

ADRIAN BEAUMONT

Dr. David C.F. Wright

Adrian Beaumont was born at 12 Minerva Street, Cowlersley, Huddersfield on 1 June, 1937 to William Dawson Beaumont, a maintenance engineer and Ada, nee Dyson, who was a weaver. They also had a daughter, Christine Mary, born 27 August 1939, who married Geoff Hardiman bearing him two daughters. Sadly, she died in 1992.

New Street Primary School in Milnsbridge was Adrian's school from 1942 to 1948 after which he went up to Huddersfield College until 1955. His strengths at school were English and the Sciences. He won two prizes for English in 1952 and 1955 respectively. He began piano lesson with a local organist, Harold Pogson, in 1945, and, from 1954 to 1956, took organ lessons with him. From the age of 17, Adrian taught himself to play to oboe.

He went up to University College, Cardiff in 1955 achieving a BA in music with first class honours in 1958, the Diploma in Education in 1961 and a MMus in 1972. The previous year he received his ARCM as an oboist.

Perhaps his real awakening to music was on hearing the Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra in 1953. Romantic orchestral music impressed him, particularly the sounds of Delius. At school, when he was faced with an A level science paper he rebelled and determined to pursue music.

As a student he gave recitals playing the oboe and also playing in an ad hoc orchestra which was later considered to be a semi-professional orchestra. When the conductor fell ill, Adrian took over with the University's Choral Society and he recalls conducting Bruckner's E minor Mass.

He had begun composing around the age of 15 but all this early material has been discarded. Probably his first success was *The Spacious Firmament* for six part unaccompanied choir of 1963. He considers his early style might owe something to Hindemith but, if that was the case, it did not last very long. As to his personal taste in music, Adrian considers that Mozart may be the greatest of us all but with the onslaught on the early music "specialists" he has not had the same level of interest; Schubert is capable of showing us a glimpse of eternity shared by Bach and Fauré; Beethoven is powerful and cannot be ignored; Brahms is admirable; Liszt he also admires and has conducted the *Faust Symphony*; Mahler is fascinating but sometimes irritating; he cannot take Britten's *St Cecilia Ode*; Tippett is intellectually stimulating and Adrian's wife, Janet Price performed Tippett's *Third Symphony* with the LPO under Haitink in what was a memorable performance (she also gave the Belgian premiere of the work); Adrian says that Ligeti has to be admired and is challenging but not really enjoyed. His preference is for composers who use the big orchestra well, especially Elgar.

He gave up smoking in 1976 since it was no stimulus to composing. Composing could occupy him some mornings but only a few minutes worth of music would be composed at a sitting. He is a Christian, nominally a Baptist as is his wife. Until the middle of 2007 he considered himself an old-fashioned socialist but resented the Thatcherism of Tony Blair. Adrian is a bird-watcher and a member of RSPB. He enjoys fell-walking mostly in the Brecon Beacons but also in the Lakes whenever possible. He delights in gardening and is proud of his own garden. These hobbies are shown in his sumptuous work *Summer Ecstasies* where the other great love of his life, his wife, is also portrayed. Many of his vocal works were written for his wife who is an amazing soprano with an unmistakable voice. On a personal note, I shall never forget the first time I heard her sing Grace Williams' *Fairest of Stars*, an incredible and legendary performance that will never be equalled. It may well be true to say that Adrian's finest works are those with Janet in mind but that must not take away from his skill and technique and the striking originality of the scores.

He married the soprano, Janet Price on 25 July 1963 at Abersychan Baptist Church High Street near Pontypool. Janet studied with Olive Groves to whom she owes a great deal and then with Isobel Baillie who was not a good teacher. Janet's career seems to have been in three sections namely the neglected heroines of nineteenth century opera, contemporary music and French song. One recalls with affection her performance in

Rachmaninov's *Francesca Da Rimini*. She wanted to study French song with Pierre Bernac but he went to America and so she studied at summer schools with Nadia Boulanger (1966–1971) and Adrian studied with Boulanger at the same time seeking her advice on the current scores he was working on. Janet also studied with Harvey Allen.

As to Adrian's working life, he taught at Bristol University from 1961 to 2002, first as an assistant lecturer, then a lecturer, then senior lecturer and then reader until he retired.

Between 1965 and 1967 he wrote two string quartets and his *Symphony no 1 in A* was completed in 1969. He was commissioned to write some continuous music for the film *The Mazemaker* which was a catalogue of the sculptures of Michael Ayrton. At the suggestion of Colin Staveley, then the leader of the BBC Welsh Orchestra Adrian arranged some of the music for an ensemble of eleven players.

His *Cello Sonata* was a success and its first broadcast brought some congratulatory telephone calls. It was played by David Evans and, later, by Sharon McKinley and Ross Pople. Walter Süsskind premiered the *Symphony no 2* known as *Sinfonietta* and the *Allegrì String Quartet* performed *A Glimmer of Unshapen Dawn* with Janet Price. Norman del Mar conducted the premiere of *Summer Ecstasies* and later Bryden "Jack" Thompson took it up, both exceptional conductors.

The *Cello Sonata* of 1981 is a massive work in two movements lasting about 35 minutes. It was completed in Bristol on the 15th November 1981. The first movement is a sprawling affair with many sections and paraphrases of the thematic ideas. Despite its episodic style it is coherent in its repetition and development of the main ideas. The second movement seems more integrated and the penultimate slow section is ravishingly beautiful. The quick finale section is quite brilliant.

The origins of the sonata's first movement comes from the vocal work *Judas, Betrayer* and the second movement from the song cycle *The Homeward Journey* As well as being a composer Adrian often writes his own words such as in *Summer Ecstasies*, *Dance of Life*, *In Paradisium*, written in memory of his mother-in-law Trudie Price, and *Judas, Betrayer*. Of all these texts that of *Judas, Betrayer* is probably the most memorable but, having said that, all his texts are very telling.

Of considerable note is his text to *A Glimmer of Unshapen Dawn* for soprano and string quartet, Op 47. He writes, In the broadest sense of the term, this work constitutes a political statement in that it expresses very forcibly beliefs and opinions held by the author. To this end the quarter represents mankind. Their violent, aggressive and repetitive arguments are twice interrupted by a disembodied voice, at first wordless and impersonal. This voice attacks the present state of the authoritative thoughts of man and his actions with regard to famine, human rights and nuclear weapons. There are five sections.

Indictment is followed by *Nightmare* in which possible consequences of man's actions and behaviour are examined, *Lament* and the final two sections, *Exhortation* and *Vision*, give grounds for hope. The text is original though some of it is derived from passages in *Isaiah* and *Lamentations* whereas the *Lament* is based on the tone and rhythm of Christ's lament over Jerusalem.

Indictment speaks of how nations do not care about the poor and the weak and the plight of the sick and hungry and how some nations use religion, race and creed to justify prejudice and hatred. The section also tells of those nations who put their faith in nuclear weapons and show no care in spite of Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Chrenobyl and Three Mile Island. *Nightmare* tells of those who suffer hunger and malnutrition, desperation and torture and those falsely imprisoned. *Lament* records the men who close their eyes to morality.

Exhortation calls upon men to renounce pride and to love God and their neighbour and to choose whether they wish to continue as they are and destroy the world or to eradicate disease, hunger and poverty and pursue a true and lasting peace. *Vision* tells of all men to leave immaturity, pride and personal glory and to seek the glimmer of an unshapen dawn with devotion friendship, and love coupled with justice, concord, harmony, freedom, beauty and peace.

The work was premiered by Janet Price and the Allegri String Quartet in Bristol on 19 March 1987, in Oxford on the 20th and in Nottingham on 5th November.

It is a dramatic work which has the soprano at a distance to begin with. It is also an uncomfortable piece and, surprisingly the message of hope at the end of the piece seems to be the most desolate music. But how clear is the message and how true the message is!

Some of Adrian's later works have colourful titles. An ark singing in the sun for orchestra is based on a line from Dylan Thomas and Echoes of Ozymandias was inspired by the poem of Shelley and here Adrian sets some original words for unaccompanied choir and this is developed in his next work, Reverberations (Echo of Echoes) for chamber ensemble.

In Praise of Filton for male choir and brass brass was commissioned by Filton Town Council to celebrate the millennium His work is worthy of being heard. Oboists should take up his Oboe Concerto, cellists the impressive Cello Sonata and, if there is a soprano in the vein of Janet Price, Summer Ecstasies which to me, is his finest work, but such is the injustice of the music world few know it and they are missing out.

There are settings of Welsh and Scottish folk songs, songs for children, Nature Studies for oboe and piano recalling the sounds of British birds, church music all of which have a distinctive voice and the first essential of a great composer is originality.

List of works:

- The Spacious Firmament for SATB
- String Quartet no. 1 Op 1 (1965)
- An English Mass SATB small orchestra or organ Op 2
- Three Songs for voice and oboe Op 3
- Concerto for double wind quintet Op 4 (1967)
- Jonah and the Whale SATB Op 5 (1966)
- Songs for high voice and piano Op 6
- String Quartet no 2 op 7 (1967)
- Sonata for Brass Quintet Op 8
- Songs for little children, high voice and piano also for SSA Op 9
- Symphony no 1 in A op 10
- Fanfare, Chorale and Finale for orchestra Op 11 (1969)
- Trio for flute, oboe and piano Op 12
- Songs for little children (set two) Op 14 (1970)
- Pavane and Galliard for amateur orchestra Op 15
- Film Score Mazemaker Op 16 (1971)
- Mazemaker Fantasy Op 16a for 11 solso instruments
- Amor Perfectus, cantata ST soli, Choir and small orchestra Op 17 (1972)
- Oboe Concerto Op 18
- Song cycle: The Heart's Journey for voice and piano Op 19
- Seven Welsh and Four Scottish Folk Songs for voice an piano Op 20, also for voice and violin
- Wind Quintet Op 21 (1973)
- Song Cycle: The Pale Horizon Op 22 (1974)
- Three Hymns for male choir and small orchestra Op 23 (1974)
- Symphony no 2 (Sinfonietta) Op 24
- Fantastic Mr Fox, musical play for children Op 25 (1976)
- Symphonic Fantasy for an Academic Occasion Op 26 (1976)
- Fantasia no 1 for organ Op 28 (1978)
- Dance of Life for soprano and violin Op 29 (1979)
- Spring Festival for mezzo, baritone, choir and small orchestra Op 30 (1979)
- In Paradisum SATB Op 31 (1979)
- The Homeward Journey voice and piano Op 32 (1979)

Ten Concert Studies for two oboes Op 33 (1979)
Judas Betrayer for tenor and harpsichord Op 34
Toccata for brass band Op 35 (1981)
Sonata for cello and piano Op 36
Jubilate Deo for soprano and SATB (1982)
Nature Studies for oboe and piano Op 39 (1982)
Meditation: In Paradisum for voice, oboe and percussion Op 41 (1983)
Symphony no. 3 Op 44
Six Short Scherzos for two brass instruments Op 45
Concerto for brass band from Sonata Op 8, Op 46 (1985)
A Glimmer of unshapen dawn for soprano and string quartet Op 47 (1987)
Symphonic Variations for piano and wind band Op 48 (1989)
Trio no 2 for flute, oboe and piano Op 49 (1989)
Piano Sonata: Lakeland Sketches Op 50 (1990)
The Curlew, the Lark and the Nightingale for SATB, oboe and cor anglais Op 51 (1990)
Now burns the redeeming fire STB soli, choir and orchestra Op 52 (1992)
Metarmorphosis for flute, bass clarinet and piano Op 53 (1995)
Fanfare for a new beginning Op 54 for brass quintet, also version for orchestra
An ark singing in the sun for orchestra Op 55 (1996)
Echoes of Ozymandias for unaccompanied choir Op 56
Reverberations (Echo of echoes) for chamber ensemble Op 57 (1999)
In Praise of Filton for male chorus and brass band Op 58 (2000)
Lakeland Sketches (Piano Sonata) arranged for orchestra (2000)
A Time for Reflection for orchestra (2002)

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