

MANUSCRIPTS

Peter Maxwell Davies always writes his manuscripts with an H2 pencil. To my eyes, Max's manuscripts are things of beauty in their own right, never mind what the contents of the markings on the page might bring.

When I first became Max's manager in 1975, the manuscripts were something of an issue. Max was under great personal pressure of finding his way towards writing what would turn out to be his *Symphony No. 1* and as a result the quality of those gorgeous manuscripts had seriously deteriorated, and his publishers, Boosey & Hawkes, were encountering a great deal of difficulty in preparing the material ready for performances. In order to save himself time, Max suggested that, an interim solution would be to engage someone to make a fair copy of his manuscripts and that these would be the ones handed to Booseys. Richard Emsley a young composer with a clear and bold hand, was brought in for the purpose. Richard's work was absolutely meticulous, and it was his manuscripts which Booseys dealt with at this period. Once Max had completed his symphony, and it had been performed in 1978, his equilibrium regarding the writing of his manuscripts had returned, and the necessity of someone making a fair copy of his manuscripts had totally disappeared.

When Max received the commission to write the full-length ballet *Salome* in 1977, I discussed the project with Richard Emsley, giving him the time scale and asking him if he would be able to write the fair copy himself. He told me it would be an impossible task, not only for one person, namely himself, but that even two people working at top speed could not manage, and that this job needed three people. I asked Richard to find the two other people who would assist him in the task, and everything was set for 'go'. The ballet was to be in two acts and nine scenes, and each of the three copyists would have three scenes, working in rotation. As Max started to compose the ballet there was a deafening silence. Then the silence was broken, and Max informed me that he had completed the first scene. I asked him when he would be arranging to let me have the manuscript so that I could pass it on to Richard. "I have done it myself" said Max, "and I will continue to write out the whole of the ballet myself". In spite of the time pressure, there were no complaints from Booseys as to the quality of the manuscript which was presented to them. They of course had the huge job of preparing all the material at great speed, but this they did with their usual efficiency.

One day, during the course of our conversations, Richard Emsley told me that he had been approached by two schoolboys who wanted to talk to Max in connection with a scheme they had. This scheme involved something to do with a computer programme. I was totally ignorant of anything to do with computers, and I had no idea what a computer programme was. Max was considerably less knowledgeable about any technical matters than even I was, and for the life of me I could not see how anything the school boys had to say would interest Max in any way. However, I told Richard that the boys could come and see me, and that I would listen to what they had to say. An appointment was duly made, and the two boys, twin brothers called Benjamin and Jonathan Finn, came to see Michael and me. Michael had much more understanding about computers, and even knew what the word 'software' meant,

which I certainly did not. They explained that they were working on this programme, and they wanted to have Max's support as they went through it all. By support, they said that if they could say that Max was interested in what they were doing, it would be greatly helpful to them. I asked if this meant that Max would be required to use this product, because if this were the case, I couldn't see that Max would ever do such a thing, as he was so devoted to his way of writing with a pencil. They said that this would not matter. It was only Max's name that they were interested in. I understood virtually nothing of what they were talking about, but it all sounded like some kind of fairy tale. After they left, Michael shook his head, and said "impossibly brilliant – both of them".

The twins, both of them musically gifted, left school, both to study mathematics, one at Oxford and the other at Cambridge. They were working on their project when they saw each other in the holidays. At the end of each holiday period, I would get a report that things were moving on, but they needed one more holiday and then yet one more holiday until they achieved their goal. It took several years of asking for more holidays, until they completed their university studies. . The combination of mathematics, music, and two brilliant minds, who were twins, working together was dynamite. It wasn't necessary for me to tell them that whatever it was that they finally produced, Max would never use it. They had understood that from the start, but they still liked to refer back. As they moved nearer towards their goal, they asked if Michael and I would be their business managers, which we refused. I only looked after Max and was not interested in anything else. As anyone reading this will obviously by know have realised, the Finn twins were the founders of the Sibelius software, the most successful in the world, and the rest, as is so often stated, is history. Since the advent of Sibelius, and other similar software, the whole approach to writing music has totally changed. But Max continues to use his H2 pencil.

When I first started to work for Max he was writing on manuscript paper which was given to him by Booseys. But when trouble started to brew, Max thought it best to have his own supply and not to be dependent on anyone. He decided that instead of having to buy manuscript paper from a shop, his best bet would be to have some made up himself, fitting his own requirements exactly. I contacted Ted Shipley at the firm of Oldacres in Hatton Garden to enquire as to price and procedure. Max was very exact. He gave the precise size of the sheets, which had to be double. He wanted to have twenty-four saves on every page. The paper had to be of a certain thickness, and of certain whiteness, and the staves had to be of certain blackness. Once all these things were sorted out, and were to Max's satisfaction, there was then the question of price. Economies of scale certainly operated here. The more you had, the cheaper it became. Max opted for the very largest amount that was offered which of course came at the most beneficial price. I received a phone call informing me that the order was ready for collection. Then I was told "there is an awful lot of manuscript paper here". I reported this to Max who, by way of reply said "I write a lot of awful music". The problem of where to store the vast quantity of manuscript paper now arose. It was solved in various ways.

Some went up to Max in Orkney. Some went to his parent's house in Dorset. Some of it came to me. And some of it went to the place where we stored the costumes and instruments for *The Fires of London* in the barn of Marie Curry's house very close to George Bernard Shaw's house at Poet's Corner in Hertfordshire.

I had started to become anxious about Max's manuscripts in general. How many were there? Where were they all? What should be done with them? Thus I started on my quest to attempt to make a list which proved no easy a task. There were manuscripts all over the place. There were some at Booseys pending publication There were some in the loft of his parents' home at Eccliffe Mill in Dorset, which had been Max's own home prior to his moving to Orkney. There were, supposedly, some at Max's croft on Hoy. And how many others who knows where? The first job was to make a list of compositions. Once this was done, it was necessary to pull all the manuscripts together in one place and to see how these matched up to the list of compositions. In 1984 my whole living room was jammed almost to its high ceiling with the manuscripts which I had gathered together by various means. We had one extraordinary day, with Max on the other side of the gigantic pile, endeavouring to work out what was what, because not every manuscript had any form of title or description anywhere as to what it was There was much giggling but somehow, at the end of a very long day, were able to know what manuscripts were in our possession and which, according to the list, were missing.

How to find these missing manuscripts? Max had absolutely no idea where they might be. He did remember that one of the films scores he had written for Ken Russell in the early 1970s was removed the moment the recording session had ended. Likewise he remembered that his original manuscript for a recoding in a studio had likewise disappeared. But as to the whereabouts of for instance, his first symphony, he had no idea. I had many conversations with Sally Cox at Booseys who was Max's editor there. She was able to tell me that several of those missing manuscripts were, in fact, at Booseys. They needed to keep hold of them pending publication. But there were several other ones, which she had a record of as being at Booseys, she had looked for and had not been able to locate.

Several manuscripts emerged which were not on the list. These were, for the most part, early works which had not been published. One of these was a sequence of songs which had been intended to be performed as a sort of cabaret with Max's friend Tony Warren, who was the creator of the television series *Coronation Street*. Max and Tony had been teenage friends together. They had both appeared on the BBC's *Children's Hour* programmes in Manchester under the guidance of Trevor Hill. In those days, the late nineteen forties, talented children were encouraged to participate in the programmes. Max had been commissioned to write works, for which he received a payment of one guinea – one pound and one shilling – and I count Max as having been a composer since those days. Other alumni from that programme include Julie Andrewes and Roger Moore. Tony had studied at the Elliot Clark Theatre School in Liverpool, and these songs, with words by Tony and music by Max had been written for a performance, which never took place. Somehow Max had the score in his possession, and it was now revealed. I telephoned Tony to inform him of this find, and he instantly started to sing the songs to me down the telephone – word perfect. And it wasn't as if he had had any forewarning to job his memory.

All these manuscripts needed to be put into one place and made available for viewing. Max wanted all the works he had written prior to his move to Scotland in 1971 to go to the Salford City Archive Centre, and those after 1971 to go to the Scottish music Information Centre in Scotland in Glasgow. Moving all these items around from their various places was a problem. One likes to think of music being charming and relaxing, but a lot of it boils down to the logistics of moving many kinds of items from one location to another.

Thus things remained for several years until in 1993 I began to have further worries about both the safety of the manuscripts in the archive centres and the fact that they were in different places. I was disturbed, for instance, by the report of a couple of researchers who were looking into Schoenberg's manuscripts, because these were between archives in California and Vienna, and the Viennese one was only open once a month on a Thursday. Ease of access and availability were the two crucial matters.

Various possibilities were thought about. It was known that some American universities were eager to get possession of manuscripts. Also, several composers' had their manuscripts in the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel. But Max felt that the British Library was the best place, and so we negotiated there with Dr. Alice Prochaska who was in charge of acquisitions. At that time, the British Library was still in the British Museum in Great Russell Street in Bloomsbury. The list of manuscripts had grown, because Max had composed many new works. In September 1993 I arranged for a van to drive from London to Glasgow, and then down to Salford and then back to London, picking up from the two archive centres. It was not possible to get to the British Museum on the same day, and so everything had to be brought into my flat for the night for safe keeping. This involved carrying everything up the stairs, and then, the following day, down the stairs again, and onto the British Museum and depositing everything into the waiting arms of Dr. Prochaska and Dr. Hugh Cobbe, head of the department.

With the manuscripts and sketches went my list, which I am afraid was not as complete as it would have been had I been more expert in the art of compiling such a list. Arthur Searle was the man who was to make the list for the British Library Catalogue. I asked him how long he estimated it might take, and he replied that it might be two months. In the event, it took over one year. Arthur Searle told me that it was one of the most difficult jobs he had ever undertaken, and he added that it was also the most satisfying.

By 2006, the manuscripts had once again started to pile up in my office. By this time I was well versed in keeping track of exactly where each manuscript was, as between Max and the publishers and me. Once again we returned to the British Library, which had moved to its present magnificent premises in St. Pancras in 1998. Dr. Chris Banks was now in charge. This time, the items that were to be given would be all the early works which had not been published, and the sketches. It seems that in a way, sketches are even more interesting than manuscripts, because from these one can see where the composer has changed his mind. Once again my office was full of packets of envelopes, each one containing a manuscript together with any other material appertaining to that particular work.

Manuscripts

Richard McNutt came to assess everything. After opening one or two of the envelopes he asked me where the sketches were. I replied that as far as I was aware, Max had provided me with all the material connected with each composition. Mr. MacNutt said that he was unable to see any sketches, and he asked again where Max worked everything out. I said that to the best of my knowledge Max didn't do that, and that he wrote straight into a manuscript, but that I would check with Max, and let him know if I had got it wrong. Mr. MacNutt said that he had never heard of such a thing, as all composers have sketches. I did check this with Max asking him if he had any more sketches, to which he replied "certainly not". This set of manuscripts went to the British Library in November 2006.