

**Musical Imagery:  
Hearing and Imagining Music**

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VOLUME 2

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## **Appendix A**

### **ESM instruction sheet**

#### **'TUNE ON THE BRAIN' - 11th-17th February 2002**

- Every day, between the hours of 10am and 10pm please ensure you carry:
  - six blank forms and a pen/pencil
  - mobile phone, switched on at all times on vibration mode/silent mode
  
- It is important not to have the phone ring set, as any sound may interfere with what you may be hearing at the time. If your phone does not have a vibration or silent mode, please set it to a neutral, non-music ring tone (and inform me that this is the case)
  
- If your phone is on silent and not vibration mode, please ensure you **check it regularly** to see if I have called
  
- I will not speak to you when I call, but let the phone ring three times.
  - Please programme my number into your phone as 'Experiment', or 'Fill in form!'. My number is . . .
  
- **Please be honest** when filling out the form. e.g. it is tempting to claim you were imagining something more abstract and high-brow than you really were!
- Your participation in this study is anonymous, and your name will at no time be disclosed in writing up this study.
  
- During the week, try not to call me about the study unless urgent. The idea is for my calls to be a fairly impersonal signal.
  
- I understand that there may be a few times (e.g. lectures) when it is impossible to have your phone switched on. Please let me know when these are likely to be. At all other times please try to have your phone switched on.

***THANK YOU for all your help. This study is a first, and your participation is greatly appreciated!***

## **Appendix B**

### **Post-study interview schedule**

### **ESM Interviews - Monday 25th February 2002**

#### ***Interview questions***

- 1) Was it a 'normal' week for you?  
 Prompt: did you do more/less practice than usual?  
     Did you go to more/less concerts than usual?
- 2) How have you found doing the study? Please describe your experiences. . .  
 Prompt: Has anything stood out about the week?
- 3) What, if anything, have you learned about your musical imagery?  
     - Has it had an impact on your current experiences of musical imagery?
- 4) Do you feel you imagine music more or less than...  
     - Other music students?  
     - Other people generally?
- 5) Did you ever experience imagining music while simultaneously hearing it?  
     - How, if at all, did you write this on the form?  
     - Could you talk through an example of that, and how it felt?
- 6) Please describe what you remember about these (3/4 random) contact points  
     - What were you thinking about in particular?  
     - How important was being alone/with others to your imagery at these times?  
     - To what extent were you anticipating the call? – Did you ever find yourself imagining the absent ring tone?  
     - Does talking about these episodes now trigger the image?  
     - If so, to what extent might the image have changed since then? Why?
- 7) Looking back, did you feel as if the balance was more towards silence, hearing music, or imagining it?

#### ***Feedback questions***

- 1) Could you tell me about the practicalities of the study. . . what was the phone use like?
- 2) Were there any unclear/ambiguous questions on the form?  
     - If so, how did you deal with them?
- 3) Were there any experiences that were not accounted for by the form?
- 4) How frequently did you find yourself filling out the form whilst no longer being in touch with your circumstances at the time of contact?
- 5) Any other comments/thoughts you would like to elaborate on?

## Appendix C

**ESM – Coded response categories for the question ‘What was the MAIN thing you were doing?’**

### Activity coding

Working – writing letter, writing lecture, working on dissertation, music teaching, study, setting up studio, on computer, reading poems, writing/reading, typing up work, discussing work, interviewing, preparing to rehearse

Travelling – driving, walking, crossing room, sitting/travelling, walking home, leaving, finding way out of London, going to interview,

Leisure (excluding TV watching) – reading paper, drinking pints, writing in diary, reading, having coffee/tea, having dinner/talking, on internet, crossword, dancing, making cake, reading magazine, looking at exhibition, jogging, listening to radio

Leisure (music) – listening to music, making compilation CD,

Television watching -

Interacting – talking, on phone, socialising, chatting, writing text message, meeting friend, e-mailing, playing with friend’s baby

Music-making – practising, playing, composing, singing, rehearsal, sight-reading, conducting,

Time Filler – waiting, sitting at traffic lights, in queue, playing phone game, lying in bed

Being – getting up, sitting, praying, trying to sleep, thinking, dozing, looking for A-Z, sleeping

Maintenance – cooking, shopping, brushing teeth, eating, shaving, hanging up laundry, getting changed, tidying up, packing bag, washing clothes, washing up, shower, preparing to go out

Other – filling out previous questionnaire

**Appendix D****List of imaged music (ESM)*****Named music***

Andrew WK	<i>Ready to Die</i>
—	<i>I Love NYC</i>
—	various songs
Beethoven	piano sonata
Björk	
John Blow	a chorus from <i>Venus and Adonis</i>
—	<i>Venus and Adonis</i> - Huntsman's chorus
—	Last duet from <i>Venus and Adonis</i>
—	<i>Venus &amp; Adonis</i> chorus parts
—	<i>Venus and Adonis</i>
Brahms	<i>Marienwurmchen</i> (Ladybird)
Britney Spears	<i>Overprotected</i>
Byrd	<i>Agnus Dei</i> (Mass for 4 voices)
Sally Doherty	<i>This is what she said</i>
—	<i>Low lands of Holland</i>
—	<i>Empty at the End</i>
Electric Soft Parade	
Eminem	
Enrique	<i>Hero</i>
Nelly Fartado	<i>Radio</i>
Faure	<i>Mandoline</i>
Aretha Franklin	<i>Respect</i>
Gabrielle	<i>Give me just a little more time</i>
Gluck	
Haven	<i>Song something</i>
Hearsay	<i>Everybody</i>
Iron Maiden	<i>Number of the Beast</i>
—	<i>Fear of the Dark</i>
Michael Jackson	<i>Heal the World</i>
Tom Jones	<i>Kiss</i>
Lenin	<i>Views from the Blues</i>
John Lennon	<i>Mind Games</i>
Less than Jake	<i>All my Friends are Metalheads</i>
Madonna	<i>Thief of Hearts</i>
Monteverdi	<i>Pulchra Es</i> (Vespers)
Mozart	<i>Bester Jungling</i> (Der Schauspieldirecktor)
—	Overture <i>Le Nozze di Figaro</i>
My Dying Bride	<i>Songless Bird</i>
—	<i>Sear Me 1993</i>
No Doubt	<i>Hey Baby</i>
Own composition	<i>Hansel &amp; Gretel</i>
—	Aria from <i>Violin &amp; Pear in Line</i>
—	Aria II:3b <i>Violin &amp; Pear</i>
—	Finale <i>Violin &amp; Pear in Line</i>
—	<i>Waterline for solo flute</i>

Parry	<i>My Heart is a Singing Bird</i>
Posh Spice	<i>Not such an innocent girl</i>
Prokofiev	<i>Viscus Fugitones - 3rd mvt</i>
_____	<i>Viscus Fugitones - 8th mvt</i>
Henry Purcell	<i>Ah! How sweet it is to Love (Tyrannick love)</i>
_____	<i>Sweeter than roses (Pausanias)</i>
_____	<i>Farewell all joys</i>
_____	<i>When I have often heard</i>
Rotary Connection	<i>Respect</i>
S Club 7	<i>All I need is you</i>
_____	<i>Show me your colours</i>
Mark Slater	<i>Exposition Violin and Pear in Line</i>
_____	<i>Violin &amp; Pear in Line</i>
Song 41	<i>Da Movies</i>
Space	
Stockhausen/Spice Girls	
Pete Stoner	her friends composition
Summerisle	<i>This is what she said</i>
Train	<i>Drops of Jupiter</i>
U2	<i>Elevation</i>
Verdi	<i>La Traviata</i>
Westlife	<i>A World of our Own</i>
Robbie Williams	<i>Angels</i>
_____	<i>Gogo a go go</i>
Kate Winslet	<i>What if I had never let you go</i>
Will Young	<i>Evergreen</i>
<i>Boys &amp; girls go out to play</i>	
<i>Brazil</i>	
<i>Car Craft of Sheffield - jingle</i>	
<i>Cheers theme tune</i>	
<i>Diagnosis Murder theme tune</i>	
<i>Fly me to the moon + riff</i>	
<i>Olympic soundtrack</i>	
<i>Playing the Field theme music</i>	
<i>The sad music from Neighbours!</i>	
<i>Theme from Wish you were here</i>	
<i>When Jesus comes to you</i>	

### **Unnamed music**

Classical - opera/vocal  
 Contemporary  
 Contemporary solo/chamber  
 Dance  
 Dance/chart  
 50s something or other  
 Jazz  
 Opera/vocal  
 Orchestral  
 Pop - love songs?

Pop/chart  
Pedagogical music  
Rock

## Appendix E

### Participant instructions (to read out) for GROUP A

Thank you for sparing the time to take part in this study which aims to learn more about the way we hear and imagine music. First of all you will be asked to listen to the melodies of a familiar nursery rhyme, *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, and a familiar carol, *Away in a Manger* playing on the headphones four times each. Please note that throughout this session the song lyrics are available as a reference should you wish.

#### ***Timing – perception***

You will now be asked to listen to the melody of *Away in a Manger* again. The note in the fifth bar corresponding to the syllable “-tle” of the word “little” in the carol, has been either moved forwards or backwards from its original timing, or left unaltered. That is to say your task will be to judge whether such pre-selected target notes are on time, or out of time. On hearing the target note, please indicate your timing decision immediately by pressing one of two response buttons. Down cursor key arrow indicates an on time decision, and cursor key right indicates an out of time judgement. Please make a quick but accurate response. To demonstrate these task requirements, the melody will be played on your headphones. You will have a chance to press a response button upon judging the timing of the note. Please indicate when you are ready to have a trial run of the task, for the syllable “-tle” from the phrase “little Lord Jesus”. Get ready so that you will know where that note falls in the melody.

Do you understand the task requirements?

- 1) So, please indicate whether, for the tune of *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, the target note for the syllable ‘li-’, as in the phrase “little boy” is on time or out of time.
- 2) etc. (x 18)

#### ***Timing – imagery***

You will now have an opportunity to hear the melodies of *Away in a manger* and *Baa Baa Black Sheep* again, in their original form. You will now hear the beginning only of the melody of *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, and are asked to continue the tune in your mind, as if you were actually hearing it. You are asked not to sing the melody out loud, or tap the rhythm in any way, but to imagine it in silence. You will notice that one of the notes corresponding to the nursery rhyme lyric ‘boy’, as in ‘little boy who’ is actually sounded while you are imagining the melody through. Your task is to judge whether this note seems ‘on time’ or ‘out of time’ with respect to the music in your mind. Please indicate your decision immediately by pressing one of two response buttons. Down cursor key arrow indicates an on time decision, and cursor key right indicates an out of time judgement. Please make a quick but accurate response. To demonstrate these task requirements, the start of the melody will be played on your headphones. You will have a chance to press a response button upon judging the timing of the sounded note. Are you ready to have a trial run of the task, for the word ‘boy’?

Do you understand the task requirements?



- 1) So, please indicate whether, for the tune of *Away in a Manger* the target note, for song lyric 'Lord', in the fifth bar, is on time or out of time.
- 2) etc. (x 18)

### ***Pitch – perception***

You will now have an opportunity to hear the melodies of *Away in a manger* and *Baa Baa Black Sheep* again, in their original form. You will now be asked to hear the melody of *Away in a manger* again. This time, a flashing light on the computer screen in front will provide a visual indication of the tune's rhythm, which you are asked to follow. The pitch corresponding to the syllable "Je-" of the word "Jesus" is either in tune or made to sound out of tune. Your task is therefore to judge the tuning, and to immediately indicate your decision upon hearing the note by pressing one of two response buttons. Down cursor key arrow indicates an in tune pitch, and cursor key right indicates an out of tune judgement. Please make a quick but accurate response. You are asked to note that, irrespective of its intonation, the target pitch may be different from the original melody note pitch. For example, you may hear an F instead of a C. However, it is only whether or not this note is in tune or out of tune which is of concern, and not how closely it matches the original. To demonstrate these task requirements, the melody will be played on your headphones. Please indicate when you are ready to have a trial run of the task.

Do you understand the task requirements?

- 1) So, please indicate whether, for the melody of..., the target note for the word '...', is in tune or out of tune. Get ready so that you will know where it is in the melody.
- 2) etc. (x 18)

### ***Pitch – imagery***

You will now have an opportunity to hear the melodies of *Away in a manger* and *Baa Baa Black Sheep* again, in their original form. You will now hear the beginning only of the melody *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, and be asked to continue the tune in your mind as if you were actually hearing it. A flashing light on the computer screen will indicate the sequence rhythm to you as an aid to following the melody through. You are asked not to sing the melody out loud, or tap the rhythm in any way, but to imagine it in silence. You will notice that the note corresponding to the syllable "li-" of the word "little" is actually sounded while you are imagining the melody through. Your task is therefore to judge whether this sounded note is in tune or out of tune with respect to the music in your mind. Please indicate your decision immediately upon hearing the note by pressing one of two response buttons. Down cursor key arrow indicates an in tune pitch, and cursor key right indicates an out of tune judgement. Please make a quick but accurate response. You are asked to note that, irrespective of its intonation, the target pitch may be different from the original melody note pitch. For example, you may hear an F instead of a C. However, it is only whether or not this note is in tune or out of tune which is of concern, and not how closely it matches the original. To demonstrate these task requirements, the melody will be played on

your headphones. Please indicate when you are ready to have a trial run of the task.

Do you understand the task requirements?

- 1) So, please indicate whether, for the melody of..., the target note for the word '...', is in tune or out of tune. Get ready so that you will know where it is in the melody.
- 2) etc. (x 18)

**Thank you very much for your help!**

# Appendix F

Experiment Two – target moments (Participants to image between the dotted lines)

Pulp

Target one

I've se - en all the pic - tures | I've st - u - died - them for - ev - er I  
 wa - nna make a mo - vie so let's star in it to - ge - ther oh - Don't make a move

Target two

*Piano*  
 Put your money where your  
 10 mouth is tonight | leave your make-up on and

Target three

13 I can't be - lieve that it took me | this long  
 16 that it took me this long  
 19  
 ↑ This

**Björk**  
**Target one**

All the lo-ve a - bo-ve

I send in - to you. Confort and proteo - tio - n

I'll watch o - ver you.

**Target two**

I know the fu - ture I'd love to reach you a - way

Just to make it ea - sier on you.

**Target three**

Just to make it ea - sier on you. You are gon - na - ha - ve to find out for your

se - lf You are gonna

## Appendix G

### Aural course – student questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire designed to find out about your experiences of aural training, and the role of 'inner hearing' in your musical life. **The contents of this form are confidential. Information identifying the participant will not be disclosed.**

Responses will be collected as part of my PhD research on the development of musical imagery (inner hearing).

To help classify your answers, please state:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Sex \_\_\_\_\_

1) Instrument played & years of lessons (e.g. '92-'01)? \_\_\_\_\_

2) Instrument played & years of lessons? \_\_\_\_\_

3) Instrument played & years of lessons? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the duration of any formal tuition you have had in:

- music theory (e.g. ABRSM grades) \_\_\_\_\_

- aural (e.g. A-level, ABRSM) \_\_\_\_\_

- harmony instruction (e.g. A-level) \_\_\_\_\_?

Please circle the most appropriate response:

How would you describe your voice-type?

soprano/ mezzo-soprano/ alto/ tenor/ baritone/ bass

Do you have perfect pitch?

Yes/ No

As far as you are aware, do you have normal hearing?

Yes/ No

(If no, please give details \_\_\_\_\_)

Please list any musical situations in which you believe the ability to imagine or have a mental image of sound is an asset?

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Please list any aspects of your current or past musical training which were designed to improve or did improve your inner hearing skills.

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Please note the musical qualification needed to do your degree in music (e.g. A-Level, Scottish Higher, other)\_\_\_\_\_

Did that syllabus include an aural skills component? Y/N

How important was the component (e.g. 25% of final mark)?\_\_\_\_\_

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Was preparation for the component mostly self-taught or teacher taught?\_\_\_\_

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Did your syllabus also include a harmony and counterpoint component? Y/N

If so, please rate the following by placing a number '1' by the most used and '3' by the least used method of doing harmony exercises:

application of abstract rules \_\_\_\_\_  
 imagining the sound \_\_\_\_\_  
 playing at the piano \_\_\_\_\_

Do you believe inner hearing is an innate ability?

Y/not sure/N

Do you believe that the most 'talented' musicians have a good inner ear?

Y/not sure/N

Please rate your response to the following questions on a scale of 1-7.

- How would you rate your ability to transfer written notation to inner hearing?

poor							excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

- How would you rate your ability to sight-read or sight-sing music?

poor							excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

- How would you rate your ability to mentally replay the detail of a piece of familiar music?

poor							excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

- How would you rate your ability to mentally recreate the timbre of a piece of familiar music?

poor							excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

If possible, please give an example of music for which your mental image

has a timbral component \_\_\_\_\_

- How would you rate the frequency with which you 'play' or 'sing' music in your mind in everyday life?

never							constantly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Please describe any pattern you see to the types of music you 'image' in your mind:

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Please describe any pattern you see to the times that you image music in your mind:

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Would you be willing to take part in a follow-up to this study?      Y/N  
if so, please leave your email address below:

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**Thank you for your time and help.**



## **Appendix H**

### **Sample interview schedule – used for course director at ‘traditional’ music department**

- 1) I know you taught on the course last year. Have you done any previous aural teaching (here or elsewhere)?
- 2) What changes, if any, has the course seen over that time?  
Result of what?
- 3) Can you tell me whether you think there has been a shift in approach to aural training:  
At A-level  
Demands made by universities?
- 4) Do you think there have been any changes in aural teaching since your own BMus training? Why?
- 5) What are the changing needs of aural training courses?  
Prompt: composition at the computer? Electroacoustic manipulation?
- 6) Who is responsible for the aural course teaching material and module objectives?
- 7) Is there any explicit integration of the aural skills taught to other aspects of the degree?  
Do you personally believe that aural training needs to have separate lessons devoted to the subject?  
Applicable methods to everyday experience – realistic?
- 8) Are inner hearing skills innate, or can they really be developed? See improvement in initially least able? See link of aural ability to other aspects of degree performance?
- 9) Have shown me examples of aural assessment papers. Without these it's hard to know how the development of inner hearing can be measured. One of the course aims is to cultivate the inner ear by developing aural awareness and extending musical memory  
How is the course effectiveness gauged?  
How can the development of inner hearing - ability to auralise - be measured?  
Prompt: dictation? Arrangement exercises? Standard of performance? Creativity?  
H&C sophistication?
- 10) I know you don't teach the aural, but do you have a view as to what might be changed, and what should stay on the course?

**Imagery**

11) Is inner hearing a talent that we are born with, and cannot really be improved?

Prompt: a measure of musical talent? Genetically predisposed?

12) Some have proposed that singing is particularly good as a way of developing a certain sort of inner hearing. Is this a method that you might recommend?

Prompt: necessity to pitch

Are there any drawbacks to this technique?

13) Any ideas how inner hearing can best be taught?

How can inner hearing be developed?

Prompt: practise normal musical activities? Focus attention through perception?

Memory tests? Encourage image manipulation and creation? Gesture, dance, mime? Metaphor? Applicable methods to everyday experience – realistic?

14) Own musical interest? – Performance of ?, music ed./psych

15) Imagery for timbre, dynamics, texture etc. developed enough through private instrumental practice and listening?

16) Are there any musical dimensions that you feel may be missing in your musical imagery? e.g. Are timbre, expression, detail, an integral part of your musical imagery?

Prompt: why less developed? ('there or not' attitude)

17) 'Inner hearing' really necessary when live music perception possible?

Is inner hearing necessary to improvisation?

**THANK YOU!**

## **Appendix I**

### **Discussion group schedule**

My research is about the way we represent music in our head. The way we imagine music in our mind. Examples would be anything from silently singing your way through *Old McDonald* in your head, to imagining the start of the next track on a familiar CD, to sight-reading music in your mind, to mentally composing music, and any other example of when you need to 'hear' musical sound internally.

As part of my research, I have decided to look at the applied side of musical imagery. In other words, I want to look at where musicians use musical imagery, whether it is important, and how inner hearing can be developed if it is important. The obvious people to talk to were music students, particularly those who have experience of various forms of aural training, to gather opinions about how useful aural training is, and how it might relate to musical life.

The particular focus of my PhD is trying to find out how close inner hearing is to what we actually hear. I don't want to tell you how you hear music mentally, but to gather your opinions. Of course I have my own experiences, and if you think they seem different to yours please tell me so.

#### **Tune on the brain**

I'd like to begin by finding out how many of us ever have the experience of hearing music in our minds when there is no music playing.

When?

Where?

Why?

How?

Ever get specific pieces apparently 'stuck'? etc...

Sometimes I might be able to imagine a particular painting or scene in my head. I could probably focus in on the experience and describe what it was like, e.g. how vivid the colours, how complete the detail, etc. Could you do that for music? Describe musical imagery experience : loop? Through-play? Little bits (to do with memory for it? salience? Like it? Dislike it? Lyrics symbolic?)

Is level of detail even throughout?

Ever have the feeling that we know music subconsciously, like a piece you've played but can't quite remember the next bit, though feel you 'know it'? Do you think if we learned to tune in to our subconscious more we would 'hear' more?

When you imagine music in your mind, is it just the sound you imagine, or are there other associations too? For instance, a visual parallel might be imagining a scene, and part of that being who I was there with, how cold it was, how spacious it felt, etc. What, if any, are associations with a musical image?

Imagining a painting, I wonder if I could visualise the texture of the surface?  
When imagining music is timbre included? Detail of image? Texture? Dynamics?

Less developed? – why?

(Peculiar to our melody/harmony based culture?

Evolutionary importance of timbre)

Imagery for timbre developed enough through private practice and listening preference?

When do we just imagine music as a replay of something, and when do we mentally manipulate an image?

### **Musical Imagery and Musical Experience**

Can you see a role of inner hearing in your musical lives?

Do you think that the sharpness of musical images is a measure of musical ability?  
Is it the same as musical intuition?

Do you think we are born with good or bad inner hearing skills (NB. Questionnaires suggest ‘not sure’)?

Or is it built up from scratch from things we perceive?

Do you think that if we selected all the most talented musicians in the world they would score highly in an imagery test?

Do you think if we selected all the least talented musicians in the world they would score badly in an imagery test?

Do you think some instruments/disciplines require better musical imagery than others?

Is it possible to develop inner hearing? Or is it something you have, or you don't have (struggle with)?

Is it naturally developed? Are class lessons etc. a waste of time, as normal musical activities, perceiving, or actually hearing is the best thing? Or should we all be imagining music and re-playing it to develop aural imagination?

Think memory tests any good?

Can we develop musical imagery through mime? – ever practised/conducted that way?

Anybody do dance? Does that reinforce musical imagery?

What would you say your musical imagery strengths are?

What would you say your musical imagery weaknesses are?

Do they impact your musical life?

## Aural Training

### A level

Taught? How large the class? What was the method? What was the assessment? Enjoyable? Productive? How good did you feel you were? How good were your marks? Link between subject and application made?

### ABRSM

Taught? Teacher's method? Enjoyable? Productive in ways other than meeting exam requirements? How good did you feel you were? How good were your marks?

### First year aural course

Can you remember doing the first aural test?

- please describe what you remember and how you found it
- do you feel as if your aural awareness has improved, stayed same, declined?

What bits of course stand out, are memorable? Any idea why? Do they relate in any way to your inner hearing skills?

### Aural needs

When running an aural training course - What would YOU do/have you done to develop inner hearing?

How can development of inner hearing be measured?

Dictation?

Arrangement exercises?

Focused performance?

Creativity?

Sight-singing?

## Aural Applications

Do you do H&C? - sophistication?

Ever used inner hearing in doing the exercises?

- can you imagine getting to that stage having assimilated all the rules, you are able just to 'hear' inside what works, or does that seem impossible?

How good do you think you are at judging own inner hearing ability?

Evidence?

Composers in group?

Conductors in group?

Anticipate going on to do that professionally? Any ideas what professional college training might entail for aural/inner hearing? What *should* it entail?

**Course material**

**Do you use it out of class? If so, what for? Specifically set tasks for particular course? Advised it is of use? Own idea?**

**Have you found it useful? In what way?**

**Think inner hearing necessary/important when heightened aural awareness so important?**

**Do you think the increase in music technology means musical imagery is less important than it was?**

**Computer composition?**

**Electroacoustic manipulation?**

## **Appendix J**

**Coded responses to the question ‘Please list any musical situations in which you believe the ability to imagine or have a mental image of sound is an asset’.**

**All – Most, all practical skills**

**Group performance – Choirs, gospel choir, Bands, Orchestras, chamber groups  
Operas**

**Musical activities – Composing, Conducting, teaching, harmony, arranging  
Improvisation**

**Practising – Pitching/intonation, Learning new tunes, preparing to play piece for first time, characterising a piece, learning new repertoire, Acquiring emotional expression**

**Memorising**

**Sight reading  
Sight singing**

**Aural tests – Transcribing, recognising intervals, dictation, Singing back music**

**Analysis - Listening to music to answer questions on it**

**Anticipation**

**Performing – running through mind before performing, Conveying image in playing, hearing sound before producing it, tone production, empathising with composer intention, to overcome nerves**

**Programme element - Imaging narrative to programme music, Listening to concerts, contemporary music relies on imagination, imaging scenes for better portrayal, imagination to be musical**

## **Appendix K**

**Coded responses to the question ‘Please list any aspects of your current or past musical training which were designed to improve or did improve your inner hearing skills’.**

**Group singing** - Choir singing, singing in blues band, Pitching in voice/focusing on vowel sounds in vocal chords

**Playing** - Orchestral playing, African drumming, Instrument lessons, daily practice, singing lessons

Working with accompanist

**Some aural training** – aural lessons, using songs for intervals, e.g. ‘My Bonny’, A level practice, GCSE practice, grade 8 aural, cadence practice, sol-fa, pitching Kodaly exercises, notation, aural at junior college, Kodaly/Dalcroze, singing back melodies, sight-singing, sight-reading, relating chords and notes, leaving certificate, rhythmic subdivision

Dictation – in more than 2 parts, note rows

AURALIA (music software for aural skills practice)

A level harmony

Composing

**Improvisation**, jazz class

Imagining note direction while listening

Listening to violin tuning, recognition of pitch, **pitching notes**

**Listening** - Listening to different kinds of music, describing mood of piece, appraising music, Studying and listening to polyphonic scores



## **Appendix L**

### **Semi-structured interview schedules for GN, PH and PW**

#### ***GN - Interview schedule***

Are you imagining any music at the moment?

#### **1. Personal background to composing**

How long have you been composing for?/At what stage in your life did you begin?

Do you have any recollection of hearing sounds in your head as a **child**?

Prompt: tunes 'stuck on the brain' or more like a creative aural imagination?

I'd like to ask about your training in composition.

Who were your main teachers (Rands, Blake and ?)?

Were you aware of them making particular/interesting **use of auditory imagery**?

Prompt: ever mentioned as important to them? Ever refer to important music/influences to them by imagining or asking you to imagine? Ever an explicit focus in your training?

How much did they use the **piano** in hearing and teaching composition?

Whose music influenced them?

Whose music influenced you? Influences you?

Can you form a clear image of that music, or elements of that music?

Did your music education include H&C exercises (at York?)?

Were these done mentally or with piano?

Why? (encouraged to adopt a particular approach? Able to adopt a particular approach?)

Do you feel your aural awareness was improved through such exercises?

Consider it a worthwhile endeavour to develop inner ear for your students?

#### **2. Aural skills**

When listening to music comprising more than one line:

Able to hear many lines simultaneously?

Able to imagine many lines simultaneously?

Prompt: conscious awareness akin to a musical image? Detailed? Overall harmony? Etc.

Do you believe in Mozart-style stories of a full and detailed musical image?

i.e. replica of perceived sound

Ever composed in an electroacoustic medium?

What form does your musical score take?

Prompt: graphic, traditional...

Given that traditional notation methods are not a direct manipulation of sound, do they necessitate good auralisation skills?

Prompt: (because they are a visual transposition) particularly pitch + timbre?

To what extent do you play out score on the piano as a preliminary to notating it?

Can you internally hear your own compositions?

Prompt: all of them?

Do you find that easy or difficult to do?

Prompt: need to calculate, or internal record playing? How complete (close to perception) is the experience?

What might trigger internal replay of your music in the course of things?

What cues might be needed for a deliberate internal replay of your music?

### 3. Creative process

*Can you talk me through your experience of the process of composing, of creating music?*

*Prompt: pick a piece (important, typical, recent, current?) role of imagery, formation of imagery*

For you, is composition a consciously ongoing thing?

Or is it an activity of focused work sessions?

Does creation ever occur in dreams?

Do you think that sub-conscious musical development is possible?

Do you inwardly hear an idea at note level?

If so, are you able to manipulate that image, or is that a fixed germ?

- does it come complete with instrumentation?
- Do you have absolute pitch?
  - If so, must an image in a certain key remain so?
- do you believe it is possible to have absolute tempo?

Have you experienced that?

If so, must the tempo of an image remain at that speed?

Prompt: depends on context/circumstances (e.g. performer ability)?

What makes a good compositional idea?

Do such ideas cohere as imagery?

Would you say that the working out of material 'just happens' in organic way?  
Or does it involve conscious structural connections etc.? examples?

Do you compose in a sequential manner?

If so, ever find it difficult to move beyond a moment?

Ever work backwards?

Ever work across compositions? Examples?

Why do you think that might be?

Prompt: effective bit, unfruitful bit...?

Would it be fair to say that for you musical imagery can be: - a compositional tool

Prompt: would you distinguish imagery and imagination? Playback?

Have you ever knowingly confused your own creative imagery with existing music?

- if so, do you have a theory as to why it happened

Do you or have you ever re-worked aspects of a composition?

Why was this?

Prompt: the result of imagery and/or perception of the work?

Do you ever do any improvising?

Do you ever allow the performer to improvise in your compositions?

Prompt: imagery precedes sound, or just feeds into it? Difference from 'composition' is degree of imagery pre-thought, or solidity of final 'product'?

#### **4. Timbre**

Is your timbre knowledge based on inner hearing or knowledge of the instrument's properties?

Do you ever do any or have you ever done any arranging?

If so, is imagery part of the process?

Prompt: do alternative sounds play themselves? Or does a more concrete or a more abstract knowledge suggest ideas to you?

What in your opinion makes good instrumentation?

Timbre to some extent describes a sound source.

As such does it elicit spatial/visual imagery for you?

Do you have synaesthesia?

If so, is it linked to timbre?

#### **5. Strategy in composition**

How important is it that your musical image of a composition corresponds closely to:

- performer's rendition?
- Listener's interpretation?

Do you think that the salient ideas and images of a piece for you are generally the same for a listener?

- if so, are you aware of a conscious manipulation of such moments when composing?

Has your music ever followed: narrative/vocal imitation/motion/literary inspiration?

Prompt: examples?

How would you describe the balance of external and internal influences in your composition such as: - abstract ideas/demands of commission (e.g. BBC pieces/contemporary music groups)/musical imagery?

How might your compositional technique and/or values have changed over time?

Prompt: relating to auditory imagery

I'm interested in the role that imagery might play in the increased experience of a composer.

Do you think that practice has an effect on, or is affected by

- image formation? Imagination formation?
- Declarative knowledge (formal, structural, timbral)?

Have you ever been surprised when hearing your compositions performed?

Prompt: in other words, have you ever found that the sound produced is not a match with your mental image of the music?

Have you ever found that the actual performance is an enriched version of the image?

Can you think that you have ever given advice to performers producing your music which relates to imagery?

## **6. Everyday Imagery**

What sort of music do you listen to for pleasure?

What sort of music do you listen to for inspiration?

Do you see a connection between the music you listen to and the music you subsequently imagine (either as tune on brain, or relating to composition)?

Do you ever experience the 'tune on the brain' phenomenon?

How frequently?

- loop/real time?
- Own music/others' music
- Haunting/or pleasure/or creative?

Prompt: vivid?

Do you regard yourself as an 'auditory' person over other modalities such as vision?

Have you noticed other people in your home environment experiencing the 'tune on the brain' phenomenon?

Prompt: children? Manifest how? Similar to your experience as a child?

Can I ask if you are auralising any music now?

If so, what?

Are you aware of the potential triggers to an internal hearing of music?

Prompt: mood (excitable), semantics, times in life?

Do you think the nature of musical imagery is related to the content of a piece of music or the emotional response to it?

Prompt: in what way?

It seems from the comments that some people have made that familiar music lends itself particularly well to mental representation.

Are there any styles which you find difficult and consequently pieces that you would struggle to internalise?

Is there a strategy for internalising contemporary music?

Prompt: that you suggest to others, that you use, that differs from repeated hearing?

Is internalising music an important thing to do?

Prompt: to truly understand a work? To fully enjoy a work?

When mentally replaying music, especially your own compositions, have you noticed a tendency to fix on certain passages?

If so, is this moment a sort of essence of the music (or something else)?

Prompt: linked to harmonic content & therefore drive for resolution?

Do you have a view about what might be lost of an auditory image when people introspect and report on their imagery?

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### ***PH - Interview schedule***

Are you imagining any music at the moment?

#### **1. Chapter issues**

Could you describe to me what you mean by the term 'conception'?

prompt: how the music should sound in abstract or at note level?

You talk about comparing the sound produced to an inner conception and aligning the two. Can you explain this a bit more?

prompt: how simultaneous are those acts? how capable are we of truly listening when image already underlying perception?

Having read your chapter, it is clear that you see musical mental representations as an important component of music. However, is immediate perception not enough for a musician? is musical imagery really necessary?

Ever a danger that music so well prepared before actual production that image or conception in itself becomes 'cemented', repetitive and loses freshness?

prompt: Gerald Moore memoirs

Do you memorise music as a matter of course?

Is this intentional or active memory as a natural result of preparation?

if natural, does it need securing in some way?

how long does it take?

noticed trend in errors? explanation for this?

Could you talk through the stages of preparing a piece of music for performance in terms of the **balance** of hearing and imagining the music?

prompt: preparation to rehearsal to performance?

What component of preparation is **analysis** of the music?

Do you ever look into the source of inspiration behind a piece before learning it?

Can this transfer to your mental image of it?

Does score preparation really involve note-level imaging, or is it more about dramatic logic?

-at what stage does imaging play its role?

Do you always wait until you have analysed and formed an understanding of a piece before listening to other people's renditions?

Would listening to recordings lend itself to alternative performance options in an abstract or in a 'concrete' mental representation way?

Is it fair to say that your method of learning a piece is to form an **ideal** image, or it more transient than that?

Ever do silent rehearsal with mime?

When/at what stage of playing a piece?

You advocate getting to know the music before learning bad habits through sight-reading. How large an overview is necessary? In other words, do you believe we can truly fit large-scale forms together in a mental map, or is our perception and imagery restricted by music's temporal nature?

How often do you resort to hand crossing etc.?

special occasion?

Rightly point out that handedness perceptual bias of pianists. Do you think motor behaviour influences perception and imagery in any other way?

i.e. any examples?

Do you ever learn by ear?

if so, is it a different sort of musical image to that initially read?

prompt: less creative?

Is anticipatory imagery in advance of sound production ever a conscious thing

(e.g. in a bar's rest)?

## **2. Teaching**

Do you teach aspects of musical imagery, or does it develop naturally?  
is a good inner ear an indication of a good musician?

Like the notion of being uninhibited in the head by technique. However, what of the special technique and perceptual experience required to work away from the score? Can this be taught? Should it be taught?

You confess how tempting it is to go for the quick fix. Is there any hope of shifting focus to mental away from physical?

Can curriculum be changed to redress the balance?

What of obsession/need for assessment?

Were you taught to think about musical imagery (apart from by Cyril Smith)? If not, what prompted you to introspect on otherwise automatic processes?

Are most of your piano pupils university students?

If so, are they at that crucial stage of gaining independence and developing a more cognitive outlook? How do you encourage this?

Realistically, do most students rush to get into playing without taking the time to prepare?

To what extent are your ideas ideals?

Are analysis, imaging, and creativity genuinely difficult, or just not encouraged by teachers enough?

How early in musical development is the mental clarity you speak of possible?

- evidence personal? anecdote?

Do you have a view about what might be lost of an auditory image when people introspect and report on their imagery?

- imagery

- performance?

prompt: relate to chapter writing process, relate to freshness

Is there any value in rehearsing musical detail with associated visual, motion and/or dream associations?

What does this accomplish?

When might you do this?

When might you recommend your pupils to do this?

## **3. Strategy in Performance**

How important is it that your musical image of a piece corresponds closely to a composer's intentions?

prompt: literal-mindedness vs. true understanding

Do you think that the salient ideas and images of a piece for you are generally the same for a listener?

- if so, are you aware of a conscious manipulation of such moments when preparing a piece?

How might your approach to imagery and performance and/or values have changed over time?

Thinking back on previous performances of music that you are no longer working on, has your image of it (i.e. how you did it, how it should be) changed?

I'm interested in the role that imagery might play in the increased experience of a musician.

Do you think that **practice** has an effect on, or is affected by

- image formation? imagination formation?
- declarative knowledge (formal, structural, timbral)?

Believe some instrument playing necessitates more accurate imagery. than others? (e.g. singer, string, brass), or is pitching an automatic, sub-conscious info. transfer?

Have you ever been **surprised** when hearing recordings of your pieces?  
prompt: in other words, have you ever found that the sound produced is not a match with your mental image of the music?

Have you ever found that the actual performance is an enriched version of the image?

Feedback at performance stage satisfactory match to image or about feeling comfy/uncomfortable with the result?  
mutable over time (the image)?

Disagreements with other people's performance. of a piece based on sub-conscious notion, or conscious introspection of hearing how it should go?

What makes an **outstanding** piece of music?  
is this felt at a performative level? is this related to an image you can form? 'cause of music's logic and consequent knowledge? is this related to an image the composer may have formed?

Do you ever image the keyboard as an aid to performing? in practice away from the keyboard?

You mention the need to rest from practice sometimes. Do you mean mental or physical rest?  
if mental, then does the subconscious continue on a level?

Do you ever do any **improvising**?  
prompt: imagery precedes sound, or just feeds into it? difference from 'composition' is degree of imagery pre-thought, or solidity of final 'product'?

You mention that mental study is particularly useful for the preparation of avant-



garde music.

imagery of atonal? noticed a link to 'singability'? about familiarity?

Noticed a link to 'playability' (e.g. unnatural finger pattern)?

#### **4. Background to performing**

How long have you been performing?/At what stage in your life did you begin?

Do you have any recollection of hearing sounds in your head as a **child**?

prompt: tunes 'stuck on the brain' or more like a creative aural imagination?

Did your music education include **H&C** exercises?

Were these done mentally or with piano?

Why? (encouraged to adopt a particular approach? able to adopt a particular approach?)

Do you feel your aural awareness was improved through such exercises?

consider it a worthwhile endeavour to develop inner ear for your students?

#### **5. Messiaen and synaesthesia**

Do you have **synaesthesia**?

- if so, is it linked to timbre?

- how does this affect your association with Messiaen and his work?

#### **6. Aural skills**

When listening to music comprising **more than one line**:

Able to hear many lines simultaneously?

Able to imagine many lines simultaneously?

prompt: conscious awareness akin to a musical image? detailed? overall harmony? etc.

Do you believe in Mozart-style stories of a full and detailed musical image?

i.e. replica of perceived sound

What might **trigger** internal replay of music you are working on or have worked on?

#### **7. Timbre and nuance**

Do you use mental imagery in order to extend a wide timbral range?

What? - visual? other instr.?

Are you able to image the specific timbre of certain pianists or pianos?

How does changing instrument affect the fixity or fluidity of a mental representation?

Do you believe in absolute tempo? Do you have absolute tempo?

Do you have perfect pitch?

To what extent is expressive nuance an integral part of your musical imagery?  
e.g.?

### **8. Everyday Imagery**

Do you see a connection between the music you listen to for pleasure and inspiration and the music you subsequently imagine (either as tune on brain, or relating to pieces worked on)?

Do you ever experience the ‘**tune on the brain**’ phenomenon?

How frequently?

- loop/real time?

- haunting/or pleasure/or creative?

prompt: vivid?

Do you regard yourself as an ‘auditory’ person over other modalities such as vision?

Have you noticed other people in your home environment experiencing the ‘tune on the brain’ phenomenon?

prompt: **children?** manifest how? similar to your experience as a child?

Can I ask if you are **auralising** any music now?

- if so, what?

Are you aware of the potential **triggers** to an internal hearing of music?

prompt: mood (excitable), semantics, times in life?

Do you think the nature of musical imagery is related to the content of a piece of music or the **emotional** response to it?

prompt: in what way?!

It seems from the comments that some people have made that familiar music lends itself particularly well to mental representation.

Are there any **styles** that you find difficult and consequently pieces that you would struggle to internalise?

When mentally replaying music, especially pieces you work on, have you noticed a tendency to **fix** on certain passages?

If so, is this moment a sort of essence of the music (or something else)?

prompt: linked to harmonic content & therefore drive for resolution?

Do you ever experience imagery in your sleep?

if so, is this related to your playing? how?

### **9. Directing**

I know you have done a fair amount of musical directing. In your chapter, you draw a parallel between the mental preparation of a performer and a conductor

before the first rehearsal. How important is it to have an image of the music you are conducting?

Have you ever been explicitly trained in musical direction, or was it all self-taught?

if so, can you remember whether the formation of a mental image was stressed as playing an important role?

Does the preparation for directing involve the **assimilation** of other renditions (recordings, performances)?

if so, does that process lead to more clear image or more abstract imagery?

When directing music and rehearsing with the musicians, how do you **convey** your intentions, and explain your musical image?

prompt: verbally, practice? (depends on time/standard/occasion?).

Has your experience as a performer affected your directing empathy and vice versa?

on a practical level? relating to image conveyance?

Does the genre of music alter the manner of your direction in terms of the development of a musical image in your performers?

When preparing to direct a performance, do you ever do **silent or mime rehearsal**? Do you use recordings (and at what stage)?

If so, is this always sequential, or find jumping to moment?

Do you imagine the conducting in a physical way?

is the venue important? the performers' location? the kinaesthetic dimension? the notion of bows being lifted?

When directing, are you aware of having **superimposed** your own musical image on the actual sound being produced?

prompt: how frequently? examples?

Is the timbral blend a pre-determined imagery component, or more of a hands-on use of resources?

When directing is a real **control** of each individual timbre needed if an existing mental image is to be produced through the instrumentalists?

Alternatively is your image inevitably adapted/standardised in the face of less than total control?

A conductor often has to squeeze out the **dynamic extremes** of an ensemble.

Does your imagery of music you are directing include small gradations of volume?

Is tempo a fixed component of your musical imagery when directing?

Is it an aim that the feedback at the final performance stage is a satisfactory match to your image?

prompt: accomplishable?

Could you talk through the stages of directing an ensemble in terms of the **balance** of hearing and imagining the music?

prompt: preparation to rehearsal to performance?

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### ***PW - Interview schedule***

Define it...

What role does musical imagery have in your professional music career?

#### **1. Imagery**

Are you imagining any music at the moment?

What form do your memories of specific pieces of music take?

Prompt: i.e. rhythm, kinaesthetic, spatial, visual? aural?

Stronger imagery for music performed by you?

Please describe any other pattern behind music imaged? – e.g. liking, emotional quality, familiarity...?

Thinking back to your first piano and organ lessons,

Can you remember whether the formation of a mental image was stressed as playing an important role?

#### **2. Deafness**

Done any composition? - Would you say that your imagination was ever 'aural'?

Prompt: experience residual hearing?

- have been looking at aural training as development of inner hearing skills. – ever had aural training to develop residual hearing? Emphasis ever on imaging as well as listening to the sound?

Understand that sound vibrations through body communicate music. Does this in itself lead to an inner auditory sensation through activation in auditory regions of brain, or is the image one of vibrations as a physical (non-aural) sensation?

Missed that part of your talk on sound vibrations – do you hear frequencies in different part of body? – does this translate to your imagining of those pitches?

I am particularly interested in your ability to inwardly hear musical score. I would really like to learn more about what you might get from a score. . .

#### **3. Conducting**

Gather you are a choral conductor? What mechanism do you use to detect any slides in pitch?

How important is it to have an image of the music you are conducting?

Have you ever been explicitly trained in musical direction, or was it all self-taught?

if so, can you remember whether the formation of a mental image was stressed as playing an important role?

Does the preparation for directing involve the assimilation of other renditions (recordings, performances)?

if so, does that process lead to more clear image or more abstract imagery?

#### **4. Work for 'Music and Deaf'**

I'm thinking those who were born deaf, and those who have lost their hearing must experience mental imagery for music quite differently. In your role as advisor and educator, I imagine you've come across many different scenarios. Can you tell me a bit about them?

Are there publications specifically on the subject of musical imagery, or inner hearing skills for the deaf?

#### **5. Signing**

When you are signing for productions, how important is it to have an image of the music you are signing?

When preparing to sign a performance, do you ever rehearse alone, imaging the music?

Do you imagine/predict your signing in a physical way?

Is the venue important? The performers' location? The kinaesthetic dimension?

Could you talk through the preparation stages of signing a performance?  
(preparation to rehearsal to performance?)

#### **6. Musical dimensions**

Good at doing regional accents, demonstrates your awareness of timbre or sound quality. Imaging timbre is a particular focus of my thesis, and so interested to know what that timbre knowledge feels like, and if it has what you would describe as an aural component in your mind?

Seems to me that dynamic flow could be an important part of your musical perception. Do you likewise imagine this when you think of music or musical activity?

When signing, do you incorporate dynamic emphasis?

## **Appendix M**

### **Interview transcriptions for GN, PH and PW**

**Q – Investigator**

**A – Respondent**

#### ***Interview with GN***

***23rd July 2001 (10.30-13.30, his office)***

**Q.** First of all, thank you very much for sparing the time.

**A.** I hope it's worth it (laughs)!

**Q.** Um, I think you vaguely know what I'm researching.

**A.** Mm.

**Q.** Musical imagery. Tune on the brain style, and things.

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Actually, before I began, I was just going to ask you whether you're imagining any music at the moment?

**A.** Er, not right at the moment (laughs).

**Q.** Not right at the moment. OK. Fine. Er, right then so first of all I was just going to ask you a little bit about your background in composing.

**A.** OK.

**Q.** Um, how long have you been composing for?

**A.** Oh gosh! Well I think it's only seriously um since my first degree but there are things that go back to when I was nine or ten.

**Q.** Um, what sort of things would they be?

**A.** Oh tiny things. Um, I've you know, an awful lot of effort to get anything down and um, they were just tiny little experiments. Quite conventional. You know like waltzes and things. And I hadn't discovered that you could go into a contrasting section (laughs)

**Q.** Right.

**A.** It was a kind of statement and then it would stop!

**Q.** Yes!

**A.** It would be that kind of thing. Um, and then I had a group of friends at secondary school who, um, were quite advanced in their musical tastes actually. And we discovered people like Webern who was very mysterious, you know? Um, this was about the age of fourteen, fifteen? We all started writing serial pieces. (laughs). Er and because it was Webern they were all very short! You get to the end of the piece of paper and that's it, you know? Um, not, it's not terribly serious that. If I dug these pieces out now I'd sort of hide my head in shame.

**Q.** Yeah. OK. But when you were younger, sort of experiments, um, was that coming from, would you say you were sort of hearing sounds in your mind as a child, or were you actively encouraged to experiment. . .?

**A.** No, in fact rather the reverse, I was being discouraged from experimenting. Yes! Um, so its all been a delayed reaction to that (laughs)! Um, I do know where the idea came from. I suppose the history of music in the family was, was that my great-grandfather played piano by ear, and so there was this kind of mythology in the family that if you played by ear you'd never develop as a musician, you know it kind of stunted your growth.

Q. Right!

A. Um, because he'd never learnt to read music so he, there's this clear feeling you either learn to read music and do it properly, or you muck about.

Q. Right.

A. Er, and the two are incompatible (laughs)

Q. Right. OK. So at that age were you being encouraged to sort of read music. . .

A. Yes

Q. . . .and do the more conventional kind of. . .?

A. Yes, that's right. I was experimenting on the piano from as soon as I could sit up. And I was doing things, I was trying hard to play things from I suppose the age of about two. Um, and I put objects on the piano to remind myself where I was, um, because nobody had pointed out the figuration, or configuration rather, of keys on a keyboard, and I couldn't remember where I was and which notes I'd be using so (laughs). . . Where that pencil is, that's where I want to come back to. Um, so in a sense I clamoured for piano lessons. I didn't realise you could have piano lessons until my best friend started having them. And I don't think he wanted them! But I did. Suddenly it seemed possible that there was a way of getting beyond this stage. And again that I suppose contributes to the idea that once you start having lessons you can do it properly, and everything that had gone before hand was like working in the dark.

Q. Hm. Would you say that as a child you were sort of naturally, did have quite a well-developed aural imagination? Were you hearing sounds in your head a lot or was it much more hands on at the piano?

A. I think it was hands on. Yeah, yeah. Er, in a sense it still is. I'm not the sort of person who goes round imagining things. I tend to be working when I'm working.

Q. Right.

A. Um, with some exceptions of course. I mean there's this kind of horrible after effect. Um, if I've been working on something all day, then I go to sleep hearing it, and I wake up hearing it, and I realise I've been hearing it all night. Can't escape from it (laughs)! Um, but that takes a, that takes quite a head of steam I think before I get to that stage. Um, I tend not to be sort of frustrated by carrying sounds around in my head for weeks and not having an opportunity to write them down.

Q. Right. OK. I'd like to ask you a little bit about your training in composition because you studied at university at university as well didn't you?

A. Yes.

Q. At York?

A. Yes.

Q. Who were your teachers in composition?

A. Right. Er Bernard Rands, when I was an undergraduate, and then David Blake when I was a postgraduate. Now I think Bernard was more, um, more to do, rather less to do with formal teaching, and more to do with picking up what you could by osmosis. Um, partly through his example, I mean he was very clearly an active composer, and an active conductor of his own music and other people's. Um so he was an exponent, he was very clearly a practical exponent of the art.

Q. Right.

A. Um, and it was, you know there was this circle of acolytes and I didn't feel as if I belonged in that circle, because you know I wasn't sort of setting out to write music that flattered Bernard, as the others were (laughs)! Um, so I picked up what I could I think from the perimeter. And in a way there wasn't terribly much by

way of formal tuition from him, but I feel that I did pick up quite a lot from him anyway. Um, and of course that was as an undergraduate. It was, you know, less formalised. Um, with David it was one to one teaching and there was much more of a sense that he had his finger on what I was doing.

Q. Hm.

A. Um, although less and less actually because once he'd established confidence in what I was doing um, he interfered less and less. Although he's got this sort of disarmingly discouraging manner (laughs)! You know he'd say "well I think the piece before was better", you know? And it always went back to that the first piece that I'd ever written with him was brilliant, and it had gone downhill from there on!

Q. Were you ever aware of them making an interesting use of auditory imagery? Would they make clear their methods of composing in terms of how vivid their imagination would be?

A. I never got a picture of that, no. No, I don't think it was something they were particularly interested or keen to convey.

Q. Right. How about, did you ever have a sense of, would they play through their students' compositions on the piano, or can they, or were they sort of reading score so they'd get an idea of the music, or were they very much dependent on the piano to auralise. . .?

A. Mm, I think mostly they were reading score. Um, David occasionally went to the piano and put things on it. I don't remember Bernard doing that ever. Um, I remember Bernard actually beating through things.

Q. Oh, right?

A. Yes. And he had a kind of, I've never seen them elsewhere actually, maybe some American friend gave it to him as a present, a kind of metronome, er but it looked like a stopwatch but it actually ticked inside. Um, with an arm that moved across. Um, and he was, I remember him trying out different tempi to see if I'd got the right one. Um, and he'd beat his way through as well. So that was I suppose his way of cueing the sound in his head.

Q. OK. Um, I was wanting to ask about influences on your style, and also perhaps influences on their style if they were ever adamant in making sure that you heard such-and-such and such-and-such.

A. (laughs) Right. OK. Um, well me first of all then.

Q. OK.

A. Um, very early on, one of the, I think it was the first actually, the first professional composer I came across was the, um, that was while I was still at school, there was a contemporary music festival in Durham that ran every summer. Every summer I say but it ran for about four or five years and then they ran out of cash. But it came at a good time for me because the first year, or first year or two that they ran I went along to hear the concerts at night. And then er for two years in a year row I went a long as a resident, and I came into contact with Pousseur who was teaching composition courses there. I came into contact with all sorts of other people. Like I had some piano tuition from Susan Bradshaw um, I met Graham Treacher and Norman Del Mar and Alan Loveday and Keith Puddy and goodness knows who else. Um, and came into contact with actually all the people who were students then and who are the musical establishment now.

(laughs). And um, so I was very strongly influenced by Pousseur who at the time was talking about his own music which brought together different harmonic styles. He was working on trying to create a music in which you could be dissonant and



consonant as well. But it was a kind of post-tonal music. And so it was an integration through pastiching and quotation of earlier musical styles. That was his way in. Um, and it struck me as a very laudable goal to try to do this. Um, and quite an interesting sort of music that was resulting. So that became a very strong influence. Um, and I think at the same time, you know I was getting what I could off the radio. I was hearing the latest Boulez or Stockhausen pieces that came up, and catching up also with Schoenberg and Webern and Berg. Um, I think most of those people have continued to have some sort of an influence on me, whether its pronounced or not now I don't know. Um, the two people up on the wall here I think are very important; Stravinsky and Berg. Um, and its very hard to escape the influence of Stravinsky particularly from the point of view of rhythm and instrumentation, use of instruments, use of colour. And from Berg, the thing that astounds me about Berg is the matching of, not only matching but the marriage of discipline and expression. Er, something that sounds absolutely fluid and expressive will find is, you know, a palindrome, and its twenty-three bars long because that was, because it had to be (laughs) you know.

Q. Yeah.

A. Um, and its just miraculous, um, the way in which he blends the two things together. Oh I'm sure there are lots of other influences as well. There are classical influences as well as more recent ones, but you know, how far do you want to go?

Q. That gives me a sort of idea. Yep.

A. I would also say that jazz has continued to be a very strong influence on me, although its maybe not obvious from the sound of the music, or the surface of the music, but I'm very interested in the relationship between improvisation and composition.

Q. Right.

A. And I try to produce the kind of lines for players that they might have improvised. And in my teaching I'm always persuading or trying to persuade people to produce lines that rely on the instruments, try to think in terms of instruments. That's partly, you know, the legacy of Stravinsky and Berlioz and all of those people who think in terms of the instruments, but it also comes from a lot of listening to people improvising on their instruments where there's no composer in a sense, the performer is the composer. (pause) Er, now my teachers, well it was always obvious that Bernard Rands had come into the orbit of Berio. Um, and I mean this was one of the reasons why I didn't want to be part of the coterie who were all producing sub-Berio (laughs). Um, Bernard's got something else to offer, but you know the other people at the time didn't have big enough personalities to be able to transcend it. Um, and well I suppose what I've just been saying about instrumentation also applies to Berio, the way in which you can't imagine his music being composed for other instruments. It always sits on the instrument its composed for. And the music grows out of the instrument in many respects. Um, David Blake um studied with Eisler, and er so there's a kind of political element there. Um, which I like to think I've picked up. Um, there's also a sort of practicality and craftsmanship um, which I think he got from Eisler. I remember him talking about the year that he spent in Germany with Eisler when they spent most of the year looking for a possible theme for him to write a set of variations on. This is apparently what Eisler used to do with everybody, he said "I want you to write a set of variations, but first you must find a theme which is good enough and has the potential for writing variations on'. And I think David spent about six months trying to come up with a theme, that would do (laughs). So that sort of

rigour is something which David tried to pass on to me. Whether he succeeded or not is another matter.

Q. OK. Er, when you were an undergraduate, um, were you having to do a harmony and counterpoint component.

A. Hah, well there wasn't terribly much of that at York at the time.

Q. No.

A. Er it wasn't rigorously taught. Um, I did some of it in the first year. I should point out I was the year that was always experimented on, all the way through. (laughs)

Q. Right.

A. So I'm the archetypal guinea pig.

Q. OK.

A. Now, the system changed I think at the end of my first year and also the end of my second year (laughs) so I had a bit of the old regime in the first year.

Q. Right. And can you remember how that was taught to you? Did you use the piano or was it more of a, more of a . . . ?

A. No, it was a do it in your head. It was do it in your head. Because, well, everything was working towards exam room performance, so there was that. (laughs) I think we've all lapsed since. I need the piano as much as anybody does now. Um, I take heart from the fact that Rimsky said to Stravinsky "some people work at the piano and some don't. You will work at the piano". (laughs)

Q. Do you think it was a useful skill to develop? Do you think it did help to improve your inner hearing?

A. Yes. Yes, undoubtedly. Um, it's a question of how far you can go, how far you can explore. Because I think in a way it's easier to develop habits that you know will work. In fact I never knew the name of anything. I was always sort of using things like German sixths in my harmony, but my teacher had just said "here's another dodge that I know", or "here's another wheeze that I was taught". You know he was very informal in that way. And he never named anything, he just sort of sketched out situations in which he could use a particular progression. And so it was much later when I got my hands on the textbooks that I realised all these things had names (laughs). And you could formalise them. But for him it was a sort of practical matter. It was a question of dealing with a particular situation.

Q. OK. Um, yes, in general do you feel that um, when listening to music comprising more than one line, when sort of replaying it back in your mind do you think that you, you're quite easily able to hear many lines at once, or is it much more focusing on one line, or the prominent part, or . . . ?

A. Er, it varies, but I, you know, I certainly think I'm capable of hearing several lines at once. I had a stand up row with somebody at my previous university. Somebody in our department. It was a sort of, you know, postgraduate seminar type event. Um, where we were trying to define melody. And I was citing, you know the theme from the slow movement of Rachmaninov's second symphony (sings). Now I feel that you can't actually understand that as a single line. It implies harmonic movement. You need to hear suspensions, you need to hear resolutions, you need to hear the sequencing of it. Um, and if you hear it simply as a melodic line you lose all the tension that's in it. And he was saying "oh, it's just a musical line, I don't hear any suspensions or anything" which, you know, made me question his musicality really (laughs). Um, but I think this is the key to it, that a lot of people when they talk about a musical theme don't simply mean the top line. They're probably, you know if they try to reproduce it that's what they'll

sing, or whistle or hum, but they probably they have at least some sense of the tensions that are in it, that are spelt out by the underlying harmonies, and the movement of the bass for instance.

Q. Do you think its a question of perhaps consciousness of that being there, perhaps where you have this sort of harmonic awareness which you aren't able to sort of necessarily fill out but it's perhaps there? What do you think?

A. Yes, yes, yes. Yes I think it's a problem that what we have, our means of reproducing these bits of music, it's down to our voice, and the voice by its very nature can only sing one line at a time. So its a problem, um, I mean you know taking another quite common example I mean is it possible to hear Chariots of Fire just as a melodic line?

Q. Hmm.

A. It's nothing! I mean (sings). It's nothing (laughs). You have to imagine the texture as a whole, and I suppose if you had a group of people you know they might send it up by doing (makes a gunshot noise) or something (laughs). Some of them might actually do that.

Q. Do you think if we were all sort of, imagine, and it's a strange thing to imagine, a world where we were all born with fantastic piano skills and we all had mini keyboards with us, if we were to reproduce a famous melody like that we would just be harmonising? It's a silly question because obviously we don't, we aren't all born with these skills. . .!

A. (laughs). Um. . .

Q. Do you think it's that essential to our. . .?

A: Yes. Yes I think we'd try to. I think we would.

Q. OK. What do you think about, is it Mozart? I don't know if it's a myth, or what it is, the sort of legend of him being able to copy down in full detail the music that he'd heard once. That kind of thing. Do you think that sort of aural imagination is possible?

A. Well, um, (laughs), I think the myth is wrong because he's supposed to have gone back the next night to check it out isn't he, and this is a performance that took part once a year so (laughs) I think we can safely say that that's a myth. It's the Allegri isn't it there that he's supposed. . .?

Q. Yeah. Yeah.

A. Well there are people with this ability, yes. Um, I don't know how to explain it. Um, there are some celebrated examples of um autistic children or semi-autistic children aren't there who can reproduce at the piano things that they've heard once, but interestingly enough only within a particular idiom. So, I'm not quite sure what that means, but you know if you played some Mozart or you played something as far along the line as Bartok they might be able to get it, but if you played them some Stockhausen they wouldn't. Er, and it's a question of what's within the orbit and what isn't. So it suggests to me that in some respects its a function of memory. Well of course a function of memory! What am I saying?! Er, I mean its a function of long-term memory that it's er, that the vocabulary has become embedded, and that's what you can draw on. Um, I mean that's the point I was trying to make about aural imagination and um exploration, writing things simply using your aural capacities without wanting to expand the boundaries. And I think it might be quite OK to be doing exercises in the style of Bach, in an idiom that's familiar to you. But if you're exploring your own world and pushing the boundaries then you may want some help from external sources. And I find it very

useful as a composer to be able to pound the piano and the walls, and whatever, to help me.

Q. Right. Um, have you ever composed in an electro-acoustic medium?

A. Not for a very long time, and I keep saying it's part of my five year plan to get back in there.

Q. OK. Did you. . .?

A. I don't think it was terribly successful at the time.

Q. I'm interested in perhaps the different role that inner hearing might have between a more conventional form of composition and electro-acoustic composition.

A. Mm.

Q. Um, it seemed to me that because you're producing such, well I don't know, such different sounds, well perhaps not any more, but experimenting in that way, a more perhaps wider range of sounds available. I don't know if that's true, that perhaps the imagination for that would be rich, but alternatively it occurred to me that electro-acoustic composition might be much more hands on, and much more about playing with the sound and hearing it change.

A. I think generally it is. I think it's very difficult going in the studio imagining something you want to get. Um, you might never find it. Um, and the problem is of course that you're not actually, you're not writing for instruments as it were, you're not writing within given parameters, so it's actually easier to start with certain particular sound sources and to work away from them, and um, produce something that might be as good.

Q. Mm. OK.

A. But actually I think the boundaries are changing. Um, there's another aspect of that which has to do with the repeatability of the music and the fact that an instrumental composer is imagining a performance or imagining a sort of idealised performance whereas the studio composer's hearing the real thing, and um you can in the studio get bored with the material and feel that you need to produce more layers of activity to liven it up. Er, whereas the listener coming to that afresh might find it very exciting.

Q. Yeah.

A. And now that we have the possibility of inputting notated music into a computer and hearing some sort of version of it played back, its easy to have a similar sort of relation to the music and to get bored with it. Um, I take comfort from the fact the computer can never produce anything as interesting as the live performer does. Um, its very much a dead sort of sound. Um, I have got students who actually lost confidence in their pieces because they've heard them on the computer and thought "oh, that's actually not very interesting is it?".

Q. Is that er, do you work in that way, i.e. using a computer and playing it back?

A. Yes I try to avoid the temptation to use it too much. The big difference for me between working entirely on paper, which is what I was doing until a few years ago, and working with the computer is that um the boundaries between finishing the composition and copying it have come down. Um, yeah when I was working with pen and ink, I would finish the piece first and make sure that I wasn't going to revise it, and then consider page layouts and so on, um, so that the business of copying the piece and possibly the business of copying the parts after that was a kind of, it was a different act. And it was a kind of cleansing act between composing one piece and another. You know it's actually seeing that piece off.

Um, whereas now (laughs) you know you've got a notepad you can doodle on, and

I quite like the idea of sort of putting something in when the piece is half finished. It means that the moment when you draw the double barline in isn't quite the same at all. And in a sense the piece need never finish because you can always go on revising it because the programme will always reformat the pages for you.

Q. OK. Um, yes, um given that traditional notation methods are not in a sense a direct manipulation of sound, it's a sort of medium isn't it?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that that in itself necessitates fairly good auralisation skills?

A. Yes. I think also it goes beyond that, that there are manipulations you can make with the material once its on the page that in a sense you can't make when its in your head, and now this might be a bit ingrowing, um, in that you might start to manipulate the material just because you can. And you know you might decide to invert the whole piece just because you can do it once you can see it, and it might not make particular aural sense. Um, so that's another way in which the studio medium is different, because what you, if I can coin a phrase, what you hear is what you have (laughs) and that's that, whereas it's possible to write down things which are impossible to play, or impossible to hear. You might write redundant textures. And then it becomes about the business of notation rather than about the business of sound.

Q. Yeah. So I'm interested in the way you sort of began actually which is to say that you can manipulate more on the page than perhaps you can in your mind.

A. Yes.

Q. Um, is that a process of sort of preserving something that you can then work with would you say?

A. Yes. Yes, that's exactly it. Yes. And it can be a problem because you can be stuck with the music in the form that you notated it.

Q. Yep.

A. Um, again, Stravinsky said that he needed to know the tempo of a piece before he could start writing it down. Um, and that's a sense of a grid, that's a sense of what the boundaries are and how you're going to measure the music against those boundaries. I think it can be quite valuable to re-notate something, to rethink it in a different way, and then different manipulations become possible. So its double-edged: it can be useful but it can also hem you in.

Q. Yeah. OK.

A. And I've got strategies, you may like to know this, I've got strategies for trying to get the music down quickly. I mean there are two distinct processes, um, one which is to try to write down the music that's going on in your head, and the other which is to project more music. Um, so one is constructivist if you like, and the other is trying to capture something on the wing. Um, so if I'm trying to capture something on the wing, um, it's you know, it's horrible, you've got an orchestra going mad in your head (laughs), and you want to capture in strokes with a pencil on a piece of paper the vitality of that and the brutality of it perhaps. The drama of all these people performing all these actions, so I try to find ways of notating the most important aspects of it, and sometimes they may be graphic, it may be to do with trying to, you know, make a graphic representation of something in a given time span: "let's hear that again, it takes thirty-two seconds, so this page is thirty-two seconds long. What happens there? Oh yes, there's a big (pwa) there!" you know, and I try to get the thing measured out on the page. And I might even take a stopwatch to it and read it as a kind of interim notation, and try to put bar lines into it, or I might try to get the curve of melodic lines without defining the actual

pitches. I might make a note that that's coming back to the same pitch again and again up here, you know?

Q. Right. So, sorry, when you're doing that with the melodic contour, you aren't actually defining the pitches, but the pitches are quite fixed in your mind at that point so that just by indicating the melodic contour. . .?

A. Well I hope it's fixed in my mind. It might be changing on each replay.

Q. Yeah.

A. (laughs) That's the problem. Um, I've mentioned the orchestra. This is actually what I did with my first orchestral piece. I had the opportunity as a postgraduate to write a piece for the chamber orchestra which was to be twenty minutes long, or thereabouts. And I sat in my garden at the beginning of summer, something like June when term had finished, knowing that I had to produce this piece by September, and I sat down in the garden and thought "right, I'm going to imagine twenty minutes of orchestral music". Um, and that's what I tried to do. I tried to sit down as it were and switch on a radio in my head which was playing my piece.

Q. Right.

A. And what came out eventually at the end of that summer was richer than what I heard in my head. I hope it was. Um, because I hope that I built into it layers of meaning, you know layers of activity which the casual listener the first time round wouldn't have heard. And in that position I was of course the casual listener.

Q. Right. Yeah.

A. So I think in a way it was a kind of mis-guided exercise. But it was a useful thing to try to do in terms of getting large durations fixed in my mind. How the thing might work in terms of a large formal shape, and how I might begin to get to the detail eventually. But I think the actual business of working on the page means that, you know, if you were using thirty-six stave paper maybe you'd have a sense of the people who aren't doing anything, and the people who are doing something. And then you get a dramatic sense of "ah, these people are sitting there, and their instruments are on their laps" and you know I'm watching them, and are they going to pick them up, are they going to do something with them? Um, it's said that Janacek towards the end of his life only ruled staves for the instruments he wanted, and it was a kind of discipline to inhibit himself from writing over-thick textures. So the manuscript from the *House of the Dead* apparently has a third bassoon added in the bottom corner (laughs) sort of thing. And um I think the first performances were edited posthumously by a couple of musicologist who felt they had to thicken the whole thing up (laughs)!

Q. Right.

A. It wouldn't do! But that's really what he wanted. He wanted to force this discipline on himself.

Q. Hm. OK. And I asked before about your teachers and whether or not they were playing your music on the piano or auralising it in their mind. What about your students' work? When they turn up and show you a page of manuscript. Is it, are you able to just read that in your mind, to get a good idea?

A. (sighs) I hope I get a good idea, it's not as good as I'd like (laughs). And sometimes I have recourse to the piano. But um, I'm very much aware that the fact that the piano isn't always the answer. I mean it might be the answer for me, um, to help me to write my own music, but it's never, unless I'm writing a piano piece of course, in which there are different problems, um, but it's never for me the piano on its own, it's always just a producer of pitches.

Q. Yeah.

A. Um, and its not always going to be terribly useful. Um, and I tend to produce scores myself that you can't play on the piano. So in a way its perhaps a question of producing one layer of sound outside myself so I can listen to another inside myself at the same time. Um, and ultimately you can't play the whole lot at once. So um, its a constantly frustrating business actually. I mean I would love to be able just to have the capacity to pick up a score and hear it like a recording. I can't quite do that. And especially as, again I'm coming round to this question of familiarity, I mean most students are producing music which is unlike anything else. I've no model to, to amend you know, to something like that, whereas of course if you pick up a Mozart score you don't know, well, that's all right (laughs).

Q. OK. Um, I don't know how many pieces you've composed in total but would you say that in retrospect when you look back at your compositions you can hear them all pretty well in your head?

A. Ha ha! (laughs)

TAPE CUT

A. Yeah, wouldn't it be nice to be a walking archive. No, what happens is that the pieces almost become somebody else's eventually. You know, its almost as if somebody else has written them, as you kind of, either you move on, or they recede into the background. Um, and I see the whole process as one of long-term objectivisation. Objectification do I mean? Um, (laughs) that in a way what I'm trying to do is to get outside of me something that's inside, er and the first step is to put something external on the page and work with it. Um, and then it can be handed on to performers who contribute their bit. Um, and I usually like to, to be on hand to help them to do that, initially. Um, and as a means of checking that I've actually got down on page what I want. You know, there may be some instructions missing which are then put back into the score. Um, but then, you know, more generations of performers might turn it into something of their own. And then historically as the piece recedes from me, and as I become less the person that I was when I composed it, it feels like somebody else's music, and no, no, I don't stand any better chance of remembering it than I do anybody else's music.

Q. Right! That's interesting. Thank you.

A. There are, there are pieces which I've been involved with as a performer of course, and which I've gone on being involved with as a performer. And those stay with me, but the other ones no. (laughs)

Q. OK. Right. Um, I was going to ask you some more questions about the way you sort of create but you've sort of already touched on quite a few of them so. . .

A. Well, if there's anything I can clarify?

Q. Well, one question is whether composition for you is a consciously ongoing thing. Would you say that you're constantly composing or is it not like that?

A. It's not like that, no. It's intermittent. Um, I know people do talk about it being, Max Davies talks about it being like a tap that's constantly turned on, and that its possible to have more than one tap turned on you know at the same time, and to work on three or four pieces simultaneously. Um, I don't like doing that. I like to be involved in one piece at a time, and preferably, it's not always possible these days, but preferably to be totally immersed in it, for the period I'm working on it. So it's rather a distraction listening to anybody else's music at the same time. And I find that very frustrating (laughs).

Q. Hm.

A. But if um I.. I do hear stuff going on in my head most of the time, um but it tends to sort of be detritus. It tends to be like drum machines and things. Um, its not terribly interesting. I wouldn't er, I wouldn't bother writing it down.

Q. Um, you mentioned having the er, perhaps the rare experience of hearing music when you went to bed and hearing it when you wake up, yeah would you say that, would you say that that sort of creating and composing actually would occur in dreams for you, or is it much more just a replay?

A. Um, yes I think, I certainly think there's the possibility of solving problems overnight. And I would try to leave loose ends as far as possible, well that's not quite the case, I mean when I'm stopping work on a piece er I would like to have an inkling of what the next bit is, but not too far, you know. I would like to stop at the point where I know I can pick it up again, rather than come back with an unsolved problem, um but sometimes, as I say, you can go to bed and wake up with the problem solved. In other words you've got beyond the bit that you knew and can see a bit further.

Q. Hm. So that's very much a subconscious sort of development?

A. Hm. I've learnt to trust my subconscious, in fact I think I really don't see any great divide between the conscious and the subconscious. Er, I used to feel very puritanical about music that I'd worked on, as opposed to music that I hadn't worked on. Um, you know valuing the one and not the other. Um, but as the pieces recede from you in time, you can't remember which bits you worked on, and which bits you know, which bits didn't present any problem at all. Um, and then you begin to see it more as the external listener would. Which is I think what we're aiming for as composers. And really, you know, if something comes as a gift, fine, you shouldn't look a gift-horse in the mouth (laughs). You have actually worked on it at some level.

Q. Hm.

A. It just it feels it doesn't have a big price tag on it, that's all.

Q. Yeah. So music that you feel you have worked on in a more conscious way, um I was going to ask you a bit later on about sort of if you had any one particular strategy, but would you say that that was playing with ideas at note level in your mind and experimenting in that way, or is it more abstract, or?

A. It might sometimes be more abstract, yes. Um, but it, I know what it is, it tends to be manipulation and projection of material based on material that's already there. Its sort of generating more of the same. Um, I suppose its the good old fashioned word 'developing' material. That's what its about.

Q. In quite a "I'd like to develop this idea now" way, or in a "it just sort of happens, more organically" would you say?

A. Um, well, you know I often say to people "the world is full of page one pieces". In other words you have an idea, it fills the first page, the second page is blank, what do you do? Um, you can either think of something else, or you can find ways of extending the sense of page one, and its that question of extending the sense of page one that I'm talking about really. Um, what are the strategies for developing material, teasing more out of this? Go on, tell us more about that. And those tend to be to do with, um, analysing the material, seeing its potential, and seeing it through. All of which feels more like hard work, than just having an idea striking you out of the blue.

Q. Yeah. Right.



A. So it may be, it may be abstract yes. Um, or it may be, you know nitty-gritty development of motifs, or generating more of the same harmony or something like that.

Q. When you first get an idea, a specifically musical idea, um, would you say it comes complete with instrumentation, and sort of colour to it?

A. Very often. Yes. Yes, um, I mean it may be that the first impetus is to write a piece for a particular combination of instruments, so that I'm automatically thinking in terms of those instruments.

Q. Yeah.

A. Its very frustrating and it sometimes happens, you're in the middle of a string quartet and you hear a tuba (laughs). And you think "no, I can't do that". And it's really what you want most in the world! And you just have to stifle it, it's a great pity (laughs).

Q. It does sound frustrating.

A. But you try to avoid that situation as far as possible, or you say "I'll make a note of that. That's another piece". Um, but, I might be set up in order to hear what the clarinet can give me, for instance. I may actually be thinking about the nature of the clarinet as an instrument, and what it's good at, and what sounds good on it. And then I start getting clarinet-y ideas. But yes it may well be that, you know, an idea just strikes me and its attached to a particular instrument, and I haven't got another starting point for that piece, I haven't thought of writing a piece for tuba and string quartet, but there is, you know, its happening.

Q. OK. Do you have absolute pitch?

A. No.

Q. I was going to ask whether, if you did (laughs), whether you imagine music at a certain pitch, and whether it was important to stay at that pitch. I don't know whether you've come across anybody else..?

A. Ah right. No well, some. . . I say I haven't got absolute pitch, sometimes I'm there, sometimes I'm not.

Q. Right.

A. And I'm not sure I understand what the term means anyway. Um, people talk about good relative pitch, and I don't know quite where you draw the line. Um, there's somewhere where Britten says, I think it's an interview, maybe it's in the Marie Schaeffer book, when he asked if he's got perfect pitch and he says "oh I tend to hear Maester Singer in B major these days, its all slipped" (laughs). Now, if he knows its slipped, does that mean he's still got perfect pitch and he can put it back up again or what? It's an odd way of thinking about it. Um, no I tell you what though, I think there's a connection with such obvious sounds as open strings, which have to be open strings, and therefore have to be at a particular pitch. So to that extent, yes I do feel these markers in terms of absolute pitch.

Q. Um, and you mentioned before, the. . . was it Stravinsky and the notion of having the tempo fixed, before, do you think its possible to have a sense of absolute tempo?

A. Well sometimes I've got that.

Q. Right.

A. Um, maybe I shouldn't tell you this, er, it's too good a story not to!

Q. OK!

A. Um, I think it was the birth of Leo, um they were monitoring his heartbeat and trying to find the tempo and I said "that's 132". And eventually they said "yes, that's right!" (laughs) And now it's gone down to 116.

Q. Wow!

A. But that won't work everyday.

Q. Do you see any trend behind when it will and when it won't?

A. (laughs) I'd love to know! Um, I think it's to do with being in practise, probably.

Q. Yeah.

A. Um, I mean I don't feel I always have it as a conductor, and I wish I had. Um, apparently Solti could do retakes, you know, six months later. Go back with the orchestra when they had another day to do the recording, and he'd sort of paste these bits in the middle of a Brahms symphony. It's exactly the same tempo. And that is pretty scary! (laughs)

Q. Do you think it probably is practice?

A. I think it is practice, yes. I think it's a form of imprinting. I mean I do try to associate in a conscious way particular tempi with particular pieces. Um, but there's never the guarantee that you're going to experience them at the same pace every time anyway, um. . . Somebody pointed out to me recently that, and it's something I've known without articulating it, that performers um tend to rush things when they're under pressure. You know, if you feel that something's going to be difficult, you make it more difficult for yourself by rushing it. Um, that's because of adrenaline. You're actually experiencing time more quickly than the listener is. So, if you actually calm yourself down a bit, or you allow for the fact that there is actually more space than you think, it'll be all right. But there's a perceptual time when you're high on adrenaline, which is different from how you would experience the same music as a listener, and therefore your feeling for tempo has got to be different. Um, so again coming back to Stravinsky, sorry about this, there's a bit of film of him um discussing tempo with Robert Craft and um, maybe it was you know, in the middle of a recording session or something, a break in the recording session, when they were taking him to task over the tempo he was doing, saying "but you've got this tempo in the score" and he was sort of beating time and they've got a metronome, and he concludes yes "fine, well today this is 56 for me, tomorrow perhaps is something else".

Q. Yes.

A. And that's the composer above all who has the reputation for being absolutely precise about such things as metronome marks.

Q. Hm. Well with your own music then, your own composition, is it the speed quite an important dimension?

A. Mm. Mm.

Q. Would you say, when you imagine it, that it stays at a fairly fixed tempo?

A. There's a problem here, because when you're working on something in a very detailed, and I would say myopic way, its very easy to cheat yourself over tempo, and you always kind of, you can write something in the wrong units actually, and then realise later that you've done that. You know, write them in triplet crotchets where they should be triplet quavers.

Q. Right.

A. Um, and somehow you're tricking yourself into taking the tempo down when you get to that point. Now this is where the computer's very helpful, because the computer doesn't lie (laughs) and you can check your notations that way, very clearly. But its being so close to the detail and worrying about the notes the clarinets playing, you lose the speed of the whole thing. Um, but that's a slightly different proposition isn't it? I mean you're talking about getting the tempo right

for the piece, and whether it will stay the same. I try to establish a tempo that works yes, um, and sometimes I get it wrong. Sometimes I ask for metronome speeds that are too quick for the players to do it. And um when I hear it I'm quite happy that they play it a bit more slowly than that. But often the metronome mark I put on is an ideal.

Q. Um, how are we doing for time?

A. (laughs) I'm all right!

Q. I do have lots of questions but I'm quite happy to break it into another session if you prefer.

A. No. Well, I'm expecting somebody at twelve but he may be late.

Q. Um, I've got a question here which seems very silly now: what makes a good compositional idea, in terms of sort of an image that might come to mind, whether that be purely auditory or . . .?

A. Yeah, yeah. I mean usually for me it's a very striking idea. And it may be um a very immediate sort of gesture which I know is going to have the same effect on an audience, you know. It's very strong because it's memorable. Um, it's probably also strong because it's got potential, maybe a very pregnant sort of idea. That's the ideal thing. Not only that you've got this big rhetorical statement, but also that you can see where it might go.

Q. Mm, hmm. And is that something that you would experience as a musical image?

A. Yes. Yes. It might be a sonority. It might be, um I don't know, there's a piece for string orchestra um which has the habit of voicing the viola line above the violins half of the time, and that particular sonority is something that struck me as important and vital. So it may be a concept. It may be something which um, you know, has a particular occurrence early on, but which you know will fuel more of the same.

Q. OK.

A. It might be a harmony. Um, it might be a striking melodic gesture, or it might be hitting the bass drum very hard or something.

Q. In general would you say that inspiration comes from, more of that sort of internal imagery hearing sounds, rather than I'd like to write a piece about, I don't know, a walk in the park?

A. Right.

Q. What would you say the balance is between sort of external and internal ideas?

A. Well I'd have to do a survey of the pieces really to work that one out. Um, often there are external stimuli. Um, very often visual ones. Um, I can think of a specific example, there's um, in Vance, which is round the coast from Nice, inland, there's a chapel which was designed by Matisse, and um, the stained glass is of three different colours, and motifs are repeated on all the windows. The inside of the chapel is, well he aimed it to be the colour of bread (phone rings), I'll ignore that, he aimed it to be the colour of bread so it's very neutral, but when the sun shines through the window it makes the most amazing patterns on the inside of the chapel. And if you stay in there for any length of time, I'd love to have stayed there a whole day, but you're not allowed to, um you can imagine it would be like being in the middle of a kaleidoscope. And, I came away wanting to write a piece which would be as, as simple a sort of mechanism as that, and obviously it needed to be translated into some kind of musical terms. Um, with a sense of the same, the same musical material shifting round in the course of the piece, in a very gentle sort of way. Um, and yet producing all kinds of different relationships within it. So

it wasn't a specific musical idea at all, it was a kind of ideal of simplicity that I was going for.

Q. Right.

A. And I thought "gosh how clever, to be able to set up what really is a mechanism", um, this building is sort of passive, and its just letting the sun play on it, which is fantastic. But on many occasions, you know, a piece will be the result of thinking about a particular group of instruments and the relationships inside that group, um and particular characterising material. You know, musical types which are going to occur in that piece. Quite often there's a single sheet of paper initially with lots of little ideas on it, specific musical ideas, most of which get in. There's room for them.

Q. Would you say in general you compose in a sequential way? You begin at the beginning and work through, or is it not that straight-forward?

A. It's not always that straight-forward. Sometimes I've written the end first. Um, that orchestral piece I was talking about, my first piece for orchestra, um, I turned inside out in the end (laughs). Because it was a piece which actually joins end to end, that makes a loop. So in a way you could start anywhere inside it. And it actually it made more musical sense to start elsewhere in the piece that I originally thought. I thought it was, all would come out of a middle C, er and then all would go back into a middle C. But in fact um that's not how it begins, that happens in the middle now (laughs). (phone rings). Somebody's desperate to reach me.

ANSWERS THE PHONE

A. So, where were we?

Q. Um, composing in a sequential manner.

A. Yes, yes. Um, I was talking about the orchestral piece. Yes, there's at least one occasion where I've written the end first because I knew how it wanted to end, um and then you've kind of got this very peculiar situation of writing towards the end. Um, but you know, when it comes to it, it doesn't really matter how you worked. You know, you present a piece and that's it. Nobody knows how it was worked on and it doesn't really matter. Um, some pieces are journeys. I like to, you know, start out, um take a line for a walk as Klee would say. You know just start and explore the material from there, knowing that's the starting point. And of course, as far as the audience is concerned, that's what you're doing, in every piece. Um, but if you have a clear sense of some events that will happen along the way, or even where the goal is, then why not? Why not sketch those bits first?

Q. Yeah, yeah. Do you ever find it difficult to move beyond a moment when you're composing?

A. You mean get stuck?

Q. Yeah!

A. (laughs) That's a nice way of putting it! (laughs)

Q. Well not necessarily! I mean I suppose that's the negative spin on it, but alternatively perhaps its because you've got a very striking image in your mind which you particularly like, or is just, takes over. I don't know.

A. Mm, hm. Er, I don't think I can ever remember that happening in a positive way. No, related to that though, sometimes I find that things take longer than I originally thought, and its specifically when I'm working with texts I think. Um, the settings of the texts are often longer than I thought they were going to be. You know I think "oh this is good for three minutes" and it comes out at seven. Um, and I suppose that's because I want to dwell on some things along the way. But well yes, I suppose come to think of it I have enjoyed the moment sometimes. Um,

sometimes the, where I go up close to it it actually needs more time. But um, I don't think I've been surprised in any particular radical way, I don't think you know its taken over the piece.

Q. Right. OK. So again thinking in terms of musical imagery, would you say, I've heard it described by somebody who is doing similar research in a similar way on imagery but specifically looking at composers, they came to the conclusion that it was a compositional tool, that it was some sort of playback mechanism in the mind. Would you say you would regard it in that way, as a compositional tool, or would you say that perhaps it was less a playback thing than a means of developing and experimenting with ideas?

A. It's both. Um, yeah it's difficult to say where one starts and another ends actually.

Q. Sure.

A. Yes, I think the problem is that its, its a faulty tape. Um, if its a playback mechanism you can't actually be certain that every time its the same, and I think this is the beauty and the drawback to notation that it actually fixes a version. If you're unlucky that version becomes something that you can't develop any further because its become so fixed, you can't see any potential in it any more. It's definitive, its complete. Whereas you know sometimes its more valuable to try to keep the ideas fluid. But, um, you know if I, having heard my orchestral piece for twenty minutes, if I then try to repeat it the next day who knows what relationship that would have to the original? And, um, until we've got some way of plugging electrodes in and recording (laughs). . . I don't know whether that would be desirable or not, frankly.

Q. It would help my PhD a lot!

A (laughs) Yes! Yes. Um, but it would become much more like a studio experience then, and you might feel that "well OK, that was enough to listen to once, but I wouldn't want to come back to it, I'd have to build more into it". Yes I would say its a faulty playback because you can't guarantee that the tape's always the same. Um, but that's why it's also useful as a means of experimentation.

Q. Hm.

A. Sorry, it took us a while to get there, but I got there!

Q. No, that's. . . (laughs). Have you ever realised, knowingly confused, known that your own creative imagery is actually the same as existing music?

A. (laughs) Yes! When I was about, er twelve, I suppose, I thought I'd written the New World Symphony! (laughs). I haven't made that mistake again. Um, there's a moment in my pieces for strings. Everything comes to a unison, and then goes into a kind of unison melody, and I was worried about it because I realised that this is what Lutoslawski did in the Funeral music. Um, but the situation is different, and the situation I think grows naturally out of the discourse in the music, that in the end I thought well this is all right, and the gesture is the same but I've arrived at it by different means. And it's not the same music, so it's all right, you know, it's like getting inhibited about using pizzicato because other people have! Um, so I let it stand.

Q. Do you have a theory as to why there was that similarity? Where you particularly influenced by Lutoslawski at the time, or. . .?

A. I don't think so. Um, it it just struck me as a natural thing to do. Um you know the potential of having fourteen solo string players at one extreme - this piece is about extremes, it's about um having fourteen different things going on at once - and at the other extreme having them all doing exactly the same thing, except for

the bass player who can't reach up there. But thirteen of them literally on a unison, and I thought "this is a fantastically strong gesture".

Q. Hm.

A. You can't miss this one (laughs)!

Q. No! Um, I was going to ask if you ever re-worked aspects of your composition, but we were talking a little bit about that with computer notation weren't we, and the potential to do that?

A. Yes. Once the piece is finished it tends to stay finished. Um, I mean I think, following the first performance, you know I might turn an mp into an mf, that sort of thing. Um, I might add a tempo indication, that sort of thing, but I, I probably wouldn't do anything radical. Um, I don't withdraw pieces and re-write them, in a radical way. It just tends to be, you know, a little minor adjustment.

Q. And would the minor adjustment come from having heard it being performed, or would it be sort of continuing the compositional process in a way in your mind, and thinking "actually, when I think about that" perhaps? Would you say it was more based on having a perception of the music or an image?

A. Yeah, it's actually more to do with sending out the right signals to the performers. Um, rather than anything structural. So it's the use of, it's to do with the use of the score as a prescription for performance.

Q. OK. I was also going to ask you a bit about improvising. You mentioned that you were interested in the relationship between improvising and.. and that you're quite interested in the idea of having your instrumental lines written almost in an improvised way. Do you ever actually direct your performers to just improvise within your music?

A. No (laughs). Um, sometimes I free up the notation. Um, but I'd never let go completely. Um, and again I think there are models for ways of doing. I mean I think Lutoslawski might be one for instance. Um, he never lets the pitch go, only once lets the pitch go I think in Venetian Games, only, you know, as a kind of inviting the xylophone player to do a glissando without showing exactly what the pitches are. You know, that's nothing (laughs). But generally he's got the harmonic grid, and he works within that. And he's simply allowing freedoms about rhythm. Um, similarly I might you know allow some freedoms about durations, but that's about it.

Q. Do you think that, I was trying to think in terms of musical imagery about the relationship between improvisation and composition. Do you think imagery precedes the sound in improvisation, or do you think it's..? It's difficult isn't it because you never consciously think "I'm going to do that now and then go and do it", because it's not like that, but do you think that is essentially the difference between composition and improvisation or do you think in a way that the difference is just in the solidity of the final product as it were? I'm not sure. I'm not putting it very well. I'm just trying to work out the relationship between the two.

A. Right, right. I think um, I think in a way improvisation and, I think we have to be aware that these terms are very loose. . . .

Q. Oh, yeah.

A. . . .improvisation is related to my faulty playback system. That, as there's no notation, a player may be trying to play the same solo every time, but it's never coming out the same twice. On the other hand there is the horror story of the, the um the man in the, the hotel manager who's setting his watch by Dizzy Gillespie's top C every night (laughs). "Oh no, what's going on here?" There's a sense in

which something can be apparently an improvisation but it's really a composition, and it's become codified, and although the details might be fluid, essentially the structure's the same every time. Um, and I'm sure it's, it's incredibly difficult to wipe the slate clean every time and you wouldn't want to, but you know I think we have to be careful, improvisation isn't as pure as perhaps the term suggests. Now I'm interested in the idea of imaging. I suppose what you mean in terms of improvisation is imagining what you're going to play before you play it.

Q. Yeah.

A. (sighs) Yes. (pause) It's a difficult one that. In mean so often it must be tactile. Um, and to some extent it must be to do with um, with patterns that you've played before, and which are familiar. Um, I mean I suppose that competent jazz players get by on a bad night on their habits, and on a good night will be going way beyond them into something more exploratory. But exploring means that you might fail, or succeed. You have to be prepared to take the risks. I think there's always got to be the bedrock of the safe option for them. So there must be a sense of what might come, and maybe going beyond that.

Q. Right.

A. There was the interesting case of Slam Stuart, the bass player who always sang along with himself. Er, you know he'd take bowed solos, and he'd sing the same thing two octaves higher.

Q. Mm, that is. . .

A. (laughs) So I don't know where that gets you, in terms of imaging! (laughs)

Q. No! Um, yes I wanted to ask you some things about timbre, which I'm particularly interested in. Um, you mentioned a few things but um, first of all I was wondering to what extent you think that your timbre knowledge is based on an inner hearing of the sound, or on more of a sort of declarative "I know that such an instrument is capable of doing x, y, z"?

A. It's a bit of both. Um, I had a particularly tricky one recently when I was writing a solo clarinet piece and I wanted to use extended techniques. Um, some of which I was sure about and some of which I wasn't. Um, so I did some research on what was feasible. Um, and it was, it was very much a mixture of speculation and knowledge. Um, generally, you know when I'm on safer ground and I'm not exploring quite so much, it's er, it's to do with hearing the instruments do it.

Q. Yeah. As in hearing internally rather than hearing out loud?

A. Yes. Yes, hearing internally, that's right, yes. But there was a particular thing I set up in this piece, I had a set of quarter-tone, well micro-tonal fingerings around a particular pitch, um, and from the fingering charts I could actually see that this would work as a nice pattern for the player.

Q. Right.

A. Er, and on any particular instrument I wasn't quite certain how precisely tuned this was going to be. Er, but I knew I was going to get these fluctuations of pitch, and I predicted that it would be kind of up, down, up a little bit more, down a but further, that sort of thing. Those situations I think are very risky, but can be very exciting. I wouldn't want to commit myself to print without hearing it (laughs). And in fact when it came to it, my player who had a slightly amended Boehm system of clarinet, um, came up with some better fingerings for himself to use on his instrument to produce the effect, and the final version of the score has got both sets of fingerings in.

Q. Right. Do you, have you. . .(TAPE CUT OUT)

A. OK? Um, what sort of arranging do you mean?

Q. Um, re-orchestrating, that sort of. . . altering timbres I suppose is what I mean.

A. Er, yes. Um, not recently but, yes I have done a bit of that. Um, and I've done a couple of pastiche pieces for birthday presents where, you know, I've disguised myself as another composer.

Q. So where you're taking material that's already written and re-imagining it. . . Is that what you're doing, you're re-hearing it and manipulating the sound in your mind?

A. Yes.

Q. Right. So that would have quite a high imagery component then?

A. Yes.

Q. Do alternative sounds just sort of play themselves to you or is it again is it more of a strategic or an "I'd like such and such an effect"?

A. Um, I think it's more the former than the latter I would say. Sometimes I think it looks back on itself I mean I'm thinking now as a pianist and, sometimes you want to open up the sound of the piano more by imagining another instrument playing the same thing. So in a way it's sort of orchestration at the piano. And it's sort of a small step from there to orchestrating, you know, Debussy piano pieces, where you think "yes that's a flute line" or whatever.

Q. Yeah. OK. Um, what do you think makes, oh that's difficult. . . because it would depend on the context obviously, but what in your mind makes particularly good instrumentation? Perhaps you can think of examples of particularly good and particularly bad in others?

A. Ah! Oh right (laughs). Um, . . .

Q. Because if timbre for you as an integral part of a musical idea, do you think, do you think that's a thing that experience brings, or do you think that's something which you've always been able to do; imagine and instrumental sound, and the colour as part of it? Because I was always terrible at composition but, you know, it was always write a piece and then pick an instrument, any instrument kind of thing. . .

A. (laughs)

Q. But er. . .

A. Yep. I, um, well I think part, it's partly to do with working with the instrument and getting the best out of the instrument. I mean that's a kind of circular answer maybe. But, um, finding something which is so characteristic of the instrument that you can't imagine another instrument playing it.

Q. Right.

A. Um, and also, you know, it has to match the technique of the instrument. Um, a couple of good examples strike me immediately. Um, and I discovered this from inside actually, as a one time viola player. Um, Berlioz, *Roman Carnival*, um there's a passage where he's got grace notes for the violas and cells going 'vram, vram, vram, vram'. Four note figures. Now you've got four fingers, and you're simply putting down one two three four: 'vram, padalam' and then you're shifting up a position 'dram, dadalam' and it's just so perfect for the instrument. Because a five note figure it wouldn't work. It would be hopeless. But it's a four-note figure, um it sounds percussive, it sounds vital, it sounds like the whole section deciding to do that, you know wanting to do that, improvising it. And you couldn't get further away from the idea of the composer sitting at the piano and plonking down block chords than that. You know, there's no way that you could get that gesture other than to think in terms of the instrument and what it'll do. Um, the other one which I've heard again recently live, um the Ravel piano concerto, the slow



movement. Um, oh I'm seizing up as I'm hearing it in my head now (laughs). I can't talk! There's that long piano solo and then the strings creep in, with the flute entry, and the flute entry's beautiful enough, but then the oboe comes in higher, and I think it's a top E flat, and it's just so fantastic. Um, because you're not sure whether it's going to work! That is one thing, it's just so on the edge. Oh French oboe players don't have such a problem up there (laughs) but it's just such a beautiful entry, and it's like a voice about to crack. It's very highly emotional. And then of course you realise as the piece goes on that that is sort of related to the cor anglais solo that's going to come later. So he's making a kind of structural point there. It's brilliant. Bad ones are harder to find (laughs)!

Q. OK. Never mind! I was playing devil's advocate there! Um, timbre of course describes in a way the sound source. Do you think, because of that, certain timbres would elicit a sort of visual and spatial imagery for you as well? Is that a part of your experience of music, that you're imagining visual things?

A. Um, I suspect not as much as a lot of other people do. It tends to be orchestral spacings and I mean you know I listen to Copland and these big wide open spaces and I see the big wide open spaces. It seems to me landscape music and I'm not quite sure why. Um, but very often the textures have a whole in the middle, and um, and it's that. Um, I'm trying to think about other things. And I mean it's verging on what Boulez calls the anecdotal. Um, well after Saint-Saens it's very hard to not hear xylophones and not see skeletons (laughs). (pause) Some timbres seem absolutely right for particular situations. I'm trying to think of something specific at the moment. Um, again I think of wide open textures but it's a sonority I like very much out of it's context anyway, the end of the first movement of Shostakovich Five, the doubling of the harp harmonics on the celesta, again in a texture that's wide open. It's just got this, you know, incredibly desolate sort of character. Um, there's something about that sonority, that doubling, that's at one time fragile, but it's also sonorous and cold, sort of dispassionate in a way. And people talk about the end of that movement of the Fifth Symphony as being out on your own in the Russian Steppes, and I'm sure that's what he was getting at. Um, there are often these sonorities in Shostakovich which seem to me to have to do with desolation. It may be spiritual desolation or isolation. Um, and I've very definitely got a picture of him, you know sort of working late at night in his flat, with the light on, and nothing else going on in Moscow, and feeling isolate in lots of different ways. But maybe I'm reading lots of autobiography, or biography into that (laughs). Um, I used, you know before you have kids you can do this, I used to work late night a lot, and um many of my double bars are drawn at dawn, or close to dawn. And eventually I had to write a piece about dawn. Um, so I've got a piece called *Aubade* which without being specifically figurative, it tries to draw on the notion of the light coming back, and if you want to hear birdsongs in there you can. I don't know whether I've answered your question, have I?

Q. Yes! Do you have synaesthesia?

A. No. That's a Messiaen question!

Q. Um, how important is it to you, that your musical image of a composition corresponds to a performer's rendition and their image of it?

A. I think they can get to the same end by different means, so I'm not too worried about that. I mean sometimes I might, if it's not working, I might try to let them in on it, but I think if I'm happy with the results I'm not too worried about how they got there.

Q. Hm. And similarly um the, how important is it that your image relates to the listener's interpretation?

A. Ah that's the big question isn't it? (laughs). Um, I'm sometimes astonished when I hear what people make of it. Um, it's something, it seems to me that they bring all kinds of different things to it and there's no way of directing that or censoring it or censoring it. Um, I suppose this is where the programme note becomes useful although I feel in a sense you shouldn't need such things. Um, it sort of helps to nudge people gently in the right direction, but they'll make of it what they will, and I don't think you can really control it.

Q. No.

A. I was horrified actually, I had a group of first year students in here recently and I was playing them some late Beethoven, the last sonata, and they found it hilarious. And one of them said "oh, I wish I'd known about that when I was doing music for the pantomime".

Q. Really?

A. Yeah. And it was going (sings), like that. And they, and they all clearly had, you know, pictures of "ha, ha, ha" sort of melodramatic villains, you know, twirling their moustaches and tying damsels to the line. (laughs) I thought, you know, I'm sorry, this is tragic (laughs) this is the grand manner, and I'm sorry that you've come to this, you know, through perverted Victorian um versions of similar things. But you know this is the real thing, and it's not Beethoven's fault. But um, I was astonished you know that people who have studied music this far and can't take late Beethoven seriously. Err (laughs).

Q. Do you think that um, although as you say you can't control the way that a listener interprets your music, do you feel that in terms of just sort of note level. . . Just (laughs)! I mean, but you know, in terms of the sound, the way they perceive it and the image they have without the external, you can't really take away the external, but without, do you think that the salient and the striking images note-wise for you would be the for a listener?

A. I would hope so, yes. I would hope so. Um, but I've found people listening to my third quartet. I must tell you how I got into this actually. Um, somebody, I think it was Colin Lawson actually, who's still here, um, got his students to do write-ups of concerts they'd been to. I think it was a course on criticism. And as it happened I got to second mark some of this, and some of them had been to hear my quartet (laughs).

Q. Oh right!

A. So I found some very strange perceptions of this coming over. And the beginning of the piece which I think of, I mean its pianississimo, it's in, it's in harmonics mostly, I think of as being very gentle very delicate, very ethereal. Um, they were seeing it as spooky, threatening, frightening, you know (laughs). . . ominous. And I hadn't put any of those things in. Um, and they were just thinking, well a minor second is a minor second, whether it's up there or down there, and a minor second is horrible. (laughs)

Q. Sorry I've just heard it actually, I've just heard it because I got it out of the library over the weekend because I thought I really should listen to. . .

A. Oh right! (laughs)

Q. And I'm trying to think. I don't think I reacted like that to the beginning but I. . .

.

A. There's some fierce things later on, but I don't hear the beginning like that at all.

Q. No. Um, has any of your music ever followed a narrative, would you say? I suppose you mention that you've used text before.

A. Yes, yes. Text is rather a different matter. No, I wouldn't say it has followed a narrative, precisely. There's an orchestral piece called 'the convergence of the twain', which comes out of a poem by Hardy about the Titanic, but the original poem isn't too specific about the events, and neither is the piece. Um, the piece really is about the notion of there being two things coming together which create a catastrophe. Um, so it's, it came out of thinking about larger issues in Hardy generally. I mean I see one important feature of Hardy's work as being about the fact that nature is there all the time. Well its been there before us it'll be there after us. Um, it's essentially uncontrollable, implacable. And um human events might seem important to us but in the big picture, you know, we are very evanescent little things, we're like ants. And so you've got these big things being played out against this backdrop which is eternal, and um that's the iceberg of course. So, that gave rise to different kinds of musical material, and there's a climactic point, you come out the other end of it, but it doesn't follow a narrative.

Q. Right.

A. Um, no, no, I don't think I've ever followed a narrative precisely. That's the closest probably it gets.

Q. Have you ever thought in terms of wanting to produce a certain motion with your music?

A. Mm hm. (laughs)

Q. Good (laughs)!

A. I think I know what you mean.

Q. I'm just trying to get away from the pure notes, different ways of conceptualising a piece of music.

A. Well often the notes themselves are the least important matter, and you're actually going for something which is larger than that. So for instance, yes, yes, I mean I would say that um part of what I described earlier on as pictorial influences would be things like wave motion, or the interaction of different waves you know, coming at each other from two sides of a cove or a bay. Or, you know, if you watch something like a wheat field being blown on by the wind, and movement in lots of different directions, um that kind of richness is something that I try to get into a texture. I actually gave a composition lesson to somebody in here a few weeks ago, and said "let's just have a look at that tree out there" er it was blowing gently, and actually it was before it was in leaf. Um, and already it was quite interesting all the opposite movements going on, and then a couple of weeks later we were doing it again and there were leaves to watch as well. Um, and it seems to me that the richness of activity that's there, and which you just take as read, as part of a bigger picture, is often what I'm trying to do in a piece. I'm trying to control the small details so that the larger shapes shall emerge. And it's extraordinary, the tree's stopped moving altogether now (laughs). But that's another thing I would, I think we take lots of cues from physical activity like running, and getting excited, and calming down you know. I'm often saying to people that the timings of sections of a piece of music, think about running for the bus and you've missed it. How long does it take you to calm down? You know there's a kind of natural *rit.* that goes on there. Which you might want to emulate or you might want to produce a different world with different rules in the music.

Q. OK. Um, how do you think that your compositional techniques may have broadly speaking of changed over time? Particularly in relation to, obviously, to

musical imagery, but in terms you do up here, how much you go straight to notating it, how much is. . . ?

A. Er, right. Well it doesn't get any easier, I can tell you that. Um, yes I mean I think if I can just amplify that for a moment. The three quartets I've done, they're widely spaced in time. And the first one was by far the easier to write. I think it was partly that I was a full time student. I did it so I could get on with it. Um, but also I think that um, in a sense it, it's about immediate effect, it's about playing with very clear musical types, and working with them. Um, so it continues to have a great immediacy, and I think the immediacy was there in the composition. Um, the other two I think are, each one's taken longer and longer to write (laughs). Um, and I, maybe I started to feel the burden of classical quartet tradition on my shoulders more. Um, there's, there's more work in them, in a way, than there is in the first quartet. Um, the third one is, the third quartet is in the computer age, so the working method there was a bit different from the second, um, so you know I was working on the piece once I mean it was already, as it were, notated in its more or less finished form. . .

Q. Right.

A. I think that's the major change that's taken place over the years. Um, apart from that I think um, I've never been one for writing lots of versions of a piece. You know there are people who sort of write five versions, five different scores of a piece, and it's kind of getting more and more focused. Um, with me, the process does take place on a small scale, so I might do it over a period of a few days, focus the same little section of music, but then it's fixed and it's in place. And very often, um, those versions are on the same bit of paper, you know they've all been rubbed out, and the new versions been written in place. (phone rings) (pause). Um, I've lost track of where we were again.

Q. Um, no, we were talking about the way, um, things that have changed over time. And we were talking about focusing on. . .

A. Right. Yes, the computer changing thing. Oh, I know what it was! It was writing different versions and rubbing them all out.

Q. That's right.

A. Yes, yes! Yes, I mean that's been my working method really, just to get the little bits right as you go. Um, and that means working rather slowly and um, and very frustratingly (laughs). So I mean that goes hand in hand with the strategies for trying to get something down quickly, of um, the broad gestures. I was going to say, I've probably said it already, that um I feel it hasn't got any easier over the years, but rather I work in a more sort of concentrated way on music. I'm not entirely sure that that's healthy, but um there you are, that's the way it goes.

Q. Um, I'm interested in the role that imagery might play the more experienced the composer becomes.

A. Mm hm.

Q. Do you think that sort of practising composing has an effect on your image formation.

A. Yes, um, I think it must. I mean I can't say that I'm tremendously confident that I'm better at it now than I was, um, but I suppose I must be.

Q. What do you think the. . . This is a very difficult question, feel free to not answer it.

A. OK!

Q. Do you think the relationship between image formation and the development of imagination, do you think that imagery and imagination. . . how do you think they differ?

A. Right. I think it maybe back to the studio again here. I think it may be to do with the question of whether you can imagine things you can't imagine.

Q. Yeah.

A. And.. ooh! (laughs) Um, it's to do with the known. It's to do with the known. Um I think always, um you know something like a . . . something like an unknown combination of instruments is more difficult to handle than something that is regular and conventional. Um, it's always going to be easier to imagine flute and piano, or a string quartet, than it is to put together a koto, a bass saxophone and a drum machine. Um, partly in terms of what instruments can do in relation to each other, partly in terms of practical things like balance, and when students bring students they often set up situations which I wouldn't get myself into, um and I feel I have to advise, you know, "this is not going to balance", or "this is going to balance" or um, "there are problems here". Um, it's sort of a good seventy per cent guesswork but it's based on experience, and yet the imagings not going to go that far. It's not going to go far enough to help completely. So I think that's where you draw the line.

Q. Mm. Yeah. OK. Have you ever been surprised when hearing your compositions performed?

A. (laughs!) I like the word 'surprised'! Once or twice I've been unpleasantly surprised. Usually I'm either quite happy with the results or I'm pleasantly surprised. Um, let's do positive first.

Q. OK!

A. Um, er this is an experience that's gone back all the way actually. I've always felt that the colours come up more vividly in real life, um, and it's always better than you imagine it's going to be. And I suppose that goes back to what I was saying about the computers producing a dull sound. The sound of live players, um with all the tensions, and all the fragility sometimes, er and the possibility of things going right rather than going wrong, all those things are vital in the piece, in the music when its played. So, things like the control of the bow, or breath control, you know, these things are something that a computer can't simulate, um and they're going to be better in real life. Timbres are also going to be that much brighter, um at least that's what I find, than they way I imagine them. They're always a little bit kind of, a little bit hazy you know. They're not quite as resonant as they are in real life. Um, so I'm always prepared to be pleasantly surprised by what I hear. Um, it's quite nice to allow that margin in, there's going to be, you know, that extra bit that you get. Um, of course I'm unpleasantly surprised when things go wrong. Um, usually they don't, I'm glad to say, but um on one or two occasions when I haven't been in on the rehearsals, and the players have got further and further away from what I've said, it's er, it's not a nice experience. I once had a violin solo played um by somebody so well known I shouldn't mention the name, er but who was a contemporary music specialist and I had very carefully composed the lengths of all the silences um, you know everything I felt was very carefully constructed. And then the whole thing was just treated rubato, and was sloppy, and as far as I was concerned didn't bear any relation to the tautness of what I'd composed. And I rang him up, you know, a couple of weeks beforehand and said "can I come and hear the piece, do you need a hand?" and he said "no, no, I'm quite happy, it's all clear" er and I thought I was going to get a phone-call on

the day of the concert, you know, "come and hear it in the hall, see what you think". No, nothing. And I went along on the night and I was very disappointed. (pause). I haven't played it again (laughs).

Q. Can you ban a performer from performing your music (laughs)?

A. No, but you can put people off (laughs). Um, no they self-select. And I suppose the thing is that there's so much music around that they can choose from that they can afford to avoid me if they like.

Q. Can you ever think of any advice you might give to performers about performing your music which might in a way relate to the image they should have, or might have?

A. Yes, yes. Um, yes quite often. Um, I remember sort of instructing a harpist to play like distant bells, for instance, um you know because I wanted a bit more weight in the sound, and I wanted resonance but I wanted it quiet. Um, yes things like that are often useful.

Q. Yes, OK. How are you doing for time?

A. Well. . .

Q. It's quite late isn't it?

A. I'm OK, if you've got some more questions to go through I'll do them.

Q. Yeah, I wanted to ask you about more everyday, less compositional imagery in a way. . .

A. Oh right!

Q. And then possibly a little bit about directing if we have time, but if not. . .

A. Yeah!

Q. Yes. So, more sort of everyday imagery, so first of all I was interested in what sort of music you might listen to just for pleasure.

A. Oh, all sorts of things. (laughs). Er, do you want a list of things?

Q. Er, no, if you think it covers most things then. . .

A. It covers most things I would say, yeah.

Q. OK. And would that be the same sort of music that you might listen to for inspiration if you were writing something at the time?

A. Oh, I'm not sure I would, I mean I think I may very well avoid music for inspiration because it might get in the way. Um, I don't want to write the New World Symphony again!

Q. No!

A. (laughs) No, it's partly to do with that feeling that I have to construct my own world, and once I'm inside it I find it very difficult to be disrupted. Um, no I, I know what you mean. There are people who say they play a Haydn sonata every morning and that sort of thing. Um, I can't say that I do that. (knock on the door). Sorry, so many interruptions. Um, yes. I mean there's so much inspirational music out there you know I could be sort of fired up to want to create something by hearing an Elgar Symphony or something, you know. But I'm just as likely to think, well, you know "what's the point in trying?". (laughs). Give up! Um, but I (phone rings). . . Um, I can't remember what we were just talking about.

Q. Um, listening to music for inspiration and how perhaps it might put you off.

A. Perhaps it might put you off, that's right!

Q. Do you see a connection between the music you listen to in an every day sense and the music you might consequently imagine? Perhaps hearing 'music on the brain' kind of thing.

A. Um, yes. I think that often happens.

Q. I mean would you say that you do frequently experience the sort of tune on the brain phenomenon.

A. Um, quite often yes. Quite often. It's not, I wouldn't say it's always a problem. It can be. But it's more likely to come as a result of something I'm working on, or have been working on and um, repertoire or perhaps something the children are working on you know, which I've heard a lot. Um, (phone rings). . .er so we were talking about that sort of imprinting of music which I've heard. Yes, it often happens. I wouldn't say it's a particular problem. It can be, particularly if it's something you want to get rid of, something that's pernicious (laughs).

Q. Would you say you experienced it as a loop going round, of particular bits, or is it much more imagining it through in real time and that's that?

A. It can be a loop. Um, I mean especially if it's something I've sort of heard casually. I mean there may be thing you hear which are not complete, like signature tunes for instance, or little fragments of tunes that you hear coming out of people's cars. You know, if you hear them enough they can be stuck in there, and they are looped because you don't know where they go to.

Q. Yeah. Um, yes do you regard yourself as, you know people say that they are balanced towards one modality over another, say vision over auditory. Would you say that you consider yourself to be a particularly auditory-based person?

A. Um, probably yes. Although I think visual is very important to me. It's often a stimulus.

Q. Er, you mentioned your children and music that they might be working on. Have you noticed other people in your home environment experiencing tune on the brain phenomena?

A. Yes. Yes.

Q. How does it manifest itself?

A. Um, well Ruth, Ruth whose 10, has often said "oh I wish I could get rid of this, I mean I can't sleep for it" (laughs). "It's awful, and I can't remember what it is". I know what she's always complaining about: she's complaining about the sound of the ice cream van, er, she says "that terrible tune, and I can't get it out of my head". That's a prime example of something that hasn't got a conclusion, because it stops when he stops the van and that's that.

Q. Would you say, I've been talking to some other people about this, um who seem to think that children in particular do hear, do have that 'tune on the brain' thing perhaps more than adults. I don't know if that's true or not. What do you think? As a child did you have that more than now?

A. I think so, yes (emphatically). Yes.

Q. Are you hearing any music in your head now?

A. I'm hearing "she loves you, yeah. . ." and do you know why? I'm thinking back to the time when every shop was playing it. And I thought "oh no, I've got to walk around time, and I can't get this out of my head" (laughs).

Q. In general, are you aware of potential triggers to that internal hearing of music?

A. I think so, yes.

Q. What sort of triggers do you think there might be?

A. Er, well, like that one was simply a recall of a situation that sparked it off in the first place, um, there might be um, sort of verbal cues, um you know, if somebody says 'ER', off it goes (laughs). That's a very difficult one to pin down actually. Because you have to remember all the timbres. There's not much by way of melodic line to recall. You have to have the whole thing in your head. Um, yes it might be verbal cues, it might be, I don't know, some kind of association. . .

Q. Do you think mood affects the likelihood to be imagining music?

A. Um, well my first inclination is to say yes, but I think if you have something that's liable to be triggered at the least provocation, then maybe not. Um, there are a lot of these things that you recall. . . it happens to you in a sort of. . . you're passive in a way. You're not attempting to recall, so the mood is really irrelevant. (pause). Mm. I think it probably is.

Q. No, that's fine. Um, do you think that the nature of musical imagery is related to the content of a piece of music, or perhaps the emotional response that you may have originally had to it? Do you think that would affect perhaps the quality of the imagery?

A. Er, right. So I suppose what you mean is that if something has emotional baggage attached to it?

Q. Possibly, yes. Or just perhaps its, um, perhaps not necessarily emotional baggage but it might be a piece of music which you warm to instantly and for that reason. . .

A. Yes it could be. I mean I was thinking of, you know, "they're playing our song" sort of phenomenon. Um, (pause) TAPE TURNS OVER

Q. Mm yes.

A. Well its given me a moment to think about it. Um, I suspect that for me it wouldn't necessarily be the first time I'd heard something, unless it was one of those awful things you can't get rid of, um that leach onto you, but if, you know, I would tend to remember and recall something which I had got to know gradually, which over a number of listenings perhaps, or more intimate experience of playing it, um, then it would become important for me, and then it would become something that I would recall.

Q. OK. Do you think there are any styles that you would find more difficult um, perhaps struggle to internalise and memorise because of the idiom its in.

A. Well I'm not sure I'll ever be able to play the whole of *Gruppen* in my head (laughs) but I can hear bits of it. Um, yes, um, I think this probably has to do with clearly recognisable melodic and harmonic content, and um music which is important in detail. Um, you know I mentioned *Gruppen*, well *Gruppen* in a sense is more about gesture than anything else, so the things that I remember, and can hear at this very moment are the sounds of the brass instruments calling to each other across the sound spectrum, so its actually a stereophonic things I'm hearing. But, and I can hear the piano solo, but I may not be hearing the exact pitches of the piano solo, because maybe they're not so important as the gestural content. Um, something like *The Rite of Spring* I'll probably hear all the notes of. . . (pause) Um, maybe a Ligetti piece would be more to do with gesture than precise sounds, but I might very well get lost in it.

Q. Mm.

A. What I found astounding actually was that Christian Zaccarius at Edinburgh last year played all the Mozart piano concertos from memory. Um, and I cannot imagine holding them all in your head and in your fingers and not finding a way from one into another. (laughs). That's a different problem though!

Q. I know that you do, well most of your work with contemporary music, but um working with students for whom its perhaps not that familiar, do you find that there's a sort of easy way in, or a way that you can suggest to them, because I think having a clear mental image of difficult contemporary pieces of music might be a difficult thing for them, would you. . .?



A. Mm hm. I think it's trying to remove the irrelevance. Um, if you go in sort of expecting something that isn't going to be delivered then you're sort of wasting your time, you're sort of looking in the wrong direction. Um, and so um I would try to steer them in the right direction instead. Um, I'm just trying to think about things I've done recently in connection with this. Um, I think a composer like Ligetti is actually quite useful from this point of view because he is setting out his stall from the beginning, he's not actually promising you anything you're not going to get. You know, somebody who in one of his pieces of music gets you to listen to what is it six double basses playing the same chord quietly for two minutes, um, and then smashes a sack-full of glass jars, um its, you know, you think "well maybe this is ominous, maybe something is going to happen but we're just suspending time here" but you know, it's not as if you're expecting a big tune or anything, and if you're looking for that, as I say, you're wrong. You might as well not be doing it at all. So I think it's a question of the fact that he lays his ideas out very clearly um, and doesn't promise anything he's not going to deliver, whereas the gestures in some other composers are sort of reminiscent of more familiar music and then you're looking for the wrong things there. Um, I can, yeah I've tried to push Varese at people, for instance, and um, you know, talk about non-developmental structures, and they're trying to go for the trumpet-iness of a trumpet sound and that sort of thing. The fact that it's so much about the raw materials its dealing with. Um, sometimes it might in fact involve appealing to their sense of the spatial, or imagery, or at least I'd want to explore their experiences from that point of view.

Q. Um, yes, um, I find it very difficult, obviously, trying to get at people's musical imagery because you can't, and I'm aware that quite a lot of the experience is lost probably the second you try and introspect and think about what you do do. I wondered if you had a view about that, what it is that might be lost of the sort of spontaneous, just doing it, just imagining a piece of music. What's lost when you have to try and describe it?

A. Ah! Terrific! Um, goodness.

Q. Or what's gained? Perhaps I shouldn't be so negative!

A. Well, I'm playing *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune* at the moment. (laughs) I suspect that it's to do with the sense of what in the textures you're listening to are most immediate. Um, and this actually might happen in a live performance anyway, you know you might be listening relatively circularly, so I might miss the fact that the cellos are sustaining a pedal point for a few bars you know, but it's very quiet, and um if I'm not aware that it's there it won't be there. I can pick up the score and say "ah yes, it should be there". But I may not actually hear it in the concert hall for that matter. Um, and I would suspect that trying to describe it to you would tend to make these layers drop away. So what's immediately retrievable will stay, so the flute will stay and the harp will stay at the beginning, but other things might drop away.

INTERVIEW ENDS

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**Interview with PH**

**5th October 2001 (14.00-16.00, his office)**

Q. Great. So um, I've read your chapter. It's all very relevant to the kind of thing I'm looking at.

A. Good.

Q. I don't know if you know what it is I'm researching exactly.

A. No.

Q. Um, musical imagery, by which I mean the mental representation, it's hearing music in your mind when it isn't necessarily there.

A. Mm.

Q. Now obviously that's very broad. I've been looking specifically at imagery for timbre in music, um but really sort of all sorts of aspects. At the moment I've been looking at interviewing, well, yourself, George I've interviewed as well, and hopefully a sound producer, a sound engineer as well, because I'm interested in the whole kind of composition, performance, and perhaps I can ask you some questions on directing later as well 'cause that would kind of fit into it.

A. Mm hm.

Q. Um, but yes, it's all very related. Um, so looking at your chapter, I was interested in, you've used the word 'conception'. I've come across lots of different terms to do with musical imagery and I wonder whether you would consider conceptions to be what I might consider to be musical imagery?

A. I'm sure I would, yes. Um, er, yes, well you carry on, yes, no you ask your questions and then I'll elaborate. Yes.

Q. OK! Er, well when you are talking about conception, perhaps in this chapter, do you mean how the music would sound in an abstract kind of way, or are you talking about more sort of note-specific kind of image or mental representation?

A. Er, I don't quite understand the question, but I think what I'm thinking of is how you auralise the music in your head and er, yes the, well the conception might be something where it wasn't down to the sort of specifically how each phrase or each note or whatever it was would sound, but it might be a kind of, you know, policy that you had with the piece which, um, I mean wouldn't be an arbitrary thing imposed from outside but, um, I mean might be, you know triggered by all sorts of things. I mean you might have a particular kind of insight about the music an imaginative idea about the music that might have been triggered by say, something as specific as doing some analysis of the piece, and feeling there were, you know, areas of the structure that you particularly wanted to bring out or something like that, or that you wanted to explore playing it in, overall playing it in such-and-such a way as opposed to something else, um, whatever it was, I mean that might indeed be a conception that you would then as it were make very specific in obviously a detailed way with the next stage of your work. I mean the conception might be like the conception that a novelist has about the whole work. They don't just start on page one and sort of see where it leads them, well I mean a few people do I dare say, but I mean mostly you would start with some idea. If you are composing a piece of music, again you would start with some kind of notion about overall what you were aiming at, which obviously you would be prepared to refine or modify or even discard depending on how the work actually progressed. But you will have an idea of how the whole canvass is going to be filled before

you start work at the detail, would you not, because after all your fundamental job of performing is to connect up this bit with that bit, you know, so that there is indeed a conception (laughs). Er, am I not right? I mean obviously a conception is something that you uncover too as you go along, and all, I'm convinced that the whole business of performing is really largely, I mean one can never get it down to a method. I mean people would love you to be able to say well if you do the following, you know, hundred things then you will be a great pianist. They'd love to be able to say that, because unfortunately the reason why you can't say that is it's really a matter of balance between this and that and the other. I mean everything has to be in balance. When things are in balance you're playing well, and when you're not playing well, when you've lost your form, whatever it is, it's just like sort of golf or something like that, or tennis you know, it's usually almost always because there's some key area that you've, that you're neglecting, whether ear, or indeed the conception or whatever it is, or do you know what I mean, or you're not doing enough etudes or I don't know, something, something, there'll be some key area and so you're out of balance. But the business of forming a kind of view on a piece of music is obviously an incredibly subtle one I mean, as I say, I think you start with a conception, but clearly when you work on the details, I mean they are conceived too, and they will feed back into the wider conception which will be modified accordingly um, and er indeed they may be modified by the instrument which you're playing on or, and you know even in performance itself by the performance and so on, and then finally they important thing that you don't want, or I don't want anyway, a performance which is so completely planned and cut and dried in every detail that it has no possibility of further growth really. I mean in a way a certain if you like imprecision has to be built into the business of being a musician. I mean not nearly as much imprecision as people imagine, but still some otherwise you've got no room for growth and you've got nothing you can do in a concert either. You know what I mean? There must be room for the unexpected.

Q. Right.

A. Is this making sense?

Q. It is, yeah. I'm interested in, you said 'imprecision to be built in to it', I mean do you think it's a question of sort of reaching a level of precision and dropping back from it, to kind of say "no, I'm going to leave such-and-such a detail" or is it more. . .?

A. Well, I almost think that actually one of the very hard things, I mean, is managing repertoire because it seems to me in a way that every day you come to practise a piece, and if its a very difficult piece you may have to practice it day after day after day, but still every day you have to bring some new imagination to it, because otherwise the work simply becomes kind of technical, and in a way um divorced from the imaginative impulse. Do you follow what I mean? And what I'm, I mean the basic thing I'm saying is that as soon as our work becomes merely technical we kind of die really, I mean the music dies. Do you see what I mean? But in a sense, um, that means that actually the job as interpreter is very difficult in those pieces where you have to work and work and work at it day after day after day because at the end you may get to a point where you're actually changing for the sake of changing, and it merely becomes kind of bizarre, or, I don't know. Do you know what I mean? I mean you lose. . . And at that point one has to say there's nothing for it but either to stop playing the piece altogether or give it a very good rest. Does that make sense?

Q. Yeah.

A. I mean, I mean, I mean it is extremely difficult. Um, you know, we like to think don't we that people who have been playing the Beethoven sonatas for eighty years or something like that, you know, kind of know far more about them than people who've only been playing them for one year, but there is a down-side to that which is the people who've been playing them for eighty years may simply pull them to bits. You know what I mean? Sometimes the first view is, is, um, is almost the best. And that is why I think it's terribly important at the beginning of practice, not in a way to waste time putting the fingering in and, you know, doing the details, but actually to make a kind of note somehow, whether you write it down you know somehow on the copy or you keep a diary, to make a note somehow to keep a note of that first impression you had, because you can very often in fact sort of go back to that when you've done this um process of growth, sometimes you can, you can, if you've written it down somewhere in some form you can go back to that first impression and remember what it was and of course you now bring to it a much greater experience but you can still kind of revive it. I think that's terribly important. I mean the huge mistake that people make, myself included, is to start looking at the difficult bits straight away, long before they've actually formed any actual conception of the piece.

Q. Hm.

A. So I think, and I hope I was trying to say this in the article, but I think everything flows from conception, really.

Q. Yeah. I'm interested in the practicality of what you've just said actually, the idea about somehow trying to encapsulate your first view of the piece so you can go back to it if you write it down somehow. What kind of form might that take? Is it something you've ever done?

A. Um, well it probably won't take very much the form of playing it at the piano.

Q. Right.

A. Er, unless you are a fantastically good sight-reader, which I am, in a way, quite glad that I'm not. (laughs). Um, but um, it might take the form of sight-reading in your head. Very much so. Definitely. Um, I think how much you use the instrument at the earlier stage depends how good you are, and I'm not very good at divorcing um, um, you know I mean it's still having musical ideas when you're also very buried in trying to play it in tune or find the right fingering or you know hit the right notes or even, you know, even literally read it in some cases. Um, and I think, you know, there are some people who seem to be able to, you know, do both jobs at the same time, but I'm a really a bit more kind of, I like to know what I'm aiming at, and then I will find the means to realise it. Um, and in finding the means to realise it, I mean that's a creative job as well, it's not just a mechanical one, and that may, almost certainly will give me more ideas. Um, there's another very important point to be made, which was, um, I suppose the huge lesson that I learned from my teacher who I think I mention in the article, Cyril Smith, um, whose thinking in this area was incredibly advanced, which is that of course we don't er, you know, we want to lead our hands, and our ability, and our technique, wherever it resides, um, we don't want in a way to be giving in to it.

Q. Yeah.

A. I mean, in the real world, maybe we do have to give in to our ability to some point otherwise we'd probably never be able to play anything in a concert, but you don't want to start in a kind of surrender mode. Do you follow what I mean? And the fact that we may be unconsciously influenced in the early stages by what feels

comfortable, or safe, or whatever, is bad. You know, we should be influenced by idealism, by what we think is right. Schnabel, whose edition of the Beethoven sonatas is looking at me from up there, used to say to his pupils, 'safety last'. That was his, um, um, his watchword, which I think puts it very nicely. You know.

Q. Yeah. Um, can I just ask actually, are you imagining any music at the moment?

A. Yes, lots, yes. I wake up early in the morning and I imagine music in my head, or I go for walks with the dog and I imagine music in my head.

Q. OK. Would that generally be, for example at the moment are you hearing anything and would it be related to what you're preparing at the moment?

A. Yes, it is, completely yes. Because I have bitten off more than I can chew and I promised Tony Bennett that I, before the summer holidays I said "I'm going to learn Book One of the Forty-eight and I'll play it to you in the autumn", which was a grand... (laughs). But, um and I did do a lot of work in the summer but I mean I'm nowhere near ready to do it, but I will do it, you know, because I said I would so I'm, I am actually having to work extremely hard at the moment, just to kind of get anywhere. But, um, never mind, who cares, and um, er, because it simply is a colossal job, I mean absolutely colossal. I mean the forty-eight, book one, is yeah about a hundred and eighty-five pages of music, which would be enough anyway, but when you consider how densely the music is written, and how extremely difficult it is, and how every note in a sense demands a kind of interpretative intervention, um, and you're in competition with such fantastic players in this repertoire, I mean, you know, the task is simply amazing. I mean, you know, I can remember, maybe the longest single work that I ever learned was Messiaen's *Vingt Regards* which is kind of two hundred pages, but it's two hundred pages of highly repetitious music, I mean to be honest, and some of it is very difficult of course but a lot of it is, he's laid out on an extremely broad scale, you know, I mean so that I would say the forty-eight is probably three times as long as the *Vingt Regards* in terms of musical density, if you know what I mean, if not in actual performing time, about the same I should think actually in performing time. Um, so, yeah, I, yeah so I'm working all the time in my head. All the time, absolutely, yes. And er, and some of it though there's been a great deal of, er there's not so much at the moment I mean because I've just had to practise it so much, but there's been a great deal of analysis that's gone on, and I've been working in a, what I did in fact was actually to photocopy my printed score, and I had that in a loose-leaf binder, and on the back of the pages I have lots and lots of kind of analytical observations. I'm afraid I haven't got them here, to show you, but anyway you can take my word for it that I have, and um, er, and I scribble all over it, you know, in a kind of analytical way, and I think that's going to bear fruit, well I'm sure it's bearing fruit, and also it will be something, it will be a record of initial thoughts which I can go back to, you know, referring to what we were talking about, you know, first impressions and so on. And um, um, and the, the process of imaging is very much one of um, of trying out new solutions to particular problems, really, in my head.

Q. Right.

A. Er, prompted by some kind of dissatisfaction, you know.

Q. Right. So would you say that was quite a creative experience? It isn't simply a replay?

A. No. No. Well, no. It is creative. I mean when I said that I think you have to re-make your music every day, I was particularly thinking of the forty-eight.

Q. Right.

A. Er, in a way it reminds me of, you know John Cage used to study counterpoint with Schoenberg, believe it or not, and he used to do an exercise with Schoenberg and Schoenberg would then say, as he said to all his pupils, right go away and do it again, differently. And then he would go away and come back, "OK, go and do it again, differently". You know, so you did your chorale, or whatever it was, you know six different ways. Er, and in a way of course, the wonderful thing about the preludes and fugues, but also their difficulty, is that um one can imagine um hundreds of different ways to play any one prelude. I mean with vastly different say tempi, and in a sense I think that's something you've got to hang on to, and in a way be able to switch ideally effortlessly from one to another, from say a very fast tempo to a very slow tempo, and vice versa. Do you see what I mean? I mean a real mastery, I wouldn't consider that one's, the forty-eight had been mastered if you could only ever play it one way, you know. Do you see what I mean?

Q. Yeah.

A. Because surely there's a lifetime of discovery in the forty-eight and I mean you don't want to, as it were, hit a brick wall after six weeks or something. And I mean it is said, and I don't know how true this is, but I mean it's said of Glenn Gould that I mean he used to basically come into recording studios and play these things over and over again in completely different ways, and then ultimately they sort of chose the one they liked best, you know. Um, but it was actually very experimental, the process of recording, it wasn't kind of getting down something that had been minutely fixed before the session. I don't know how true that is but I can believe it actually.

Q. OK. Um, I'm particularly interested in the relationship between imagery and perception. Between perhaps in the case of performing it would be between the anticipating and creating a sound in your mind with the actual experience of what's happening in the moment. Um, you talk about comparing the sound produced to your inner conception a little bit, and aligning the two. Um, in an actual performance, how simultaneous would you say the two are? I'm imagining the situation, perhaps on stage, and you're about to perform, is there a moment before you play when you're imagining what's about to happen, or is it a total 'it happens in the moment'?

A. Oh what a very good question, and a terribly, terribly difficult one to answer. And in fact I think if I knew the answer to that I might be some good at the piano but I mean it's um... Yes I use this idea of comparing, and it's a very simple, it's a very simple idea in practising because it seems to me that it's completely hopeless to go into a room and sit down and play and then sort of kind of tinker with it as you go along, because all you're doing is literally tinkering, I mean you're just muddling yourself really. I mean I, I'm sorry I'm not answering your question but I'll come to that in a moment, I mean I profoundly believe that the simple way of describing this is to imagine that you, though you are a pianist, that in fact you are a conductor, and that the piano is your orchestra, or that your hands are your orchestra if you like, and that you come to a session, you know, knowing what it is you're trying to get, and if you know what you're trying to get, um, then you won't waste anybody's time, and you'll very quickly find a way of getting it. You know, you'll diagnose straight away because you're matching this with a conception. That's obviously how conductors work. I mean they wouldn't dream of getting up in front of the London Symphony Orchestra and sort of giving a downbeat, and kind of sort of seeing what happens. I mean they know what they want before they start. Equally of course, because they're playing with a great

orchestra, they're going to be flexible to how the first oboe wants to play the tune in the slow movement, or something like that, because as Solti once put it, you know "in my younger days I used to be very dictatorial, but after sixty years of being a conductor I've decided there's a great deal you can learn from the marvellous musicians you're conducting, and you might as well learn it, you know. And um, if they do it marvellously, why change". Do you know what I mean? But um, equally as I say the task of being a conductor is really you know, treading that particular tight-rope, isn't it? And I mean different conductors will, some will be more dictatorial than others, others will see themselves as a kind of co-ordinator of what the orchestra's doing. It very much depends on the orchestra, of course. There will be some works perhaps in which the conductor will be more dictatorial than others. I mean you can imagine the whole thing is terribly flexible, but there has to be some kind of balance in a conductor's work, and so it is obviously with any kind of instrumentalist, there's a balance between your pre-rehearsal planning, or pre-practice planning, and then what you actually do. But essentially, of course, you're able to diagnose, correct, improve and so on because you do know what it is you want. And equally, it ties in with what I said earlier, that um that you want something which is not fettered by your technical inadequacies, therefore you confront those technical inadequacies and do something about them, and get better. Do you see what I mean?

Q. Yeah.

A. Yeah, right! OK, so your question really was what do you do in performance? And how difficult this is, really. I don't know what it is that's, I don't know whether anybody's really cracked this, I mean I think, I mean Brendel said something about this, didn't he, about you know you're doing three things at once, you're sort of envisaging what's coming next, you're actually playing it, you're reacting, you're hearing it and, as it were, processing it, and in the light of that processing you're kind of re-envisaging the next bit and so on. I dare say he's right. Um, er, I think that it's completely useless to perform if you're not actually listening to what you're doing, and by listening I mean actually reacting to what you're doing. And I think, um, you can verify this if you go and listen to say small children playing the recorder, or something like that. I mean really small children who are below the age of becoming self-conscious, you know, um, and you will see the odd one who is a performer, who is a musician, because they clearly listen to themselves, and do the next bit differently, depending on, do you know what I mean? Whereas the ordinary ones just kind of play what they're instructed to play and get through it. They're not actually making music. Do you know what I mean? I mean I remember my very first, when I was a child, piano teacher, who would make this big distinction between that kind of playing and playing like a grown-up, as she put. And I mean the carrot she dangled in front of me was "Now Peter, I want you to play like a grown-up" which of course was a very good spur. Um, 'cause all children want to be grown-ups, you know. And um, er, I know exactly what she meant. I mean there's a difference between just sort of chuntering through it, as it were, you know, sort of obeying the instructions, and actually kind of grasping it, and making something of it, and communicating and so on. Well, you're not, I think the first pre-requisite is that you must listen to yourself and you must react, which then makes this whole pre-planning business so terribly difficult, because er, if you're so practised in, if you're so conditioned in your nervous system and so on, doing it just like this, you can't react anyway. Do you follow what I mean? It's too rigidly in you. So, in an ideal world, we wouldn't

have to do any practice. You know. Er, um, and you could point to certain types of music, like say a Schubert song accompaniment, where arguably you only ever play it right once in your life, and that's the very first time you play it, because only the first time you play it do those little harmonic nuances elicit from you just the right reaction and not too much. After that you sort of say "oh, that's a gorgeous chord" and put a ring around it, and then a squiggle underneath and it all, you know you can see, already it's becoming artifice rather than nature. Do you see what I mean? Um, and er, I mean the first prelude of the forty-eight, the one that everybody knows, is just like that. I mean if you sort of, you know, if I wasn't sort of thinking about playing it at the moment, and just sort of play that, I'd probably play it pretty well, you know, and not really knowing what I was doing, and all the rest of it. I mean try to actually play it marvellously, you know try to play it and it becomes impossible. I did about two weeks ago play, I took myself by surprise and played it as I thought very well. Um, but you know. But you can see can't you, that I mean it's just terribly difficult, I mean as soon as you in a way plan a piece like that... So well, but however some planning is good. For instance I have a conception of that piece er which gives me a sort of framework within which I can operate, this is I think all quite relevant to your question, within which I can operate with a certain amount of freedom. For instance, er, like all the preludes in the forty-eight, and this is quite extraordinary, all of them begin in the same way. I mean they have a different figuration, but they all take their figurations from usually a little four-bar phrase, or, anyway, four chords which take you back to the tonic. I mean it's as if there's a little, you know, formal introduction to the idea, and they nearly always begin in a kind of rather, shall we say innocent, way. Innocent in the sense that after that the whole argument kind of tightens and deepens. Do you follow what I mean? Um, and you go on a journey. And I said to somebody the other day, it's a bit like sort of after, by the beginning of the fifth bar Bach as it were lets the music off the lead, do you see? And it sort of starts to, having been taken in a neat circle then it starts to zig-zag off in all sorts of ways. Well I mean the opening prelude of the forty-eight, if you look at it in a kind of analytical way, is actually an extraordinarily bizarre piece, because it starts with um, when it gets let off the lead it goes in a little sequence that takes it very neatly to the dominant, and then um, almost exactly the same sequence, with a little bit of adjustment, takes you back to the tonic. I mean the music actually repeats itself and that in a way closes the circle, end of piece, except it isn't because you're actually only halfway through it. And then the thing really begins, by that point you've got down to the bottom of the piano, or the bottom of the keyboard, the sound is, you know richer and so on, you've started off in this kind of luminous bit up here, and then you get that very long, you get that move sort of round chromatically so that he approaches 'G', the dominant pedal, via an F# and then an Ab, two semitones, and there you're on the 'G' and you have this long pedal, um, which goes sort of through two phases and then you come out with a kind of coda at the end which sort of trickles back up to the top of the piano, kind of where you started. Do you follow what I mean? So I'm describing in here a kind of analysis of the shape, a pattern, that's also got within it a kind of conception, the idea of starting in this luminous sort of trebly area of the keyboard, the idea of a formal kind of opening that goes in a round circle. Then it is released, very gently, it goes to the dominant, the sequence is then repeated, which takes you to the tonic, and then if you like a kind of vast coda, you know, which is just an enormous cadence but has the pattern over this 'G' pedal and the more



chromatic and intense chording with diminished sevenths and so on and so on. And then the release of that at the end, so that the end isn't a kind of triumphant end, but a kind of vanishing, a dispelling of the darkness. Do you see what I mean? Now, that's a very kind of broad conception. Um, which could encompass a very slow tempo, a very fast tempo, quite different dynamics, maybe very different, you know, detached or legato. I mean all sorts of things. But there's a conception there. Do you follow what I mean?

Q. Yeah.

A. Now hopefully I could go out in public in a different acoustic to what I'm used to, and a quite different piano of course, maybe feeling different, certainly feeling different probably, and er, and sort of, you know, having people listening which is something too, and um I could do something quite different from day to day without actually changing my sense of the shape. Does that make sense? I mean that's a conception isn't it? It's a conception but it isn't one that's set in stone in every detail.

Q. No.

A. But it's a framework. That would be a good um... I, er, am I making any progress in your... But your question about what you do in performance is terribly... Am I right about Brendel? I mean is this a, did he say something like that?

Q. I don't remember him saying it, no, but I might not have come across that particular...

A. I have a feeling that he does.

Q. But, I mean, I am interested in the idea of the feedback in the moment. How possible do you think it is to really listen to what you doing in the light of perhaps an image which is shaping the way you interpret what you're hearing at the time? Do you think that your image of the piece then determines the way you actually hear yourself when you play, in any way?

A. Well I suppose it must do. And I suppose that you must be trying to um produce something that in a way fits your framework. Um, although I think in a way understanding your framework that well means, you know, as I've just described, say that prelude, means that in a way you don't have to think about it. I mean that's kind of in you. Um, and we have to remember that when you're playing clearly, you rest on a whole bed of things which is at this point unconscious. But I mean might well have started out as conscious thoughts but are now kind of fully absorbed. I mean I'm not saying that in the future I might not change my conception perception of that first prelude and I might find that it works, you know, that there's an overall different pattern. But what I do think is terribly important is that one does actually understand the piece that one is playing, and principally by, understand that one does actually know what happens and why. Or at least one has an answer to why. I may not be *the* answer, and it may certainly not be the composer's answer, and it may not be a definitive answer, but that you do have one. Um, (laughs), um, er, how often do I not live up to these, to these ideals? But um, er, I don't know whether I really skated round your, well no I haven't totally skated because I do think I've said that you have to listen, and um, I mean ideally if you are relaxed you are able to actually make discoveries... I mean it's one of the actual good things about being a pianist, I mean it's a very very bad thing too because I have to play on all these different pianos, but they do actually force you, willy-nilly, to find a way that's going to work on this piano, which as all the pianos are all more or less hopeless anyway, so I mean you're sort

of in a way forced, for all sorts of practical reasons, to kind of adapt very rapidly to a new piano, and you're forced, they force a creativity on you, I'm convinced of that. Um, (laughs).

Q. Um, yes, you've sort of touched on it already actually but I was, you know, this notion of mental practice before, or, you know, putting a balance towards the mental rather than the physical, to avoid um getting stuck in old habits, I was going to ask you "is there any danger of your mental approach becoming stuck and fixed in a similar way?", but as I say you've sort of touched on that a little bit...

A. Well I think there is. I definitely think there is. Yeah. But we've sort of touched on, you kind of touched on that. And it's really a question of combining um, er, well I think I've changed. I think when I was a student at the RCM with Cyril Smith I actually got very kind of tense about things because, you know, I took this imaging idea, which was very, I mean I learnt for the first time from him, er you know very much to heart. And it made totally good sense to me, and of course I imaged like mad, and er, you know, all my scores were all kind of minutely marked out. And it was all kind of terrific, you know it was very very good for me. My God, it was badly needed. But you see I was, you know if a phrase didn't come out exactly as I wanted it to, you know, then I was sort of immediately disappointed and downcast. Of course the one thing when you're performing, you can't be that! I mean you've got to be as it were kind of making the best of what happens, you know, and sort of positive about what happens. Do you know what I mean? I mean practice is quite a different thing, it's totally different, so that I think I got locked, do you know what I mean? So that now I think I would feel that my idea of a broad framework, such that I described, er which is a really understanding of a piece, um is terribly important, but necessarily that you sort of fix every last detail to the nth degree, if you see what I mean. Um, so that clarifies my sort of earlier remark about sort of controlled imprecision, or whatever I said. So I think, yeah I agree totally about the dangers. But since most people have never done this at all, then they've got an awful lot of catching up to do. But it is unquestionably the *only* path towards radical improvement, and huge standards. I mean, I am convinced, it is the only method. I mean if there is a secret... Because it enables you to be your own teacher, your own doctor. You diagnose everything yourself. You're much much quicker about it. Er, the whole mental side in most people in most people is non-existent, and yet in a way, the whole technical side of playing an instrument is a kind of... is perfected when um all, when several different parameters, or whatever you call them, are as it were all intersecting. I mean imagine if I, you know an absurd thing: what is it that makes me play 'G#' at this moment and have a complete mastery over the G#, you know. Well for most people it's simply a physical habit. I mean it may even not be organised, with students in this department, it may even not be organised sufficiently that you're playing with the third finger or... even that may be left to chance, but you know hopefully there may be some physical habit there, because that's all they do. But they may not have heard the G#. I mean if you ask them to play the passage, I mean I think I wrote something in here about this, say with the other hand, they wouldn't actually maybe know it was a G#, they might play G natural. So they wouldn't have heard it. They wouldn't have understood it. Do you follow what I mean? Er, but if, if all these things, your musical conception, your understanding of it being G#, your hearing of it being G#, and your physical habit of it being G#, if they're all kind of perfect, the chances of you not playing G# are small, to put it mildly. Do you follow what I mean? I mean I know that's an absurd way of

putting it, but it's as if all sorts of things are coming together and intersecting perfectly at G#. Well I mean you can write that on a big scale, obviously, phrasing or, you know, the whole thing. Um, so anyway, as I was saying, most people have an awful lot of catching up to do because they've never actually trained their minds at all, or even ears. I mean compared with a jazz musician, I mean we classical people who read the music are hopeless for, in an aural sense. But I don't think we were born hopeless, we just haven't used it. (pause) So I mean I used to have these lists from Cyril Smith you know, I mean we sort of, you know, 'ear – perfect' (bangs the table) you know, 'intellect – perfect' (bangs table) you know, 'musical intention – perfect' (bangs table) you know, then you go the piano and you learn to play it with your eyes shut 'perfect'. 'Concert performance' – you've learnt it then.

Q. Wow. Have you come across anybody else using similar techniques in their teaching?

A. Er, candidly no. Not quite to this extent. With him there was a particular reason which was that he was um, well it was probably for quite complicated reasons, but he had had a totally disabling stroke when he was fifty, on a concert tour in Russia. I mean he was, I mean this was long before your generation, I mean he was in a sense before my generation, but um but he, because I'd never heard that he had this stroke in, oh God I don't know, mid-fifties or something like that, something like that anyway, before I was going to concerts. And um, he had been, you know, one of the kind of definitely star pianists with a big, you know, kind of Brahms, Rachmaninov-y kind of repertoire. He was very very noted for his Rachmaninov playing. And I mean when he was still a student at the college he'd been asked by Sir Adrian Boult to do a prom with Brahms *Second Piano Concerto*, which is quite a thing to do. So you know he was quite a star, you know. That was in about 1930. And um, and suddenly at the age of fifty, and he wasn't the only one. Solomon also um had a stroke and indeed couldn't play the piano at all. But Cyril Smith was, had the use of his right hand. And him and his wife formed a kind of duo partnership, arranged music for three hands. And they were enormously successful... (door knocks) Where were we? Ah, yes. Sorry, rambling on a bit. I mean the thing was that the stroke er, he naturally um, being a very self-analytical person he wondered why you know he'd actually, this had happened to him. I mean there may have been a lot of reasons but he definitely diagnosed that he was one of these people who, as he used to put it, kind of flogged himself at the piano. Do you know what I mean? And he always counselled, I mean he was an incredibly hard-working man and demanded immense standards and commitment from his students, but he always encourage us to in fact put in less practice time than we might have done. And he, you know he was a great one for saying, you know, "you must take up golf, and you must have one complete day off a week" and, you know, all kinds of very good kind of life advice if you like, very very important, which I think he felt he hadn't followed himself. Funnily enough, did you ever see a film called 'Shine'?

Q. Yes!

A. About the, um, the, what was his name? I can't remember, what was the name of the pianist? Because he was in fact um, the Australian pianist, was actually at the college when I was there, and was a pupil of Cyril Smith. I mean it amused me vastly that Cyril Smith was played in the film, he wasn't called Smith he was called Parkes, for some reason, and he was played in the film by John Guilgood, who is about as unlike Cyril Smith as it is possible to imagine. I mean for a start

Guilgood was in his nineties, whereas Smith died at the age of sixty-five. And secondly Smith was a kind of blunt, north country, from Middlesborough, and Guilgood was the sort of fluent suave aristocrat, you know? (laughs). Er, and um, er about the only thing they've picked up is this idea of being able to play Rachmaninov third piano concerto with your eyes shut. You know. That was about the only Smith-ism which I could detect and thought was terribly funny. So, but that was actually, that was very important, and I think part of his emphasis on mental imaging, the importance he saw not only for its own sake, but because of course it slashes the practice time that you have to do with the instrument. And of course all the practice that you do, must be dulling your sensibility. Do you not think? Well, he thought anyway. I mean, it's the old thing with, like with the Schubert song. I mean if you have to practise your Schubert song kind of seventy time over before you can play it, I mean frankly the musical inspiration has gone. But if you can as it were learn it in all sorts of ways, er, so that, you know, frankly, the piano practice bit is just applying the last ounce of polish well and good. Do you follow what I mean?

Q. Yeah.

A. Um, yes. So that's a very important point I think. (laughs). Well, it's good stuff isn't it?

Q. Have you come across um, Freymuth's book? It's just a small little booklet thing I reviewed just recently and its all on mental practice for performers. And it touches on, she has a particular angle on reducing repetitive strain injuries and things like that...

A. Oh! True! Um, absolutely. All part of it, yes. I mean I was thinking kind of mental fatigue, but yeah, physical, absolutely.

Q. Um, so, I suppose particularly with the example of the Bach forty-eight coming up, do you find it quite easy to memorise music?

A. Well, I find it quite easy to memorise but then I find it awfully easy to forget. But that's because I'm fifty-three I'm afraid. I think. I think really. I think it's, I think it's... But, so I mean, put it this way, so this is... the question if I may you know, enlarge on it, is terribly important to this whole idea of imaging, because it seems to me that the older you get the more you have to rely on, if you like, intellectual means of remembering things, and what are we doing when we practice if not trying to remember? You know, to learn how to do something, as opposed to, you know, the child-like way of learning which may involve great rote learning, and its good that it does because children do that sort of things terribly well. Um, you do it less and less well by even your mid-twenties, certainly by the time you're my age I mean it's just a waste of time. I mean you'd just go on forever really. Um, and it would be very damaging. So the more you can actually learn to remember something because you know why it's there, I mean if I asked you to memorise, I don't know, the phone book or something, it would be hopeless, because there's no reason why... Some people can because they have a photographic memory, but I mean for ordinary people it would be hopeless because it means nothing. But if I asked you to remember a Shakespeare sonnet that's a different matter.

Q. Yeah.

A. So that it's very very relevant.

Q. Yes, um, what I've got here is um my questions relating to memorising. When you memorise is it intentional or is it a kind of active seeking to learn it, but you've just sort of answered that in a way.

A. I. Well by my age it has to be an active... Well I think it should be all the way through. You see I'm horrified, I mean I actually was talking, somebody, I was in company with a musician, a professional musician, a harpsichordist, and somebody who wasn't a musician was talking to us both, and they said "how do you memorise things?" and she said "oh well you just do it over and over and over again until it sticks" and I thought "oh well". I opened my mouth and then I shut it again because I thought "this is not..." But I mean I could not disagree more.

Q. Right. Yeah.

A. I mean really if... (TAPE NEEDS TURNING)

(...) Yeah so I couldn't disagree more.

Q. Right. I was going to ask whether um, when you noticed perhaps errors in your playing you could see a trend behind that, and it might relate to what bits you found easier to memorise than others, but I suppose if your approach to memorising music is to approach it in a more looking for the meaning and analysis then that wouldn't occur so much, that's precisely the point of the method.

A. Um, I think that's true, yes. I mean I think the thing about errors is, gosh I wish I'd followed this precept, I think is to try to avoid the sticking plaster approach which is.. I mean clearly you've got to put things right but I mean I think it's *why* you make the error is the thing that needs investigating because if you really investigate it you get down, like gardeners do, to the roots, and you pull the whole thing out. Otherwise you're sort of mowing the top off.

Q. OK. Um, I was going to ask you to pick on an example of a piece you've been preparing for concert and perhaps the fact that you've got these concerts coming up that would be a good one...

A. Yep.

Q. .. and talk me through a little bit the balance that there might be between, again I'm looking at this relationship between actual hearing and imagining. Perhaps that balance shifts throughout the course of your practice. I mean if you begin with the mental preparation, at what stage might you begin to transfer these ideas to the piano?

A. Um. Hmm. Probably sooner than I ought, is the answer. But I mean I'm very impatient. Um, um, I mean ideally, well no, not, let's start again... I mean the thing is, there's clearly no point in starting to memorise something until you are reasonably secure what it is you're memorising so that um, I would certainly begin learning a piece by looking at it, listening to it in my head, hearing it, thinking about it, analysing it, all those are ideal. Well, certainly analysing it actually. Um, but then at a certain point after doing that I would take it to the piano and you begin experimenting and er, you know, you're like a kind of painter, mixing colours, you know, and you're trying this and you're trying that and you're getting ideas, and it's wonderful actually. You know, wonderful. It's the nicest bit of practice actually. When you're experimenting and you're gradually bringing something to life, something is beginning to emerge, but it's only after you've done all that, and you're really actually sort of, for instance it's the only way you get to a point say where you're actually satisfied with your fingering. I'm not one of these geniuses that can change their fingering from performance to performance, so I suppose that is a limiting factor on my conception because I do very much believe that fingering, different fingerings produce different effects, you know. It's not just what feels comfortable but it actually produces a different effect. So um, and if I was going to do a line in Bach staccato rather than legato I would unquestionably have a different fingering so the fact that I've chosen a

staccato is, if you like, *pro tem* a limiting factor, you know. But I mean I certainly wouldn't start trying to remember it until I'd, you know, actually got everything in place. By the time I have got everything in place, I've thought about it so much that hopefully an awful lot of the memory will come very easily and take care of itself, but then this is where long walks with the dog come in, you know. And even sometimes just sort of a straight thing like actors learning their lines. I mean, you know, you literally learn a phrase, and then you learn the next one, and finally you carefully join them together, and so on. But it's a very active memory, it's never kind of, oh 'when I've been playing the piece for six weeks I'll start memorising it' sort of memory. It comes very early on. Well because in any case part of the difficulty of a keyboard instrument is sort of fluency, and of course remembering it conquers the fluency issue. Do you know what I mean? So it's all part of learning the piece really. But I find that in a way the more complicated and the more detail, the more reasons you have for doing anything in a way the easier it is to memorise. You know. So that it's, in other words, the more thought I've put into something..

Q. Yeah.

A. ..the easier it will come. I mean I am talking about from, I'm afraid, a rather middle-aged perspective here but never mind. (laughs).

Q. Um, you've mentioned quite a few times now the sort of role that analysis might play in preparation, um, do you ever actually look into what might be the source of inspiration for the composer in terms of maybe looking into biographical information?

A. Well I might do, yes. Um, yes I think there are, yes definitely because um I feel a very personal relationship with music I play with the person who wrote it. Er, I definitely feel um, you know, in partnership with somebody else's imagination. I mean I actually get to know a person through the music they write. I mean that's not just being kind of fanciful. I think that is actually true.

Q. Right.

A. Er, so I definitely might, any, you know, even little anecdotes. That nice anecdote about Bach who used to, whose attitude to fugue is revealed by his son, Carl Philip Emmanuel when they used to go and hear other people's fugues and sit beside each other in a recital or something like that, and Bach would sit bolt upright and as it were C. P. E. Bach would see his father kind of mentally ticking off the various manoeuvres which the chosen subject had the potential for, and when a particularly nifty stretto was elicited from the subject he would kind of sort of dig his thumb... I mean, whether it was true, well C. P. E. Bach wrote it so I don't see why it shouldn't be true, but it's such a lovely idea, but it's also quite an important idea because it gives you the idea that Bach saw the business of writing the fugue as sort of extracting all the potential from some given material, which is actually rather an important conception, because there might be other reasons for Bach writing a fugue altogether. You know, so I mean he actually does give you a sort of clue as to the way his mind is working. So though we know precious little about Bach, little things like that do slightly bring it to life. But I mean we know Bach through his music. So if you totally identify with the imagination you see this fantastic variety, and all sorts of incredibly surprising, to me surprising things because there are lots of things in the forty-eight which in sensibility have that kind of irony and charm and so on, understatement, that you associate with you know, his as it were musical grandchildren, Haydn say, and that I don't associate with Bach, but that I have discovered is very strongly there in the forty-eight at

times. Perhaps because the music is essentially very domestic, in fact. But at the same time there are sort of the B flat minor fugue and the C sharp minor fugue and so on which are sort of vast, monumental, granitic, you know, amazing er you know. But there's a quite different sort of classicism in there already which um I find extraordinarily interesting. All one can say is that so far I can find no limit to the great man's kind of sensibility, if you know what I mean (laughs). It seems completely universal while comparison other composers seem sort of specialists, you know. So that's a great thing to do. Which of course is marvellously demanding on me. And I think it means that it's very important to me, my personal belief is that it is very important that one doesn't approach Bach in a sort of 'this is my Bach style', you know. That every work, in a sense, every fugue or every prelude creates its own style.

Q. Right.

A. So, yes I am sort of answering your question, aren't I? (laughs) You know. So to sort of stuff Bach into a stereotype where say you play kind of very severe dynamics and strictly in time and rather staccato, or whatever your stereotype of Bach is seems to me completely wrong because that's, I mean it might be true of some Baroque composers, or the Baroque in general, but I think to see Bach as typical of the Baroque is hopeless. He cannot be. Any more than Beethoven is typical of the nineteenth century. I mean, you know.

Q. Um, sort of going back again to this preparing the score mentally. I'm sort of, I'm very without sorting of sticking electrodes on people's heads it's very difficult to know just how detailed an image it is that they would be creating when they first look through it and first prepare it...

A. Mm.

Q. Can you imagine, if I presented you with a score of music that you didn't know, and it was a piece for preparation, and it was your first read-through, how good do you think you are at picking up note level detail in terms of creating an image of it in your mind?

A. God! Well, probably not as good as I think I am but um, I well it depends very much how difficult the style of the piece is, you know, but obviously I don't know but I think that, I would say this, that I really don't see how you can expect to play a piece of music which you can't have a mental image of, I mean otherwise you're just a kind of hack really. Um, I mean the idea that, I mean you'd be like a composer who writes notes but can't hear them, or like a conductor who beats time because it says 4/4 but can't actually hear a score. Er, so I would say that um, I mean as you know I've done lots of modern music where the kind of auralising precisely of notes is terribly difficult. It's easier for me because at least on the piano I have a pretty, fairly accurate perfect pitch, which only comes, I certainly wasn't born with it, it comes from listening carefully. It's corrupted by the fact that I play on very out of tune pianos, everybody does, so that I, I mean I'm not, you know pitching a G in tune would be quite difficult for me. But you know once I'm at the piano, and as it were learnt it's pitch, then I have actually pretty good perfect pitch, and I'm sure that's helped me a lot, but I'm not terribly aware of it. But I think it's probably helped me a lot in Messiaen or Schoenberg or whatever. It must have done. Um, er, yeah, so, what was the question about? How well you think you... Yeah, how quickly I do that I don't know. Well, I can remember when I first started in my mid-twenties to play what was then very avant-garde music, sort of Stockhausen piano pieces and so on, I mean I can remember that with them I mean I would literally spend the best part of a week sitting at a table

like this with a pencil and rubber and so on, kind of minutely going through the score and working it out.

Q. Right.

A. Er, and then when I'd done that I began to say to myself 'hell, why don't I do this with Mozart?', because by the time I actually got my Stockhausen to the piano I was kind of so advanced with it having per force had to go through this process, that I mean I only did it because it's so irritating to sit at the piano when you're trying to put the fingering in, and you simply haven't a clue how the rhythm goes, because you haven't worked it out, and I thought well I'll separate this activity out if you see what I mean, um, but I was so kind of well organised by the time I got to the piano that the work, I noticed, went terribly quickly, so I thought 'well why don't I do this with music which, you know, I could practically sight-read, but, you know, is still just as difficult?'

Q. Yeah.

A. And I found there was a great deal to be learnt.

Q. OK. Um, do you always wait until you've analysed and formed an understanding of a piece before you listen to other people's renditions of it?

A. Oh, definitely! I mean sometimes you can't help having heard other people's renditions, because otherwise, well you know, but definitely. I mean I am now, with the first, with the forty-eight, by December, by which point I will have played the whole book twice in public, I will be immune to, um, you know following at a whim what other people do, and I will be able to listen to other people. In fact I want to listen to other people. At that point I shall probably go down to the sound archive in London and er spend a day listening to a whole range of recordings and see what I learn. But it's to see what I learn, not in order to copy.

Q. Yeah.

A. And most of it will be seeing what I reject. I mean it will be saying either I don't like that, or well I think that's fantastic but it's not for me.

Q. Right.

A. And sometimes it will be, 'oh, well that's worth thinking about'. Which would be great because that will actually make me think again and so the thing will be freshened up, if you see what I mean. So that the next stage with the music, you know, say early next year, it will give a sort of impetus to that. And I mean it may well show up to me some sort of frightful complacencies in my own approach, you know. But it'll be learning because I've already done my own thing. It's exactly the same with the counterpoint here. I always insist my pupils go and learn from Bach or whoever it is. Don't learn from me, I don't know anything about it, but Bach does. But you won't learn from Bach until you've done it yourself. If you see what I mean?

Q. Yeah. Do you ever get the urge to sort of, not cheat, but just to, in the preparation process..

A. Mm, practically never. To be honest no. I mean actually this goes back to a conversation I once had with a BBC producer called Paul Hamberger who was a very good accompanist, I mean he was a really good pianist, er and I was recording a programme in Maidevale which he was producing. He was a very nice man, and very unlike the typical BBC producer, a sort of expansive Viennese character, with a thick kind of Viennese accent you know, and very good musician and very nice. And I um, we'd been getting on terribly well, and we were sort of having a coffee break and I sort of said, 'well I don't think students, and I'm one of them, you know ever took the business of studying other pianists and



interpretation seriously enough, and we ought to do much more of that' and so on, and I think he kind of misunderstood me, but he sort of exploded, and this was very untypical, and he said 'you should never' I don't know whether he meant you in particular, but anyway he said 'you should never ever listen to other people playing your Beethoven sonata. You must just do it the way you do it, you know, and have your own ideas, for better or for worse. Um, I kind of always remember that, and he was so passionate about it, I was thinking 'oh, sorry', you know. Um, as I say he may have slightly misunderstood me, because I didn't mean that one would learn a piece by sort of assembling a committee of great pianists and sort of cherry picking for what they do, but he may have thought I meant that, which I didn't. So I think there's an enormous amount you can learn from other people, but I think it's crucial when you do it, and you definitely don't do it at the beginning. I'm horrified when I hear professional musicians say 'Oh, I've got the record out of the library and...' you know. I think they have no self-respect. Hell, what's the point of doing it?

Q. Yeah.

A. And when you're in this fragile early stage before you've done any work you're bound to be over-influenced and in any case it's a cheat, it's a short-cut, it's plagiarism. Isn't that right? I mean it's like, to be honest I say this to anyone whose doing research too, I say 'look first of all you know go to the primary sources and have a blank piece of paper and have your own ideas. Do all that, you know, work really hard. When you get stuck, then start reading secondary literature, and it'll be interesting, and it'll mean a lot, and you'll be in a position to reject some of it. Otherwise you're just kind of assembling a whole lot of stuff and kind of coughing it up again in a different form. Do you see what I mean?

Q. Yeah.

A. I mean it's very difficult. I mean I agree. It's very difficult to know how to use secondary literature when you're doing research but that's my view anyway. Do your own thing (laughs). You know.

Q. Um, Do you ever do any silent rehearsal; miming?

A. Um, yes. I used to do it a lot. Less so now actually. Less so because I think Schumann's remark about dummy keyboards is probably you know a good one, that it's not a musical way of working, and I think um, I mean I think it can be useful but I don't do it very much now. It probably has its dangers. I mean the top of a table can be useful but I, but it's not the same as a piano, do you know what I mean? So you could be forming really bad habits. I do have a dummy keyboard actually for warming up with, for venues that don't have a practice piano, which is most of them. But it's only for just warming up, not for practising a piece.

Q. OK.

A. You might be going to ask me what practice do you do on the day of a concert? That's an impossible question.

Q. Is it?

A. Well there's a school of thought that says you should absolutely not touch the pieces you're going to play in a concert at all on the day of the performance, and there's a lot to recommend it, but you have to have nerves of steel.

Q. Mm. So you find that a bit of a struggle between one school of thought and the other?

A. Yes, awful. Yes. No, awful. And I never really know quite how to approach it. I've never solved that one.

Q. What would you do mostly? Do some practice or...?

A. Um, yes but I probably wouldn't kind of perform maybe. You know, I'd probably just kind of in place. You know. One is trying to make oneself feel more confident. I think it's really nice when you go in and you try and you like the acoustic and you like the piano, above all, it seems to work and fits you and, you know. That's good. Um, I mean part of the trouble with the forty-eight I mean on Thursday I'm going to have to play in the drama studio on a crappy old Yamaha. And that's a very difficult question really, 'cause if you, you know, well if I were taking it terribly seriously I'd go down to the drama studio before next Thursday morning and I'd try it out, but I don't really in a way want to adapt my whole way of playing the forty-eight to the crappy Yamaha, excuse my language. Do you know what I mean? I mean too bad. If it ain't that good I'll do my best on the day, but this is not the Garnigi Hall or something like that. I mean I think it's a big big problem for players who don't have their own instrument. Like pianists. I mean, you know, you can imagine yourself being sort of systematically ruined by the instruments you play, and you're trying to do the best with them, but in so doing you're um, you're betraying your um abilities. I mean in theory we should always play on instruments that work perfectly. I mean no violinist would play on something with a crooked fingerboard and, you know, a frayed D string or whatever. Bridge wrongly set up, and so on and so forth. I mean we do that all the time. I mean if you have a violin like that you just go and get it fixed. You wouldn't adapt to it. But we do that the whole time, and I've no idea how much harm it does us, but it must do harm. So, the downside of playing different pianos (laughs).

Q. Yes. Er, (pause) you advocate getting to know the music before learning bad habits through perhaps sight-reading it, preparing it, how large an overview of a fairly large piece of music is necessary? In other words do you think it's possible to mentally map a quite large piece of music?

A. Must do. Definitely. Absolutely. Of course in order to map you may have to have a sort of short-hand in your mind that kind of sort of categorises certain sections or whatever. But I mean how do you choose the tempo of your Beethoven sonata first movement? Er, by seeing what works in the first four bars? Well, yeah, but, well you have to say you've got to take into account the whole thing haven't you? Er, and um, and I would say probably that you never really consciously, there's never one moment where you consciously choose the tempo, but it should grow organically from all your perceptions of the piece. Do you see what I mean?

Q. Yeah.

A. And this is a very serious and perfect councils here. (laughs). But I mean you know, I'm talking about if you want to be a great pianist. That would have to be how you worked, however talented you were.

Q. Mm. Um, so how often do you resort to using for example the hand-crossing techniques and things like that in order to check the...

A. Well yeah. Yes, a lot actually. No, it's very good. There's a horrible piece in the forty-eight, the E minor fugue, which is a very strange piece which is in fact a moto perpetuo, it's a fugue in two parts, the only one that I know of. (sighs) Um, and um that's tremendously effective doing cross-hand practice on that, but it's fantastically difficult. But I mean it has um, I mean not only does it sort of sharpen up your powers of co-ordination but of course it has the great virtue of putting the left hand which you don't listen to as well as you listen to your right, above your right hand, so it kind of puts it in an exposed position. Now it also means that you're playing in kind of awkward um, so if you can play it very well in a kind of

awkward position you know it's going to seem much easier. So it's actually attacking all sorts of things. Yes, it's terribly good because the thing is it produces very, it sounds like a ghastly thing to do but it produces incredibly quick results. Because if you think about it, suppose you give yourself nine out of ten for your basic as written version, and you start doing hands crossed, er you can very quickly improve that from sort of one out of ten to say seven out of ten.

Q. Yeah.

A. I mean roughly speaking. And you will find that that has reflected, without any practice at all of the piece as written, and that's kind of reflected on it. And it is also profoundly addressing the difficulties of the piece. I mean it sort of enhance.. no, exaggerates it. That's right. So it's very like the sort of theories of Quarto that I think I quoted in this article although I think the actual exercises that Quarto devises for the Chopin etudes, which is where that came from are I don't think terribly helpful. But I mean I agree in principle that the idea of practising the music in an indirect way, so that you don't have to practise the piece itself, thereby it gets stale and so on, is terrific. It's all part of the same thing, you know; avoiding actually practising. I find the eye shut thing is just stunning. I find that gives you terrific confidence. I mean if you can play a fugue with your eyes shut, er kind of nine out of ten, you know, you're pretty on top of it, really. And it is amazing how it does improve. And you know blind organists can play. I mean your faculties really sharpen up.

Q. Right yeah. Well, you rightly point out that the perceptual bias of a pianist in favour of the right hand, can you think of any other examples of motor behaviour influencing the way we perceive what we're producing? I can't think what but you might have some idea.

A. Oh, um. Er, gosh. Um, well it's like Chopin saying 'I was born with a weak fourth finger and I shall die with a weak fourth finger' (laughs). Um, yes, I'm sure they do. I mean, yeah, er sorry I can't answer this question directly. I mean um, yes I mean, but the answer is that there's a kind of loop going on here, and it must be that all the time you're playing the piano you're sorting of getting used to the way you play the piano, which is the reason why we have to have this image before we start, so that we don't just accept what we do and get used to it, whereas our critical faculties are sharp and we can change to what we ideally desire to do. But equally er there is a sense in which of course, you know, people are, you're an artist because of what you are and who you are and um in a natural and unconscious way. And again the snag about what I was doing when I was first a pupil of Cyril Smith was in a sense I was probably to some extent you know fighting some kind of natural instincts, although I want to qualify that by saying that of course the work you do away from the piano, imaging in your head, should enhance your instincts, and in fact it's the bad playing you do because you can't play the piece at the piano that you get used to is actually destroying your good instincts. Do you see what I mean?

Q. Yeah.

A. But still you could actually try, I mean I think you have to sort of find inside you the sort of truth as it is for you. And that is partly down to the way you play the piano. It must be. I mean you're not conscious of they style and yet you sort of must have.., I mean other people when they've written reviews about me, you know, I mean it's, I don't think one should read reviews but inevitably you do, I mean they sort of talk about you as if you've got a style, and I've never, never been aware of that. I just take each piece as it comes. I'm sure I do have a style

but... But I don't think you should be aware of it. I don't think a painter should be aware of a style. I think once you do it becomes self parody actually. Um, and that's why critics are so damaging because you actually read a kind of um, you know even when they praise you they sort of might praise your *dolce* playing or something and you say 'oh I'm a great *dolce* player am I?'. Do you know what I mean? And you, as I say, it becomes self parody. And so I don't think there's any harm in the fact that we all sort of, you know, we just do all have a way of playing whatever instruments we play. It's interesting for me as, when I accompany people, um, well now I don't know if this is a particular gift I have, I'm sure it's not but um, you know a violinist can just come in and tune the strings and I know exactly how they're gonna play the piece. I mean I know what they're like. I mean I know what they're like as a person, if you see what I mean, from just tuning the A string I can tell you. You cannot hide, I mean that's why performing is terrifying in a way, because you cannot hide the truth about you is stripped naked. You can't help it. Um, it just is very personal. So, sorry, again at a tangent I sort of answer your question. But I, that's why it comes back to this thing of balance, because sometimes you've got to say 'well, my instinct, my unconscious is doing this, and it seems good so let's go for it. And I can't really find a reason for it, but it seems to work, so we'll have it'. You know, not everything is going to be planned like a military operation.

Q. Yeah. Um, how are you for time?

A. I'm OK 'til four.

Q. OK. I do have sort of masses of questions which I'm obviously not going to get through but um, perhaps I can ask you a little bit about some aspects of teaching, and passing on some of these ideas about mental imagery. Do you teach any of this sort of emphasis on mental practice?

A. Yes. Well I've taught it in classes here. And where I have had advanced piano students I don't teach many people the piano, but where I've had advanced piano students I've tried to pass it on to less advanced piano students and it seems to me that they're extraordinarily resistant to it.

Q. Why do you think that is? Why do you think it's something that isn't universally done?

A. Well there's one very easy answer to that and that is that most say people of 18 when they come here have been accustomed to a kind of go into a room, sit down, begin at the beginning, play through it, maybe correct the odd mistake, you know, but a kind of rote learning approach. And maybe its worked fairly well, I mean up to a sort of certain limited standard, and you know perhaps with not terribly difficult music because they're children. Or have been children. But I know that they have got to, if they're going to go on being good and getting better that they have actually got to radically rethink their ways of doing it. This is why the child virtuoso has an awfully difficult time growing up. I mean you can see that. Grown-ups are different from children. Um, so that's one reason. The other reason is that nobody likes to use their brain. Er, and they don't like to use their brain anyway, but they're particularly resistant to the idea that the brain has any place in art. I don't know if this is a peculiarly British thing, it may be, because abroad the term an 'intellectual', if you're described as an intellectual it is intended as a compliment. In the UK it's always satirical. Well, probably rightly so. I mean maybe I'm as guilty as anybody, but I mean er, but people think that if you have to work at say listening to a piece of music there must be something wrong with the piece of music. I say, well shall we say work in the sense of reading the libretto of

the Wagner opera you're going to see so you do understand what it's about before you go to it, if you don't speak fluent German. And they might just accept that. But I mean why should one not? Um, I mean, am I really getting the last word out of a Beethoven quartet if I sort of sit there letting it wash over me while I make the coffee? No I'm not. You know. And maybe actually kind of thinking about it, just as a listener, will pay off, you know. And you'll enjoy it and it'll mean much more to you, and so on. And why not? But I mean performers are incredibly resistant to the idea that you think about what you're doing, actually. Um, I've mentioned golf already. Apparently golf teachers find exactly the same thing. I'm afraid I've never had a golf lesson so I'm a very good example of a bad golfer, because I have never had a golf lesson, but I should have done because it's hopeless trying to play a game.. you can no more play golf without lessons than you can play the piano without lessons. And it would be very good for me to have lessons. But apparently people when they have lessons, the first thing that has to be impressed upon them is that there's a great deal of hard work to be done before you actually step up and whack the ball. Like kind of deciding where you're trying to hit it, how far you're trying to hit it, er what you're allowing for in terms of the lie of the ground and the direction of the wind, er the shape of the shot you're gonna hit, the kind of way that your set-up is gonna be to produce that shot, blah, blah, blah. I mean I grant you that for a seasoned professional a lot of these things may be very rapid and almost instinctive but, it's news to most golfers that you do anything except sort of, you know, try and hit the ball. You know, any kind of pre-planning is strictly forbidden. And almost tantamount to cheating.

Q. Yeah. Do you think there's any sense of people perhaps, inner hearing or auralisation skills being inadequate to that kind of mental preparation?

A. Certainly. Certainly. But that's all the more reason for doing it.

Q. Right.

A. Um, yes. And I also think, allied to that is the unfortunate fact that we do aural in our grade exams, or sometimes in curriculums, but it's sort of a separate activity. OK. So the kind of institutionalised sort of boxes is very bad news because it inculcates in one the idea that you work on the ear here and then you forget about it for the rest of the week. You see the great thing about the two teachers that I ran into in my formative years, Cyril Smith and Nadia Boulanger was that both of them, as it were, applied aural training to the pieces you were working on. So Smith saying I want you to play from memory this page of semiquavers with one finger so it has to be reconstructed by ear, Boulanger who said to me sing the left hand while playing the right.

Q. Yeah. Do you think there's, I don't know if it's a misconception, but I think um, there's this notion that good musicians, natural musicians, have a good inner ear, and have this natural innate ability to auralise sound. Do you think, um, inner hearing is something that can be practised up, like anything else, or...

A. Absolutely! Yes. No, I mean, do these people mean that in their cradle these people could do this? I mean, I'm certain they had talent and all the rest of it and they had a predisposition to be good, but you get good at something by doing it.

Q. Yep. Um, over time do you find that your own imagery has increased or developed with your increasing experience? I mean you sort of said earlier on about when you were first working with Smith how you would look in great minute detail and now it would be more of an overview. Do you think that effects that the nature of the imagery you would have for a piece of music as well?

A. (pause) That it would be less detail, or that it would be done in a slightly

different way?

Q. Either.

A. Er, yeah I think the word strategy is a good one. You know, that I would have a kind of, yeah, I would have a strategy with a piece that grew out of my knowledge of the piece and my thinking about it, so it wouldn't impose from outside. But then I would have a sort of strategy. Er, a kind of understanding yes, but that hopefully it's not done in a way that limits my freshness and imagination. Yes, er, I think, you know, I just think it's so important, I mean I can see myself, you know the trouble about growing older is in some senses you get, oh yeah you get sort of 'oh I've seen that sort of thing before, it's like this' do you know what I mean? Oh I recognise that, oh yes that's the sort of thing, do you know what I mean? In a way you get rather facile in your judgements, do you know what I mean? I mean it's actually lovely hearing children, I mean good children play, who've got no preconceptions, they don't have this kind of style switch inside them. Do you know what I mean? I think that's rather good. I think we lose that. So again that's a very good reason for doing this really detailed imaginative work, because it may enable you to jump the stereotypes. I mean because after all, what are you trying to do with any piece you play, you're trying really to show what's unique about it.

Um. Anyway!

Q. Um, yes, well, you kind of confess how tempting it is to go for the quick fix approach.

Do you think there is any hope in trying to shift focus away from physical, I don't know be it through institutions or any kind of way that we could kind of revolutionise the system?

A. Well I think it's very difficult because it does seem terribly slow to people, and as I say they're very resistant to it for all the reasons I've given, and it does depend how ambitious they are. You know. It's a very. Education, institutionalised education's a very difficult and very imperfect world. My own experience of say writing is the um, well the first time a magazine editor rang me up and said 'you might be the person we're looking for to write an article on so and so, would you like to have a go, and if it's any good we'll publish it'.. Boy, did my standards go up. So this wasn't like kind of writing an essay, you know the day before for somebody's class, it wasn't even like doing a degree. Well, you know when I did a degree it was all you know three hour papers and was just kind of crazy rough and tumble anyway. Um, but you know, you were really on your metal. This guy will publish this piece if it's good. What does he mean by good, you know? Is it really interesting to him and his readers? And is it, you know, really kind of sound stuff, and readable, and, you know. And above all is he going to be able to publish it as it stands without having to hack it around and waste his time? Um, I mean God your standards suddenly go through the roof. And I mean the trouble is you're in the kind of never never land of education. Do you know what I mean? It's a bit soggy. I mean 64% or something seems like a wonderful mark. I mean in the real world it's absolutely hopeless. And you don't want to discourage people too much by saying that but it does really depend you know how much of a germ-like flame they've got inside of them. I fear. But it's very frustrating because I feel that with anyone, like the worst golfer, I mean I know, I heard one golf teacher say that 'if I could get this guy to believe, however bad he is, if I could get him to believe in the idea of actually thinking what you're doing before you do it, I guarantee that his golf will improve by 80%, you know, straight-away, without any practice, without any lessons at all, just learning that lesson. And I think it's true of musicians of

whatever standard or calibre, or ambition, that actually a little bit of sensible thought about what they're doing, and a little bit of, well quite a lot of imaging, and practising in the shadow of this imaging, and their standard would simply erupt, you know. So it is deeply frustrating. So I wish you good luck!

Q. (laughs). Um, I think you said, if not here then elsewhere, um this sort of need for assessment you know that you have in institutions, in educational institutions, and how can you ever assess somebody's ability to image a piece of music and use those kind of mental skills?

A. Yes. Well you can't, no. And well the proof of the pudding is in the eating I suppose, but still you can't. And um, you know that's another bad thing about institutionalised education is it's sort of geared to kind of quantifiable results and testing. You know, it's kind of driven by what can be tested rather than what is actually good, which is ghastly I think. But, so I think we have to passionately try to recognise and mitigate the evils of education. Alas the whole tide of our culture is to swim determinedly in the opposite direction. So teenagers never stop taking exams. You know. I mean music students never stop taking exams. When I was at university I took an exam in April of my first year, and my next one was in June of my third year, which was going a bit far, I agree, but it did mean that in-between you could go off and play Hamlet or learn the Emperor concerto or something without worrying about the next deadline. Which had a lot to be said for it. But try saying that to Mr. Blair. Though he was part of that culture I may say, two years after me at St. John's college Oxford. Um, and I'm told by the person who um, Tim Day at the National Sound Archive who was at St; John's with Tony Blair and said that they were unable to cast him in the opera club production of something, I forget what it was, because Tony Blair refused to cut his long hair.

Q. (laughs). That's good to know.

A. It is isn't it! So, how people change, is all I can say. I think it's bizarre really. I think underneath it I don't think I have changed very much, and I think my outlook is actually probably pretty similar to what it was, but refined by experience. Whereas Tony Blair's would appear to be a 180 degree swing. Anyway.

Q. Um, other than, well, have you ever been encouraged to really think about musical imagery by anyone other than those teachers that you've mentioned.

A. No. Funnily enough, no. And I mean I think there's a very interesting point here, is the working together in ensembles or quartets or something like that, where I've always hoped and wanted people who I work with to sit down over a coffee and talk about the piece. Rather than just all be sitting with our bows in hand, and... Do you know what I mean?

Q. Yeah.

A. And I mean with people that I know very well, like Ben Frith, to some extent we do that, you know when we're driving along in a car together or you know having a break, we sort of do...TAPE NEEDS CHANGING!...for solo pianists how much that applies to an ensemble, really. I hope you're going to give some lectures about imagery? Perhaps you'll come and talk to the first year performance class next term?

Q. Mm. That'd be great.

A. Because they'll believe you. They won't believe me.

Q. Um, yes. At the moment I'm looking much more at the sort of applied side of musical imagery, um, having done various experiments and things I'm now going to three different places to look at their aural training programme, and to look at

the role of imagery there.

A. Right. Great. Um, Smith told me, and I don't know how true this is, that you know, that there was a great piano teacher called Lechatitsky who taught Schnabel and Miservich and you know great figures like that, and was a famously rigorous teacher and of course told Schnabel that it was too late for him to learn to be a pianist and he could only come to him at the age of six, and all that sort of stuff, and, but apparently Lechatitsky's method was very simple, that you sat there and you, at the piano, you imagined, when you were learning a piece, and you imagined the next phrase, well I mean merely actually identifying a phrase is itself an interpretative act of course, but you imagined a phrase you know lengthways, that way, every way, then when you were absolutely satisfied that you knew how it went then you learnt how to play it, then you went on to the next phrase. Then the next day you came back and you imagined two phrase, the first two phrases together, and then you re-learnt them to play them together, and so on. And it was like putting a jigsaw... I don't know how true that is or where he got that from, and I wouldn't do it like that because I'm, I know I'm too impatient. And I can sit down and say I'm gonna do that but actually my hands can't quite keep off the piano, so actually I have to get right away from the piano for my imagine. Do you see what I mean? And I have particular difficulty now I suppose at the stage of my life where I have much too little time to practise the piano. And so I tend to use too much of my practice time actually hands on the piano.

Q. Right.

A. And not enough proportion imaging. But I know I am aware of this failing, and it's not entirely my fault and, but I'm aware of it. (laughs). But certainly if I'm really really serious about anything it'll be imaged up to the hilt.

Q. Um, realistically do you think that most students will take the time to stand away from their instrument and prepare. But we've sort of touched on that, and requiring the brain and the time pressures...

A. Well. Kind of I hoped they would. I haven't cracked that. I sense that I've not cracked this one really. But it is absolutely the secret. I mean if there is a secret to learning to be a good performer it is this one thing that you actually know what you're doing and you know what you want. If you know what you want then you can be your own teacher. And that's very important, acquiring independence. Terribly important among university age people, that they acquire independence from their teacher. That they don't go to somebody and that person tells them how to play it. I mean yeah that person can encourage and can give them new ideas and all the rest of it, but I mean they should not be telling them how to play it. That is to behave like a beginner really. Um, and you know once you can do that you're flying. I mean there is no limit. The limit is only your own desire and so on.

Q. Do you think there's anything to be said for encouraging that kind of mental preparation and perhaps sight-reading and inner hearing in beginners? In children?

A. Must be. Yes. I think there must be. And I think the way to do it would be to play a game and say imagine this is an orchestral piece and we're going to conduct it. In fact just conducting your piece, well you can't play the piano while you're conducting anyway, you know just to conduct it would be very good. Or to sing it, or to dance it. Something to it that isn't playing it. Do you see what I mean?

Q. Mm.

A. Um, (pause) yes I had a thought about it then. Yes, I was only thinking the Bach, you know that I'm playing, it's still deliberately very experimental. You know it's still very provisional. I don't want too quickly to kind of, you know I



want to, as it were, plan for growth (laughs). And so it's still very fluid inside me, you know. Um, and it's going to change, it is changing a lot from day to day. And, very experimental. Which I think is good. I think it's rather nice to have a free-wheeling approach, especially to Bach. Um, so it's sort of irresponsible in a way, but I mean in a good way. But yes definitely one could have this idea of activities which precluded you from going near the instrument but that sort of, you feel the spirit of it, you know.

Q. Again, I think there's the book by Freymuth that I mentioned earlier. She sort of touches on a few...

A. ...exercises, techniques, yeah. But it is the secret. The one and only secret really. I mean without it no teacher can really teach you anything.

Q. How early in musical development do you think that a kind of mental clarity would be needed to be able envisage music like that would be possible?

A. Well I'm sure that actually children would do it terribly well. They'd probably do it much better than I do actually. Because they have such amazing brains. Um, if only encouraged to do it.

Q. OK. Here's a question I'd like to ask because it's so relevant to the problems that I have, do you have a view about what might be lost of an auditory image when you think about it, when you consciously think about what you're imaging? Do you think that you lose something of the spontaneity or the, we were talking about instinct earlier...?

A. Because of the exercise?

Q. Yeah.

A. Well, I would turn it right the other way round. And I would say that the clumsiness, and the limitations and all the rest of it with my technique are a much more limiting thing, and the marvellous thing about imaging is that I can fly anywhere I want to. And when I say that it is the absolute answer I mean that I have no doubt, God this sounds arrogant, it's going to sound terribly arrogant, but I've no doubt that you could put, well anyway a lot of repertoire in front of me, and that I can inside myself imagine what Smith would have called a world beating performance. You know, given time and understanding and working at it. I mean I've no doubt that I can, God it does sound arrogant, I've never thought of this before, but I actually don't entertain any doubt that given time and thought and all the rest of it, I can penetrate as deeply into the forty-eight as anyone else. Whether I can actually bring that back and communicate it to people in sound is another matter which is, you know, what we're trying to do at the end of the day. But, I've absolutely no doubt that I can go deeply into this music, and it's only my own idleness or lack of time or whatever it is that would prevent me doing it. Once you say to people, look, you know divide your work, first of all let's imagine the world beating performance, and then let's try and get it. It's very difficult to get it, but you're never going to get it unless you've imagined it. But you'd be amazed what you can do if you have actually set Everest in front of you, and you really want.. 'Cause that's the other thing is you're motivated by your imaging. You want it. You're not satisfied with less, if you see what I mean.

Q. Yes.

A. I mean people would just fantastically improve. They have to. At all levels and all standards.

Q. Um, when you rehearse, mentally rehearse that is, musical detail are you aware of any associated visual components?

A. Yes. Anything, anything is grist to my mill. No, I mean I use words, you know.

I mean I'll sometimes put a single words somewhere or, you know, maybe on the music or maybe on my notes or somewhere like that, you know. Yes, anything. I don't mind what it is. No, I'll tell a story if need be. Er, or use a kind of metaphor like I did with the Bach of letting it off the lead or something. Yes I think that's terribly helpful. And when you hear marvellous people giving masterclasses and they somehow manage to kind of convey, yeah, a big idea, instead of explaining it note by note they sort of will come up with some phrase and the student will kind of 'oh yeah, I get'. You know, and they click. Well that's fantastic. You want to do that with yourself I think. Don't you think? I mean you sometimes get these things in dreams or unexpected moments. Sort of insight.

Q. That's right.

A. Yeah, I don't mind. Paint a picture or whatever.

Q. Speaking of dreams, do you, would you say do you um dream of music?

A. Pretty nearly yes.

Q. Pretty nearly?

A. Well yes because I always wake up. I'm a bit of a musical insomniac actually.

Q. Right.

A. Well I tend to wake early anyway, and then I literally do, I lie in bed working for an hour or so before going off and making the early morning tea and waking everybody up. I mean, you know, it's actually, because I have so little time, it's quite an important working time for me.

Q. OK.

A. It's probably not very good for one.

Q. OK. Right.

A. How are you getting on?

Q. Well I do have sort of pages and pages but...

A. I'll stop it now I think.

TAPE CUTS

A. ...the music will result, if the composer's done his job. Do you see what I mean?

Q. Yeah.

A. Well of course that goes against everything that I stand for, but I can see the point of view. Um, and I didn't know whether Messiaen would actually be like that, there would be a question of going and playing to him and playing absolutely right, do you know what I mean, and he would say 'yeah, fine', and every last added demisemiquaver would be precisely a demisemiquaver, and no more and no less. Do you see what I mean? Anyway I kind of did my homework as rigorously as I could in that way, er, and I actually found that Messiaen was, to be honest, very little different from practically every other composer that I've ever met, namely that he wasn't really like that at all, and that he unquestionably had a terrific vision of the music that he'd written, and that it was a very very dramatic vision, highly pictorial, vivid, and er, the first thing was, you know, don't play it like a piece of mathematics, but, do you see what I mean?

Q. Yeah.

A. And he was, you know of course, it's like the violinist striking up the A string, as soon as Messiaen actually hummed a bit of music, well, I was in a very privileged position to see exactly where he was coming from. And I was delighted to see that it was pretty much the same as me. I mean we, our idea of what music was was essentially the same.

Q. Right.

A. Er, and he was tremendously eager that I should, in the first pieces that I worked with him were from the *Catalogue d'oiseaux*, and he was frightfully keen that I should know what the birds looked like, because for him it was a sort of a unity. The look of the bird effected in a way the sort of song that he gave it, you know, I mean to be honest. And certainly the conception of the piece would be bound up with things like what the bird looked like, or what he perceived to be its character and behaviour, like the difference between a joyful irresponsible bird and a kind of menacing hunting bird, or, you know.. I mean it was all tripe, you know, you know scientifically it was tripe. But it doesn't matter. That was the imaginative idea, so he wanted me to enter into this ornithological world, because I know nothing about birds at all. Um, but I found it all terribly interesting when related to the music and a musical conception. He clearly, he had a conception of his own piece and he wanted me to understand the conception, in a way kind of putting the notes on the conception was the kind of secondary bit. Which isn't to say that he wasn't terribly hot on some inaccuracies and actually completely didn't mind at all about other ones, funnily enough. And the synaesthesia well came out in this idea of the way you played chords would change the colour. So, the chord in the middle of the piece called *L'oeil l'oreal*, is the golden chord (plays it) and it was the top of the sunrise the sun at its most intense and the sun with a mirror and in the score he marks it 'brassy' like a brass instrument. And he says I imagined trombones playing it, and he said the great thing is bringing out (plays) that major third in the left, so you don't play, and that gives you your choir of... So it was very practical. I think, and I said something about this in the Messiaen companion, about the synaesthesia, I mean I don't think we can sit there saying 'oh yes, that's blue violet and that's purple gold' or something like that, which evidently Messiaen could, but we can hear a difference in timbre, and we know there's a change in colour, and when we know it's a sunset anyway, well we can use our imagination. So it's not as recognised as one might imagine. Um, but I thought that was terribly interesting, the idea of actually changing the colour of a chord by the balancing of the notes within it. I mean it's not marked in the score, and there was rather more than, I wouldn't expect from an organist who when you put your chord down on one manual it all comes out uniform anyway. So it was actually an example of piano thinking in Messiaen which I had not expected and which he demonstrated too on the piano, beautifully. Um, but I think the whole idea of the what he shared with so many other composers was the thing that they're thrilled if they meet a performer who actually is into the idea of the piece, who can't, who isn't just a sort of technician but is into the idea of the piece and believes in the piece.

#### KNOCK ON THE DOOR

A. ...so he was on the side of the angels. I think what, another amazing thing was that he was also perfectly, this goes back to your earlier question about studying recordings, of course I did not study other people's recordings of Messiaen, and especially not those of his wife, so when I first went to Paris to play to him I couldn't help feeling that I was entering the lion's den, as it were, unprepared and he was going to find what I did was incredibly odd and wrong, but I never got that. And I mean it is totally different from the way she plays it, I mean my recordings. And I know that. They are wholly uninfluenced by her, and they are totally different, and that's what I, and my colleagues at the record company kind of set out to do. We thought about it and said well there's no point in doing it if you're just going to clone other, plagiarise other people's performances.

Q. No.

A. But when you go and play it to the composer, who after all is totally used to the way his wife plays it, what do you get? Well I found, I must say, a certain of greatness of mind which was that he, you know if I had a conviction, he kind of latched onto it and he went with it, and he tried as it were to enhance it, rather than kind of fight it. Very very occasionally he sort of said 'you've got hold of the wrong end of the stick completely here', but it was very very seldom. I mean perhaps two or three times in four years, and um, er, so he seemed positively to um, when he was pleased with me it seemed to be because you know he recognised a conviction and it was coming through. And it clearly wasn't the one he was used to. Er, which I thought was, in a man of eighty odd, was great stuff. I must say. So, you know. But then he had been a teacher all his life. So it was interesting. So I don't know if that answers your questions on Messiaen?

Q. Um, yes, it was just very general really. Just to know a bit more about the synaesthesia.

A. Well that sort of all I can tell you. I know of course he did think in these colours, and I know he did want me to see the colours of the birds and showed me his books and that I sort of would understand them. And kind of in a way you do. I mean he writes them in the score anyway for *Catalogue d'Oiseaux*, er but he did, these sort of practical details did kind of bring it to life.

Q. OK. Thanks very much,

A. OK. Well look, go away and digest all that nonsense.

THE END.

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***PW interview –***

***29<sup>th</sup> May 2002, 3pm, his office***

Q. I'm interested in to what extent various professional musicians use imagery in their music life. So I've spoken to a pianist already, and I've spoken to a composer, and so I was wondering if you could tell me to what extent you think you use mental imagery in your music-making.

A. Yes. OK. Um, you already know some of the background already about me or do you want a bit more? Or can you remember most of it?

Q. I can remember most of it but more would be good.

A. Um, well you no doubt remember that I rely entirely on the printed score. Um, actually just listening to music doesn't mean anything, it's just some abstract noise with no recognisable shape, no recognisable form. I never knowingly sat down and taught myself how to read a score. I always thought that that was something that anybody could do. And I remember having a massive argument with my tutor at university about this, because he said that, out of the blue Monday, that I was the easiest person he'd ever had to teach. And I asked him what he meant. And he said 'well because you're deaf'. And I said 'go on, tell me more, tell me more', and he said 'well the thing is that most students if you asked them to analyse a piece of music they will go away and listen to it, and there is a limit to what your ear can pick up.' So from that point of view, because of my deafness, and because I had to

rely on what I saw on the printed page he said that I notice far more. I don't just go away, put a CD on the turntable, or put a tape in and think 'um yeah, there's something happening there'. You actually look at it on the page. But I didn't actually believe him when he said that most students can't do this. I said 'but they're music students, they must be able to do this', 'no Paul they can't' 'but they must be able to!' he said 'no they can't'. And I said 'do you mean to say I have an assumption about hearing people in the same way that they have assumptions about deaf people?'. Um, I just cannot imagine life without a score. And also the ability to memorise, which is not as good as it used to be. When I was a kid I could look at something two or three times and yeah, it was there. No trouble. I was very very good at sight-reading. Tremendously, unless you've got lots of semi-quavers in so you have to turn the page, you know. Um, but yeah I love it if somebody is to give me a piece of music and I sit down and work my way through it.

Q. Wow.

A. Yeah. But again it's not something I've knowingly learnt to do. I don't know whether that's been some sort of automatic compensation for my hearing loss, or the fact that I have to relate to what I see. Um, but this idea about imaging music, if I go to a concert or on the rare occasions I might listen to a piece of music without a score, but I do know what's going on, I can actually conjure up some kind of picture in my head, but when I get the score afterwards I find it bears no relation at all to what I thought I heard. Now I don't know if that's true of most people. Um, the first example I can remember is when I was about 13, 14. It was my music lesson at secondary school. Er, music teacher played a bit of Mahler Eight, Symphony of a Thousand. And I thought 'wow! This is incredible! I've never heard anything like this before!'. Um, I don't know if it was the sheer scale of it, and the size of it. I've no idea. I just thought 'I've got to go out and buy this'. And so whenever I got out of there I went to mum and said 'mum, mum! I've got to go and buy Mahler Eight'. And she said 'that's nice dear'. And so I went out to find a copy, because there weren't that many recordings of it. That was about what? 1979? No, earlier than that, 1978, something like that. But I was lucky they had it in the local music shop. And then I had to go and get the score. But no matter how much I tried, I couldn't actually find that bit in the score which originally had made me think 'wow!'. It's amazing.

Q. Right.

A. Um, there've been other pieces since then. Er, the most recent example I can think of is [incomprehensible]. He wrote it for the opening of the Bridgewater Hall. How ever long ago that was now. It was called 'These premises are alarmed'. It was written for the whole Halle orchestra. A short piece maybe about seven or eight minutes. Try as we might, as I had a friend at the Halle, we couldn't get hold of a score and so I just sat there, twiddling my thumbs thinking 'squeaky gate music, squeaky gate music'. And then sitting there I just went 'woah!' and leapt to the edge of my seat. Um, because it was the way the piece finished. It finishes with a *spiccato* for the entire orchestra. But then they froze. They didn't take the instruments out of their mouths or put their bows down or whatever, you just had this massive (makes popping sound with mouth) sound from the whole orchestra. And everybody just sat there for about twenty seconds. Um, maybe it was the unexpectedness of it again. Because the audience didn't know what to expect. Um, if it was meant to explore the acoustics and the visuals of the hall it did a damn good job. Yeah, because it seemed like an eternity that people just sat there waiting for the sound to die away. It was absolutely fantastic. Er, and it was in the

same programme that there was the first UK performance of John Adams' 'Slaminsky's ear box', um do you know it?

Q. No.

A. I mean again I couldn't get a score for it, but it was a wonderful hypnotic kaleidoscope of sound. Um, it was actually a bit like looking down a kaleidoscope, as a lot of minimal music is. You've got a pattern and suddenly you slightly shift it, and the pattern all changes. Um, but rather than being any particular notes or instruments, it was the rhythm of the thing. 'cause I pick rhythm up easier than anything else. Um, again I've never seen a score of that, and I know that if I go, if I find a recording of it, or if I go into another concert of it, somehow it won't have the same impact. Often I'm talking to people about music, um I talk about it not being on some abstract wall over there; music's something that can give an idea, that can tell a story. And even though a composer may say that it is about a certain thing, for example Beethoven, you may have heard of him, yes, er he wrote a piece called the *Pastoral Symphony*. He did actually! You may have played it! Which he says is about scenes in the countryside. It doesn't have to be about scenes in the countryside. Just because somebody says this is what it is, it doesn't have to be. I think that's one of the best things about music. It's the same with *La Mer*. You can actually make any piece of music do anything you want. Um, obviously if you've got lyrics, it's a bit harder. Er, but if it's in a foreign language it doesn't really make any difference. (laughs). But I think that's one of the fabulous things about music. I'm always amazed by the fact that if you pare music down to its basic level, you've got a very small number of notes, but what you can do with those notes is almost limitless. That's, it's incredible stuff if you think about it. You've got so few raw materials and so much you can do with it. Er, it can make you laugh, it can make you cry. I whole host of things. It's incredible. I just can't imagine life without it. (pause) Throw me a question.

Q. Well I'm just wondering, having spoken about those specific pieces, are you imagining any music now?

A. What you mean a specific piece?

Q. Mm.

A. No, I'm not. Um, I don't think it happens so much to me now as it did when I was younger. Um, when I was younger, I must have driven everybody mad at school, 'cause I was always used to practise my piano pieces on the desk in class. Presumably you used to do it with your oboe, and most other people would, do imagine the fingering, you know when they're on a journey, when they're in school. And um, I used to have pieces of music going round and round and round and round and round my head. And sometimes it used to drive me nuts. Um, I haven't yet worked it a good way of getting rid of them. Sometimes sitting down actually bashing the thing out on the piano would work, sometimes actually playing a recording of them would work. Other times just singing it very loudly would work, but it still wouldn't always shift it. But it's not always whole pieces either, it's just tiny little bits. Um and when I started doing the theatre signing thing, years ago, I used to find it impossible to sleep for a couple of nights after the show because I'd learnt something so well, and it was going round and round and round and round and round. Now because I do so many shows in a short space of time, I suppose I've trained myself to do a show, get it out of my head, and put another one in. It's almost like I've compartmentalised them. Um, but there are still certain bits of shows that I did years ago, which hang around. Whether they strike a chord with me in some particular way, whether they have memories of

something that happened during that performance or something happened that was about it, I honestly couldn't say. There are certain pieces of music though which have particular memories. Particularly about certain people or certain situations. Um, and there was a song called, from a musical called *Jekyll and Hyde* which has never been produced over here, and it was called letting go. And I first came across it at a time when I'd met someone I really really fancied but there was no way I could have them. Um, so it just stuck around in my head. Um, but interestingly enough they're nearly always pieces of music with lyrics.

Q. Right.

A. They're nearly always songs.

Q. Any theory why?

A. No! I don't know why. I suppose with a song, unlike with instrumental music, its parameters are more fixed. Um, if Debussy had written *La Mer* with some lyrics about the sea, maybe it wouldn't be as easy to imagine it was a camel train in the desert, for example. I'm not saying it ever has been, for arguments sake (laughs) um.. No I don't really know why, why it's song that I... Do you find quite a lot of other people tend to relate music to colours?

Q. Not many. Some, but not many. Do you?

A. Some pieces, yes. And they usually tend to be quite bright primary colours.

Um, they're usually a sort of red and orange and yellow colours somehow.

Q. Again, do you see any pattern between what sort of music, and when you might imagine colour?

A. Well just let me think if there might be any particular pieces of music that make me think of colour. Um, again it's not an overall piece, it's just little snatches, or else little snatches which have got a certain warmth or temperature to them. Er, I don't know if I said when I came to Hull that one of my favourite two or three bars of music is the slow movement of Beethoven Five. Um, and it just has this absolutely wonderful warm moment when the horns go (sings). There's just something incredibly relaxing, almost like a sun sort of disappearing on the horizon. There's this wonderful warm moment. I don't know anybody else it has that effect on. Um, or even why it stays with me. Um, it could actually be that um back in '85 or '86 I took a deaf friend of mine to an orchestral concert at the Barbican. He'd never been to an orchestral concert in his life. It was the LSO doing Mozart, Beethoven programme. Um, he was incredibly excited. He was a fascinating kid anyway because he was the first deaf person I'd met.. and generally the first person I'd met full-stop, who wasn't interested so much in playing music as to the why and the wherefore of it. Um, he used to play a little bit, percussion when I was at school, and it's the only time I've ever seen somebody who every time he had an instrument in his hand, it was like somebody switched a light on inside him. He was just incredibly animated, and he seemed to come alive when he was playing. And um (incomprehensible) it was the same when he listened to it. Even though he didn't hear it in the same way that you do, and not even in the same way that I do, um, there was just something about it which made him so enthusiastic and so animated. And I took him to this concert, and the first piece was *Leonora III*, and I had the score, of course, and being a music graduate I got lost following the score! Duh! I can just remember idiocy and guilt. But he actually got me back in the right place, by following the timpani line. He couldn't read music, he just happened to notice that occasionally there was a blob on this particular line and that other times there wasn't, and it related to what that guy down there was doing. Um, but somehow it seemed so in character with him. But

as I say he couldn't read it but he had this awareness of what was going on and how it was all put together. The second piece was my favourite piano concerto, which is Mozart C minor, K491. Er, I think it's absolutely gorgeous, especially with the slow movement. Do you know the one I mean?

Q. Yeah.

A. It's just so simple (sings). There's something about Mozart's wind writing that always gets me. It's the same in the inner parts of that. The piano plays it first and then the orchestra take it up and it's just this gorgeous warm sunlit you will ever get in one night, and er, he'd never heard anything like this, this kid. He was just bowled over by the thing. And he loved that slow movement. I don't know if it was the simplicity of it, or whether it was the overall feel of the whole thing, but when we got back to Oxford afterwards I just went to the piano and I started playing it, and he said 'oh I remember that, that's gorgeous'. Even now, a few years down the line, if you play that he'll remember it.

Q. Wow. Gosh.

A. And then in the second half they played Beethoven Five. Um, in the slow movement I said 'oh, there's something really really nice coming on', my two bar bit, I said 'just listen to this, listen to this'. And he sat right on the edge of his seat, and he was straining to hear it. Um, I said 'now' and the horns went (sings), and he just visibly went, he could actually see it, all the tension in him just melted away, he dropped several feet almost. And he just sat back on his chair, and I thought he was going to melt into it. And he turned to me and said 'that's the most gorgeous thing I've ever heard in my life'. So, I suppose it's got those memories for me. Um, but he's a fascinating kid. I've never yet met anybody whose got that same enthusiasm. I don't think he still plays music, he still listens to it but, I don't think he plays it. But it's absolutely fab. It's so nice when you see somebody respond in that way that you give somebody that opportunity that they've never had, um, it hits them in such a physical way, it's absolutely wonderful.

Q. Yeah. OK. Um,...

A. How am I doing here?

Q. Well we haven't got very far!

A. Am I jumping from question to question?

Q. A little bit.

A. I tend to do that. Are there any...? If I can ask you a question, are there any types of string writing, wind writing, brass writing that have a particular effect on you?

Q. On me? Um, yeah, I think, you know sort of shivers down the spine sort of?

A. Yeah.

Q. I often get that with French horn and woodwind combinations, sometimes. I can't think of any examples of the top of my head but, and certain chord sequences as well. Suspensions that really kind of...

A. Hm. Any in particular?

Q. Um, no..

A. Or do they tend to be modulations?

Q. Yeah. Yeah.

A. There's one modulation which has always sent shivers down my spine er, the Schubert B flat piano sonata, the slow movement, because the slow movement is in C sharp minor. What relation has this got to B flat major?! And at one point it goes from the dominant straight onto a C major chord. It's magic. Absolute magic. Breaks all the rules, and it's just so mad. God! Woah! (screeches). Talking about



things that send shivers down my spine, there are lots and lots of bits in the Magic Flute that do that. I think for Mozart's wind writing the Magic Flute is amazing. And it's so simple, so incredibly simple. I don't understand people who don't like Mozart.

Q. No.

A. Um. Some early Mozart can sound a bit same-ish but late Mozart has got this incredible richness to it, so there's nothing there that doesn't need to be there. Um, the most perfect thirty-two bars in music must be the Mozart *Ave Verum*. It's so simple, and again it's, the modulations in it are just so incredible. It's in D major and then goes into F major, and it's like 'woo', so clever. Um, bits that got down my spine, one thing's guaranteed to send shivers down my spine, even just thinking about it, er Bernstein. Lots and lots of bits of Bernstein, to tell you the truth. Um, I could probably talk about Bernstein for ages, um, I think he was the first musician who really grabbed my attention. Partly because he was outrageous, I mean as a conductor some of the things he used to do were incredibly over the top. But my God you didn't need a score when you watched Lenny. He acted everything out. Um, maybe a lot of people didn't like him because he was American and he was brash, and because he jumped between popular music and classical music. And um, I just think he's the most amazing musician of the twentieth-century. He acted everything out. Anybody who can write stuff like the *Mambo* from *West Side Story* is a genius. Every time I listen to *West Side Story* there's something new in it. And I never ever get tired of listening to that. Um, it's such an incredibly analytical piece of music. Even just simple things like the first time Tony and Maria part, on good terms, you hear that 'Somewhere' motif underneath. That motif crops up all over the place. You've got tritones all over but it's the way he resolves tritones it's just stunning. And again it breaks all the rules, and my god, thank you for doing it. But the bit that gets me more than anything is from *Candide*. Do you know *Candide*?

Q. Er, no.

A. It's not the overture which is what most people know (sings).

Q. Oh yeah, I know.

A. It's not that! It's the final choral. It's called 'Make our garden grow'. And it starts on octaves, it starts on a G, so it jumps an octave G to G. The G is sustained, goes down to an F, goes down to an E, back to the low G, back up the octave and to an A (sings) and then it plays a G in the bass (sings) and then it does it all again, and then it modulates into E major, just by going up by step and then putting a B in the bass, 'boom' and then you're in E major. Even just thinking about it it just does me in. It's incredible! It's so simple, and there isn't actually any harmony in it, but that's one of the things about it I think. It can go so many different ways. Because you just the leap of a G octave and then down to F and then down to E. Um, so you think it's going to be in C major, but then the first phrase ends on an A, with a G in the bass, and then it goes up another step and ends up in E major. And there are so many different ways the thing can go. Um, and there's the most gorgeous lyrical lines come out of it, from *Candide*. Melting stuff. Wonderful. I met Lenny once.

Q. Did you?

A. Yeah I met Bernstein in 1986. A very small man.

Q. Is he?

A. Oh yeah. Surprising. He's a lot smaller than I thought. He probably wasn't terribly well by that point. Um, put on a lot of weight. Um, but there was definitely

something electric about being around a certain performer. I don't like everything he did, obviously, I don't think anybody likes everything of anybody, but as an all-round musician he's terrific. But I used to get terribly shaken and I still do sometimes by the snobbish attitude people have towards him. Um, I was talking to the warden of my college at Oxford and saying that I was going to the Bernstein festival and asked him if he was going, um because I thought, well he's been involved with Covent Garden, he's been involved with all these orchestras, you've got a big Jewish music get-together type thing, and um he said 'oh no I'm not going to that. I only go and listen to proper musicians. And it really pissed me off.

Q. Yeah.

A. What an incredibly snobbish attitude. Um, and there's no room for snobbishness. There's good music and there's bad music, but it's all down to personal taste.

Q. Of course.

A. Sorry I keep going off at different angles.

Q. Well I'm very interested in what form your mental imagery takes because um, you clearly have an aural image and not just a physical image of. . . is that true to say?

A. What you means in terms of pictures or colours or. . . ?

Q. No, in terms of, well really I'm looking at.,

A. How are you defining image in all that?

Q. Well this is part of my problem, defining imagery is difficult. It's any mental representation, so of course you have visual, and you have colour and spatial and kinaesthetic, but also I'm looking at the relationship between perceived music and imagined music.

A. Right. You mean like with my Mahler Eight, to some extent? What I imagined was happening and what was really happening may not have been the same thing.

Q. Yeah. To some extent. So I'm interested in particularly your score reading. How you're getting auditory information from the score and how you're able to create a mental image from that.

A. Hmm! Um, it's like I said earlier on, I've never knowingly learnt to read a score. Um, there are certain scores that are harder to read than others. If you give me something like '*Grunerleider*' which. . . Have you seen the score for '*Gunnerleider*'?

Q. No. But I can imagine.

A. Bloody huge. And, well yeah it's easily three feet in length. It's a mammoth piece, and it's very very dense as well. But that's not to say I couldn't do it. If you gave me time I could sit there and work out what was going on. Um, but with, when I've got a score for the first time, um I'll perhaps just sort of flick through it and take the whole lot in, but there are still certain things that stick out. I find it quite easy to identify primary and secondary themes, to identify main melodies, counter-melodies. Um, I don't find it that difficult to work out the harmony and even the structure just from looking at it. When I say that I memorise a piece of music, I obviously don't memorise every single note. Um, maybe a conductor needs to do that so that he can direct his orchestra. My knowledge is not as detailed as that because it doesn't have to be. Um, I suppose it's a pared down representation of the whole thing. Um, because if I'm, if I'm at a concert or when I'm in the theatre signing something, um, I tend, if I don't have a score in front of me I tend to play them through in my head. Um, I tend to visualise it in big blocks. I'm sometimes aware of certain modulations. I'm aware of thematic changes. Um,

I suppose I'm really aware of form in a way. And sometimes it often helps me to memorise it. Er, but I wouldn't.. I certainly don't stand there thinking 'oh, there's a G sharp in the cor anglais part here'. It's necessary. I don't need to do that. Um, a lot of the stuff that I sign outside the theatre, um I sign very very little stuff out of context when I'm out doing talks and lectures. Partly because it doesn't fit, a lot of songs don't work out of context, a lot of theatre show songs don't work out of context. But also with quite a number of songs I've only got a piano representation, I've never seen the orchestral score. Um, I don't know whether it's a genuine inability or just a blockage, but if somebody just gives me a lead sheet and some lyrics I don't feel confident at all. I find it so hard to do. Um, 'Blood Brothers' is an example. I've been signing 'Blood Brothers', with my best Liverpudlian for about six years. Now they don't have a score. All I have is a vocal selection book so a vast amount of the time I've no idea what the band is doing. And I think that's why, even though I like doing 'Blood Brothers', and it's very hard work, more a play with music than a musical, I've still never felt entirely happy with the songs. It's the only show where I'm happier with the dialogue than with the song. Um, the only reason I can think of is because I've never seen it.

Q. Right.

A. But interestingly enough, I'm working on 'Chicago' this year. Again, they can only give me a vocal book. There's no harmony or anything underneath it, it's just the vocal line. End of story, but somehow I don't find that a problem. It might be because I know [incomprehensible] music quite well. I know the way that they build a song is based on a vamp. And the orchestration for that is very very clever, and it's very very similar all the way through. So whether it's the style of music and how much written that makes the difference I can't honestly say.

Q. When you look at a score are you able to imagine the different sound qualities of different instruments?

A. Oh yeah! Oh yeah! Um, I think that's because when I was younger I had a go at playing lots of different instruments. Um, I think that's vital anyway, no matter whether you're deaf or you're hearing, that you actually play as many different instruments as possible, and get used to the sound of feel of them and timbre of them. I think it's a very rewarding thing to do and a very worthwhile thing to do, but if you're deaf it's also a vital thing to do because when you see somebody else playing an instrument, you need to be able to imagine for yourself what they're playing and what it sounds like. Um, when I was in the sixth form and then my year at Huddersfield Technical College before I went to university, I used to do a lot of arranging and orchestration. Now by rights there's no way I should be able to do that, 'cause you need a good ear, and mine are crap! Forgive the bluntness, but they're crap. You need to be able to tell what instruments will sound like when you combine them. For example what sort of timbre quality does a clarinet and a bassoon have? Which instruments work together, which instruments don't, what's the best range and so on. Well I freely admit I didn't have an extensive knowledge of the workings of these instruments, I love doing orchestration. Um, both my teacher in the sixth form and my orchestration tutor at the tech um said that I was good at it. I think it's because I have a fairly vivid musical imagination. Even if I look at say a song accompaniment, just a piano accompaniment, I can imagine colour, I can imagine warmth, I can write counter-melodies to fit underneath.

Q. Right.

A. So when I look at a piece of piano music, I don't necessarily just think of it in terms of a piano, I can think of it in terms of an orchestral pallet, and vice versa. I

mean if you give me an orchestral score, I don't find it that difficult to reduce it and mentally play it on two staves. That doesn't mean to say I can necessarily do it at the piano. I mean reading the score and score-reading in terms of trying to play are not the same thing at all. Um, but where that ability came from I don't know. The only plausible explanation is simply because I've tried playing different instruments, or being in close proximity to them you build up this imaginative vocabulary, for want of a better word. Um, and somehow your brain just absorbs it. Um, one of my favourite sounds is the lowest register of a flute. It's incredibly sexy, is the low register of the flute. There's something quite hoarse about it, and quite breathy about it, but my god it's a real turn on!. It's a fantastic sound. But not many people write down there. I mean I know why. You can't project that easily when it's right down there. And another instrument which I only actually had a chance of feeling, sounds kinky now, about three years ago, four years ago was a bass clarinet. God, they're sexy as well! It's terrific. Um, a lot of musicians tend to talk about music in terms of sex anyway don't they? They're the only people I know who can understand me when I say 'this is an orgasmic piece of music'. You know what I mean! Um, but there's only one piece of music that genuinely does that to me, um, and there's lots of music, particularly Richard Strauss, is it in 'Ariadna', where this couple go off to the bedroom. You don't actually see it happening, but you hear it in the orchestra. There's a difference between music being sexy, or being sleazy or whatever, to actually making you think 'oh god!', you know. And this is cruel, but it's all in the name of research. Um, there's one piece of organ music by Kenneth Leighton. Now I'm not a huge fan of a lot of modern music, although academically I would like to know where it is coming from and what a composer's trying to say. Leighton, do you know many of Leighton?

Q. No.

A. He was born in Wakefield in 1927 and unfortunately died about eleven or twelve years ago now. He was on the staff at Oxford, he trained in Italy, was on the staff at Oxford, then became professor of music at Edinburgh. Wrote quite an extensive body of work, and a lot of it is very dissonant but it's very very idiomatic. I first came across it when I was twelve years old. I went on a choral chorus, with my beautiful little treble voice as it was in those days um, we sang this piece called 'Denise Desinquin' and I'd never heard anything like it. It was one of the most wonderful pieces of modern music I'd ever sung and it was very very thrilling. Very thrilling indeed. So I tended to absorb anything by Leighton. And there's one piece of organ music that was published after he died, um, that's in a book of preludes or hymn tunes. Er, this one is based on Vena Vene Emmanuel (incomprehensible) (sings) Excuse the key, slightly low. Um, and this piece of music is the only piece of organ music that I can play which is positively orgasmic. Um, it just starts and it's like having sex. There's no other word for it. It's just gorgeous. And as you're learning to play it, what a wonderful experience, um, I mean learning to, learning a piece of music is like a love affair anyway. And even though some people might say 'well it's inanimate, it can't answer back' - it can answer back. Um, I like the analogy of learning a piece of music as a relationship or as sex, um and that you have to spend time with it, you have to know how it operates, you have to get inside it, and know your way around it. And the moment that you finally perform it is I suppose the big moment, splurge! Um, and after that you feel quite empty sometimes. Sometimes you feel elated, other times you feel quite empty. I don't know of any other art form where people talk

about it in the same way, but with this particular piece of Leighton's it just starts, it's really dissonant, it's really gloomy, it's like somebody's lost in a swamp, um and it just builds and builds and builds, and then a wonderful glorious moment, after all this massive dissonance, you get an E major 'boom' (shrieks!). It's incredible. Probably it doesn't have the effect on anybody else that it does on me. But just playing it is just amazing. Are there any pieces that have that effect on you?

Q. (laughs) Perhaps not that extreme!

A. Well maybe not quite directly but!

Q. I must admit I have more of a reaction like that if it's something I'm actively playing in, rather than just listening to.

A. Yeah. It doesn't happen much when I'm listening to it. You've got to be playing it. You've got to be with that piece of music, and sort of combine with it, definitely. Er, but those people who say 'oh music's inanimate, it can't answer back' um, they're wrong. I think that's one reason why, I'm going off at massive tangents here, I think that's one reason why a lot of musicians' relationships don't work. I know so many musicians, so many musicians whose relationships fail. Um, I mean when I was engaged back in the mid eighties, um, my mum warned Gina to back off. Um I had my performance exam coming up at the Royal Northern, my postgrad performance course. Um, when I'm doing a concert, when I'm doing a performance like most people I have a routine. I know what I want to do, um as mum and dad learned over the years they have to let me go, spend time with my music and then I will come back. I mean I bet you know what I mean don't you?

Q. Yeah.

A. And she didn't. Gina didn't. She insisted on hanging around. Um, it bugged me so much, and eventually I just blew my top and said 'bugger off'. Um, and she still wouldn't. And, it was just so frustrating. But as I say I know so many musicians whose relationships tend not to work. And I think it's because by and large you have a love affair with your music. It's very very difficult when you've spent so long, and to some extent it may be easier the older you get, but certainly when you're in your early twenties, you spend so long if you're serious about your music, being alone with it, practising, doing a course, a post-grad or whatever, and you should find it hard to actually put that emotion onto a human being who is capable of answering back. I find it very very difficult. And as I said, so I think there are a lot of musicians.

Q. New angle for my PhD.

A. Well why not? I mean can you work it in somewhere?

Q. I'll work it in.

A. 'Music as a sex substitute'!

Q. Um, yeah thinking back to when you first started learning the piano, and the organ as well, did your teacher ever stress the importance of using imagery in your playing?

A. No. Not that I can remember. Um, I sometimes used to be able to conjure up pictures in my own mind. I find that most of the time now if I think back to some of my early piano exams, I can vaguely remember some bits of the music, but more than the actual notes I can actually picture something, usually an image that relates to it.

Q. Right.

A. Um, yeah I don't know. I don't know if I remember anybody talking about imaging and that sense. Um, I was always very reliant on the played example. That, perhaps that might be part of it. Um, my teacher, when I was at uni for example, my organ teacher was very wary about taking me on, because he said 'well how am I going to explain to you if you play something wrongly?' And I said 'you play it yourself and show me'. And he said 'oh great, that's what I do anyway'. Um, because it's no good somebody saying to me 'listen to this'. You know, they have to say 'look at it'. If somebody showed me how something should be done I can see what they do and then I just copy it. Um, but interestingly enough I don't, I don't frequently have the image of somebody physically playing. If I look at a piece of music I don't imagine somebody sat at a keyboard and how they're going to finger it. I don't do that.

Q. Right, OK.

A. Does anybody?

Q. Yeah.

A. I never physically think of anybody else playing it. So that, that could be because every performance that you do has got to be unique in your own interpretation. That's why, I'm a frustrated jazz musician. You know, if you can see the link here?

Q. Yes I can see the link.

A. Um, in jazz what you do is listen to what people do with an eight, sixteen, thirty-two bar phrase and you take all those different ideas and influences, stir them together in your own little melting pot, and then produce it. And I can't do that. Um, and I've never knowingly wanted to copy anybody else's style or way of playing.

Q. Right.

A. I prefer to sit down and work out my own. To some extent it's less work because if I watch everybody I haven't a clue. When I was younger and used to go to a lot of concerts I always used to want to sit either in the orchestra, behind the orchestra so I could see the conductor or sit somewhere where I could see the pianist. Even now (TAPE NEEDS TURNING)... I'd finished talking about jazz?

Q. Yeah. Page turning helps you to follow the music.

A. About what?

Q. In a festival, page turning or sitting behind the orchestra...

A. Yeah! Yes. Um, I can't remember now. Just waffle. I don't think it was going to be anything particularly profound.

Q. OK. Don't worry!

A. Sorry. It's gone, whatever it was.

Q. OK. I gather you do some, or you have done, choir conducting.

A. Choir conducting? Oh yeah. I love that.

Q. Do you still do that now?

A. Not really. Um, I've got a bunch of people who get together to sing at church occasionally but I wouldn't call them a choir. The last time I worked with a choir was two weeks ago when I was asked to help out with the music at a service at a church here in town. Erm, but I find it difficult because they rehearse on a Thursday and for the four Thursdays before this particular service I was not available, so it was a case of doing what we could in the short space of time we had. Um, I found it quite difficult walking into that situation because I need to know the capabilities of each individual singer. I can't necessarily hear what they're doing when they're in a group so I need to know individually what their

voices are capable of. I need to know if they have any particular pronunciation problems or vocal problems. Er, because nine times out of ten, I have this theory that if a singer is not enunciating properly they are not confident about what they're singing. It's amazing how much your face betrays you. A lot of people don't realise that your face can really betray you. I mean obviously all musicians, instrumental musicians, when they're young, they visibly wince or they cry when they make a mistake. Um, singers, if you've got a line of singers and the person in the middle sings a wrong note, these two on either side will inevitably have a physical reaction to it.

Q. Yeah.

A. And people say to me 'oh god, how can you tell when somebody's out of tune?' I said 'it's easy you look at the people on either side'! Er, I loved working with the choir because it was, I think it was working with other people. Even though making music on your own is fun, it's much more fun when you do it with others. Um, it was just the shared challenge we have about learning something from scratch and getting to perform it. But it's for a choir that I've written the only piece of music that I'm ever proud of. Yeah. 'Cause I wrote it for a particular voice. I had a particular voice in my head when we wrote it. That person has never actually sung it, unfortunately. Er, somebody else did and I suppose it was a bit hard on them because they didn't have the timbral qualities that I wanted. Um, how did I know that this particular voice sounded right for the line that I wrote? I don't know. Intuition. Call it musical intuition. You can't explain it can you? It's just you sometimes know that this piece of music will go with this person or this line that you're writing is perfect for this particular person. Can't explain it.

Q. When you're preparing for a performance and you're conducting or directing, do you try and take on board, attend different concerts of the piece, and listen to different pieces to prepare your own interpretation, or do you just sort of imagine your own interpretation?

A. Er, by and large its my own. Er, obviously, when I'm page turning or watching the pianist I'm able to tell technically what they're going to do. Oh I know what it is I wanted to talk about, um, it was to do with music criticism.

Q. Right.

A. Um, I went to a concert at the Royal Festival hall with a friend who worked at the BBC. It was the Philharmonia playing the Anthem from Monteplez, the Sibelius concerto. And it was, it was only a few years after she first hit the scene as um, I don't know if you remember... How old are you? Um, I don't know if you remember but everybody raved about Anzio du Mossadi [incomprehensible] this wonderful violinist, and I went and I was distinctly underwhelmed. Um, I gave my friend this whole list of things that I thought were incorrect, um, to do with the actual performance of the piece, the intonation, the attack, the whole lot. And she said to me, 'you're dead right'. These were all faults that she'd picked up as well. Um, I suppose I suppose there were technical issues, they weren't musical criticisms they were technical issues. And she couldn't understand how I knew them. Neither could I. Um, I was just talking about the overall ambience, the overall feel of the venue, where you were sat, that person there, there's some of it, part of... I don't... And she said 'thank god you're not a music critic'. I said why? And she said 'well, you'd be very hard on people, you'd also be very fair'. If there's something worth praising you will do it, if you've got something constructive say that. I mean I would never slag someone off just for the sake of it. I wouldn't do that. I'd never slag anybody off just for the sake of it. But, I'd still

like to have a go at doing music criticism, to tell you the truth. Um, 'cause there was a period when I used to get very frustrated by the music crits in the local paper, and used to think 'I can do better than that. I can do better than you'. Um, maybe it's arrogant, but you know that you've got the music knowledge, you've got the background knowledge, the academic knowledge to actually give a reasonable criticism. I mean criticism's only a personal preference anyway. Um, but I've been on the receiving end of people whose criticism is definitely not constructive. I suppose that gives me more determination to actually do something constructive.

Q. Yeah.

A. Whether I'd ever end up being a music critic is debatable. Probably not. I don't think I've got time anyway.

Q. Right. Well yeah. Um, yeah I missed the part of your talk in Hull..

A. Pardon?

Q. In Hull, I missed the last section of your talk, where you were talking apparently about um feeling different pitches in different parts of...

A. yes! Yes, yes, yes, yes.

Q. I haven't come across this before, so I was wondering could you describe a bit what that's like?

A. It's something that apparently Evelyn does. Evelyn Glennie.

Q. Right.

A. She's talked on a few occasions about feeling different pitches and in a way different instruments in different parts of her body. Um, it was after she said it that people started asking me if I was aware of it. And the answer is 'no I'm not', because as I may have said in Hull, just because somebody perceives an instrument in one particular bit of their anatomy doesn't mean anybody else will, just because we're all different heights, weights, sizes, shapes and all the rest of it. Um, in defence of Evelyn I would say that to some extent she probably needs to be more aware of it because she is a solo percussion performer who works with orchestra. And as a soloist, concerto soloist, you're meant to be aware of what the orchestra are doing around you. So, I think for her it's more necessary. Um, I've never been in a situation where I've needed to. But, I don't know, I don't understand the point. Um, it's the principle that discos work on, or clubs. You get the bass to a certain level and a certain pitch that hits you in your solar plexar and that gets you moving. It's the most boring sound known to human kind, it really is. Um, if I take my hearing aid out, if I'm in a noisy environment where there's some music thumping away in the background, er, I get even more frustrated. Most people think 'oh take your hearing aid out, that's fine, you can't hear' but that's not the case. When I've got them in, because I've got all the other sounds around me, even as I say I can't identify them properly, um I might have some lyrics and I've got the harmonics, it deadens the (smacks out beat) actual beat. If I take my hearing aid out the only thing I get is 'boom, boom, boom, boom'. It drives you nuts. It really does. I don't like noise. I don't like noise at all. I don't like loud music. It's distorting. Um, it is incredibly frustrating when you're in theatre, some music performances while you're using amplification, trying to get sound engineers who will actually put those settings at a reasonable level for you to understand and enjoy is so hard to find. You know they either tend to boost things so much that you get blasted out of your seat, or the sound's so muffled and it doesn't blend together. Um, I don't pretend to know anything like enough about electronics and about sound mixing, because being deaf it doesn't have a lot of



direct relevance, but um, they can easily become the bane of my life, as I know they can with a lot of people.

Q. OK. Um, yeah, when you sign different productions, is that, is there an element of, again I didn't go to the end of your talk so I don't know, is there an element of signing the music as well as the lyrics, or is it just the lyrics?

A. Um, well I think I'm signing the music as well. I know quite a number of people sign musicals that completely ignore the music. What they do is they just take the lyrics, and they give you the meaning of the lyrics, which to me is a complete waste of time. If you read most lyrics, on their own, they are complete and utter nonsense. But as soon as you put a melody to them, as soon as you have the orchestra underneath, or on top, around, wherever, you suddenly have this enormous emotional power. You have this quality to make things soar, to express something which words alone can't. And therefore I think it's fundamental that you try and convey that when you're saying it. Um, I've never, I've never sat down and analysed it. As a rough guide, the louder something is the bigger you're saying it. If it's quieter you go a bit smaller. Um, if somebody's holding on a note you tend to hold it. Um, obviously opera challenges you more than the straightforward musical because of the amount of warbling, for want of a much more musical word, which your sopranos in particular wish to do. Er, I mean the Queen of the Night's arias in the *Magic Flute*... are you with me?

Q. Yeah.

A. They don't have a lot of lyric, they're just showing off what they can do, and so what you do is you take the vowel sound that they're sung on and you basically make the shape of it in the air. So as you do (sings and signs concurrently). You make the shape of it, and the rest you actually stop and then start again. I've done the *Messiah* a couple of times. There are different challenges between signing an oratorio or signing a choral work as opposed to signing something in the theatre. The main difference of course being you have no action happening behind you, you just have three hundred people doing goldfish impressions. In oratorios as well, the words tend to be even more repetitive than they do in a musical theatre or up on stage. And certainly some choruses of the *Messiah* are, shall we say lyrically repetitive?! Er, most people say to me 'how do you do the Hallelujah chorus?' and I say 'very easily', because it's polyphonic writing. The vast majority of that is polyphonic writing. There's not a lot of contrapuntal writing in it, and the rhythm of it is very very easy to fit the words into it. Something like 'For unto us a child is born' or 'He shall purify' or 'All we like sheep' or even more so the 'Amen chorus', they're much much harder. Because what you have to do is you have to try and convey a sense of the music, a sense of the fugue. I think this is where your academic musical knowledge comes in useful: if you know how a fugue is constructed, if you can see the strettos, the diminution, the um inversion itself, it's a lot easier. Most people I think doing 'All we like sheep' or the Amen chorus they wouldn't know what to do with it. There's a limit to how many ways you can sign 'Amen' believe you me. Um there's the climax of this piece, you have two and a half hours of stunning music in some pieces, depending on the quality of the performance, and you soon have this big climax, yeah 'amen', so be it, and you've got one word that's repeated god knows how many times, and you've not gotta make people laugh.

Q. (laughs)

A. On the other token, on the other side you've actually got a lot of unintentional humour, um a lot of people can look at oratorios very very seriously but there's a

lot of humour that's there if you look at it. And there's even more humour in the *Creation*. I've never signed the *Creation* but it would be marvellous to do because you've got all these birds and animals and fish and trees and plants, and it's just marvellous! There's so much you can do with it. You can make it so much more descriptive. A lot of people say that they really enjoy having someone signing something like that, because even though, someone said for the *Messiah* even though it's something they've known for decades, they've never actually sat and thought about the words, and suddenly 'oh, that's what it's all about'.

Q. Yeah. Um, one of the reasons I ask that question is, when you're preparing to sign a performance, do you ever rehearse by yourself, without the music going on?

A. No. Never. Never. In fact most of the time I don't really rehearse. Most of the time I just memorise it. Work it out in my head, get up on stage and do it.

Q. Right.

A. Um, when I started out I used to work everything out. Partly because of time, pressure of time, I don't do that any more. And also because I'm more experienced. I've got to cook on my own (incomprehensible). Um, there are certain songs in some shows where you need to sit down and work things out in advance, but I would never practise in front of a mirror.

Q. No?

A. No thank you! Scary thought! Scary thought. Interestingly, (I've said that word far too many times this afternoon), boringly I've never signed an opera which has been sung in its original language and I've signed it in English. It's something I've wanted to do for a long time but it's not yet happened. I think it is far far easier to sign an opera when it is sung in its original language than when it's sung in its English translation.

Q. Why?

A. Because of the relationship between language and music. Trying to shoehorn English into French and Italian in particular just does not sound right. The harshness of English and of German cannot be shoehorned into very feminine languages like Italian and French. It jars so much when you're trying to shoehorn it in. The other advantage is a purely artistic one. It gives you a lot more freedom. If they're singing it in Italian you can actually sit down with someone whose got a good grasp of Italian and work out a really good translation so that you get the meaning and the content of what people are singing about but you've also got the musical freedom to shape it.

Q. yeah. OK.

A. There's still very few people who can set English, and to a lesser extent German well.

Q. Yeah. Translation's very difficult isn't it?

A. A lot of musicals the writing is terrible, and in a lot of modern musicals. I mean don't get me wrong, I like *Les Mis* a lot. I love *Les Mis*, but from an academic point of view, and from a language point of view, you get so many syllables crammed into one line, um it's more like recitative than an aria or an ariosa. Um, it's the same with Lloyd Weber, though I think quite frankly he's been let down recently by the lyricist. Um, Andrew, the best thing Andrew ever wrote, the best things Andrew has ever written were the first two things, that's *Joseph* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. I don't think he's ever topped himself on that. I don't mean suicidally. Um, they were new, they were different. They were full of really good tunes but at the same time they form a coherent whole. With a lot of his recent shows you tend to get a small number of ideas which are just spun out

interminably. Um, I don't know, they've still got nice tunes, but as an overall work you think 'oh god, I heard this before, so many times!'. There's not many people writing for the theatre nowadays, or even writing vocal music, who have really got a grasp of the relationship between language and music. Sondheim can do it, but Sondheim doesn't write nice pretty stuff so he's never been big box office. Um, how anybody manages to sing John Adams' operas is beyond me. I mean the technique that you need for singing a lot of modern operas is phenomenal. It really is. How anybody can sing Birtwistle is beyond me. How you memorise it.

Q. Yeah. When you memorise music, when you think about it do you envisage the score, mentally? Do you have a mental score that you would picture?

A. No, I don't actually. I know I always tell people that I play through in my head, which I do, I mean I run it through, but I don't see all the music. It's like I have a tape in my head, and I'm playing the tape.

Q. Right.

A. That air conditioning is really noisy isn't it? Hopefully you can hear me over the noise of it (ghhhhh).

Q. Er, they're most of my questions actually. I don't want to keep you for too long. Are you pressed for time?

A. Do you think you've covered everything?

Q. Well yeah, I think so.

A. Well if you think of any more you can always email me, or come back. You're welcome to. Very welcome to.

THE END.