pair of shoes.

On arrival at Craxton's, I was informed by our driver who was bringing all the percussion instruments and the cages from our store in Marie Currie's barn in Hitchin, that he could not get through because the roads were impassable and he had no idea when he would arrive. Ron contacted me to say that he was not sure if he would arrive, due to delays in all the air traffic into Heathrow. Everything was conspiring against us on all sides. But then, I thought to myself, what's new? Aren't things like this always sent to try us? But should there be so many things and all of them together?

Ron did eventually arrive with his parts and Colin Marks, our van driver, did likewise arrive with the cages and the percussion. Every work was rehearsed. We knew we would have a sold-out house for this, our last appearance. Max and The Fires walked out on to the stage to a huge roar. Max had been knighted in the New Year's Honours, and he was now Sir Peter and not Max. Well, nobody took any notice of that change, but the audience showed their warmth to Max and what he had achieved. All the works were performed. Max had his requisite number of rehearsals to bring *Eight Songs*, sung by Jumbo, to the standard he had always hoped for but had never, until now, reached. There was an air of celebration. At the end, Max gave the shortest of farewell speeches, saying that he hoped that the other groups would have more success with their funding from the Arts Council than The Fires had had. I thought this rather unfair, because, on the whole. The Arts Council had done rather well by The Fires. I don't remember anything about the party except that it had been

a huge amount of work to organize, and that everyone who had ever had anything to do with The Fires was phoning up to be invited.

The Fires had started as The Pierrot Players and given their first concert, at the Conway Hall, on 30 May 1967, with Max writing his first work, *Antechrist*, for that concert. And now, almost twenty years later, was the final concert, with Max again writing two new works, the final concert by The Fires of London was given.

The players of The Fires held all their parts at home on permanent loan from the publishers and brought them to rehearsals and concerts. From the beginning, it had always been that at every rehearsal and/or concert, at least one of the players had left their part at home, and I had to provide a replacement. This meant that I always attended each rehearsal and concert with the bags of spare parts. And, once I had handed over a spare part which someone had forgotten, I never received it back again. I was constantly in touch with the publishers to let me have the replacement parts, so that I could keep them in case of the emergency which never failed to materialise. Finally, after we gave our last concert, I requested that all the players return all their parts so that I could return them to the publishers. I remember that in one instance there were seventeen copies of the flute part for *Ave Maris Stella*.

The Fires were hugely influential. Numerous other groups were founded with the same instrumentation around the world. This was because a repertoire for that grouping, not only of Max's pieces, but works by the other composers, now existed and had proved successful and was being played. The groups, and the works still exist and are performed. I feel that I had made my contribution.

#### **List of Composers performed by the Fires of London formerly the Pierrot Players**

David Bedford  
[Harrison Birtwistle](#)  
[Pierre Boulez](#)  
Ronald Caltabiano  
[Elliott Carter](#)  
Bruce Cole  
[Martin Dalby](#)  
Martin Davies  
Peter Maxwell Davies  
[Duncan Druce](#)  
[Zsolt Durko](#)  
[Ross Edwards](#)  
Brian Elias  
Richard Emsley  
Morton Feldman  
[Michael Finnissy](#)  
Anthony Gilbert  
[Philip Grange](#)  
Cristobal Halfter  
Jonathan Harvey  
Roman Haubenstock-Ramati

Piers Hellawell  
[Hans Werner Henze](#)  
John Hopkins  
[Oliver Knussen](#)  
Robert Kyr  
[Rodney Lister](#)  
David Lumsdaine  
Edward Maguire  
Ian McQueen  
Richard Meale  
Dominic Muldowney  
George Newson  
[Bayan Northcott](#)  
Anthony Payne  
Anthony Powers  
David Roland  
[Robert Saxton](#)  
Roger Smalley  
Gerard Victory  
[Judith Weir](#)  
Gillian Whitehead

*The Fires of London*

Principal Players and Associates of the Fires of London

Formerly The Pierrot Players



**Principal Players**

**Flute/piccolo/Alto flute**

Judith Pearce 1967-77  
Sebastian Bell 1977  
Philippa Davies 1978-85  
Helen Keen 1985-87

**Clarinet/Bass Clarinet**

Alan Hacker 1967-76  
David Campbell 1976-87

**Violin/Viola**

Duncan Druce 1967-77  
Beverley Davison 1977-80  
Rosemary Furniss 1980-85  
Madeleine Mitchell 1985-87

**Cello**

Jennifer Ward Clarke 1967-  
Shrigley Jones 1977-8  
Alexander Baillie 1978-80  
Jonathan Williams 1980-87

**Piano/Harpsichord/Celesta/Chamber Organ**

Stephen Pruslin 1967-87

**Percussion**

Tristan Fry 1967-8  
Barry Quinn 1968-71  
Gary Kettel 1971-6  
Gregory Knowles 1977-85  
Mark Glenworth 1985-7

**Guest Instrumentalists**

**Flute**

Ingrid Culliford  
Paul Davies  
Kathryn Lukas  
Lenore Smith  
Averil Williams

**Oboe**

Janet Craxton  
Nicholas Daniel  
Melinda Maxwell  
Robin Miller  
Edwin Roxburgh

**Clarinet**

Francis Christou  
Joy Farrell  
Ian Mitchell  
Justin Osborne  
Anthony Pay  
Michael Penney

**Bassoon**

Roger Birnstingl  
Kenneth Cooper  
Wendy Philips  
Dominic Weir  
John Witfield

**Horn**

John Butterworth  
Peter Francomb  
John Pignueguy

Stephen Stirling  
Richard Watkins

**Trumpet**

Norman Archibald  
Gareth Bimson  
Anthony Crowley  
Mark Emney  
Robert Farley  
Nigel Gomm  
Elgar Howarth  
Ronald Hunt  
Maurice Murphy  
Bruce Nockles  
John Rourke  
Crispian Steele-Perkins  
John Wallace  
Ian Wilson

**Trombone**

Roger Brenner  
Michael Hext  
Maurice Platt  
David Purser  
Simon Wills

**Tuba**

Martin Fry

**Saxophone**

Tony Coe  
John Harle  
Edward Planas  
Kathleen Stobart  
Anton Weinberg

**Piano**

Peter Maxwell Davies  
Michael Finnissy  
Peter Greenwell  
Mary Thomas

**Organ and Regal**

Misha Donat

**Harp**

Sidonie Goossens

**Guitar**

Colin Downes  
Forbes Henderson  
Timothy Walker (guest  
principal)

**Mandolin**

Billy Bell  
James Ellis

**Ukulele**

Jonathan Lloyd

**Percussion**

David Corkhill  
John Donaldson  
Terence Emery  
Mark Glenworth  
Peter Greenham  
Christopher Hind  
Simon Linbrick  
Simon Rattle  
Stomu Yamash'ta

**Violin (Violin/Viola)**

Ruth Crouch  
Ruth Ehrlich  
Rebecca Hirsch  
Sue Lynn  
Francis Mason  
Elizabeth Perry  
Fiona Vanderspar  
Yu Yasuroaka

**Viola**

Roger Chase  
Ruth David

Paul Silverthorne  
Cathy Stevens

**Cello**

Olga Hegedus  
Marilyn Samson (guest principal)  
Rohan de Saram

**Double Bass**

Peter Buckoke  
John Gray  
Robin McGee  
Daryl Runswick  
John Steer  
Anthony van Kampen

**Principal Associated and Guest Artists**

**Conductors**

Peter Maxwell Davies  
Harrison Birtwistle

Gunther Bauer-Schenk  
Ronald Caltabiano  
John Carewe  
Nicholas Cleobury  
Robert Cornford  
Richard Dufallo  
Hans Werner Henze  
Jan Latham-Koenig  
Howard Williams

**Sopranos**

Mary Thomas 1967-87  
Jill Gomez  
Jenny Hill  
Emma Kirkby  
Bronwen Mills  
Vanessa Redgrave  
Elisabeth Söderström

**Tenors**

Neil Mackie  
Donald Stephenson

**Baritones**

Donald Bell  
Henry Herford  
Christopher Keyte  
Brian Rayner Cook  
Michael Rippon  
David Wilson-Johnson

**Basses**

Richard Angas  
Ian Comboy  
Andrew Gallacher  
Rodney Macann  
David Wilson-Johnson

**Extended Voices**

Donald Bell  
Julius Eastman  
Andrew Gallacher  
Roy Hart  
James Skoog  
William Pearson  
Michael Rippon  
David Wilson-Johnson

**Reciters**

Maria Aitken  
Andrew Branch  
Julian Curry  
Murray Melvin  
Vanessa Redgrave  
Mary Thomas

**Répétiteur**

Stephen Pruslin

Andrew Ball  
Susan Bradshaw  
Mary Nash

**Dancers**

Ann Dickie  
Christopher Jones  
William Louthier  
Clover Roope  
Mark Wraith  
Tom Yang

**Mimes/Jugglers**

Anthony Best  
Mark Furneaux  
Jonny James  
Simon McBurney  
Martin Reed  
Martin Solity

**Puppets**

Barry Smith's Theatre of Puppets

**Choreographers**

William Louthier  
Clover Roope  
Ian Spink

**Stage Directors**

Brenda McLean  
Murray Melvin  
James Murdoch  
David William

**Assistant Director**

Michael McCarthy  
Brenda McLean

**Set Designers**

Richard Armstrong  
John Chapman  
Roger Creswell  
Keith Crichelow  
Pamela Howard  
Finlay James

Noah Morris  
Ray O'Neill  
Sue Plummer

**Costume Designers**

Pamela Howard  
Michael Kennedy  
Clare Mitchell  
James Murdoch  
Sue Plummer  
Doreen Watkins

**Graphic Designers**

Stephen Pruslin  
George Cayford  
John Chapman  
Derek Jarman  
Brenda Lukey  
James Murdoch  
Karl Renner  
Philip Sutton

**Electronics**

Keith Winter  
Peter Zinoviev

**Technical and Administrative Personnel**

**Lighting/Stage Management**

Kris Misselbrook 1977-87  
Tim Anger  
Ace McCarron

Judy Arnold  
Ian Callander  
John Chapman  
Bruce Cole  
Mick Hughes  
James Murdoch  
Mark Pritchard  
Alistair Reed  
Michael Saddington  
David Weaver

Michael Foss  
Colin Monks  
Mark Ridgway  
David Wilson

**Wardrobe**

Clare Mitchell 1977-87

Katie Birrell  
Angela Rayner Cook

**Manager**

James Murdoch 1968-71  
Louise Honeyman 1971-4  
Manfred Fox 1974-5  
Judy Arnold 1975-87

**Council of Management**

John Andrewes (Chairman)  
Judy Arnold  
Michael Arnold (financial adviser)  
Robin Boyle  
Peter Maxwell Davies  
John de la Cour  
John Drummond  
Robin Howard  
Elsbeth Juda  
Hans Juda  
Sheila McCrindle  
Jasper Rootham  
Michael Storrs  
Janis Susskind  
John Turner

**Friends of the Fires**

Judy Arnold  
Valerie Bannister  
Ronald Webb  
Richard Stemp  
Stephen Pruslin