

JOHN VEALE AS I KNEW HIM

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John Veale's antecedents

It may be true to say that to understand John Veale, we might have to understand his family and his upbringing. It seems clear that his childhood moulded his character to some extent, and this is of greater importance when you consider that his superb Violin Concerto is autobiographical and makes a specific reference to his childhood.



John's father was Douglas Veale who was born on 2 April 1891. In turn, Douglas's father E W Veale was a successful, popular and wealthy solicitor in Bristol who married Maud Mary Rootham who was a beautiful woman, but the problem was that her children found her daunting. E W Veale was apparently something of a rogue and had some shady dealings with his clients' money, but was so well-liked that his victims seemed to forgive him, although his financial circumstances were subsequently greatly reduced.

E W's long suffering wife was afflicted with both asthma and a heart condition probably not helped by her husband's financial indiscretions. However, she lived into her eighties mainly thanks to the devoted care of her husband who, despite his flaws, was a gentle man and who had lost a finger in an accident. His grand daughter, Janet, adored him. Maud was distantly related to the composer Cyril Rootham.

E W and Maud had three sons. The eldest, Jack, became a doctor but was killed in the 1914-1918 war. The second son was William W Veale, known as Tom, who was a solicitor in Bristol in the firm of W W Veale. Tom proposed the health to his niece, Janet, on the occasion of her marriage to Charles Hickson in 1950. Tom wrote books on law. These two sons went to public schools in the days before their father's dishonesty. When Douglas was born, the family were in reduced circumstances, and he went to Bristol Grammar School and won a scholarship to read classics at Corpus Christi in Oxford.

His parents, having had two sons, now wanted a daughter but another son, Douglas, was born. He felt unloved and considered himself to be the 'unfortunate child' who did not have the privileges his older brothers had. This affected his character and personality. He was a very bitter and resentful man and his own children were to suffer. He grew up not seeming to care about people. He was detached.

From University, Douglas went into a top job with the Civil Service being made the Permanent Private Secretary to the Minister of Health, Neville Chamberlain. Douglas was a dedicated Conservative and was awarded the CBE in 1929.

He became the registrar of Oxford University in 1930, a post he held for 27 years. He was knighted by the Queen in 1955 at Buckingham Palace.

He had married Evelyn Annie Henderson in Loughton, Essex on 22 December 1914. She was 22 years old, having been born on 29 August 1892. They were to have three children, two daughters and one son, John.

Evelyn had been a nurse and suffered from Munchhausen's Syndrome by Proxy. Douglas had psychopathic tendencies. John told me that he was regularly flogged for the most minor misdemeanours and therefore reacted with understandable fury as well as frustration at his mother's inability to protect him from these assaults. John's mother used manipulative behaviour to try and control a dysfunctional family. John did receive some motherly love from his nanny, Hilda, who cared for him in Northwood, Middlesex, until the family moved to Oxford in 1930.

Margaret, the eldest child of Douglas and Evelyn, was adored by her father and her relationship with her parents was good although unbalanced. She was the favourite and she clung to that position. She was to become known as Lally.

And so, the Veales had three children: Evelyn Margaret born 23 August 1916, Janet Mary born 27 February 1921 and John Douglas Louis born 15 June 1922.

Margaret was educated at St Helens, Northwood, Middlesex at St Felix's, Southwold, Suffolk and Bedford Physical Training College. She pursued a career teaching dance, gymnastics and games at the Alice Ottley School in Worcester. In 1950, she became the second wife of Ronald McCallum who was born on 28 August 1898. He had two daughters by his first marriage and, with Margaret, had two sons and a daughter. Andrew was born on 15 April 1951 and married a Spanish girl called Maria and they have a son, John. Jamie was born on 30 August 1952 and Flora was born on 3 July 1956. Andrew retired early from the education department at the BBC, Jamie works for the charity Voluntary Action in Leicester and Flora is a primary school teacher.

Ronald McCallum was a history don at Pembroke College, Oxford, when he married Margaret Veale. Later, he became the Master of Pembroke and, after retirement, was appointed as the Principal of St Catherine's House, Cumberland Lodge, a student conference centre in Windsor Great Park. He died on 16 May 1973.

Janet had a very curious upbringing. In theory, she was educated at Wychwood School, Oxford, but, in effect, was self-educated because the bizarre behaviour of her mother prevented Janet going to school saying that she was extremely delicate. She was, however, allowed to go to school on days when there were dancing lessons. Janet's self-education was largely down to her extensive reading as a child. She was a very good dancer but her father would not allow her to have ballet lessons having a negative attitude to all that Janet wanted to do.

When John and Janet were in their teens they fell in love with Dvorak's New World Symphony, but when father discovered its title he would not allow it to be played in the house since the title conjured up terrible visions of seedy night life, jazz, smoking, sex and wicked New Yorkers.

Geoffrey Hamilton Hobson was in the Intelligence Corps of the Army. He was a Cambridge scholar and a linguist. During the war, he interrogated German prisoners with a Polish accent since the Germans were afraid of the Poles because of the atrocities the Nazis had perpetrated on Poland. Geoffrey was a brave soldier but the war took its toll on him. He developed rheumatic fever and the military medical team believed that he was malingering and did not take his condition seriously. Geoffrey died in 1946.

Janet's second husband was an Irishman, a geologist who graduated from Trinity College, Dublin. He was Charles Robert Tuthill Hickson and he married Janet in 1950. They had met in Holland when Charles worked for Shell. Janet was visiting friends in Holland when she first met Charles. After their marriage, Charles took up a post with ICI and they moved back to England from Holland. They had one son, Robert Charles Fitzgerald who was born on 7 March 1951 and he has pursued a career as an actor, musician and writer. His partner is Kate Duchene and they have a daughter, Anna Charlotte Fitzgerald Duchene Hickson, who was born on 15 April 2006 and a son, born in 2009.

Robert wrote the film *A Gift for Sarah* for which John Veale composed the music. For this film, John had to study the guitar and write for this rather difficult instrument. Some of the music in the film was modified into his work *Encounters* for two guitars. I remember talking to John about this film in which that fine actor, Joseph O'Connor, teaches music to a young schoolgirl and her lessons with him were when she was on her own with him. In the social climate of the day, this would be frowned upon and the film did suggest an unwise relationship. John took the point readily and appreciated it. Nonetheless, it is a beautiful and gentle film.

Janet worked at one time for the BBC as an abridger of various books including novels for a variety of programmes on Radio Four. She has had a remarkable and interesting life and has contemplated completing her autobiography.

Lady Evelyn Veale died in 1969 and Sir Douglas died on the 28 September 1973.

It is important to repeat that John was physically abused as a child by his psychopathic father. His mother did nothing to protect him. The family was dysfunctional. John grew up with a sense of independence, looking after himself and seeking love from others which he had missed at home. This search for love and acceptance ran through his life and he sought friends and certainly was a normal red-blooded man enjoying the company of women. Yet he was never a weak character, nor was he servile. He was meticulous. Among other things, he was a brilliant wordsmith.

There are a few matters which should be mentioned here since they reveal the influences of his antecedents.

Whether it was partly a reaction against his father's Conservative politics or not, John became a supporter of the Labour Party. He once told me that this was also due to the fact that he understood suffering and that he wanted a fairer society and justice for all people. Many artists of those days were left wing and some like Alan Bush, Christian Darnton and Bernard Stevens were communists. John's friend, the distinguished composer, Humphrey Searle, told me that he was himself an old-fashioned Socialist and his first wife, the vivacious Gillian Lesley Gray, was a communist. However, John began to have doubts about left wing politics from the 1960s and, more especially, when Tony Blair came to power.

Having suffered injustice, John had a pronounced sense of fairness for all, coupled with the desire for world peace and the betterment of humanity. John was in the Army Education Corps during World War II.

As already indicated, he remained a member of the Labour party until the time of the ill-conceived policies of Tony Blair's administration. John was opposed to the illegal invasion and occupancy of Iraq by British and America forces in 2003. He also objected to the Labour Party spending the Social Services budget on a war in Kosovo. Like me, he was deeply impressed by the speech in the House of Commons by the Labour minister, Robin Cook, who resigned because of Blair's madness in taking Britain into an illegal war in Iraq. Cook was eloquent and at the end of his profoundly moving speech he sat down, a broken man. He died of heart trouble not so very long after this.

One of the classic sayings of John was, "Mr Blair is the only British Prime Minister who is not interested in politics!". There were members of Blair's Cabinet that John believed were totally useless.

He disapproved strongly of some aspects of the Good Friday agreement particularly when murderers and terrorists sentenced to long term prison sentences, or life, were released early, some after only a few months and were given money by the British government to start again. John made the point that if someone murdered one of Blair's children he would not tolerate a prison sentence of merely six months for the murderer. He was disgusted with the Labour Party on issues such as this and the

miner's strike led by the objectionable Arthur Scargill. This is expressed strongly in his letters to me, one of which appears later.

Injustice at home as a child, moulded John's character to seek justice for all.

Bereft of friendship and love as a child, John developed a wonderful capacity for friendship. As well as Humphrey Searle, he was great friends with Constant Lambert, Alan Rawsthorne and the conductor George Weldon. Among his literary friends were Dylan Thomas, Kingsley Amis and Louis MacNeice and, to a lesser extent, Philip Larkin. John enjoyed the company of intellectuals being one himself and he had an unusual witty sense of humour spiced with irony.

Parental influences and John's cruel and unsatisfactory upbringing may have led him to be an atheist although he did say to me in his last years that he was probably an agnostic. He wanted to call his final choral work *Where was God?* But I told him that that may be too provocative and suggested the title *Apocalypse*. I explained that you cannot ask "where is God?" if you not believe in God.

However John developed characteristics which were not legacies from his parents.

One of the most endearing things about John was that I never heard him be sarcastic or scathing about anyone. He did not elaborate or give details about his dreadful childhood or variously criticised his parents. There were composers whose music he positively detested such as Gilbert and Sullivan because his father was always singing it. He certainly did not like the music of Elgar and Britten latterly not only for their music but because of their ruthlessness and self importance which reminded him of his father. And it is this relationship with his father that makes it necessary to record John's views about Elgar and Britten. Elgar's music was liked to some extent at first but it was pompous and decadent and his orchestration was thick and turgid and he had no idea as to how to write an allegro movement which observations are true on all counts. However, John later kept such facts largely to himself after he had entered into correspondence with the Guardian newspaper about Britten's *War Requiem*. The work ends with a homosexual love duet where two men sing constantly to each other *Let us sleep now*. Britten actually admitted that it was his intention to introduce homosexuality into the *Requiem* and I was one of many who heard him say so emphatically. John made the point that as Britten was homosexual he was using his music to advocate his sexual orientation but, as John pointed out, a requiem is not the place to do it. John also remonstrated graciously with those who stated that a requiem could be secular and therefore incorporate homosexual desires.

John did not make any new friends when he told the truth about certain issues. He often said that if homosexuality was a criminal offence up to the mid 1960s, why was it legalised? But having suffered unreasonable and illogical reaction to his valid arguments he never again publicly entered the arena of such controversy. He was very taken with my explanation when I said that some people would rather believe a beautiful lie than an ugly truth.

1922-1951

John Douglas Louis Veale was born on 15 June 1922 at Shortlands, near Bromley, Kent. As a child, John was responsive to music. By the age of five, he was haunted by the Faery Song from Rutland Boughton's *The Immortal Hour*.

He attended a kindergarten for a couple of years in Northwood, Middlesex to where the family had moved. He then was a pupil at the The Dragon School in Oxford which mainly catered for boys. About one in fifty pupils were girls however and they were very clever and so, if one of the boys needed help, he would ask a girl. Sport was important at school and John had to play cricket, a sport he did enjoy, rugby, a game for hooligans played by gentlemen, soccer and hockey. One teacher, a Mr Brown, known as Bruno, took an interest in John respecting his academic abilities. When he was twelve, John was given a clarinet and taught himself to play it from the tutor written by Frederick Thurston. Later, he did receive some practical help from a maths master and general encouragement from the distinguished composer, John Gardner, who was Director of Music at Repton School in 1939 and 1940. Veale was a pupil there from 1936-1940.

John has said that music really began for him when John Gardner arrived at Repton which was crucial to John's development musically. The previous music master was somewhat old-fashioned and the state of music in public schools in those days was Philistine. John played in the school orchestra and in a local jazz group. He lamented that, in those days, there was such a polarization between classical music and jazz. To admire both was claimed to be like being a Methodist and a Roman Catholic at the same time. John's hero was the Hungarian clarinettist, Benny Goodman. He and I agreed that Goodman's playing of the Mozart concerto was exemplary.

John did not like Gilbert and Sullivan, which his father sang in the bath every morning, and also played on a wind-up gramophone in the drawing room. John did not like Victor Sylvester either. His two sisters were good dancers and would say that Victor Sylvester was lovely to dance to. John found the style depressing and unreal. Ballroom dancing conjured for him men far too clean and immaculately dressed in tails and being grossly ostentatious.

The first 'modern' composer who impressed John was Sibelius and, all his life, he was a Sibelius man. He regarded *Tapiola* as Sibelius's masterpiece and it was his last great work. But John was horrified at a Prom concert conducted by Simon Rattle, who 'simply did not understand the piece' and, as the performance was televised, pictures was shown of lovely pastoral scenes whereas the music is not like that at all, but elemental evoking stark nature. To John, Sibelius's tone poems are far better than those of Richard Strauss in originality and musical language. Veale has said that Sibelius ran rings around most other composers and his music was probably a reaction against Stravinsky and against Prokofiev who, at certain times in their respective careers, wanted to emulate classical composers.

At Repton, John learned to enjoy the classics and retained admiration for the novels of Jane Austen, George Elliot, Thomas Hardy and the Brontes as well as modern novelists. He singled out such works as *Emma*, *Middlemarch* and *Jude the Obscure* as outstanding examples of his personal choice. His musical taste was also catholic. He regarded Mozart as the perfect exemplar of freedom of spirit within formal structures; had a regard for Bach but, like many, found it difficult to respond to his genius; he identified strongly with Beethoven and the master's obsession with form and said that Wagner's tormented spirit making him a very human composer whose sublime art is almost mesmeric. Veale had a love-hate relationship with Wagner's overwhelming music explaining that when he heard Wagner's music he found his heart contradicting his head.

It was in modern history that Veale received his Bachelor of Arts degree at Corpus Christi, Oxford in 1943 but, by this time, he had decided on a musical career having discovered both Sibelius and Shostakovich and, in 1939, had been profoundly impressed by the *Symphony no. 1* by Walton. John

was also deeply impressed by the works of Bartok, Ravel, Vaughan Williams, Alan Rawsthorne, Samuel Barber, Bax and Roy Harris. The outcome of these emotional responses, coupled with his inner drive, determined his destiny. As with many young composers, he encountered opposition from his parents.

What encouragements John had were received from musicians such as Sir Hugh Allen who was professor of music at Oxford from 1918 until he was knocked down and killed by a vehicle in an Oxford street in 1946. Walton was a marvellous help which was indicative of his character. He recognised in this young man the strong self-criticism which was an abiding feature of his own life. Walton did not give music lessons. In fact, Walton himself only had music lessons after World War II when he went to Humphrey Searle for two years. John composed slowly, revised extensively and agonised over getting things right. He was meticulous in his composing as he was in his literary editing and in the use of the English language.

His first attempts at composition date from 1937 and were mostly orchestral. They have long since been discarded.

He joined the Army in 1942. During the war, John was in the Education Corps and eventually reached the rank of sergeant. He was stationed in turn at Winchester, York, Wrotham, London and Salisbury and, during these years, met Bryan Balkwill, Christopher Hassall, Eric Fenby and William Pleeth. John was popular in his Army environment and the NCOs used to call him 'effing' Mozart.

John hated war and described it as obscene. He did not want to be a combatant and so he poured boiling water over his foot and was therefore declared unfit for active service. This may sound cowardly but, at least, he stayed in this country and did something for the war effort..

On 26 August 1944, Veale married Diana Taylor in Oxford. She had studied at the Slade School of Art and was been evacuated to Oxford during the war. They had a long honeymoon before the wedding.

As an artist, she designed the sets for the Oxford University Dramatic Society (OUDS).

After the war, John went back to Corpus with a view to studying music. But then work was offered him by the OUDS. It was in 1946 that the first work of John Veale was performed. This was an amateur performance of his Symphonic Study. The score had been shown to Sir Hugh Allen by an Oxford organist, Basil Thewlis. Allen asked Veale for permission to show it to Walton who was taken with it and aided the first public performance of the piece given by Sir Thomas Armstrong and the Oxford Orchestral Society.

In 1947, enabled by a Government grant to study music in Oxford, John went to Egon Wellesz, although he had had some unofficial lessons from Wellesz during the war. Wellesz had come to England in 1938 from his native Austria joining the faculty of music at Oxford University. Veale liked Wellesz but they were not in sympathy musically. At that time, Wellesz was steeped in Mahler whereas Veale was devoted to Sibelius, of whom Wellesz was contemptuous saying, for example, that the Symphony no. 6 of Sibelius was not really a symphony at all but a sketch. John and I used to discuss Sibelius's Symphony no. 6 at length since we both loved it and considered it his finest symphony. Despite this aesthetic gulf between master and pupil, Veale learned most of the subtleties of harmony and had to prepare exercises with great care to discuss at lessons.

It was in the same year, 1947, that John Veale wrote incidental music for the Oxford University Dramatic Society's production of *Love's Labour's Lost*, produced by Anthony Besch, with a cast that included Kenneth Tynan and Lindsay Anderson. He also wrote music for Ken Tynan's production of *Maxwell Anderson's Winterest* and for the *Masque of Hope* attended by the then Princess Elizabeth.

John sent the score of *Love's Labour's Lost* to Muir Matheson who was the main conductor for British films in those days. Muir Matheson, consequently, introduced the young composer to the film industry by commissioning music for the Crown Film Productions. It was utility music for which composers seldom received a credit but it did have financial rewards. For example, music was required to portray the workings of machines which was known as utility music.

Veale found Matheson somewhat strange. He was Scottish and had no sense of humour whereas John was witty particularly with irony. Matheson was a very efficient hack.

John had lessons with Sir Thomas Armstrong at the same time as he was with Wellesz. Armstrong was the organist at Christ Church, Oxford from 1933 to 1955. Veale's introduction to Armstrong came about because Douglas Veale was the registrar at Oxford University. From Armstrong, John learned formal harmony and counterpoint including species counterpoint.

The first professional performance of any work by John Veale was of his *Symphony no. 1* given in the Town Hall, Birmingham by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra under the very gifted George Weldon in 1948. Wellesz liked it but that does not prove anything. Schoenberg liked Johann Strauss and Webern admired Schubert. Wellesz's approbation does not necessarily prove anything. However, Sir John Barbirolli personally chose to perform it in a 'revised' version at the Cheltenham Festival of 1951 thus endorsing the music's worth. It was the work that established the composer, although he agreed with me that his first public success was *Panorama* for orchestra written in 1949 and first performed at the Malvern Festival in 1951 under Sir Adrian Boult. The work was so well-received that the audience demanded another performance during the Festival which was readily accommodated a few days later cancelling Elgar's *Wand of Youth Suite* which Sir Adrian, who did not like Elgar's music, was absolutely delighted to abandon.

The *Symphony no. 1* was written between 1945 and 1947 and is dedicated to the painter, Paul Nash. The history of the work's first performance is remarkable. The composer sent it to George Weldon who replied to the composer from his holiday venue in Cornwall saying that he would be happy to perform it. It was also given on the campus of Berkeley in California with the late Kurt Adler conducting.

The official reason for the revision was to tighten the detail but the fact was that Barbirolli was not a good conductor and there was a passage in the symphony that he could not conduct and so he demanded John edit this section out. Barbirolli used to say that no good music had been composed since 1934. But Weldon had no difficulty with it which proves that he was a better conductor than Barbirolli.

The Veale's first daughter, Jane, was born in 1947. She suffered from asthma which seriously affected her heart and lungs and led to her death in September 1951. Her father composed the *Elegy* for flute, harp and string orchestra in her memory. This was first performed by Richard Adeney, Maria Korchinska and the Boyd Neel Orchestra in Oxford in 1952.

A Commonwealth fellowship enabled John Veale to go to America to study for two years. He obtained this Harkness grant by filling in a form and being interviewed by a panel of bigwigs. With Diana and Jane, they went to New York where John studied with Roger Sessions whose music belongs to the New England school of austerity. For the second year, the Veales went to California where John studied with Roy Harris whose outlook was very different. Veale was interested in modern American music and deliberately choose these two composers for the diametric polarity or opposition they represented: Sessions for the ultra-cerebral sophistication, Harris as the quintessential American rangy rustic who had a primitive crudity (almost a counterpart Grandma Moses). Sessions was the self-consciously quasi-European oppidan. He was an exceptionally likeable man, friendly, compassionate, generous-hearted and amusing. His views on life in general were akin to his English pupil being liberal and humanitarian. He was also a humanist, yet his outstanding characteristic was his unrivalled intellectual power, musically and otherwise, although his mode of thought musically was rambling

and prolix. He was an excellent teacher provided that his pupil's approach was the same as his namely cerebral. If Sessions had a weakness it was his need to be a disciple and not a trial blazer. First it was with Ernest Bloch with *Black Masters*, then Stravinsky with his powerful *Symphony no. 1*, then Schoenberg with his *Symphony no. 2*. Veale was particularly struck by the fact that Sessions referred to composers as if they were scientific theorists to be proved right or wrong in their respective approaches. Much of Sessions's music is denigrated as being uneventful and severe, giving the impression of a lazy composer who was entirely un-self-critical but all his symphonies are impressive essays. John wrote the programme notes for the first American performance of Session's *Symphony no. 2* given in New York under Dmitri Mitropoulos.

During John's American years, he composed *Panorama* and the *String Quartet*. *Panorama* for orchestra was written while he was residing in Beverley Hills overlooking San Francisco bay. He sent the manuscript by surface mail as an entry for the Festival of Britain Concert in 1951. The composer told me that, at one time, he hoped the score would be lost at sea. It arrived too late to be included in the Festival but David Willcocks, a member of the adjudicating committee, was so impressed with it that he took the liberty of showing it to Sir Adrian Boult who was thrilled to perform it at the Malvern Festival later that year. It had another performance at a BBC Promenade Concert during the 1955 season conducted by John Hollingsworth.

John did not like his *String Quartet* and withdrew it and in one of his letters to me said he had destroyed all copies and sets of parts. However, I had a copy, edited it and John Turner typeset it and it was recorded. Sadly, my involvement has not been properly acknowledged. I had rescued this work from oblivion.

While in America, there was a fruitful three week period when John went on a motor tour with Roy Harris aiming to promote Harris's music. It included meetings with, among others, George Szell and Thor Johnson and a performance of Harris's popular *Symphony no. 3* conducted by an unknown adolescent prodigy called Lorin Maazel. Veale met other composers, of course. He found Walter Piston vastly knowledgeable, genial, mildly cynical, world-weary and sadly caustic about his colleagues including Sessions and Harris. Virgil Thomson was ostentatiously homosexual, wittily waspish and rather superficial in his thinking although he was a very shrewd man. He used to dress like Dracula complete with top hat, cloak and cane. Peter Mennin was courteous and friendly and an admirer of Vaughan Williams, but he was a vain and conceited man who countenanced odd behaviour such as accompanying his girl friend in central New York, she being dressed in jodhpurs and brandishing a riding-whip. However, from the benefit of his observations, John was probably inclined to suspect that Gershwin, Ellington and Cole Porter are the real twentieth century representatives of American music, whereas it may be generally held that Aaron Copland symbolised the American dichotomy... now folksy, now atonal, according to which bandwagon he thought was going to roll. Harris took great pride in his rangy style. Having studied with Nadia Boulanger, this was considered to be the passport to respectability as a truly modern composer. Some used to aver that Boulanger was something of a racketeer... that half an hour with her earned the requisite certificate and the phrase 'He studied with Boulanger'.

Almost all American composers at this time belonged to a school. Nonetheless, that country has produced a few outstanding composers including some who studied with Boulanger.

One such composer was Irving Fine (1914-1962) whom I introduced John to by sending him a score and recording of his *Symphony* and the *Toccata Concertante* for orchestra. John replied with enthusiasm which was never gushy (he used to say that some people make people victims of their enthusiasm) saying that he was profoundly impressed with Fine's music and had not had such an experience since hearing Walton's *Symphony no. 1* and Humphrey Searle's *The River-run* which was performed at the Royal Festival Hall when John's *Concert Overture: The Metropolis* was performed.

The success of *Panorama* was, sadly, not the springboard to greater things. This may be due to the fact

that Veale was not a hustler, although at parties he could talk at length about his music and probably bore some people. Fashion of the day plays an important part for composers and determines which are taken up. It used to be said in the 1950s and 1960s that the only way to get a work performed was to put Britten's name on it. However, Panorama is a robust score which pleases immensely. It is a portrait of the USA, not just the Golden Gate Bridge or San Francisco bay. The element of jazz is represented by the tenor saxophone but the music also describes the less attractive sides to America of which there are many.

The String Quartet was played by accomplished students on the campus at Berkeley. It was played by the Amati Quartet in Oxford in 1953 and had unfair reviews. The composer did not wish it to be played again and dismissed the Oxford performance from his mind altogether. He explained that it was good music in itself but it did not suit the chosen medium, being unidiomatic and homophonic.

I probably had the only copy and, after John's death, I edited it and it was performed in Oxford in 2008, warmly received and later recorded.

In the early years of their marriage, the Veales were happy. John had a studio above the garage and the house was filled with paintings many by Diana herself. They used to entertain friends regularly, many of whom were John's intellectual friends.

1951-1972

Still devastated by the death of his daughter, John poured his heart into his Clarinet Concerto. The work is monothematic, the single theme probably representing his lovely, curly-headed, blonde daughter. That it is a clarinet concerto and that he played that instrument seems to indicate a father soliloquizing over his lost daughter.

It was completed in 1953 the year that his second daughter, Sarah, was born.

The first performance was given by the legendary Sydney Fell, to whom it is dedicated, and the London Symphony Orchestra under Sir Malcolm Sargent at the Royal Festival Hall on 4 April, 1954.

For two years from 1951, Veale intended to research a book about American composers and was awarded a Junior Fellowship at Corpus Christi to achieve this. That the book did not materialize is a cause of regret.

The first major film score was in 1954. This was *The Purple Plain* with a screenplay by Eric Ambler from a novel by H E Bates. It was produced for United Artists by John Bryan, directed by Robert Parrish and starred Gregory Peck, Bernard Lee, Maurice Denham, Brenda de Banzie and Lyndon Brook. It is a wartime survival story and succeeds as a film because of the fine cast although the film seems to be in two parts. One of the unique features was that the air crash was filmed inside the cockpit and the three actors only just got out of the plane before it exploded.

John told me that he formed a friendship with Bernard Lee who certainly liked his drink, but to be a passenger in his car was a frightening experience.

The film was completed at Pinewood Studios and many American actors were filming in Britain as a tax dodge at the time. It was becoming cheaper to film in Europe from the early 1950s and many actors had gone to Europe as they were on the Hollywood blacklist as communists.

Muir Matheson conducted the film score aspects of which can be heard in *Kubla Khan* completed the following year. It is a gorgeous piece scored for baritone, mixed chorus and orchestra and sets Coleridge's poem. The music is warm and has an ethereal feel. The modality of some of the music reminds us of Vaughan Williams whom John regarded as the best tonal British composer. The music of *Kubla Khan* is very satisfying and communicates its message in a telling way. The distinguished baritone, Brian Rayner Cook, expressed a wish to take the work up.

Although all of John's works of high quality, many believe that *Kubla Khan* is a masterpiece. Malcolm Arnold told a meeting of musicians that there were only three great British choral works of the 20th century namely Walton's *Belsahazzar's Feast*, John Veale's *Kubla Khan* and Fricker's *Vision of Judgment*.

Kubla Khan was premiered by John Carol Case and the BBC Symphony Chorus and Orchestra under Rudolph Schwarz in 1959.

In 1955, John's son Jacob was born and Veale composed his *Concert Overture: The Metropolis*, a work which he dedicated to the London Symphony Orchestra who performed it for the first time at the Royal Festival Hall in 1957 in a series of concerts which included Humphrey Searle's magnificent setting of the final pages of James Joyce's *Finnigans Wake*, a work entitled *The River-run*. John's work was conducted by Charles Groves making his debut at the Royal Festival Hall. Veale's piece received some adverse criticism but it is difficult to understand why. For my part, I can only say that cities are not appealing as this music is. It had to wait forty five years for its second performance.

Portrait of Alison was a film for which John wrote the score in 1955 starring Robert Beatty and the thoroughly unlikable Terry Moore, as John described her. It was one of the few times that John expressed a strong negative view. The film was directed by Guy Green.

The next film was The Spanish Gardener based on the novel by A J Cronin and directed by Philip Leacock and starring Dirk Bogarde whom John found to be very dull as a person. The star of the film was Michael Hordern as the over-protective father of his young son who is befriended by Dirk Bogarde, the Spanish gardener.

Hordern was an exceptionally fine actor but he felt that acting in films was slumming. He used to say that an actor in a film had to learn a few lines and spent a day shooting the scene, whereas if one is, for example, playing King Lear on stage you have to know all the words including the long speeches and act as well.

Veale used to say that John Wayne was not a great actor but he was very popular. There is a difference.

The year 1957 saw two films namely High Tide at Noon and No Road Back. No Road Back was directed by Montgomery Tully and starred Skip Homeier, Paul Carpenter and Sean Connery as a stuttering criminal in one of his earliest films. It tells of a blind and deaf woman who becomes involved with criminals and is prepared to sacrifice everything for her son. It was described as a plodding melodrama.

The next film was The House in Marsh Road of 1959 and, in 1961, Freedom to Die. Another B feature appeared in 1962 called Emergency and while many may claim it is dated and an ' old, black and white film ' but it was a very good film for its time and was promoted to become a main feature. It was directed by Francis Searle and starred Glyn Houston, Zena Walker, Dermot Walsh and Colin Tapley. The story is a race against time to save the life of a little girl who is knocked down by a lorry and how the separated parents see in this situation the need to reaffirm their marriage vows while trying to find a blood donor.

John's music for this film is very effective. He glibly said that writing film music was just to find two tunes and elaborate on them. What was difficult was writing music to precise timing.

He regarded the scores for The Purple Plain and The Spanish Gardener as his best film scores. He once explained in simple terms that the difference between a producer and a director was that the producer really oversaw the finance while the director said how everything should be done from camera shots to how the actors should perform.

On the last day of filming The Purple Plain there were only six people left on the set. Gregory Peck invited them all down to the local for a drink. On arrival, Peck ordered six Jeroboams of champagne, one for each of his guests.

Film studios used to claim that the music belonged to them and not to the composer and often the music was destroyed. There is the famous case of Walton's music to Henry V being thrown out with the rubbish but found by some perceptive and wise person and, as a result, we have this memorable score available. This also happened to John and some of his film scores

Veale was a film critic for the Oxford Mail from 1968 and, later, film correspondent until 1980 which, coupled with his film music, was his livelihood. Diana was working as an art teacher at the Oxford College of Further Education.

Unlike the Symphony no. 1, the Symphony no. 2 is a substantial work and was played twice in 1968 by the London Repertoire Orchestra under Ruth Gipps. But they were not public performances and the orchestra, made up of highly accomplished players, was still regarded as an amateur outfit. Ruth Gipps, said it was a good piece. If it had not been, she would not have performed it for the second time. Sir William Glock wanted it broadcast on the BBC but he was over ruled by his bosses.

The work is dedicated to Valentina, the Russian woman, with whom John was then having a passionate affair.

But the 1960s and 1970s were not happy for John. The 1960s had seen the explosion of pop music and the commencement of the celebrity worship syndrome. Pop music was not music at all, he said, but a group of mainly long-haired young men strumming three chords on a guitar with persistent banging from drum kits and meaningless words which bastardised the English language. Pop music with its bodily gyrations was simulated sex and the introduction of the mini skirt and then the micro skirt was a causal factor in the epidemic of unplanned teenage pregnancies. Girls and young women would scream and shout at their pop idols, then take off their knickers and throw them on to the stage. It was sheer madness.

John was furious when the Labour Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, gave The Beatles the MBE and he understood why previous recipients sent their MBEs back in disgust. John firmly believed that all such awards should be given for academic achievement through study and examination or hard work and dedication. He had rejected Roy Harris's suggestion that he be given an honorary music degree. "I have not taken any exams," John said.

He pointed out that the pop music industry was advocating free sex both for children and young people who were not emotionally ready for it and, as well as promiscuity, the taking of drugs was being recommended.

In 1966, John composed Song of Radha for high soprano and orchestra. It was revised during 1980 and 1981. It is based on an erotic poem especially written for the composer by David Pocock who, for many years, was professor of social anthropology at Sussex University and who was fluent in Hindustani. To some extent the work was inspired by the permit to publish of D H Lawrence's Lady Chatterley's Lover after a Court case in 1960 when it was declared that the novel was not obscene.

John moved from the matrimonial home in Rawlinson Road, Oxford to the small village of Woodeaton in 1968 and the countryside which he loved. He enjoyed the peace and quiet and this enabled him to go for long walks, bird-watching and pursuing his other hobby of astronomy. He also had the ability to imitate the cuckoo and other birds including the tawny owl, a skill which he has passed on to his children.

He was indeed a country lover and some have opined that this went back to his childhood when his father conducted a successful campaign to prevent the sale and development of Wytham Woods, west of Oxford. As an acknowledgement, the owners allowed the Veale family to walk in these woods which were not open to the public. There are those who believe that this was the reason why a pastoral style is found in his music but I have never found it and John never admitted to it.

I suppose it would be true to call John a community activist. He fought a long battle with the BBC and the Air Ministry over the flashing lights on the Beckley transmitter. He also campaigned about the regular gunshot sounds to scare birds from crops and the use of the quarry adjacent to his village.

1972-2006

It is known that John loved women. He was a normal red-blooded man. As already mentioned, one of the women in his life was Valetina to whom his Symphony no. 2 is dedicated. She came to London as a Russian interpreter and when she returned home, the affair ceased. She was a stunning-looking beauty and completely desirable.

John's divorce from Diana and his long-lasting relationship with Janet Turner, a social worker, coupled with no performances of his work meant that John had a sterile twelve years. He did not compose and hardly listened to any music. John had met Janet in 1964 and they became lovers. His marriage to Diana broke up around 1968.

Latterly, Diana seems to have neglected herself. She had developed a cancer and had other health problems. Her son, Jake, found her dead in December 1987. There was an inquest. The funeral was at Oxford Crematorium.

John's relationship with Janet Turner suffered at least four separations. To add to the problem John did not get on with Janet's son, Richard, who lived in Spain. John and Janet parted in the autumn of 2005.

As it has been said, John had two part time jobs from the 1960s. He worked at the Oxford Mail as a film critic and later was promoted to being the film editor. He was also a copy editor for the Oxford University Press which, to quote him, meant having to edit and read masses of 'sociological rubbish' as well as books on law, literature, politics, art, philosophy and history. Perhaps the most notable undertaking was of a new edition of the complete works of Jeremy Bentham dealing with constitutional and social organisation and there was Karl Popper's Objective Knowledge. There were also boring books on totalitarianism and books on the nonsensical concept that if punishment did not work there was no point in punishing persistent offenders, but that could lead to anarchy. Veale stayed in this post at the OUP until he retired in 1987.

But that was not the case with the Oxford Mail. He had taken the side of the staff in an industrial dispute and was dismissed. He took his case to a tribunal claiming unfair dismissal but he was unsuccessful. Then, suddenly, he began to compose again and to revise Song of Radha.

It was in 1979 that I first contacted John wanting to see some of his music and this began a long friendship. When I told him that I had studied with Humphrey Searle he showed a controlled enthusiasm. He immediately said that Humphrey was a great friend of his and although his music was completely different, it showed an original mind and a courageous stand for the music he believed in, although Humphrey suffered much opposition. It was John who was the first to tell me that Walton went to Humphrey for music lessons for two years after World War II. The musical know-alls, musicologists and compilers of music dictionaries, do not include this vital information. Other composers confirmed that this was true including Denis ApIvor, Peter Racine Fricker, Malcolm Arnold, Alan Bush and Walton wrote to me himself confirming it.

"I could have gone to anyone," wrote Walton, "but I went to Humphrey". He was a modest, self-effacing man who could be trusted. I learned so much from him, how to make my music have a clearer texture, how to improve my orchestration which was sometimes too thick and in the Elgar tradition. Some of my best works were written because of Humphrey's influence such as my Johannesburg Festival Overture, the Cello Concerto and the Symphony no. 2."

When I saw Walton at his 80th birthday concert he looked at me with tears in his eyes and said, "I have some much to thank Humphrey for. He was the best of us all!"

John and I became great friends and he would ring regularly and we discussed not only music but politics, religion, ethics and many other matters. He edited many of my articles with meticulous care

and when I submitted some to a Classical Music website where their editor, who is not a musician, edited them, after it had been edited by a professional!

In 1982 or 1983, Lewis Foreman telephoned John wanting to know what had happened to some composers of which John was one. Foreman has written a detailed book on Bax and regards himself as an authority on British music.

John said that I encouraged him to compose again. There followed the Violin Concerto which took months to complete. It was finished in 1984 and Erich Gruenberg gave the first performance in a studio concert in Manchester in 1986. Gruenberg told me what a fine work it was. John Gardner spoke of passages in the work that were spell binding and how he admired the employment of harmonies of ultimate sweetness. Although the work was liked, curiously nothing was said about it in the media or music journals, thus signifying it was a non-event, which is a gross injustice. Had it been written by Tippett or Maxwell Davies, articles about it would have appeared everywhere. All this highlights the vagaries of musical fashion, controlled, it would seem, by a minority influencing the majority to kowtow to the opinions of a few. This has been the death-knell of many composers. The international soloist, Tasmin Little, wrote to me to say it was a very beautiful work and she would like to play it.

I suggested to John that Lydia Morkdkovitch be approached. She was a very fine violinist and had recorded many concertos including lesser-known British ones. John hesitated thinking it would deter Tasmin Little from ever playing it but I urged him and, subsequently, Lydia not only played and recorded it for Chandos, she absolutely loved it. In many telephone calls from her since, she had made this statement along with her appraisal of John as a lovely man and a very decent human being.

I had showed the concerto to the conductor, Bryden Thomson. "We do not have even a good let alone an outstanding British violin concerto as yet," he said, "but this looks impressive and I would be willing to do it." He performed many concertos with Lydia.

It should be noted that Lewis Foreman was a prime mover in securing the first performance of the concerto in 1986.

John Veale's Triune for oboe doubling cor anglais and orchestra, composed in 1991, was premiered by Nicholas Daniel at St John's, Smith Square on 2 May 1996. The orchestra was Oxford's New Chamber Orchestra under Andrew Zreczycki as part of the orchestra's London debut. The work was repeated in the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford on 5 May.

Andrew Zreczycki was a conductor for whom John had a high regard. "I could trust him to prepare any of my works without my need of going to any rehearsal," he said.

The Demos Variations for orchestra were completed in 1986 and dedicated to his two children. As the title suggests, the work implies an optimistic view of human nature. The piece falls into four sections and is symphonic in outlook if not in design. It was premiered by the BBC Philharmonic under Adrian Leaper in Manchester in January 1993.

There were two marriages in the 1980s. Jake married Barbara Kells at Lewisham Registry Office in November 1988. Barbara is a Labour party activist and was a teaching assistant in a school for children with special needs. They have two daughters, Megan born February 1989, and Eleanor, born October 1992.

Jake was a local Government Officer dealing with community safety in Lewisham but ill-health forced him to retire early in the summer of 2006. Unfortunately, his condition continued to deteriorate and he died in January 2009.

Sarah met Roy Collins in 1987 and they were married on 18 November 1989 at Lewisham Registry

Office. Roy was a Health Service Manager in Greenwich and, at the time, Sarah was a Senior Policy Officer with the TUC. John gave a witty speech at this function, the reception being held at Congress House where Sarah worked. Sarah and Roy have two daughters, Hannah born in 1991, who shows a talent for art, and Esther, born in 1994, who is learning the classical guitar.

Roy has retired and Sarah is currently the Head of Equality and Employment Rights at the TUC. In June 2006 she was awarded the CBE, five months before her father's death.

He was very proud of her and was keen to tell me so. He also adored his grandchildren although in his last years when illness and weakness overtook him he was unable to keep up with their energy.

But to return to John's career. In the mid 1980s he worked slowly on a large work for chorus and orchestra which he wanted to call *Where was God?* I told him that this title was provocative and how could anyone blame God when they did not believe in Him? The work is a portrait of the final nuclear annihilation of the human race. The texts include those from the book of Revelation, Coleridge, Sasson, Stafford and Porter. The work bears no dedication and is called *Apocalypse*.

During 1989, John began correspondence with Max Keogh of ABC (Australian Broadcasting Company). Max was responsible for a radio station within the organisation. Max helped secure a recording of the *Clarinet Concerto* with Paul Dean and the Queensland Symphony Orchestra and a performance of *Sydney Street Scenes* which John wrote in 1994 for Max to poems by Kenneth Slessor. It was premiered on ABC radio in 1995.

In a British Music Society newsletter someone said that Veale's *Clarinet Concerto* was "utterly delightful... a pastoral enchantment and a summer's morning sense of wonder... with an explosive Waltonian *joie de vivre*."

As John commented, some people do not know what they are talking about!

What was infuriating was that the BBC broadcast the work on Radio 3 without it being advertised and without telling the composer. The same problem happened with his *Symphony no. 3*. It was premiered as a broadcast after John's death without being advertised. And this was an important British symphony!!

John was very honest about composing and composers. He used to say that most composers have within their genre some junk, even his beloved Shostakovich.

The 1990s were very difficult for him. He had developed prostate cancer, had laser treatment for it, was often passing blood which distressed him. Although his medication and medical procedures dictated his day he kept to a healthy diet. He made his own soups.

He was even more distressed that Lewis Foreman and Max Keogh seemed to desert him despite John's many letters to them. He said that they had both served him well and he was grateful but probably felt they could do no more but that they could still keep in touch. He was often depressed by this and sometimes said, "I don't think I have ever fitted in anywhere."

However, there are letters from Max enquiring about non-replies to his letters to John.

For my fiftieth birthday in 1996, John and Janet visited me on the Isle of Wight. I took them round to the famous locations such as Farringford in Freshwater, the home of Tennyson. We saw Osborne House the home of Queen Victoria, Nunwell House where Charles I spent his last night of freedom and Carisbrooke Castle where the king was a prisoner. John was particularly interested in the gorgeous villages of Shorwell and Brighstone where French prisoners were detained during the Napoleonic wars. We had a super meal in the Crown in Shorwell and John was delighted with its beautiful Norman church. We had another superb meal in Arvino's, an Italian restaurant, in Shanklin.

John, his politics and opinions

Some have stated erroneously that I have put my opinions into the mouth of John Veale and this false allegation can be rebutted by setting out one of his letters to me:

7 Nourse Close
Woodeaton
OXON OX3 9TJ

17 February 2004

Dear David

Because of my support for the Labour party, I was atheistic, which is the usual belief of left wingers. Now after editing some of your theological essays, I would say that I am more espoused to agnosticism.

I reacted against my father, who was a Conservative, and I felt that the Labour party were more compassionate to peoples needs.

My views have changed since the coming to power of Blair who is more conservative than Thatcher but I had doubts before this.

I objected to Blair's dalliance with Bush and the illegal invasion of Iraq. I admired Robin Cook's stand.

Of course, you are right that many left wingers are irrationally opposed to Christianity, and religion in general, since they are opposed to any and every other authority or ideology. Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Wilson and Foot have all made this very plain whereas the Conservatives have a policy of religious freedom, which is fairer.

I do not completely share your views on homosexuality. What I do not like is underage sex between a man and a boy and this is why Britten does not have my approval. His advocacy of bestiality as in *Our Hunting Fathers* is very troublesome and, you are right, the man is in his music.

It was the Labour party who legalised homosexuality in the 1950s and I did not support this but took the view that if people are of this persuasion then that was exclusively their business and one's private and intimate life should be both private and personal. This, and the wicked miners strike designed to bring down the Conservative government, which was anarchy, were the beginning of my disillusionment with Labour but I have to be circumspect as some of my family members are staunch Labour and Union supporters. Such aggression and violence in politics is unacceptable and you must remember that some miners were guilty of the murder of a taxi driver, David Wilkie who was bringing miners in to work. The strike was illegal since a proper ballot was not taken and it cost the country billions of pounds and it was not the Conservative government that proposed mine closures; it was the National Coal Board.

If Socialists believe in equality, as they say they do, then they should, and indeed must, acknowledge Christianity and religion without condemnation or disapproval of it.

I understand your views about Elgar but, because people are not so knowledgeable as you are, they will be offended at what you say. That he was a very nasty man is true but that

should not colour our views about his music. But his music is poor; he could not write a sequence whereas Shostakovich could; Elgar could not write an allegro and his orchestration is turgid and the Cello Concerto is a pathetic wallow although I used to like it. He could only write two themes and Falstaff is his best work but still not that good. His attempt to be modern fails miserably as in *The Apostles*.

Yours ever,

In 2005 in Oxford, John had a bad fall and broke his femur and was taken to hospital for surgery. This was a difficult time for him as he was losing both his sight and hearing. It was clear that he could not return home to Woodeaton. He could no longer live alone.

At the end of April 2006, I received a letter from Sara Dixon of the Musicians Benevolent Fund asking me for a reference about John who had applied to enter the Fund's residential home in Bromley. It was very humbling to read that John had said that I had done more for him in music than anyone else and that I was the most trusted friend he had ever know. I do not claim to agree with this kind accolade but, obviously, that is what John thought.

John's sight and hearing were failing fast and he was very weak. When he was in a nursing house which was run by the Catholic Church, he found this to be extremely ironic given his views on religion but he enjoyed debating this when the priest called.

John Veale died at the Princess Royal University Hospital, Bromley on 16 November 2006.

Humour, Independence of Thought and Judgments

John had an excellent sense of humour and the many funny stories he told about people he had usually investigated to ensure that they were true. He did not like gossip or a joke about someone which was not true. His witticisms were clever and highly amusing and he had a sense of irony.

His stories were intellectual not common or crude. He had a brilliant mind. Some have said, however, that he was a great gossip!

One of the first stories he told me was of his friend the very gifted Welsh poet, Dylan Thomas. Sometime in 1951, Dylan rang the BBC and asked if Victor Hely-Hutchinson was still the Head of Music at the BBC. The reply was that he had died in 1947. Dylan snapped, "That was not the question. Is he still the Head of Music at the BBC?"

John spoke to Sir Thomas Beecham at the end of the 1950s.

"Sir Thomas, what do you think is the finest work Elgar wrote?"

"Oh, that is easy. It is a piece he composed twenty years after he died."

It was easy to be friendly with Malcolm Arnold. After the publication of Arnold's Symphony no. 4, John purchased a score. He met Malcolm some weeks later and said, "I enjoyed following the score of your Fourth Symphony which I bought the other week!". Malcolm smiled broadly, "Oh, it was you who bought it, was it?".

These stories may not have an impact today since they show a particular sense of humour.

Another hilarious story concerned John and Malcolm. John asked Malcolm, "What do you think of Barbirolli?" he asked innocently. "Oh," answered Arnold, "is he that chef in that Italian restaurant in Hackney? No, I don't like him at all!".

One of the most endearing composers was Edmund Rubbra who also lived in Oxford. I know this story is true because the same event happened to me. John asked him, "Do we call you Mr RUBB - Rah or Mr Rew-brr?". The answer was, "You call me Edmund!".

Walton had been a good friend to John since the early 1940s. There are a few stories about Walton which John enjoyed. Up to about 1960, Walton had some regard for Britten but then discovered his pederasty which deeply offended him. Walton remembered having a lift in Britten's car and Britten asking him if he had ever buggered a boy. Walton protested no. "You do not know what you have missed !" said Britten. In a music shop there was, on one occasion, a display of Britten and his music including a large framed photograph. Walton snatched it and laid it face down on a chair.

The only time I saw Walton angry was when someone started the nonsense that he was Elgar's successor and that Elgar's mantle had fallen on him. Walton was incensed, and rightly so.. "Whoever started this absurdity should have been shot five minutes before he invented this nonsense!" snapped Walton.

This is an important point. People will make comparisons and ,if there is no comparison to make ,they will invent one and so musical myths are made and, tragically, some are believed.

John was also annoyed at such things. He laughed with incredulity when someone said that his Violin Concerto was like Delius. "It is as ridiculous as saying it is like Monteverdi," explained John. He was also irritated that some said his music was pastoral depicting country life or scenery. "Pastoral music

is often somewhat anaemic having no body or substance, rather like orange squash watered down to become tasteless.”

However, John approved my definition of his music when I wrote that his music encapsulated England before the advent of the motorway and ghastly skyscrapers. John adored the country and felt that it was the country that made England so special but his music is not pastoral. He lamented the fact that we had become like America. He admired Prince Charles’s stand against high rise buildings which he described as eyesores in England’s beautiful land. He would often say, “Why do we have to build skyscrapers on sea fronts ?”

One of the issues that saddened John was that dictionaries now gave definitions as to how words were currently used and thereby endorsed their incorrect use. He regarded this as the bastardisation of the English language and that it created problems and they were avoidable problems. “If you use English properly it is misinterpreted because of new definitions of established words, “ he would say.

He would cite the expression, “I am quite well but I have a bit of a headache!” The word quite means completely and so if you are quite well you cannot have a bit of a headache. He hated the use of the word cool to mean fantastic or commendable. The word cool means at a fairly low temperature and fairly cold. And so if teenagers call a pop group cool they should encourage the group to buy some warmer clothes. Another word that irked him was the word fabulous which dictionaries now say means incredible and marvellous. John explained, “The word fabulous comes from the word fable. A fable is a fiction, it is non-factual, it isn’t true, it isn’t real. It is usually a fantasy involving animals. And so if we call The Beatles fabulous we are saying that they are not real, they are fictional, they are not true, they do not exist. They are just a fantasy.”

As for The Beatles, who were known as the Fab Four, John was disgusted that they received their MBEs from the Queen and it was reported that they smoked marijuana at Buckingham Palace. Several previous recipients of such awards sent theirs back in protest. The Beatles sang songs apparently advocating the use of illegal drugs and promiscuity such as the line in the song I am the Walrus, “Boy, your naughty girl has got her knickers down!”.

John would groan at good quality newspapers and the BBC for their use of poor English. “They end sentences with prepositions and use split infinitives, “ he would lament.

He detested political and business words and expressions. He loathed the expression collateral damage which means the unavoidable loss of innocent lives and damage to property during war or military action. We both saw on the television film of some young Iraqi children playing on a dusty road in a village, smiling and laughing and without a care in the world. Then the camera shook. There was a tremendous bang and the next picture was of those children dead and mutilated in the dirt.

He was also offended by the expression friendly fire. In the business world he hated the word downsizing. “Why don’t they say what they mean... we are sacking some of you!”.

He grimaced at the modern use of the word wicked. He referred to a football match and the commentator saying ‘ that was a wicked ball.’ “How can a football be evil, corrupt, immoral and despicable?” he would ask, adding, “Hitler was wicked!”.

In the world of music, John was troubled by the word masterpiece. The word has two meanings, an outstanding work or the most outstanding work of a composer. John was annoyed when a radio announcer introduced a Piano Quintet by a famous British composer as a masterpiece. “This composer could not write for the piano”, said John, and he was right. Many famous pianists refused to play it because the piano writing was not pianistic and, indeed, atrocious. “How can this therefore be a masterpiece?” queried John.

Many years ago, a survey was conducted which took over five years for people to say what they considered were the worst two symphonies ever written instructing them to give musical and unprejudicial reasons and evidence to support their claim. The two most disliked symphonies for musical reasons were Mahler's Fourth and Elgar's Symphony no. 2.

A few months after this survey was analysed, The Gramophone referred to this British symphony as a masterpiece.

John was not gullible, never tricked and, although he trusted his friends, he was not over trusting. He needed to be certain of facts. When I told him about Elgar insisting that all women in the choir and orchestra performing any of his music had to wear navy blue knickers and, furthermore, that Elgar would undertake random inspections, John was aghast. He took the matter up with the English cellist Beatrice Harrison who played Elgar's Cello Concerto and recorded it with the composer. She confirmed that this was true and that every time she played the concerto she had to buy some new underwear and it had to be navy blue. I sent John copies of letters between Elgar and my great uncle Sir Ivor Atkins and copies of letters from twelve separate women who wrote to me stating that when performing Elgar's music they suffered his voyeurism and underwear inspection. John wrote to these ladies and six of them replied direct to him and confirmed that this was, in fact, true.

We agreed that the composer is in his music and his music is him. Most people may say that we are to judge the quality of the music and not judge the man or his private life. But the private life is sometimes in the music. Britten's obsession with homosexuality, bestiality and pederasty is in his music such as *Our Hunting Fathers*, *Death in Venice*, *Abraham and Isaac*, *War Requiem* and *The Turn of the Screw*. Bruckner's Roman Catholicism and spirituality is in his music, Mahler's angst pervades his music perhaps to intolerable levels, communism is in the music of Alan Bush and so on. John's love of women is his *The Song Of Radha* and *Valentina* is his Symphony no. 2. His Violin Concerto is autobiographical. Humphrey Searle's hatred of war is in his *Oxus* and his love for his first wife, Lesley, also known as Gillian, makes his *Poem for 22 solos strings* positively glow. Martinu's reaction to genocide is displayed in his *Memorial to Lidice*. The list is endless.

What sometimes troubled him was the suppression of facts about famous people and the prevention of making these facts known and circulated. "We are making celebrities, making people out to be famous who do not deserve such accolades. We are making heroes by claiming that some men have courage, nobility and exceptional qualities worthy of our praise. And when it comes to Elgar and Britten we are not allowed to say that one was a voyeur, abuser of women and a dirty old man and the other was a criminal and a sexual abuser of underage boys," John said, adding, "We made one a knight of the realm and another a Member of the House of Lords!".

"Dreadful role-models," John complained.

John responded to my father's humorous comment that tap dancing should be done in bare feet. John, being a film critic, was very knowledgeable about films. He drew my attention to the musical *Brigadoon* pointing out that there is a song and dance routine to the song *Heather on the Hill*. John said that there was a part when the song was played merely by the orchestra in a sumptuous orchestration which was often drowned out and therefore spoilt by the horrible clacking of Gene Kelly's tap dancing. "What a ruination of superb orchestration," said John.

He also commented on his own film music. "I wrote what I thought was an expressive theme in one of my films but you never really heard it. Actors were talking above it and when the theme was repeated the traffic noise obscured it."

One of John's famous remarks was, "You have got to have a sense of humour to be a film composer or film critic!"

There is a lot of great film music. John would say that there were films where the music made the film successful. Understandably his favourite film composer was Alex North whose scores including *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *I'll Cry Tomorrow* and *Spartacus*. John's friend, Humphrey Searle, wrote some memorable scores for movies and there is no film score better than Searle's score for Robert Wise's *The Haunting*. Bernard Herrman's score for *Pyscho* was masterful and Jerry Goldsmith's scores were memorable. There were other fine film composers such as Miklos Rosza, William Alwyn, Benjamin Frankel and the 'glorious witty scores' of Malcolm Arnold. And, of course, there was Walton's score for *Henry V* which was rescued from the rubbish at a film studio.

What is not realised by many people is the fraud that goes on in film music. To quote one example, the film *The Greatest Story Ever Told* has, as a credit, that the music is by Alfred Newman. It is not. Most of it is by Verdi and taken from his *Requiem*.

I drew John's attention to the hit songs of a British composer of successful musicals in which it is clear that this composer had stolen the tunes of famous composers. Take as an example two of his songs. One is Ravel's *Bolero* and another is the slow movement of the Mendelssohn *Violin Concerto*. John saw the music which was the evidence he needed. He said, "A man becomes a millionaire by writing musicals with the material of great composers of the past. Surely that is fraud!"

There were films which impressed John. He was particularly enthusiastic about Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* but found some of the alleged great films to be something of a bore. He was very supportive of actors who did not become household names. As to actresses, he spoke of the splendid timing of Rosalie Crutchley, the dependability of Vanda Godsell and, the charm of Maureen Swanson ; conversely he recalled Alfred Hitchcock's remarks about Julie Andrews who said of her, "She can't act, she can't dance and she certainly can't sing!" John felt that Greer Garson was over-rated and that in the film *Mrs Minerva*, Garson was outclassed by Teresa Wright and Dame May Whitty. Katharine Hepburn made some great films but she was a flawed actress who, in many of her films, never stopped talking but, presumably, she was speaking to a script!.

As to actors, John said that John Wayne was a popular actor but not a great actor adding that this is an important distinction. Robert Donat was not such a popular actor but he was certainly a great actor. Even when he was dying he turned in a magnificent performance as the Mandarin in *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*.

Of the more up- to- date actors, Robert de Niro was a versatile and splendid actor whereas in every film made by John Wayne and Michael Caine the only parts they ever played were themselves. Clive Revill was such a brilliant actor that each role he played was so convincing that he was not Clive Revill..

"There are few films that are really humorous, " said John, " *Some Like it Hot* and *Barefoot in the Park* are two exceptions as they are genuinely funny. *Laurel and Hardy* are out-dated but often very funny. There are films which are funny, indeed ridiculous, but not intended to be." John highlighted early horror films such as those starring Bela Lugosi which were intended to scare but which were painfully funny.

"There are very few really great films," said John. He makes special mention of John Ford's *How Green was My Valley* which had a splendid cast including Walter Pidgeon, Donald Crisp, Maureen O'Hara and an excellent Roddy MacDowell. He also mentioned the 1947 version of *Miracle on 34th Street* with Edmund Gwynn as Kris Kringle. His stay in America enabled him to meet actors and he had endless praise for such people as Susan Hayward and Robert Ryan but lamented that the film studios never gave them the films which their talents deserved.

It must not be taken that John was negative and only given to censure. On the contrary he was 80%

positive even when he was so ill and depressed with his circumstances. It will be claimed that he was old-fashioned and did not move with the times. That would be an unfair appraisal. He was meticulous and precise but never in a demanding way. He loved the English language and advocated its correct usage. What is wrong with that ? He enjoyed the best that art, particularly music, had to offer. He did not like the frauds in the music industry.

He believed in honesty. In all my writings he stressed that I should tell the truth. When I submitted an article about Gesualdo to a music website the so-called editor of that web site would not publish it unless I took out the fact that Gesualdo murdered his wife, her lover and their child. But it is true and major events in that composer's life. To tell the truth is often more dangerous than telling lies.

In all these things John showed that he cared. He gave matters serious attention. He looked after what he believed was valuable and important. He worried about getting things right as shown in his music. He had genuine concerns and interests. He should not be criticised for such qualities.

John Veale's character and personality

John and I were friends for twenty five years and yet there were things he did not share with me, not that he had to.

At no time did he give me details of his father who used to beat him as a child. He simply said that he did not get on well with his father. The only thing he said about his mother was that she was remote whereas, when the Veale children had disagreements with their mother, as all children do, she would place her hand over her chest and say that she had a weak heart and cause her children to feel guilty and believe that any disagreement could lead to her dying of a heart attack. In this she was manipulative and dishonest.

For the last ten years of her life, Lady Veale suffered from pemphigoid cancer. Her funeral service at the Oxford Crematorium was not a sad affair for John and he was not adversely affected by her death. In fact, it may be true to say that her death was a relief as she had never been a real mother. His sister, Janet, felt the same. Apart from family and a few friends, the only other mourner was Lord Halifax, then Chancellor of Oxford University, who seemed to have more than one funeral to attend that day judging by the wreaths in the boot of his car.

Sir Douglas Veale died of bowel cancer in September 1973. There was a memorial service at the University Church in Oxford. Certain heads of colleges were present with family and friends and, at his funeral, it was acknowledged that he was extremely respected and had been a very able administrator who steered the university through difficult times.

One issue which troubled John was that of homosexuality. Like me, he did not hate homosexuals but he hated homosexuality and there is a difference. I produced to John expert medical evidence that homosexuality was not a genetic issue since twins, whether identical or not, have the same genetic make-up and one turns out to be straight and the other gay. We accepted that circumstances could lead to someone becoming gay. There is the case of my friend the composer, James Wilson, whose father died when he was only four years of age, and James was brought up by his mother, his aunts and various other women.

So dominated by bossy women, James wanted less and less to do with them and sought the company of men who, understandably, he preferred. He had no father's love in his life and wanted the love of a father figure. It all makes sense.

Notwithstanding this, John was tactless in the case of a composer who taught at a boys' school. John believed that everyone knew that this composer was gay and therefore mentioned it in company just as someone would say that So-and-So wore glasses or had a wooden leg. The word got round and the composer was sacked.

John Veale was no saint. Having no woman's love from his mother, he frequently sought love and physical activity with women. Apparently, he used to boast of his sexual conquests and in intimate detail. He did this when dating other women and while he was married to Diana recounting his prowess in the bedroom and the quality of sex various women gave him.

However, John had a great capacity for friendship particularly with people of similar intellectualism. He said that he needed the stimulation.

One of the many things John told me was that between the wars many musicians and other artistes had things in common. They were either socialists, atheists and homosexuals, or they were Roman Catholics and homosexuals. This was also born out by the composer Robert Simpson who used to aver that to get your works broadcast by the BBC you had to be Catholic and/or gay or better still, a toady and

extreme patriot whether a sincere one or not. Robert Simpson used to say that the BBC had a blacklist of composers whose music they would not perform. The BBC protested, and so Simpson said that the BBC therefore had a white list. And this was in the post-Glock days.

John found the combination of socialism and atheism interesting. Michael Foot once said, “You cannot be a member of the Labour party and a Christian.” The founder of Socialism, Karl Marx had said the same thing. Some will disagree, but Foot gave a compelling argument to support this concept and others said, “You cannot be a Labour politician and a Christian !”

The other factor was that John passionately believed in evolution but explained that there were many diverse definitions of evolution. He indicated that evolution must mean there is no Divine Creator and therefore no God. In latter years John told me that the Bishop of Oxford expounded the idea that evolution was God’s means of creation.



I do not think that John was averse to telling a risqué joke but he never spoke one in my presence. The most prolific teller of such jokes was the cellist Jacqueline Du Pré whose dirty jokes were both ‘advanced’ and sick which, with her alleged good looks and lovely legs, made her popular.

However, it must not be assumed that John had no morals. He believed strongly in world peace and strongly denied the nonsense that all wars were caused by religion. Many wars were and are caused by greed and power, men wanting to dominate other men or to prevent their being dominated by other men and their ideologies. He made the point that most wars were generated by these desires singling out, as examples, the Boer Wars, the two World Wars, the Korean War and the Viet Nam War.

Having lived in America for two years, he was alarmed at some aspects of American culture. He would complain that the USA ascribed the final victory of World War II to themselves and, added flippantly, probably to John Wayne as well. The only big things about some Americans, but not all of them, is their bellies and their heads he would say. He found less intellectual stimulation in American than he did in Britain, but it must not be assumed that he hated all Americans or America. He found Roger Sessions to be highly intellectual and, therefore, his type of man.

As to musicians, it was not just two British composers that John was troubled by. He found Wagner’s anti-semiticism unacceptable and, even more so, the extreme racism of Chopin. John was disgusted at Schubert’s regular paying for sex in brothels and was not sympathetic about the fact that Schubert died of syphilis. While John had many lovers, he explained that he was different from Schubert inasmuch that the women in his life acquiesced and there was no payment, just sheer enjoyment.

It must be stressed that this is not negativism or prejudice but the pursuance of the truth. It is even more interesting to record the composers for whom John had a high regard. Sibelius was superb and we often discussed the symphonies and how Ginette Neveu’s performance of the Violin Concerto would never be surpassed. He adored Shostakovich and being something of a perfectionist and meticulous as well he loved Mrvanisky’s performances of Shostakovich as the definitive performances. He hated Pretre’s performance of the Symphony no. 12 because the rhythm and timing was all wrong. He admired Mahler’s Symphony no. 6 but positively hated the Symphony no. 4. Bartok was the greatest innovator and never wrote a substandard piece. The Music for strings, percussion and celesta

was the finest work for string orchestra ever written with both an emotive and cerebral content. "It horrifies me," John said, "that people do not appreciate Bartok. How can this be?"

He enjoyed the music of Samuel Barber whose Symphony no. 2 was withdrawn by the composer but John said that this was a pity. He felt that the Violin Concerto contained beautiful music but did not work as a concerto. The romantic sumptuousness of Ravel appealed strongly to him. A special favourite of Veale was Vaughan Williams and particularly the Symphony no. 4. When I sent him the recording by Bryden Thomson he enthused that it was never better played nor would it be. "I cannot stop playing it!" he told me.

But the question remains. How far was John's character affected by his bullying father and manipulative mother? It clearly was, but to what extent we will never know. I always found him to be a polite and considerate man. We had a mutual respect for each other and a friendship I valued highly. I still have many letters from him which confirm all that I write here.

John Veale and William Glock

John was one of many musicians who was indoctrinated to believe that Sir William Glock, the Controller of Music at the BBC from 1959 to 1971 was so in favour of avant garde music that he deliberately refused to broadcast British music that was conventional and tonal in style and, therefore, John believed that he was one of the casualties of Glock's policies.

This is completely untrue. The fact of the matter is that Glock was not espoused to the avant garde as revealed in his many letters, but he felt that the BBC had to broadcast music of all genres and many of us are grateful that he did.

This is an important issue ,although it will be unfairly dismissed by some as a defence of Glock rather than being relevant to reminiscences of John Veale, but John eventually admitted that for years he believed that Glock was exclusively responsible for the BBC's neglect of his work.

Way back in the 1940s when Victor Hely-Hutchinson was the Controller of Music at the BBC, John would write letters complaining that certain British composers were ignored by the BBC. John made a special plea for the music of Edmund Rubbra.

It was 'after' Glock left the BBC that many British composers were totally ignored by the BBC and most of them wrote conventional tonal music, yet Glock has been savaged as the one who has ruined such composers and their reputations by advancing avant garde music at the expense of British conventional composers. This is simply not true and I prepared evidence for John to attempt to kill this myth and injustice. A myth is something imagined and fictitious.

A friend has copies of all Radio Times since 1951 and listed all the conservative British tonal works broadcast in Glock's time. I listed to John many examples. Glock broadcast many symphonies of Havergal Brian numbers 1,2,4 6 -12. 14. 21, 22 and 28. Glock put on all the Rubbra symphonies to date and music by Robert Still, Ivor Walsworth, David Morgan, John Dyer, Ruth Gipps, William Wordsworth, Bliss, Bax, Britten and many more. The list is endless. Glock put on seven premieres of Richard Arnell, seven of Ruth Gipps and five of Francis Chagrin to name a few. Glock was also responsible for the revival in Sibelius who was not then as popular as he is today.

In one year, Glock only broadcast one avant garde work, a glorious piece by Bruno Maderna and this is born out by evidence. He broadcast many British tonal works that year, 105 to be exact.

The conductors of the BBC Symphony Orchestra in Glock's time included Dorati and Colin Davis and they were not avant garde and did not perform such music. It was in Glock's last year that Pierre Boulez was appointed and Boulez was keen to perform the avant garde and so it is only in one of the twelve years of Glock's tenure that avant garde music had attention but that was a mere 4% broadcasts in Glock's time. But Boulez also performed classical repertoire and performed it very well too. It was after Glock left that Boulez gave considerable attention to modern works approved by the new controller at the BBC, Robert Ponsonby.

It is true that Glock valued some composers who were progressive but it must be remembered that he was criticised for playing too much Mozart. For many years we had Mozart every day. Like me, Glock was a committed Beethovenian.

If you analyse any year of Glock's reign from the Radio Times, as I have, you will see that conservative and 'classical' composers had the lion's share of broadcasts. There is no doubt about that.

He put on a great deal of British tonal music and very little British avant garde or modern music. He

did not like the avant garde and one recalls the awful fear he experienced in Italy of a public performance of Nono's work which created a riot which cemented his existing dislike for the avant garde.

I knew Glock and how hard he fought to premiere conservative British works and I have many reliable witnesses to this, but Glock was often overruled by the BBC reading panel and by higher management.

It is wrongly thought that Radio Three's Controller of Music has the final word on all broadcasts and scheduling including the Proms and, therefore, must be blamed... it is simply not true. I had endless correspondence with Ruth Gipps and others and copy letters from Glock in which it is evidenced that he tried very hard to perform other 'conservative' British works. The evidence of this is first hand information confirmed by many others and in writing, as well as the evidence in the Radio Times.

John Veale suffered at the hands of the BBC after Glock's retirement. He sent four scores to the BBC which were forwarded to the BBC in Manchester who were silent for about five years and, much later, they returned John's scores.

There were some traditional British composers who shot themselves in the foot by submitting works to the BBC and then attacking the BBC only a few weeks later for the 'delay' and not treating their works as priority. I could cite composers and dates and how some composers were literally frog-marched off the BBC premises. Britten and the composers in his circle were the worst offenders. Glock suffered a great deal of abuse of this kind. And still today there are writers who advocate the lies about Glock ignoring some conservative British composers. False allegations are deplorable as are the people who make these claims.

Composers cannot depend on the BBC being their initial, major or only outlet for performances. You will find that composers given few or no performances by the BBC often have the same situation outside of the BBC having no performances elsewhere, including, at that time, gramophone records.

We must be aware of how the BBC reading panel has, and had the last say in broadcasts. Look how they treated William Wordsworth and his Symphony no 2 rejecting it because it was written in two colours of ink. This was not in Glock's time. The panel refused a broadcast of Arnold's Symphony no. 9 and this was not in Glock's time. It was around 1987. John Drummond was against a broadcast of a symphony of John Pickard but the panel cleared it for broadcast and Drummond was furious. The Controller of Music at Radio Three is not the final authority and yet shallow people quote President Truman who referred to himself when he said, "The buck stops here!" The anti-Glock people use this to state that, as Glock was the BBC controller, the buck, the blame, must be his.

I have also read of a distinguished British composer, whom I admire greatly, refer to Glock as a Stalin figure.

In his obituary of John Veale in The Independent of 20 November 2006, Lewis Foreman perpetuates this falsehood and it is not only to the detriment of Glock but to John himself. Lewis Foreman writes, " However like many other composers working in a tonal idiom at that time Veale became persona non grata particularly in BBC circles, almost overnight, as a consequence of the avant garde revolution engendered by Sir William Glock's appointment as Director of Music at the BBC."

This is simply not true. Glock's in-house conductors were all conservative until Boulez was appointed in the last year of Glock's reign.

This is being irresponsible, as are all the people who perpetrate this myth.

Today, in 2009, and for many years, there are many tonal and non-avant garde British composers that

are ignored by the BBC and so can I say that Ponsonby, Drummond and Roger Wright and their staff are destroying the career of these composers ?

Drummond was a very difficult man and exceptionally hostile to some composers including British composers who composed tonal music and he fought tooth and nail to ensure that the BBC did not broadcast the works of these composers. There is evidence of this and some of it is in televised interviews which I have on video.

John Veale approached Drummond on a few occasions and was ignored.

Yet people falsely attack Glock who is innocent, but say nothing about Drummond who had a blacklist. It is true that because Drummond was homosexual he promoted British composers who were also homosexual. Is this not a case for heterosexual composers to complain about?

I have letters from the BBC in which they state that none of the in-house BBC orchestras or conductors wanted to perform some works of conservative British composers and, therefore, the BBC cannot force them to do so. A BBC conductor wanted to perform some conservative British works in Glock's time and Glock readily approved this and a series of 24 programmes was scheduled. But higher management squashed the idea and it was this sort of thing that Glock had to endure and which eventually led him to leave the BBC.

Over the last fourteen years (1995-2009) the BBC has saturated us with Elgar and Britten. While they are certainly not my favourite composers, nor were they John's, they should be heard. In one year we had 30 broadcasts of the Elgar Cello Concerto and last year it was played three times in a period of 24 hours. For every Dvorak Cello Concerto that is broadcast, we get 12 broadcasts of the Elgar Cello Concerto. If it were 30 broadcasts of a particular Stockhausen piece a year this would still be troublesome. Beethoven's Symphony no. 7 is broadcast once to nine broadcasts of Elgar's Symphony no. 2 which, with Mahler Four, was voted the most unadmired symphony in 2000-2005.

While Elgar may be my bete noir that is not the issue here. If we were saturated by the BBC over the last fourteen years with the music of Hans Werner Henze, the composer most admired by Walton, the principle would still be the same. Incidentally, Elgar is the only composer to have had an official Depreciation Society.

Someone created this myth about Glock and others are perpetrating it. There are people who regard themselves as experts on British music and are considered gurus, leaders who guide and influence others, and, like Busoni, hold court. They do a great disservice to music.

These spoken lies about Glock are slanderous and when put in print are libellous. But you cannot slander or libel the dead. But the defamation of Glock is repugnant and dreadful and I address those descriptions to those who blacken his name.

Now to the real explanation.

The Controller of Music at The Third Programme before Glock, J F Howgill, had given some unauthorized indication to publishers of conservative British music (Lengnick and Joseph Williams) that such music would be played and the publishers relied on this and put financial investment into such composers. When it did not happen, the publishers created a furore and Glock was now Controller. He knew nothing about this empty promise by his predecessor but, nonetheless, did what he was allowed to do. He put on works by Stanley Bate and works by Franz Reizenstein to name but two more. Glock was not a destroyer of composers and their reputations or careers. He did what he could and many of us are grateful for that.

William Glock was a lovely man and genuinely committed to music of all styles. He should be remembered for all the good he did including that for conservative composers.

I supplied all the evidence to John about Glock and his time at the BBC. John was distressed. All he said was, “ I have completely misjudged him and so have many others!”

It is time that these falsehoods about Glock were stopped and the truth be told.

Good Musicians

As we have already mentioned, but it is worth repeating, John was able to recognise bad musicians as well as good musicians. There were many that he admired and for musical reasons.

He explained, “We live in an age when what sells many a composer is his name rather than his music. There are those who adore Beethoven, and understandably so, and, consequently, must have all the works of Beethoven and because it is Beethoven some have the attitude that as he was a great composer all his works are magnificent. As a consequence they will not allow any criticism of Beethoven and regard such criticism as a sort of treason.”

It is the famous name that people judge, not the music.

It is the same with Corn Flakes. The name Kellogs is the famous name associated with this product but, as John said, “Summerfield’s Corn Flakes are just as good”.

There was once a television advertisement for Hi Fi equipment which had the slogan, “You pay for our product, not our name.”

People will not tolerate the ugly truths about their favourite composers. They would rather believe a beautiful lie. Boult was asked about Schubert’s Symphony no. 9 and he replied, “It should not be called great because it certainly isn’t.” He disliked the piece intensely and does not comment on Schubert’s music in his autobiography.

John was an admirer of Humphrey Searle. John spent much time with Humphrey at the famous London pub known as the Gluepot. Humphrey’s music was so different from John’s but John would say that Humphrey was “the most original British composer of all and the most modest of composers. “ Searle was responsible for the recognition of Liszt and Alkan in Britain and, as early as 1937 wrote an article which was a plea for the recognition of Alkan. Searle’s modesty was also shown in that he was never arrogant, never Elgarian. For two years after the 1939-45 war Humphrey had William Walton as a pupil and yet did not disclose this to anyone. It was Humphrey’s first wife Lesley Gray who quietly said, “Humphrey must leave now. He has a pupil and it is Walton.”

Sir William Walton told John and many others that all of the teachers he could go to only Humphrey would do. With tears in his eyes Walton said, “ I owe so much to Humphrey. Not only is he a great composer but he is never caught out on any musical subject. He is a walking encyclopaedia. He knows instinctively how to put my musical ideas right. John Ireland was right when he said that Searle was the finest musician he ever knew and it must be remembered that Ireland knew many fine composers and was a friend of Ravel.

The other British composer John admired was Alan Rawsthorne. This rather surprised me as Rawsthorne is not accepted as one of the greats. To go back to the famous- name- syndrome, Alan was not a famous name. John adored the Symphonic Studies but found the String Quartets rather claustrophobic. John explained that Rawsthorne, like Searle, “ had the courage to go his own way and was not out to be popular or a commercial success. He wanted to make music not money. Some of his chamber music is very fine and his Violin Sonata must be the finest British work in this genre”.

Sir William Walton was admired by John who could talk for hours and in detail about Walton’s music. John had an amazing detail carried in his head about the two versions of the splendid Walton Viola Concerto. John adored Belshazzar’s Feast and the Symphony no. 1 was a total revelation to him although, late in life, he did agree that it was a bit overpowering. Walton had a devilish sense of humour and was a lady’s man. In his early days, Walton felt he had to go along with the crowd and admire Elgar and Britten and, in times of self doubt, he would speak on these composers’ behalf

hoping that his reward would be some recognition. He wrote a work based on an Impromptu by Britten because he was so keen to have recognition. But he loathed Britten.

John was furious at Michael Kennedy's book on Walton because of all the mistakes in the book.

John wrote a polite letter to Kennedy pointing out the many fundamental errors in his book. It was a very gracious letter but the reply was rancid and the most objectionable letter I have ever read. It enclosed Veale's letter to Kennedy torn up. John was philosophical, as usual. "The trouble is that people will believe this rubbish," he said, "Kennedy's book on Elgar is ramming this composer down our throats and telling us we must adore him and his music. You have heard of Bible-bashing, this is Elgar-bashing of the most aggressive type."

John repeated in disbelief, "How could Kennedy write a book about Walton leaving out any mention of Walton's extensive studies with Searle?"

He continued, "An author should give the facts and not use a book to force his opinions on us. There needs to be honesty in writing which must not be a sycophantic attempt to convert readers."

I also wrote to Kennedy graciously pointing out some errors in his books and suggested that they be rectified for the next edition. His reply to me was grossly offensive and I was only being polite and helpful.

One of John's many abilities was his understanding of the harp. It is not an easy instrument to write for as it is limited and not chromatic. Harpists were always grateful that John included in the score all the necessary instructions for the harpist as to tuning.

It was in this aspect of instrumental writing of Maurice Ravel inspired that John who believed that the French composer's writing for the harp was second to none. "Daphnis and Chloe is a simply gorgeous score as is the String Quartet and especially the Introduction and Allegro for flute, clarinet, harp and string quartet," wrote John but he did not like Bolero or La Valse although he admitted that the orchestration in both works was first class.

He would say with a devilish grin, "Some people pronounce it Bol er oh, instead of B lair o but Tony had nothing to do with it, thank God!".

Another good composer that found favour with John was Jean Sibelius. John said that "all of Sibelius's symphonies were different and therefore he was a progressive composer. He did not find a style or system and produce everything within those confines. The same can be said of Vaughan Williams. His nine symphonies are all different. The Symphony no. 8 was substandard compared with the seven that went before it. Vaughan Williams could not write for the piano and the piano is my Achilles heel. Vaughan Williams was a great composer since his style was his own, full of glorious mystical and modal sounds".

There were British composers of which John was not fond and he could talk extensively how much of Holst's music was 'acquired' from other composers. Like Britten, Holst was a musical thief.

John said, "Beethoven was the one of the first of the great composers and Haydn was an exemplar of form and honesty. He explained that a Haydn allegro was an allegro, merry, quick and lively so that forty bars of a Haydn allegro in 4/4 time would last five minutes whereas with an Elgar allegro it would take nine minutes and still be called an allegro. "Elgar could not write an allegro," John would say and, of course, he is right.

Shostakovich was a favourite composer of John's. We both thought the Symphony no. 12 was his

finest symphony because of its form, coherence and logic. John had many recordings of this work. He was horrified at the ghastly performance of the Symphony no. 10 conducted by Rostropovich which was nine minutes longer than usual. Incidentally, he was also distressed at a performance of Walton's Symphony no. 1 conducted by Haitink which was painfully slow and did not adhere to the composer's wishes.

"Composers are in the hands of conductors and engineers these days," he would say mournfully, "And so we should introduce a piece like this :

Symphony no 6 by Vaughan Williams arranged and rearranged by Simon Rattle and John Culpepper and Daisy Longbottom and their team of engineers and by Arthur Crabtree producer and Simon Gruntfuttock, financial director."

He would add, "It is not arranged but deranged!"

Two other composers that John valued were Samuel Barber and Bela Bartok. John liked a lot of Barber's music particularly the two symphonies, the essays and the piano concerto. John said of Barber's Violin Concerto that "it was structurally poor and not a concerto at all and the music was slushy and sentimental." As for Bartok, John said, " He was a great composer and he never wrote a poor piece. All he wrote ranged from good to superlative."

John did not find favour with everyone because of his honesty and integrity which honesty ' knocked down the castle walls of shallow music lovers and prejudiced musicologists.' He was upset when Barbirolli said that he had discovered Jacqueline Du Pre. William Pleeth did this. Like the late Princess of Wales, Du Pre has been elevated as a star. Yet she was not. She was very limited. When a work by a modern British composer was commissioned for her to play she could not play it and so the composer had to rewrite so that the cello played non-stop throughout the piece. It was the only way she could cope with it. She once performed the Shostakovich Concerto no. 1 and it was simply awful. John added, "Her playing of the Brahms's sonatas was a travesty full of attack and hormonal intensity".

William Pleeth was universally admired as was Maurice Gendron and Pierre Fournier. But the cellist that most impressed John was Janos Starker. His performance of the Kodaly Solo Cello Sonata was "staggeringly amazing" and the famous Cello Concerto of Dvorak played by Starker "melts my heart."

Although he liked Mahler's Symphony no. 6 to some extent, John was not impressed with Mahler generally. "The music is too long and full of angst," he wrote. "The Fourth Symphony is a dud. It conjures up pictures of beefy, blond, German men swigging beer. The Eighth Symphony is a hybrid. The first movement is a successful setting of the Pentecost hymn but the rest, the scenes from Faust, does not belong to the same work and the music is often dull. Perhaps the Ninth Symphony is his best."

Of conductors, John admired Boult. He adored Fritz Reiner because he "performs what the composer wrote"; John thought highly of Bryden 'Jack' Thomson for the same reason and because "in his performances you can hear what the second trumpet and the violas are doing". When I sent John Jack's performance of Vaughan Williams Symphony no. 4, he rang me immediately after hearing it saying, "This is a revelation, a perfect performance... absolutely amazing".

I sent my friend the Irish composer Gerard Victory a recording of John's Violin Concerto. Gerry wrote to me as follows

"I have now given up any idea of writing a Violin Concerto myself now that I have heard Mr Veale's Concerto. It is a fine work and the slow movement is profoundly moving and certainly beautiful. Please pass my congratulations on to Mr Veale."

Gerry and John corresponded together after that and another friendship was formed. John did his best to promote his own music and it may be true that sometimes he was a trifle too pushy. But John heard Victory's Symphony no 2 and admired it greatly and demanded to see a score.

Of another musician John said, "One of the greatest conductors was Eugene Mravinsky. He too was faithful to each score. He did not take liberties. His Shostakovich is the best you will ever hear and will never be bettered. His recording of Tschaikovsky's Francesca da Rimini is staggering. He was a deeply religious man and had a high set of morals and was always kind to his orchestras."

Was Otto Klemperer a great conductor is one question I put to John. "His performances are usually too slow but he was a first-rate musician", John replied.

When John's Violin Concerto was being recorded he spoke well of the conductor, Richard Hickox. "He was extraordinarily kind, sensitive and often asked me if he was interpreting the music as I wished it to be. He went out of his way to correctly represent my score and that is what makes a great conductor".

John Veale and film music

Neville Coghill was an Oxford University don, a notable literary figure in the University and would have known John Veale since he was a student there reading modern history from 1940 to 1943. John was asked to write the music for the Oxford University Drama Company's production of *Love's Labour's Lost* which had in its cast Kenneth Tynan and Lindsay Anderson. It was directed by Anthony Besch who went on to direct operas at Glyndebourne and elsewhere.

As Muir Mathieson was the leading light in the British Film Music business, John sent him a set of acetates of his music for *Love's Labour's Lost* care of Denham Film Studios. Thanks to Mathieson's interest, John was asked to write some music for the Crown Film Unit for which the usual conductor was John Hollingsworth who was an assistant conductor to Sir Malcolm Sargent.

On 4 April 1954, Sidney Fell gave the first performance of John's Clarinet Concerto with the London Symphony Orchestra under Sargent. By pure coincidence the very next day John Bryan, the producer, asked Muir Mathieson to find a composer 'other than one of the usual ones' to write the score for his first feature *The Purple Plain* which was being made in Ceylon and at Pinewood. Muir asked Hollingsworth, who was at the concert the night before and referred to John by saying that he could take well to writing a film score. John received a phone call from Pinewood Studios asking him to go there straight away. Here he met Bryan and was given a copy of H E Bates's novel and told to read it overnight and come back the next day. John was asked if he was prepared to write the score to this film.

Now all film directors and producers are different. Some take no interest in the music but Bryan was very fussy.

Three weeks later John was invited to see the rushes which, in effect, amounted to a draft of the whole film and a lively discussion followed with Matheson, Bryan and the director, the American Robert Parrish. The question was asked if any oriental sounding music was wanted. Bryan flatly said no. He wanted a theme for each character although this was fussy and the audiences would not latch on to such a device easily.

Veale was then sent a breakdown of the music required and its precise timing. He learned quickly that repetitious music was best so that it could be easily cut as necessary.

He had five weeks to write the music and the full score went into 300 pages of 28 staves per page. The score was sent to Mathieson's second in command, a lady with the charming name of Dusty Buck. The studio employed copyists to write out the orchestral parts.

Bryan was nervous. Veale was very young and a novice at film music. John was required to go to the recording sessions which took three days. Shortly after the start on the first day Bryan went up to Mathieson on the rostrum and said, "Do you know what this music has got? It has class." John took it that Bryan liked it.

John met Gregory Peck who in real life spoke with that slow deliberate diction and that weird expression on his face. Peck was in the bar on the last day of shooting and six of the people involved in the film were there including John. Peck turned and slowly counted the people and ordered six Jeroboams of champagne. Peck was a most unpretentious person.

Veale's encounter with one of the other actors, Bernard Lee, was less convivial. Lee was something of a toper and once offered John a lift. It was a hair raising experience.

John also met Win Min That, Brenda de Banzie, Lyndon Brook and Maurice Denham.

Denham was both a very educated man and a very likeable man. The following year he was present at a Promenade Concert when Veale's Panorama was performed. Denham collared John and complimented him on the piece and Denham's son wanted Veale's autograph.

In those days composers were paid by a down payment and royalties. Only the creative contributors such as author, scriptwriter and composer received royalties. John received a down payment of \$400 and in the 48 years since the film was made he may have made \$100,000.

It was Mathieson who recommended John to be one of the twelve composers in a series of television documentaries War in the Air. Twelve composers including Bliss, Gerhard and Addison were employed and John wrote the music for the final episode.

The next feature film was The Spanish Gardener and again it was Mathieson's recommendation that lead to John being asked to write the music. This film which starred Dirk Bogarde and the superb Michael Hordern was directed by Philip Leacock. The same procedure was followed as to the contract, time sheets and quantity of music as in The Purple Plain.

Dirk Bogarde was civil enough but not forthcoming and rather dull. Hordern was a very clever man but had a slightly supercilious attitude to making films which he regarded as slumming. After all he was a Shakespearian actor and a very fine one at that. But there is no doubt that his performance in this film stands out. The film was made in Spain.

John also wrote the score for some B films and worked with the conductor Philip Martell who in at least two of the films, Clash by Night and Emergency received top billing over John. But he was an efficient conductor. Emergency was made as a second feature but it was a cut above that and shown as a first feature. It has a good story line but, as with many B films, the acting was rather wooden.

The opening music to Emergency is very good and John's superb Violin Concerto is pre-empted in the music to Clash by Night.

The film Freedom to Die ran into financial problems and Martell was beside himself. To save money the music was recorded in Ireland at the Bray Studios.

List of works

		Dedicatee	First performance
Symphonic Sketch for orchestra	1944	Basil Thelwis	withdrawn
Symphony no. 1	1945-7	Paul Nash	CBSO, Weldon, 1948, Town Hall, Birmingham
revision	1951		Halle, Barbirolli, Cheltenham 1952
Love's Labour – lost incidental music	1947		OUDS, Oxford 1947
Winterset – incidental music	1947		OUDS, Oxford 1947
Masque of Hope – incidental music	1948		OUDS, Oxford 1948
String Quartet	1950	Egon Wellesz	Student Quartet, Berkeley, California, 1950
Panorama for orchestra	1950-1		LPO, Boult, Malvern Festival 1951
Elegy for flute, harp and string orchestra	1951	Memory of Jane Veale	Richard Adeney Maria Korchinska Boyd Neel Orchestra Oxford 1952
Clarinet Concerto	1953		Sydney Fell, LSO, Sargent, 4 April, 1954
Overture: The Metropolis	1955		LSO, Groves, RFH, 1957
Kubla Khan for baritone, chorus	1956		John Carol Case BBC SO and Chorus Schwarz, 1959
Symphony no. 2	1964		
Song of Radha for soprano and orchestra	1966 revised 1980-1		
Violin Concerto	1984		Erich Gruenberg BBC Philharmonic, Downes, 1986
Demos Variations	1986	Sarah and Jake Veale	BBC Philharmonic Leaper, 1993
Apocalypse for chorus and orchestra	1987-9		

Triune for oboe/cor anglais and orchestra 1993		Nicholas Daniel New Oxford CO Andrew Zreczycki Oxford 2 May 1996
Impromptu for solo recorder	Memory of Tracey Chadwell	John Turner Bridgewater Hall, Manchester 8 August 2000
Encounters for two guitars		Tom Dupre Richard Hand 3rd Devora Festival
Sydney Street Scenes for chorus and ensemble	Max Keogh	Australian Radio 1995
Triptych for recorder and string quartet	John Turner	John Turner, Rivali Quartet, 12 November 2003 arrangement for recorder and guitar John Turner, Craig Ogden Kendal Town Hall
Symphony no. 3	David Wright	BBC Concert Orchestra Barry Wordworth Broadcast November 2006

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