

## CYRIL SCOTT

David C F Wright, DMus

Cyril Scott was a maverick and a very strange man. He set himself up as a composer, author, poet, painter, expert on medicine, science, religion and philosophy and was a spiritualist and an self-confessed authority on the occult. He also had an interest in sexual analysis of children, although I am not suggesting that he was a paedophile.

It has been said that he was admired by Debussy, Richard Strauss, Igor Stravinsky and Percy Grainger. Debussy did not admire anyone. I have found no evidence for these assertions other than I know that Stravinsky did not admire him and Percy Grainger fell out with Scott following the suicide of Grainger's mother in 1922 when Scott said that she had contacted him from beyond the grave. Rose Grainger was mentally ill and threw herself out of an eighteenth storey window.

Scott's literary works are interesting but raised causes of concern. He wrote *Childlikeness* in 1930, *Man is my Master* in 1939 and *Man, the Unruly Child* in 1952 which he claimed dealt with morals, politics, war and religion. There is something to commend these books but the works are full of prejudice and imbalance.

His poetry is in a welcome Victorian style influenced by Rossetti and Tennyson but it is often mystical and obscure thus making it incomprehensible.

As a self-appointed philosopher, he promulgated his spiritualism or occultism as he preferred to call it. He asserted that all religions are the same; that spirit is really matter and he stressed his belief in reincarnation and karma (cause and effect). After many reincarnations some have evolved to be the greatest people with the greatest intellects, the illuminati who inspire others to maximum achievement. These great people are also called Initiates, Sages or Masters. His books were popular because they were controversial. Such books always sell well.

Scott was also a painter and there are some landscape paintings.

He was born on 27 September 1879 in Oxton, near Liverpool. In 1891, he enrolled in the Frankfurt Conservatory to study the piano. He returned to England in 1893 and went back to Frankfurt in 1895 to study with Ivan Knorr and met the Frankfurt Group of Norman O'Neill, Roger Quilter, Balfour Gardiner and Percy Grainger. O'Neill (1875- 1934) was a homosexual and the love of his life was Eric Stenbock, a writer of decadent filth and macabre fiction. He was an opium smoker and a very nasty piece of work. He died in 1895 following a bout of drinking. O'Neill married Adeline Rucket in 1897 partly to cover up his homosexuality which was then a crime. Roger Quilter (1877 - 1934) was also homosexual which developed into mental illness. The Australian Percy Grainger was a normal red-blooded male who loved women.

At this time, Germany were building battleships and claiming superiority. There was an increasing population of health-conscious people who would have holidays in the woods and live in the nude pursuing naturism and free sex. Many were followers of Nietzsche and his campaign against morality



and believed that no one should be subject to the law. Spiritualist movements like the Theosophy Society, of which Scriabin was a disciple, advocated that whatever you chose to do was right and that sex with minors and paedophilia was acceptable and only considered wrong in the eyes of the unenlightened. Leaders of the Theosophical Society such as C W Leadbetter were paedophiles.

Germany was decadent and, in the main, pagan and the immoral world into which Scott, O'Neill, Stenbock and Quilter revelled. It was a world that did not want morality or God but despised Him, and this was a world that Scott relished.

Scott returned to Liverpool and met Charles Bonnier who encouraged him to write poetry.

The first musical compositions from Scott's pen were the Symphony no.1, Piano trio, String Quartet in G minor and songs. Some of these works he withdrew. In 1901, Hans Richter conducted the Halle Orchestra in his Heroic Suite. Kreisler took part in the String Quartet and, in 1903, Henry Wood conducted the Symphony no. 1

In Paris, Scott met Faure, Ravel and Debussy and, in 1904, became interested in Raja Yoga and the occult.

Raja Yoga teaches the cultivation of the mind in order to accept reality and embrace personal liberation. Its origin is in the Hindu religion who have no god but many gods to be worshipped. It teaches that everyone is equal and has equal rights.

Occultism and spiritualism is akin to nihilism and Nietzsche's campaign against all morality and Theosophy also taught this.

Many occultists believe in annunnaki gods, celtic ritual, druids, faeries, grimoires, necromancy and magic.

In 1903, upon personal invitation, Scott went to Vienna to meet Mahler's widow. This year also saw the completion of his Piano Concerto no. 1.

He married Rose Allatine, otherwise known as Eunice Buckley, a novelist in 1921. Their daughter, Vivien Mary was born in 1923 and their son, Desmond was born in 1926.

Percy Grainger's mother committed suicide in 1922. Scott later told Grainger that he had met his mother on the astral plane and she had spoken to him from beyond the grave. This angered Grainger and the two men fell out with each other because of this 'nonsense'.

In 1918, Scott had completed his literary work The Autobiography of a Child from a psycho-sexual analytical standpoint. One may ask what qualifications he had to write such a treatise. He was neither a paediatrician nor a psychologist.

He completed his one act opera The Shrine in 1927. His Violin Concerto dates from 1928. In 1931, he began giving recitals for two pianos with Edwin Fisher and composed a Concertino for two piano and orchestra. His Concerto for two violins and orchestra seems to be lost. He also composed a poem for piano and orchestra based on the English song Early One Morning.

I played this piece at a concert and I played it well but the capacity audience of fellow musicians and music lovers hated it.

Scott wrote piano music for Benno Moiseiwitsch who felt he had to play it, and he wrote his Piano Sonata no 2 for Walter Gieseking.

In 1930 he toured the USA and Canada.

He wrote his book *An Introduction to Occultism* in 1935. In 1932 he had published *The Initiates in the Dark Circle* and *Through the Eyes of the Masters* dealing with his spiritualist beliefs.

The Harpsichord Concerto, the Cello Concerto and the Symphony no 3 (*The Muses*) appeared in 1937.

In 1942, his book *The Christian Paradox* attacks Christianity in a biased and highly prejudiced way. His thoughts were confused and his behaviour became even more strange. He left his wife Rose whose patience had worn out and went to live with Marjorie Hartston in Eastbourne where he completed his Oboe Concerto. The previous year he had completed his opera *Maureen O'Hara* and I anticipate the question that is on your lips.

John Ireland is said to have praised Scott for writing non-academic music but Ireland did not like Scott's music.

Cyril Scott became ruthless in pressing his beliefs on people. If you did not accept his beliefs you were an idiot and an enemy, and he would explode into anger. One of his students of earlier years was Edmund Rubbra who found Scott oppressive and hateful and when Rubbra became a Catholic, Scott was incensed.

His books on medicine, or alternative medicine, were regarded as the work of a crank but, again, controversial books sell well. He wrote that cider-vinegar was the cure for obesity and wrote a book on the prevention of cancer. The medical profession rejected these works as nonsense. Scott was not a doctor, a dietitian or even a medical student. He had taken an interest in homoeopathy.

The Symphony no. 4 was completed in 1952 and the Piano Concerto no 2 in 1960.

He died on 31 December 1970.

I set out below some of his quotes

Woman is fickle in friendship but constant in love, whereas man is constant in friendship and fickle in love

The story of Jesus Christ has been well-nigh ruined by the gloomy association which all the paraphernalia of sacerdotalism has woven around us.

The Church might have persuaded the nations to love one another had she not hated her enemies.

Christ will return although He will come in an aeroplane from His retreat in Tibet.

The curious pastime of chasing and killing animals for pleasure is a relic of barbarism.

Scott was a good pianist (he played Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto no 3) and we are grateful to the Canadian pianist, Leslie D'Ath for his many recordings of Scott's piano music. Incidentally, Desmond Scott also lives in Canada.

Opinion is divided over Scott's music. It has been likened to that of Havergal Brian and said to be sterile and incoherent. Others have praised it highly.

Many have called Scott's music meaningless, pointless and shapeless.

It is impressionistic music. For me, it does nothing and there is so much more music that is far more worthy but each of us must listen and make up our own minds. A majority view is that his music is like the music of Britten, being sterile.

In recent years, there have been many recordings of his work but is this interest indicating an appreciation of his music or only of curiosity value?

---

© COPYRIGHT David C F Wright, DMus 2011. This article or any part of it, however small, must not be copied, quoted, reproduced, downloaded or altered in any way whatsoever nor stored in any retrieval system. Failure to comply is in breach of International Copyright Law and will render any offender liable to action at law.