

## THE MAN IS IN HIS MUSIC

by David C F Wright DMus

I have been falsely accused of blackening the name of certain composers and told that I should confine myself to writing about their music and not about their private lives. But I maintain that the character and life style of 'some' composers is inherent in 'some' of their music. For example, Mozart was a freemason and wrote some masonic music, Haydn was a man of wit and diplomacy and this is shown in his music, Beethoven sometimes lived an angry and dramatic life, often a reaction to his deafness, and this is shown in some of his music, Bruckner was a deeply spiritual Catholic and this is shown in his music, Mahler was pessimistic and often preoccupied with death and it is shown in his music, Berg, being a normal red-blooded male, loved women and it is shown in his music, Grieg, Bartok and Kodaly loved their respective countries and it is shown in some of their music. Elgar was a pompous, arrogant and conceited man and these attributes are clearly shown in his music. Britten was both a homosexual, when it was a crime to be so, and a paedophile and considered bestiality as the next exciting stage up from homosexuality (we heard him say this) and these perversions are shown in his music.

Whatever objections are made to these statements, they are true and can be verified. All my articles are carefully researched.

It has been said by many musicians that a deeper understanding of a composer's life, private or public, results in a greater understanding of his music. However, I would say that it is not essential to understand the composer to appreciate his best music.

Composers have also been affected by events whether it be world events or personal events and expressed both their feelings and character in subsequent music. Martinu wrote Memorial to Lidice, Penderecki wrote a Threnody for the victims of Hiroshima, Searle wrote Oxus expressing his repulsion of war, Howells wrote a requiem in memory of his young son, Richard Strauss wrote a Domestic Symphony which even includes a passage portraying his intimacy with his wife. This adds further weight to our argument that often a composer's music is autobiographical as well as reflecting his character and life style.

I will be accused of being judgmental but we all make judgments and so we are all judgmental. I will be called a moralist but then we all have our own set of morals and, therefore, we are all moralists.

Most believe that writing about anyone must be balanced. If a biographical article is only praise and adulation it will fail and may be regarded as sycophantic. Composers are not gods or infallible. They are human beings with passions, feelings, strengths and weaknesses. They have their own characteristics and pursue their own life styles.

If a composer has a wooden leg it is acceptable to put that in a biographical article. But when I wrote an article about Gesualdo and mentioned that he murdered his wife, her lover and their child, I was vilified, simply for including this truth. When I produced a vast amount of evidence that Elgar used to inspect some of the women in the choir and orchestra when performing his work to see that they were wearing navy blue knickers I was vilified again. But this is completely true and I produced the original letters Elgar wrote to my great uncle, and the letters from some of Elgar's victims which confirmed this fact. But I was still accused of talking drivel, that I should not be a Doctor of Music and that I should die of painful VD, as did Schubert, and burn in hell.

But the question that people avoid was, What does Elgar's behaviour to such women tell us about Elgar?

People responded by saying that this was not true despite the overwhelming evidence and, if it was, they did not want to know, as it was nothing to do with his music. And, if I did not like his music, I should not write about it or about Elgar himself. So, all the articles about every composer must not contain, suggest or hint at any impropriety.

Mussorgsky was a drunk and this fact exists in written material about him and no one complained that I put this in an article. Gurney was gassed in World War I and, sadly, became insane, Liszt had several illicit

affairs, Wagner was a predator around women, Chopin was an extreme racist, anti-Semitic and a very nasty piece of work who used to write pornographic letters to women that he fancied, Elgar wrote that all Protestants should be done away with. All these things can be proved. For example, Chopin's disgusting letters can be viewed in a Warsaw museum

But when I reveal irrefutable facts about Schubert, Chopin, Scriabin, Elgar and Britten, people become aggressive and displayed unwarranted hatred towards me and do not argue sensibly, logically or even politely, but resort to abuse. They have every right to disagree with me with accompanying evidence, but no right to be libellous. As they have no defence, since there is no defence, they revert to bad manners and abuse.

Some people would rather believe a beautiful lie than an ugly truth.

I have read articles with outrageous and inaccurate statements but I do not reply by abusing the writer. I have read that Liszt was a dreadful composer and did not understand the piano and that all his piano music is worthless. The editor of a music website once wrote to me and asked if the first movement of a British symphony lasts 11 minutes and 10 seconds or 11 minutes and 11 seconds. He also said that Joseph Holbrooke's Piano Concerto no. 1 was the greatest piano concerto ever written and that Dvorak's music was clearly influenced by Britten. How can such a man be the editor of a music website when he writes such rubbish, and goes on to state that that a recording of Paul Creston's Symphony no. 2 was performed exactly as it was written when the performance in question left out the vital piano part.

As far as I am aware, no one has posted on the website verbal abuse and personal attacks on this man in response to the errors and nonsense he has written. And he still heads up this website.

I repeat that the character and life style of some composers can be found in some of his music.

Some say that Mozart suffered from Tourettes. What he did do was keep diaries and a record of the bodily functions of those in his presence. He recorded who farted when and where. Later he wrote a series of choral canons to his own words which included his expression of wanting to lick other peoples back passages and wanted them to return the favour for him. Anal kissing and investigation? Anal sex? That tells us a lot about Mozart and an aspect his life style is in this music.

Gesualdo, after committing triple murder, wrote some penitential motets and is this not proof of the fact that the man is in his music, that his music was autobiographical and reveals what sort of man he was. He also produced a painting of a Christian scene with a small picture of himself in it denoting his repentance. Again, the composer is in his music.

I was criticised for my article about Scriabin and told that I did not like his music because I did not understand the eroticism in it. Hence the life style of Scriabin is in his music. But how do I go about identifying eroticism in his music? Is music ever sexy? Is there a piece you could listen to and, as a result, be propelled to go out and have a one night stand?

If music is erotic is that not a personal opinion or reaction?

Ethel Smyth was a feminist and devoted her life to women's rights and her consequent life style is in some of her music.

Elgar was arrogant and conceited to the point of causing severe annoyance and generating understandable hatred. In Victorian times he wrote that people would write letters simply addressed "Elgar, England" and he would get them. His Violin Concerto is a portrait of Windflower who was a married woman that Elgar wanted to bed. His Enigma Variations are probably a picture gallery of conquests which he desired, but often hidden behind a false trail as, for example, the variation dedicated to a dog, Dan. It is now generally accepted that he had a sexual liaison with his publisher, Jeagar, which he concealed.. He was a devious man, and with his navy blue knickers fetish he was an utterly despicable individual. If I were alive in his time and he did that to my wife or daughter I would knock him senseless, as would any decent man.

I have worked in the legal profession and met many criminals and evil people, but Benjamin Britten was the most loathsome person I have ever met. He was arrogant, cruel, ruthless, a paedophile, a homosexual, when homosexuality was illegal, and performed pederasty sexually abusing boys.

He was never wrong. He sacked musicians from his Aldeburgh Festival if they pointed out errors in his music which they often did. He was egotistical, a megalomaniac, narcissistic, arrogant and a nasty piece of work in the Elgar tradition. Someone wrote that he was even more unpleasant than Wagner.

Yet he had charm which he could turn on and persuade people to do what he wanted whether it was to play his music or get boys to take their clothes off for him. He wrote love letters to boys saying that when they had read the letter they must burn it and respond with a love letter as a reply. But some letters have survived. He spoke about the joy of being in boys' anal canals but often he hurt the boys, made them scream and injured them. He had a special desire for choirboys with their angelic faces but wanted to see and touch what was under their cassocks. I witnessed one such event and I have letters here from Alan Bush and Ruth Gipps who also witnessed Britten fondling the boys crotches and asking to see their genitals and offering them money and pleading for secrecy.

My father, who was an exact contemporary of Britten, but not a coward as Britten and Pears were, actually fought for his country in World War II along with other men, some of whom admitted that Britten had sexually assaulted them. In 1943, my father was thirty years old and some of the lads with him were eighteen. Some said that they were assaulted by Britten around 1936-7 when they were eleven or twelve.

Britten once told Walton in my presence that if he had not buggered a boy he had missed out on one of life's greatest pleasures and Britten was not joking but deadly serious.

Look at his work. *Our Hunting Fathers* is about the joy of bestiality and Britten eventually said so. *The Turn of the Screw* is about a dead man called Quint who wants to come back and have anal sex with the boy, Miles. *Billy Budd* is about would-be homosexual sailors. *Abraham and Isaac* was not chosen for its Biblical story but because of the 'relationship' of a man with a boy and Britten did admit this. *The end of the War Requiem* is a homosexual love duet and was the subject of extensive correspondence in *The Guardian*. Again, Britten admitted this and tried to prove that Wilfred Owen was gay. *Young Appollo* was inspired by an explicit full frontal picture of the Greek god. *Death in Venice* is about a man in love with a pretty boy and wanting sex with him.

The incident that annoyed me most was when Britten wanted to conduct a large choral work by J C Bach. I asked him why. He replied that at an early performance in the eighteenth century, the choirboys had developed fits of laughter and wet themselves on stage and that he wished that his proposed performance would produce the same effect. Again I asked why. He explained that when when boys wet themselves it meant that they had penises and drew Britten's attention to their genitals.

John Ireland spoke of a talk with Britten when Britten said, "I am the greatest British composer. People follow me everywhere with tape recorders to catch every word I say and even record it when I fart!"

The life style and character of Britten is in some of his music. The music is the man. It is irrefutable.

You will now be saying, "OK, you have made your point, but all this information should not affect our assessment of the composer's music. If music is good it does matter that the composer was a murderer, paedophile, predator around woman, or turned on by seeing women in navy blue knickers or fascinated by the genitals of teenage boys, or being a homosexual that enjoyed buggering boys and believed in bestiality".

There are several questions to ask and, in view of accusations made against me, I have the right, as does everybody, to answer my critics.

Am I blackening the character of some composers? No. Because the word means to damage the character of. But the characters of these composers were damaged before I wrote about them and this was their fault because they chose to live the way they did.

Am I being fair? To be fair is to be just and honest. As I am telling the truth, I am being fair and all that I expressed of myself can be shown to be both true and accurate, not just opinions or value judgments

Have I now proved that the life style and/or character of some composers may exist in some of their music?  
The answer is a clear yes

Have I shown that some people who write about music clearly do not know what they are talking about and, in fact, write rubbish? That question is rhetorical.

Am I prejudicial? The word means to have an 'unfair' dislike for someone or something or the intolerance of people because they are different.

I believe my dislike for people is because I do not tolerate things which are offensive. I ought to add that I disliked the music of Britten before I knew anything about his life style. Is my dislike for pederasty unfair? Certainly not.

But the major question is, Surely we do not hate the music of composers being they were dissolute, evil or weird, do we?

If the music is good we will say so. But there is a problem. And it is due to the shallowness of some people. If I say I like Britten that can, and sometimes is interpreted to mean that I approve of his life style and agree with it, or do not condemn it.

I witnessed a famous conductor say that he liked Britten and someone snapped back at him, "Are you a bloody queer as well and do you also bugger little boys?"

Another said, "If you like Britten you must like little boys since he did!"

A writer on music who comes from the Manchester area writes that Britten was a great composer and a fine man. Really? That comment beggars belief.

I am thinking of a composer I admire but I not going to defend him for his self-inflicted alcoholism which made him very unpleasant and difficult at times, although I am glad to report that he overcome his addiction and became a most congenial friend.

There is a need for musical integrity and for the telling of truth. Perhaps it will help us understand the composer and his art and invoke in us such things as sympathy or empathy. But to perpetrate lies and myths and to trash Liszt and other great composers and treat these attacks as fair and yet wish me to die a painful horrifying death from Schubertian syphilis and burn in hell for telling the truth is unfair and reflects the evil in such writers.

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