

**DENIS APIVOR**  
David C F Wright DMus

Denis ApIvor was born in Collinstown, West Meath, Eire on 14 April, 1916 of Welsh parentage. His father, Elwy, was so totally Welsh as to have no part of him that did not stem from the hills of Merioneth. He had been born in the slate-mining village of Corris, gone to school at Machynlleth and then to University College, Aberystwyth before entering the Anglican ministry. When a curate at Llangefni in Anglesey he met his wife-to-be, Mona Nicholls Jones, who had trained in London as a Montessori school-teacher. Her father, Thomas Nicholls Jones was a church warden at Llangefni. Miss Jones's maternal grandfather was a clergyman named Lewis and her uncle was James Sculthorpe Lewis, a canon of St. Asaph and a graduate of Christ Church, Oxford.



During the first world war Elwy ApIvor had a parish in Eire and all his children were born there. With the Irish Revolution the family moved to Caernarvon, where Mr ApIvor was a classics master at the High School and took Sunday services in various churches. By this time Denis was learning the piano and singing in the choir. Later he was to sing in two cathedral choirs, thus in his youth becoming steeped in music that has, in fact, been the real training for many composers here and abroad. William Walton is a good case in point-although in the late 1940s he did go to Humphrey Searle for lessons for two years, resulting in Walton obtaining a record contract with EMI.

In 1925 the ApIvors crossed the border to Herefordshire, where Mr ApIvor was classics master and chaplain at the Cathedral school until his death in 1944. It was also in 1925 that Denis was awarded a scholarship as a chorister under Henry Ley at Christ Church, Oxford. As it happens, the organist who succeeded Ley was Noel Ponsonby, who died young. Denis sang at the christening service of Noel's son Robert, who was to become the Controller of Music at the BBC. Denis had piano lessons with a Mr Rushworth and began to compose, but he was far from happy at Oxford and, after contracting pneumonia, which put him into the Radcliffe Infirmary, he refused to go back to his college and was transferred to Hereford Cathedral, where the organist was Sir Percy Hull. Denis studied the organ at Hereford with Reginald West, sang in the choir and, having taught himself the clarinet, played in the Hereford Choral and Orchestral Society as well as in the pit orchestra at the Kemble Theatre. He sang in the Three Choirs Festivals under the likes of Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Sir Ivor Atkins, a relation of the present writer.

His parents, being opposed to their son's pursuing a musical career, saw to it that Denis took the Higher School Certificate in mathematics and science. He went to University College, Aberystwyth for a year and then, in 1934, to University College, London. However, he continued his musical studies by 'devouring' Berlioz's treatise on orchestration. Today, ApIvor admires the music of Berlioz, particularly *The Damnation of Faust*.

ApIvor's early compositions were mostly songs influenced by his great admiration for the work of Peter Warlock, whose suicide was such a senseless tragedy. The 1914-18 war seriously affected Warlock (as the 1939-45 war was to affect ApIvor). Warlock had unsympathetic and uncomprehending parents who opposed his musical life, and he was therefore unable to see his way forward in the musically backward England of those days. In 1916 Warlock fell under the influence of Bernard van Dieren, who was also to influence ApIvor's life. In fact, ApIvor's *Chaucer Songs*, op. 1 were written in memory

of van Dieren, and in 1974, when van Dieren's son died a bankrupt (he had been selling his father's scores to relieve his financial embarrassment), ApIvor wanted to copy everything he could before it was lost and therefore made performing editions of much of van Dieren's music. Yet for all this hard work ApIvor has been shamefully treated. He had, for example, the frustrating experience of seeing his edition of the Ballade of Villon and his arrangement of the de Quincey Rapsodia and The Cenci Song for voice and string quartet used as the mainspring of the de Doelen Concert in Rotterdam in 1982 without due credit in the programme. His published edition of the Chinese Symphony was given at the Holland Festival of 1983 without the briefest mention that it was his edition and production of the full score.

Like Humphrey Searle, ApIvor had wanted to study with van Dieren but van Dieren's poor health was unequal to teaching. ApIvor, too, was profoundly influenced by the first broadcast of Berg's *Wozzeck* and set about the study of the fascinating method of serial composition. About the same time Constant Lambert's brilliant book *Music Ho!* was published, and a friend of ApIvor, knowing of his desire to meet Lambert and Cecil Gray (who, in 1934, published a book on Warlock), arranged meetings. Gray visited ApIvor in 1937 and, being a wealthy man, was instrumental in securing lessons for him with Patrick Hadley, who, frankly, taught him nothing. Paddy Hadley always required a bottle of sherry to be provided for him at lessons; this was strategically situated by the piano.

It was Gray who introduced ApIvor to Lambert at Pagani's restaurant near Queen's Hall, where Busoni used to 'hold court' when he was in London. ApIvor found Lambert 'unique' and "probably the best conversationalist since Oscar Wilde". Lambert, like Warlock, was a flawed personality and asked ApIvor, then a medical student, for tablets to help him sleep.

ApIvor was with Hadley for six months, after which, at the joint behest of Gray and Hadley, he went to Alan Rawsthorne, with whom he studied for two years until the outbreak of war in 1939. From Rawsthorne he was to learn a love for the concerto form and a neatness and economy of style but, sadly, not much else. They went through ApIvor's scores together but Rawsthorne, being lazy, was an inadequate teacher, as the present writer can testify. He was a man of studied but limited culture, self-absorbed and already damaged before the age of 35 by that alcoholic obsession that ultimately destroyed not only himself but also his friend Constant Lambert.

Rawsthorne wanted to write one brilliant best-seller and, with his Piano Concerto no. 1, did that. What is not generally known is that the Chaconne that forms the central movement of that Concerto Rawsthorne derived from ApIvor's *Ostinato* for orchestra, which ApIvor showed him when he was rehearsing it with the Tookey Kerridge chamber group.

ApIvor had moved to Belsize Park early in 1939 to be nearer Rawsthorne for lessons. After Lambert's divorce Rawsthorne and Lambert shared the same house. After Lambert's death Rawsthorne married his widow Isabel.

In the 1930s, ApIvor had a great enthusiasm for Busoni and in 1940 he arranged for orchestra the latter's mammoth *Fantasia contrappuntistica*, which was played by the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Clarence Raybould in 1952 at Maida Vale.

Denis ApIvor says that he first became aware of himself as a composer when he wrote the song *As the holly groweth green* (Henry VIII) in London in 1936. This now forms part of his opus 2, *Alas Parting* for voice and string quartet.

Constant Lambert greatly admired the poetry of T. S. Eliot and encouraged ApIvor to write *The Hollow Men*, op. 5, for baritone, male chorus and orchestra. The poem deeply inspired the composer at the outbreak of war; but the work lay fallow until 1949, when he reorchestrated it. It was performed in 1950, with Redvers Llewellyn as a magnificent soloist and Lambert conducting - and what singing he

drew from the choir! There is no doubt that Lambert was a conductor of rare ability. *The Hollow Men* was very well received and should have been the 'break-through' the composer deserved; but it has, as yet, had no subsequent performance. It is a work that communicates at once and makes a lasting impression. It covers a wide range of emotion and is a 'human' work with which we could all identify. It would not be too much to acclaim it as a masterpiece, and it is refreshing in these days to recommend a work that is totally enjoyable in the true meaning of that word. Its neglect is a mark of the oblivion into which ApIvor's music has at present fallen. ApIvor is in effect forgotten, with operas unperformed, as well as five symphonies, and a violin concerto. Had he the fame and 'clout' that comes from a ruthlessly ambitious drive, or had he the professional background of the Royal College of Music or his own ensemble, things might have been different. Some, who ought to know better, have said "ApIvor is a doctor, not a composer." Borodin was a chemist. Do we conclude he was not a composer? Or does the public deny the great theatrical and executive musical talents of Jonathan Miller or Jeffrey Tate because they were educated as doctors?

ApIvor was very grateful to Edward Clark for the BBC's performance of *The Hollow Men*. Clark was a man of profound insight and judgment in modern music. It was Clark of whom Stravinsky wrote, "When I read of his death, I wept." Clark's wife, Elisabeth Lutyens, though a long-time friend of Denis ApIvor, was in some ways hostile to his music, but in attracting her attacks from time to time ApIvor was by no means unique; she was well known for generating controversy. He had first met her at a party at Hereford for her son's christening. Another interesting composer with whom ApIvor was on close terms over many years was Christian Darnton, who was physically a blond giant. He was also noisy, extrovert and wealthy and drove a Bugatti. His father was a German aristocrat while his mother was a British one. It was Darnton who tried to recruit fellow musicians for the Communist Party. However, ApIvor voted Labour until the 'winter of discontent' 1978/90 when he experienced the horrors of what the trade unions were doing to the health service. He would probably say the only logical government was the 'communism' born from the conviction that all people are equal. Denis ApIvor was brought up as the son of a parson and is a very human person, deploring Russian involvement in Afghanistan, the American action in Vietnam and the slaughter of the ecology of the South American continent. He once told me "One is, in a way, almost ashamed to be alive."

At the outbreak of war in 1939 Dr ApIvor was immediately taken into the emergency service in London hospitals and, as he had experience, was sent to training-posts in military hospitals in Alton and Swindon and then, as a member of the Royal Army Medical Corps, into surgical hospitals. Captain ApIvor came home ahead of time as his wife, Grace O'Brien, a Fleet Street journalist with *The Sunday Pictorial*, was suffering from a kidney disease which, in those days, was a sentence of death. After a while in the Worcestershire Regiment ApIvor was a penniless, homeless widower. His wife's relations provided a home for him while he was studying at the Middlesex Hospital and writing his first opera. This was *She Stoops to Conquer*, op. 12, which occupied the years 1943-1947. The libretto by the composer is based on the play and other lyrics by Oliver Goldsmith. It is an opera buffa in three acts, since the composer's obsession at this time was bel canto and the framework of the comic operas of Mozart and Rossini. We still await its first performance.

There is a strong Spanish influence in ApIvor's life that began before the war, when a girl friend brought him a copy of the first British publication of the work of Federico Garcia Lorca. He composed the Lorca Songs, op. 8 while he was in the uniform of the Worcestershire Regiment. However, it was through his friendship with the lutenist Diana Poulton, who accompanied her husband Tom in vihuela songs, that ApIvor encountered Spanish classical music and records of the gypsy *cante jondo*.

ApIvor had met the fine baritone Frederick Fuller through Alec Hyatt King of the British Museum's music department. It was Fuller who gave the first performance of the Lorca songs for a Society for the Promotion of New Music concert at Salle Erard in 1946. Cecil Gray, Edward Clark, Diana Poulton, Alan Rawsthorne and Bernard van Dieren's widow, Frida, attended this auspicious event and, as a result, Clark included these songs in a London Contemporary Music concert at the Wigmore Hall in

1947. Later that same year, and at the same venue, Clark put on ApIvor's Violin Sonata, op. 9 played by Antonio Brosa and Kyla Greenbaum.

It was the perspicacity of Humphrey Searle that brought about the first broadcast of any of ApIvor's works. This was the Concertante for clarinet, piano and percussion, op. 7, which was given by Frederick Thurston, Kyla Greenbaum and the Blades brothers, with the composer conducting. That was in 1948.

In 1947 ApIvor had married Irene Russell, a neuro-surgical theatre sister, and in 1950 he gave up medicine after the success of *The Hollow Men*. He had produced his first two concertos. The scintillating Piano Concerto, op. 13, which dates from 1948, was first performed by Eiluned Davies with the BBC Welsh Orchestra under Mansel Thomas. This was his last work to receive a Promenade Concert performance; that was in 1958, with Patrick Piggott as soloist and Basil Cameron conducting. The other was the Concerto for violin and fifteen instruments, op. 16, of 1950, the first performance of which was given by Alan Loveday and a chamber orchestra under Trevor Harvey.

This was followed by the first of ApIvor's ballets, *The Goodman of Paris*, op. 18. The Royal Ballet commissioned the ballet *A Mirror for Witches*, op. 19, which dates from 1951 and which was first performed at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, in 1952. Things were looking reasonably good for ApIvor.

After his Symphony no. 1, Op. 22 of 1952 there was another Royal Ballet commission, which was the hugely successful *Blood Wedding*, op. 23, produced at the Sadlers Wells theatre in 1953. It was subsequently restaged in Germany, Vienna, Copenhagen, New York, Cape Town, Ankara and Santiago. It is no hyperbole to say that these ballets were triumphs and, while the music of all deserves revival, *Blood Wedding* is the most marvellous and impressive score.

However, making an adequate living out of music was impossible and the ApIvor's marriage suffered and broke up during 1953-4.

ApIvor can probably be credited with the distinction of having composed the first British guitar Concerto. This is his opus 26 and dates from 1954. It had to wait four years for its first performance in Glasgow, with Julian Bream as soloist.

Having gained a prestigious post-graduate qualification in anaesthetics, ApIvor elected to return to medicine, accepting a consultancy in the West Indies, to enable him to live while he completed the operatic commission offered by Norman Tucker and the Sadlers Wells Trust to compose the three-act opera, *Yerma*, op. 28, based on Garcia Lorca's play. Tucker wanted Day Lewis to be the librettist, but the composer chose Montagu Slater, whom Britten had used. This was an unpopular choice, for Slater was a communist and refused to recant, as many did in 1956, at the time of the Hungarian uprising.

The opera took five years of hard work and, although ApIvor had a growing interest in serialism, he deliberately oriented his approach in such a way as not to lose sight of the classical, melodic and reiterative structures.

Tucker's promise to stage *Yerma* was not fulfilled and the work has had only one concert performance - a broadcast by the BBC in 1961 with Sir Eugene Goossens conducting, although it had a repeat broadcast about a year later. The title-role was taken by Joan Hammond, who gave a performance of great brilliance, though she was evidently out of sympathy with the style of the music, as was Adrian Boult with Berg's *Wozzeck* in his great performance for the BBC in the 1930s. Sir Arthur Bliss wrote to Denis ApIvor in March, 1959 saying, "I have been through *Yerma* bar by bar and I can assure you that you can be proud of your achievement. I have written to Tucker expressing my conviction that it will be a noteworthy night when this opera is produced.... I do intend to speak to Schotts (the publishers) about it and this is occasioned entirely by my respect for its value."

Edward Clark wrote to *The Times*:

“Mr ApIvor has had a long musical association with the work of Lorca from the two splendid sets of songs of his lyrical poetry, the dramatic ballet ‘Blood Wedding’ one of Sadlers Wells most successful post-war creations which has triumphed in hundreds of performances all over the world... I mention ApIvor’s earlier ventures in elective affinity with Lorca to underline my conviction that in this new opera he has surpassed all those former efforts... the multiple problems of dramatic characterisation of major and minor personages, of choral and other groups, the tremendous scene of combined chorus and ballet in Act 3 are resolved in a manner completely worthy of the dramatist’s conception. I have no doubt that this work is an outstanding achievement... and that its production would be a sensational revelation to the musical public of this and other countries.”

Malcolm Rayment, critic of *The Glasgow Herald*, wrote to the Sadlers Wells Trust after the failure to stage *Yerma*, "I consider *Yerma* a work of major importance... From every point of view the work has outstanding qualities... musically it is only necessary to study a single scene to realise the work has exceptional merit... there can be few contemporary operas that contain such magnificent choral writing. I feel it is of utmost importance for British opera that *Yerma* is staged."

Martin Cooper, the critic and musicologist, wrote in *The Daily Telegraph* that "ApIvor’s music is full-blooded and intensely dramatic with a strong power of conveying both character and atmosphere." Humphrey Searle, himself a distinguished composer with an unerring ability to judge modern music, called *Yerma* ‘a fine work’.

The shameful failure to stage *Yerma* was inexcusable, particularly as Tucker would not communicate on the subject. Common courtesy demanded something better than this. What is clear is that the refusal to produce the work could hardly have been attributable to any deficiency inherent in the score, as the authoritative opinions quoted show.

Working as a hospital consultant in Trinidad and composing *Yerma* took its heavy toll. Dr ApIvor nearly died of overwork, suffered a gastric haemorrhage and had to come home. The final act of *Yerma* was written in a friend’s house in Kilburn and the scoring completed in a cottage in Suffolk in 1958. Without funds yet again, he had once more to return to medical work as a clinical assistant at St. Bartholomew’s and St. Mark’s Hospitals before becoming a National Health Service consultant in Maidstone hospitals in 1959.

While in the West Indies ApIvor missed the performance by the Royal Philharmonic under Goossens of his choral work *Thamar and Amnon*, op. 25, which recounts the Biblical story of the brother who rapes his sister. He also missed his ‘Portuguese’ ballet, *Saudades*, op. 27, which was another Royal Ballet commission. The production was apparently not successful owing to the half-heartedness of the participants.

The year 1961 saw the completion of the Dylan Thomas cantata, *Altarwise by Owl-light*, op. 32, which William Glock at the BBC refused to perform, although it was ApIvor’s magnum opus of the period: a work in the ‘movement’, so to speak, of post-Webern, post-Varese and at a time when open-house was extended by the BBC to the music of the Berio-Boulez-Stockhausen ‘camp’ and to young British composers influenced by them. The composer took this reverse badly, as he had been on close terms with his fellow Welshman in the years after the war, and this was his first major setting of Thomas’s work.

It is a misconception to believe that well-known conductors can always deliver the composer’s intentions, so much so that Stravinsky, a notorious example, boycotted performances by anyone but himself for years. The first of ApIvor’s works inspired by Paul Klee, the nine orchestral variations,

Overtones, op. 33, was first played in a BBC 'Music in Our Time' concert in 1967 by the Philharmonia Orchestra under Bryan Balkwill. It was an inadequate performance that did not do justice to the composer's work.

Denis ApIvor met Rima Austin at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. She was a ballet teacher, ballet dancer and a member of the pioneering team of the Beneshes, who had devised a modern improved choreology to supersede the cumbersome Laban notation of ballet movements. They were married in 1962 and, later, she gave up her career to have a family. Lyndel was born in 1966 and Dylan in 1968. The year 1962 also saw the completion of one of ApIvor's finest chamber works, the duo for cello and piano, Mutations, op. 34, which was first performed by Christopher van Kampen and Malcolm Binns at a Pollitzer concert at the Wigmore Hall in 1967. Here is an unashamed serial work that benefits from a marvellous sense of continuity and, while much music in this style is slow and uneventful, this little masterpiece is not. Typical of ApIvor's best work, it has logic and craftsmanship that could be achieved only by an accomplished composer.

The Symphony no.2, op. 36 appeared in 1963 and it is the only one of the four symphonies to have been performed at the time of the writing of this article. It shows more clearly than ApIvor's other orchestral works the epigrammatic and sparing influence of Webern's orchestration.

Another work of this period was the String Quartet no.1, op. 37, described by the distinguished Irish composer Gerard Victory as a work of 'tremendous intellectual power' - a remarkable tribute from a musician whose own second Symphony has qualities amounting to a revelation to the present writer. ApIvor's Quartet is wonderfully interwoven and deeply committed. His Quartet no.2 opus 63 was premiered by the Kingfisher Quartet at Brighton Unitarian Church along with the Quartet no 3 a month before the composer died. he did attend the concert but was gravely ill.

Attractiveness may not be a word that springs to some minds when it comes to serial music, but ApIvor's Crystals (Concert minuscule), op. 39, of 1965 is nothing if not attractive; it deploys unusual forces: a Hammond organ, amplified guitar, marimba, percussion and double bass. It is diverting music and creates a musical world that is all its own. Harp, Piano, Piano-Harp, op. 41, uses an upright piano with the action removed so that the strings are played with fingers and beaters. This is not for novelty or humour but to obtain certain ethereal and percussive musical timbres.

Between these two works came the third opera Ubu Roi, Op. 40. The play on which it is based has a strong element of the commedia dell'arte but, thanks to Alfred Jarry's pioneering use of the technique of the 'absurd', the protagonist graduates from pantomime character to a symbol of oppression and evil - the 'shadow' of Jungian psychology, killer, destroyer and tyrant. Like the dictator Idi Amin, he escapes to live another day, hoping for another country to tyrannize. The music is unashamedly post-Schönberg.

BBC television commissioned the one-act ballet, Corporal Jan, op. 42, with choreography by Peter Wright. The theme of the work is the terrifying one of a poor soldier who dreams he is the 'sacrificed hero', the slain god of mythology, and wakes up to find that the dream has come true. It is a robust score that includes piano-accordion, Hammond organ and a vast array of percussion including piano. Four flutes and a piccolo are the only woodwind used. The music seems to have a concertante feel about it. It certainly has verve and élan - a dramatic and absorbing score indeed. It deserves to be heard.

Another work worthy of availability is the set of ten orchestral variations, Neumes, op. 47. It is a colourful score in which the actual notes of the twelve-note series have been replaced by 'directional vectors' in which there are no fixed notes - only 'directions like the 'neumes'' of the title. The first variation includes some excellent counterpoint and has a strong sense of forward motion; the second is mainly peaceful, but uneasy; the third is typical of ApIvor's musical tension and 'interweave'; the fourth is dramatic and brilliantly scored; the fifth recaptures the mood of the second; the sixth contrasts

comical and tender moments; the seventh deploys high chordal string parts, and the uneasiness is this time undiluted; the eighth tellingly highlights the percussion; the ninth is sinister and of heightened tension, while the final variation combines all the qualities of the previous variations. The performance I heard conducted by Norman Del Mar suffered, in my opinion, from pauses between the variations, which hindered the work's continuity.

Bouvard and Pécuchet, op. 49, is a comic opera comprising a prologue and three acts based on Gustave Flaubert's Dictionary of Stupidities. His theme was the good-natured foolishness of two city clerks who, returning to the country on a legacy, try out all forms of knowledge and 'make a mess of the lot'. The heroes embody elements ranging from Don Quixote and Sancho Panza to Laurel and Hardy. ApIvor has set the libretto to a serial score that may be at variance with the fatuous atmosphere of the original. Whether or not this works, only a performance would show.

The Clarinet Quintet, op. 60, was written in a week in March, 1975 and it is probably not only ApIvor's finest chamber work but also one of the best British works in this genre. It has a marvellous logic of musical argument, and the slow movement is one that cannot but fail to fascinate discerning music lovers. The finale is a masterpiece of craftsmanship, contrasting colour and a restrained exuberance. In this impressive work every single note is essential. The slow coda is the only less-than-perfect passage; but it is as satisfactory a conclusion as a more robust one would be.

Four concertante works followed: the Violin Concerto, op. 61, which is, in fact, ApIvor's second for violin (the first, opus 16, used only a small chamber ensemble); the Cello Concerto, op. 64; and two works for horn, the Fantasy concertante, op. 70 (with orchestra), first performed by Frank Lloyd, and the Duo concertante, op. 71, first performed by Michael Thompson and Catherine DuBois. As with much of ApIvor's work, the music is tough and uncompromising but, as one composer expressed it to the author, "a challenge is better than moribund predictability."

ApIvor's music falls into categories. There is an early chromatic-diatonic style up to 1945, which was deployed almost exclusively in song-writing. From the hugely enjoyable Seven Piano Pieces, op. 14, ApIvor has used twelve-note methods in most of his scores while retaining some features of classical tonalities up to and including the opera Yerma, completed in 1958. These seven piano pieces open with a Prelude and a Study, which is a toccata of onward motion truly pianistic and rewarding both to play and to hear. The ensuing Invention is a 'walking-tune' in canon; the Dance is a waltz-like piece but strong in character; the Nocturne is not a dreamy effeminate piece (thankfully) but a flowing piece of real atmosphere; There may be a hint of the composer's love for Bach in this piece; the fifth movement is a Tarantella that suggests Rawsthorne; but the music is ApIvor's own. It is an exciting piece. The following March is slow and the finale is a quick toccata-like piece.

By opus 30, which is another set of Seven Piano Pieces, there is clear evidence of Webern and ongoing serialism. At first ApIvor's new style was epigrammatic, as in the interesting Wind Quintet, op. 31; but this proceeded to extended forms. By 1980 there were some relaxations of these disciplines with the Fantasy concertante for horn and orchestra, op. 70. However, ApIvor has never embraced a complex serial approach in any of his solo songs. The late Dowson Songs, op. 76, show a return to a relatively simple diatonic-chromatic style with romantic overtones, as does the Vox populi, op. 58 of 1974-5. His songs are especially fine. ApIvor has tended to concentrate his works in groups dealing with specific forms or literary influences. During the years 1951-4 that concentration was on ballets (with later ones in 1968 and 1978- namely, Corporal Jan and Glide the Dark Doors Wide, op. 66). There are works influenced by Spanish music and Lorca extending from opus 8 in 1945 to El silencio ondulado, for guitar and orchestra, op. 51, of 1951. There are the two T. S. Eliot works, The Hollow Men and Landscapes, op. 15, for tenor and six instruments, which dates from 1950; the Dylan Thomas works Altarwise by Owl-light, op. 32, and Fern Hill, op. 56; there are five works inspired by Paul Klee ranging from Overtones, op. 33, via Orgelburg, op. 50 (the composer's only work for solo organ), to Resonance of the Southern Flora, op. 54, for wordless chorus and large orchestra.

We are left with the question of the neglect of Denis ApIvor's music. Publishers have said his music should be in print but do nothing about it. Many professional musicians speak highly of it yet performances are not forthcoming. There may be those who doubt the artistic merit of ApIvor's music, but this article has cited the opinions of well-known authorities on the obvious worthwhile qualities of the music, further evidence of which is that, while he does not play the violin, horn or cello, ApIvor's concertos for these instruments, when performed by artists of the top rank, did not necessitate the changing of a single note. In extreme circles ApIvor may be regarded as 'old-fashioned', since he does not belong to any of those groups which, since the 1960s, have been 'operating' on the unsuspecting public with electronic circuits plus or minus distorted instrumental sound or to others who use microtonal 'tremolandi' without aural relief, not to mention yet others who repeat a few bars for long periods, thus strongly inducing sleep, ennui or annoyance.

Another reason for the neglect of ApIvor's music is the apathy people have towards serial music and their fear of it. A famous instrumentalist commissioned a work from Denis ApIvor and never played it, admitting he was terrified of twelve-note music. Then he met Henze and revised his views; for here was a composer in the ascendancy. This is nothing short of cult snobbery, for it is judging by fashion rather than by merit. It is a common but erroneous notion that the attitudes 'I know what I like' or 'it must have a tune' must inevitably transcend all other considerations. The appreciation of immediacy in music is not belittled by ApIvor: he would regard Bach and Mozart as the greatest composers and would have much in common with 'traditional' music lovers.

A further excuse might be that ApIvor's music is difficult to play and that rehearsal time and expense do not warrant such resources for what may remain the only performance. That idea, valid in the 1930s, can be disregarded today when the most complex works are performed. To quote one example: a broadcast in 1989 of Robin Holloway's Second Concerto for Orchestra was accompanied by an interview with the conductor, Oliver Knussen, who said that this 'enormously difficult' work had necessitated five days of strenuous rehearsal by the orchestra.

It may be that popularity and financial considerations do, in fact, play a significant part, compounded by the melancholy fact that when excursions are made into 'modern' music the choice of works to be performed depends less on the merit of the music than on the standing of the composer with the self-appointed cabals and arbiters of value currently in 'high places'.

Denis ApIvor has suffered unjustifiable neglect and gross discourtesy, and his personality has been affected, which is understandable. However, I have always found him to be a man of purpose and kindness, unashamedly honest and deeply concerned about integrity in music.

I make no claim that this composer, any more than any other, achieves the same excellence in all his works. There are some that fail to arouse my enthusiasm. There are others that reach the highest standards. The success of *The Hollow Men* and *Blood Wedding*, and the praise accorded to *Yerma*, render their perennial neglect an injustice not only to the composer but also to the public, who are deprived of fine music that could become enduring musical experiences.

Every composer of originality and talent deserves to be heard but this hearing has been very inadequately granted in recent decades to certain composers born before 1920, of whom Denis ApIvor is an outstanding example.

## CATALOGUE OF WORKS

### Opus

- 1 Four Chaucer Songs for baritone and String quartet (1936).
- 2 Alas Parting. Five songs for high voice and string quartet (1937).
- 3 Nineteen Songs for two voices and piano (1935-40).
- 3a Four Songs (from the 19 above) for soprano, baritone, chorus and orchestra (Or organ).

- 4 Nocturne (Fantasia on a song of Diego Pisador) for string orchestra (1938).
- 5 The Hollow Men for baritone, male voices and orchestra (1939).
- 6 Eight Songs for two voices and piano.
- 7 Concertante for clarinet, piano and percussion (1945).
- 7a Concertante for clarinet, strings, harp and percussion.
- 8 Six Lorca Songs for voice and piano (19456).
- 8a Six Lorca Songs arr. for voice and guitar.
- 9 Sonata for violin and piano (1946).
- 10 Estella marina for chorus and strings (or organ) (1946). -Invention on an Interval for piano (1947).
- 11 Here we go round. Six children's songs for voice and piano (1949).
- 12 She Stoops to Conquer: opera buffa in three acts (1943-7).
- 13 Piano Concerto (1948).
- 14 Seven Pieces for piano (1950).
- 15 Landscapes. Five songs for tenor and six instruments.
- 16 Concerto for violin and fifteen instruments (Violin Concerto no. 1) (1950).
- 17 Overture: Bouvard and Pecuchet (1950) 9 withdrawn)
- 18 Ballet: The Goodman of Paris (1951).
- 19 Ballet: A Mirror for Witches (1951).
- 19a Ballet Suite: A Mirror for Witches.
- 20 Te Deum for unison voices and organ (1951).
- 21 Aquarelles for piano (withdrawn).
- 22 Symphony no. 1 (1952).
- 23 Ballet: Blood Wedding( 1953).
- 24 Four Beddoes Songs for high voice and piano (1954).
- 25 Thamar and Amnon for soprano, tenor, bass, chorus and orchestra (1954).
- 26 Guitar Concerto (1954).
- 27 Ballet: Saudades.
- 28 Yerma: opera in three acts (1955-9).
- 29 Variations for guitar (1959).
- 30 Seven Pieces for piano (1960).
- 31 Wind Quintet (1960).
- 32 Cantata: Altarwise by Owl-light for four singers, speaker chorus and chamber orchestra (1961).
- 33 Overtones: nine orchestral variations (1962).
- 34 Mutations for cello and piano (1962).
- 35 Animalcules for piano (1962).
- 36 Symphony no. 2 (1963).
- 37 String Quartet no. 1 (1964).
- 38 Chorales (The Secret Sea) for baritone, chorus and orchestra (1964).
- 39 Crystals (Concert minuscule) for six instrumentalists (1965).
- 40 Ubu Roi: opera in three acts (1965-6).
- 41 Harp, Piano, Piano-Harp (1966).
- 42 Ballet: Corporal Jan (1968).
- 43 Concerto for string trio and string orchestra (String Abstract) (1967).
- 44 Ten string design for violin and guitar (1968).
- 45 The Lyre-playing Idol for piano (1968).
- 46 Tarot: Variations for chamber orchestra (1968-9)
- 47 Neumes: Variations for orchestra (1966).
- 48 Discanti for guitar (1970).
- 49 Bouvard and Pécuchet: opera in a prologue and three acts (1971-4).
- 49a Little Preludes and Entr'actes (Bouvard and Pécuchet).
- 50 Orgelburg for organ (1971).
- 51 El silencio ondulado for guitar and chamber orchestra (1972).

- 52 Exotics Theatre for ten instrumentalists (1972).
- 53 Saeta for guitar (1972).
- 54 Resonance of the Southern Flora for chorus and orchestra (1972).
- 55 Psycho-pieces for clarinet and piano (1973).
- 55a Psycho-pieces arr. for piano trio.
- 56 Fern Hill for unaccompanied tenor (1973).
- 56 Fern Hill for tenor and chamber ensemble.
- 57 Seven Studies, each for a solo instrument (1974).
- 58 Vox populi. Fourteen unaccompanied songs (or with piano accompaniment) (1974-5).
- 59 Triptych. Three carols for chorus and organ (1975).
- 60 Clarinet Quintet (1975).
- 61 Violin Concerto no. 2 (1975).
- 62 Liaison for guitar and keyboard (1976).
- 63 String Quartet no. 2 (1976).
- 64 Cello Concerto (1976-7).
- 65 Chant Eolien for oboe and piano (1977).
- 66 Ballet: Glide the dark doors wide (1978).
- 67 Symphony no. 3 (1978-9).
- 68 Bats for tenor and three instrumentalists (1978).
- 69 Serenade for guitar (1980).
- 70 Fantasy concertante for horn and orchestra (1989).
- 71 Duo concertante for horn and piano (1981).
- 72 Ten Guitar Pieces (1981).
- 73 Divertimenti for solo bassoon (1982).
- 74 Seven Songs for soloists, chorus and orchestra.
- 75 Sonatina for guitar (1983).
- 76 Fourteen Songs of Ernest Dowson for high voice and piano (or strings)
- 77 Vista for double wind quintet (1983).
- 78 Nocturne for guitar (1984).
- 79 Cinquefoil for flute, guitar and viola (1984).
- 80 Melisma for recorder (1984).
- 81 Symphony No. 4 (1985)
- 82 Majestatas Dei Ultra Stellas for chorus and orchestra (or keyboard) (1986)
- 83 Hidden Leaves: Song for voice and piano (1987)
- 84 String Quartet no. 3 (1989).

## POSTSCRIPT

In the 1990s Denis's music became simpler and more expressionistic. He had moved in 1987 to mid Wales and within four years his wife Rima was struck with motor neurone disease and, in fact, died in 1997. He composed his Symphony no. 5 a work I greatly admire and a song of tremendous beauty Eyes that last I saw in tears dating from 1994. Another work of note is Wind Sprang up at Four o'clock.

He was lonely and disillusioned with the lack of interest in his music. When William Glock was at the BBC he achieved much for ApIvor but subsequent Controllers of Music neglected him. One wrote positively obnoxious letters to him and I have the copies. Denis edited the works of others to prevent them falling into oblivion and moved into the Brighton area. He became very touchy in his last years even to those of us who were his friends and had supported him. I felt this deeply as I had written and published the only major essay about him at that time which, incidentally someone in Canada claimed he had written it by changing a few words and putting his name to it.

ApIvor's loneliness was solved by some extent by his importing a new wife from the Philippines (his expression, not mine). Her name was Suwanee and he married her in 2001. He adored her and she looked after him admirably.

I am glad that I have many recordings of his work and scores. I would not want to be without them.

Denis died on 27 May 2004

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