

**A portfolio of work on musicians of relevance to
counselling psychology**

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ORIGINAL

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Transcript 1:

Rose

1 When people ask you to describe yourself as a musician, what would you say?
2
3 Well, now I say I am a composer, but only since I was about 35, maybe beyond
4 that even really, because I think to call yourself a composer takes a certain
5 amount of confidence and it's something I've written about a lot, that women,
6 particularly of my generation, did not call themselves composers when they
7 were young but it took a, it has taken me till middle age really to do that.
8
9 What was it that changed that erm made you feel that you were at the point
10 where you could call yourself a composer rather than whatever you called
11 yourself before? What was that?
12
13 Probably a great awareness of the situation of women composers.
14
15 Right.
16
17 Which I discovered when I started to edit the dictionary that I edited and to get a
18 much more, a greater understanding of the social context in which composers
19 work, which I didn't have before.
20
21 And which features were they that affected your own decision then to refer to
22 yourself a composer?
23
24 Oh all of it, I mean the whole, the understanding of what a woman composer is
25 in society er which took four years of research er as a minimum. Hearing other
26 women composers talk about their difficulties in identifying themselves as
27 women composers. Erm erm, yeah, I would say that's what probably it is. It
28 wasn't something that happened like that [clicks fingers] but something that
29 happened over a long period of time as I gradually began to understand what it
30 was I had let myself in for really [laughing].
31
32 Do you see um composing as a different thing for a woman than for a man?
33
34 Well, it has to be, as being a driver is for a woman than for a man. Doing
35 anything which men claim for their own field or attend to, er when a woman sort
36 of intrudes, because that's what it is, it's an intrusion into a male dominated area.
37 I think. I'm talking as someone who was born in the 60s, I think if you talk to a
38 woman who was born in the 80s or beyond they might not say these things, but
39 for me as a person who was the only woman composer I knew growing up, even
40 in the States, I didn't meet any others, erm I was in a man's field.
41
42 In what sense did it being a man's field influence you?
43
44 What do you mean influence me, in my music, in what way?
45
46 Yes in any way, your view that it was a man's field, obviously meant that your
47 approach to it would be different, if you felt that it was wider.
48
49 Well I didn't have control. I didn't have, I wasn't entering a woman's field in a
50 different area and therefore I couldn't compare so I find that almost impossible
51 to answer really, because I didn't. When I was doing it I wasn't aware of it, all
52 of the things I'm talking about now, my awareness really comes about as a result
53 of actually working in the area of woman composers. Before I was just a
54 composer, but once I started on this huge project, the (name), which is an
55 international thing, and as I say it took four years with a co-editor and so on, it
56 did change my understanding. I wouldn't necessarily say attitude, because I
57 don't think my attitude to composition has changed, but my understanding of

1 what I was doing. I mean before that I didn't want to understand what I was
2 doing, I just put my head down and did it. It's like sort almost of being able to
3 stand on the outside now and look at it, whereas I would never have done that
4 before.

5
6 What difference has that more separate vantage-point made to you in terms of
7 your own work?

8
9 I think it has freed me up from some of the worries I would have had otherwise.

10
11 Can you give me an example?

12
13 Yeah, I now am able to see, um er. I am able to appreciate when people are
14 prejudiced, and see it as simply prejudice and ignore it. Erm, I mean, I can go
15 back for instance and read reviews of my early pieces where a man critic would
16 say I was neurotic, and see what that means now, whereas at the time I thought
17 there was something wrong with my music. Or at least I thought for him there
18 was something wrong with my music. It's an opening up of a landscape in a way,
19 which leaves me, maybe distanced a little bit from what's going on out there,
20 because I have become a cultural critic in a way, which I wasn't before.

21
22 Yes. So being a woman composer has kind of given you a foot in two different
23 camps, two different erm attitudes, two different places really with respect to
24 your own work as well as looking at other women composers.

25
26 Well no, I've always been a musicologist as well. I've always done two things,
27 because I've a PhD in musicology, and so I've always been interested in music
28 criticism. But music criticism with regard to women in music has only really
29 burgeoned since 1980, so I've grown up along with this whole new discipline of
30 which, in which I am a part, I mean I am involved in that as well erm and I have
31 to be able to do two separate things for my professional life. So the part that is
32 not the composer has in subtle ways influenced the part that is the composer, but
33 I don't think it has affected the musical language I write with, but then how
34 would I know? That's again, when I am a composer I can't be a critic as well.

35
36 Yes. As far as friends and family are concerned would you describe yourself as a
37 composer and musicologist, or primarily as a composer to them?

38
39 Yes.

40
41 What about people you meet for the first time?

42
43 Now, yes. Not a long time ago.

44
45 How do they react when you say you are a composer?

46
47 It depends on the person. If I am with city businessmen they generally, always
48 their answer is "Is there any money in that?" [laughs] So it just totally depends
49 on who you are talking to.

50
51 And what would you say?

52
53 Oh, no, of course, no, not in the kind of music I that write, no.

54
55 Do you feel that there are more similarities between women composers in
56 different areas of music than there are between the differences between women
57 and men composers, do you see them having similar er?

1
2 I don't know many women composers in say pop music. The only ones that I do
3 know are also in classical music, so erm I can't answer that one, I don't have
4 enough experience of it.
5
6 OK. Turning to your own work, can you tell me what kinds of things make it
7 easier for you to approach your work, any things at all?
8
9 Time, free time, being undisturbed. Erm. Those are the practical things. Erm.
10
11 Do you find, just following up there on time, do you have a particular time when
12 you prefer to work, a particular working pattern that you have when you've got
13 the time?
14
15 No, because er erm, (2) from 1993 to '95 I was Head of Department, not here but
16 elsewhere, erm and suddenly my workload went up enormously, I mean I was
17 reading mail until noon every day, I decided, and I had a big commission, that if
18 I didn't steal every moment I could to do this stuff, I'd never do it. So I learned
19 how to use even half an hour. I mean I am able, my life is like that, it is divided
20 into little half hour segments, erm, so yes I use every minute.
21
22 Right. What about erm any other aspects, things that make it easier for you,
23 beyond the practical?
24
25 Writing for interested performers, having a good commission, erm a commission
26 for, you know, a venue that I am interested in or a festival I am interested in,
27 things that would motivate me, having motivation you could put it in that way.
28
29 If you were not being commissioned would you still want to write?
30
31 I do. I do sometimes write when I am not commissioned, but I'm almost always
32 commissioned, even if it's not for money. I hardly ever write a piece where
33 there 's not a performance in mind.
34
35 Right. Do you write for particular performers or particular groups, orchestras or
36 singers and so on? Is that in your mind when you are writing?
37
38 The people that I write for come back generally and ask for others. I mean, I
39 have written for the (name of orchestra) about five times so, you know, that is an
40 ongoing thing for me. I don't know if it is any more because they have cut back,
41 but never mind. And then I have written for singers erm who have asked for
42 more music and it's that kind of thing. If I write a piece for somebody quite
43 often they come back and ask a second or third piece.
44
45 Does it help to know who you are writing for?
46
47 Oh yes, absolutely.
48
49 Why is that?
50
51 Because I consider myself part of the process. I do not think a composer is an
52 end stopped occupation. I consider that when I've written a piece then it goes to
53 the performer who does their creative thing with it and then the performance at
54 the end of that is what I'm part of.
55
56 So you see yourself following it through from writing it, all the way through to
57 the performance and recording presumably?

1
2 I try to get a recording if possible, but not a commercial recording, just to fix it.
3
4 Do you have ideas erm about how you would like things to be performed and
5 recorded?
6
7 Recording is not part of what I do, that is only making erm, you know, a record.
8
9 OK.
10
11 A recording is not as in the sense of pop music where it is actually part of the
12 composition, it is not what I do. What I do is for live performance.
13
14 OK.
15
16 Right. Yes of course I have ideas about aspects of the piece, like the speed at
17 which it should go, within certain parameters, certain limits and er the way in
18 which things hang together, but then there is always a space into which the
19 performer can put their own personality and make other decisions.
20
21 Yes. Is the, [throat clearing]. Sorry I'm a bit froggy this morning, is the
22 personality of the performer, how does that, does it affect in any way how you
23 are writing, are you writing for their strengths their characteristics?
24
25 Yes. I mean it depends on the performer to some extent, but I mean I have taken
26 that to extremes, like I had a very shy pianist one time and so I ended up in the
27 piece having him playing these chords and eventually having to bash them with
28 his [indicates movement] That was an exaggeration, but yes of course if you're
29 writing for a performer you bear everything about them in mind, the kind of
30 sound they make, the agility they have if it's an instrument. It's particularly
31 important with a singer because a singer of course is an actor also.
32
33 Any other things that help you in your work?
34
35 Erm. It could be just an inspiration from erm, not so much now, but it has been
36 the case of going to a concert and hearing a particular feature in a piece and
37 thinking, "Oh I could explore that." So it's anything that will give me
38 inspiration.
39
40 Yes.
41
42 It could be a poem, if I find a poem for a setting, as I did just the other day.
43
44 Do you find that you are getting inspiration, you talked about being able to use
45 small periods of time to work in, do you find that extends so that if you're sort of
46 queuing up in a supermarket or something you are thinking about music, having
47 ideas?
48
49 I can do. Quite often sitting on a train is a good place for it. In a supermarket I'm
50 probably too distracted by other things because I have got a list and I've got to
51 get through it in five minute, or whatever.
52
53 Any other places or situations you find conducive to ideas?
54
55 I wouldn't say there's ever a situation that is conducive, but situations in which
56 they occur. I mean I wouldn't say that I have any kind of game plan for

1 composing at all. I just have, my game plan is being able to do it whenever I
2 need to do it.
3
4 Do you find that having a deadline affects you?
5
6 Yes.
7
8 In what way?
9
10 The closer the deadline the harder I work. [laughing] And also it really
11 concentrates me, and I tend sometimes to prevaricate and then the deadline
12 comes and then I'm really, but that's not just in composition, that's in
13 everything.
14
15 So having a deadline can be an advantage too or a good thing. It does help.
16
17 Yes.
18
19 Any other things?
20
21 That help me?
22
23 Yes.
24
25 I can't think of any really offhand, maybe they'll come up. It's again, it's not
26 something that I think about, because it's the opposite of what I think about.
27 What I think about is being able to do it without help under any circumstances.
28 That's what I aim for and that's what I hope to do. The one thing I would say
29 that's negative is I can sometimes get ideas I can't work with, and so I have to
30 thrown them out, and sometimes it takes a long time to realise that the idea is not
31 a good idea and I should start again. And so sometimes I work with something,
32 and really doggedly work at it, when in fact I'd be better off throwing it out and
33 doing something else.
34
35 Is it difficult for you to know when it's time to stop, when things are good
36 enough?
37
38 No it's not, because I get to the last bar! [laughs] No I will.
39
40 So you're not somebody who tinkers with things and changes them?
41
42 What I tend to do is I might come back to a piece after 20 years and rework it.
43 And I'm finding that with my early stuff which is not that good, because
44 technically I hadn't got the experience and so on, and so quite a lot of that I will
45 go back and work with. Oh, one thing I was going to say that is a negative also,
46 is once in a while I have to write for a performer I am not in um sympathy with,
47 and I have had one
48
49 In what way?
50
51 Well, I was commissioned at one time to write a piece for someone I didn't get
52 on with particularly, I did not like, and I could not envisage this person playing
53 my piece. I did write the piece but it never got anywhere really and I am sure it
54 was because I had some antipathy and I really got. It's the best thing is to be in
55 sympathy with your performers, to really want to write a piece, because it's a
56 gift to them and it's erm something you want to give them to please them. Well
57 if the person, you don't like them in the first place, you don't particularly want

1 to give them a gift to please them. Maybe you're afraid they're going to
2 disparage it or whatever, so there is this. And also I'm currently writing a piece
3 for an ensemble, and they're such a strange group of people, I can't see what
4 makes them gel. They are very very different people, they've played in this
5 ensemble for quite a time, but I am writing for the personalities in the ensemble
6 and I haven't come to terms with it yet. I could have written this piece six
7 months ago and I haven't yet so that's er a social thing really.

8
9 Yes. Relationships with people that you are writing for obviously are very
10 important?

11
12 Yes, although I don't necessarily have a relationship with them while I'm
13 writing it, it's only when it's finished, but it's my conception of them that I've
14 got.

15
16 What is it about the conception of somebody that you don't like that makes it
17 difficult to write for them?

18
19 Well, there's only been this one person and that was because I worked with this
20 person and I knew them very strongly and just didn't particularly like them.

21
22 Was it getting down to it that was difficult?

23
24 No, no I wrote the piece, but it never proved to be a very good piece and I just
25 did it, I doggedly did it, but I didn't have the inspiration to write it that I would
26 have with a performer that I wanted to give it to. That's the difference, that's all.

27
28 Yes, yes. Any other things that make it difficult, we've kind of moved on to
29 that?

30
31 That make it difficult. Er (3) Well I think the business about using every minute
32 of the time, I think.

33
34 That seems to be on both sides then, it can focus you?

35
36 Yes, what I was going to say was that when it's a very short amount of time I
37 can only use that for certain things. At the beginning of the piece I generally
38 need more space and more time to contemplate. And so half an hour which I
39 could use if I were half way through the piece when I was just tidying things up
40 or putting it onto the computer or whatever, those more technical things, I think
41 to have not enough time at the beginning of a piece, er, or at the point in the
42 piece where you need the time, I can't tell you precisely. But there are occasions
43 when you really feel the need for space to work on something, er maybe it's the
44 overall shape of something or whatever it might be, but sometimes you need
45 more time than others. Er. And so that would be a negative if I only had small
46 bits of time when I needed longer bits.

47
48 Yes. I haven't asked you how you work. Do you work at the keyboard, at the
49 computer, the piano?

50
51 I always start at a keyboard and then I move to a computer and then I move back
52 to the keyboard. When I write, my opening moment of writing is always at the
53 keyboard, or singing, or maybe even thinking, but never at the computer. The
54 computer is for editing and for moving things around and re-jigging, but it's not
55 for music. For me I like to sit at a keyboard and it actually makes a huge
56 difference as to what that keyboard is. I have currently at home a lovely piano
57 and that I really enjoy, it sort of really is my muse. I have another piano in my

1 house in (name of place), and that's not such a good piano, it's a harder action
2 and that produces different music.
3
4 So that in a sense is one of the factors that helps, You are inspired by, you know,
5 the tone and the touch of this particular piano.
6
7 And again it depends on what piece I'm writing, if I'm writing a song, as I just
8 have done, then because I sing as well, then the interaction of the sound of the
9 piano with the sound of my voice, because I always, or generally write for voice
10 and piano, is important. So that there is a physical aspect to it.
11
12 So when you have small moments to write and you're travelling around and you
13 are here or in different places, you have to adapt yourself to that too?
14
15 No I just write little fragments down, I just sketch little things.
16
17 So you write down on manuscript or something?
18
19 Or shorthand, musical shorthand.
20
21 So flexibility is something you have had to develop?
22
23 I think as a female I've always been flexible, because I've always had to do a
24 million things at one time. I am sure you find the same thing. There is no way
25 you could just do one thing, as a woman.
26
27 Yes, women are more multi-taskers or whatever you want to call it, than men.
28
29 Yes, that's right. Absolutely. In my experience shall I say. [laughs] The male
30 composers. I mean, there was a wonderful article in The Composer magazine a
31 number of years ago which I cut out, I cut the relevant quotation out. It was by a
32 composer called Jonathan Harvey, his wife's called Rosalind Harvey and she
33 wrote an article about how to treat your composer "husband" and it said, a lovely
34 paragraph, it said "A composer should not have to wash dishes or do the"
35 and I cut it out and stuck it on the fridge so my husband and son could see this.
36
37 Did it have an effect? [both laugh]
38
39 No, they were hurt because they always thought they always helped me out, but
40 actually I think there has always been this thing, that the male composer has
41 always had an army of people around to help, particularly a successful one like
42 Benjamin Britten, who had half a dozen people copying out his scores, whereas
43 the woman composer I don't think is very often in that situation.
44
45 Do you think it's because it is expected that she goes about it in a different way
46 and doesn't need it, or is it other factors, just sheer lack of understanding?
47
48 I think it's a lot of things, I think a woman is socialised into having to cook and
49 do all those things unless they're from the upper classes and I don't know what
50 they'd do then. I haven't any experience of them. But I think also there is the
51 notion that a woman who would be single-minded would be also selfish,
52 particularly if you've got children. How can you possibly be single-minded and
53 ignore your children?
54
55 So it's selfish for a woman but not for a man?
56

1 I think it's probably selfish for a man too, but it's OK for men to be selfish.
2 Men who are not selfish and who are not single-minded probably aren't given
3 the respect they are due, if they want to do something like compose.
4
5 Have you experienced this attitude yourself from people?
6
7 It is hard to say. I think in myself it's more a construction in my own mind,
8 because of the way I was raised, because of my whole social, you know,
9 everything that I have ever done, really.
10
11 I was wondering whether it made it easier or harder for you on your path to
12 being a composer, those attitudes.
13
14 I am sure it made it harder, I am sure it made it harder that I am not single
15 minded and that I would have guilt if I were single minded. I mean, erm I think
16 the only time, to think about it actually, erm I remember erm I came back to this
17 country, because I lived in the States for a long time, after my father died and I
18 was there for the summer with my mother and my son and er I had to finish a
19 piece for a commission. So I had to spend time in my mother's house working
20 on this score every day, because when I got back to the States it was going to be
21 performed and I remember my mother saying at the end of my visit, "Now next
22 time you come, don't bring that music with you", so [laughing] but I mean.
23
24 How did that make you feel?
25
26 Well, it made me feel that I hadn't given her the time she deserved, I mean my
27 father had died the year before so she wanted me to be there for her. But, I did
28 have, I mean I wouldn't have done it except I had a commission, but she
29 obviously felt that I had sort of destroyed the holiday by working the whole time
30 on my piece.
31
32 Did you have encouragement from your family in your writing?
33
34 I didn't actually do much composing at home. I did a little tiny bit and I had
35 great encouragement as a musician, because my father was a musician, and you
36 know it is mixed actually. But the reason I am a musician with the skills I've got
37 is because my father from a very early age encouraged me and taught me and
38 gave me ear training from the age of two and a half and I played the piano from
39 very young. So I had all the er, my father made sure that I developed whatever
40 potential I had. On the other hand they didn't want me to be a professional
41 musician, they wanted me to be a doctor or something like that.
42
43 Why was that?
44
45 Because they thought that one would always be a musician. My father was a
46 teacher and he taught music erm but he
47
48 They saw it mainly as a big hobby for you?
49
50 They saw it, I wouldn't even say the word hobby, I think they saw it as a
51 spiritual thing, that it would be succour for you throughout your life.
52
53 Has it been?
54
55 Er. I don't know, I've never had the chance to be without it. [laughs] All these
56 things seem to require a comparison with something else and all I can say is it's
57 a huge part of my life, but whether it has given me succour I don't know. It's

1 me, Does my right leg give me succour? [laughs] I don't think of it in those
2 terms.
3
4 There haven't been periods when you have been without it?
5
6 There haven't. Right, there haven't, yeah.
7
8 OK. So we are talking about the family encouraging you to, in music and we're
9 talking about your mother, this came from your mother saying don't ...
10
11 Yes, you see my mother wasn't musical, so I wouldn't say that she was able to
12 encourage me in the way my father was, because he did it as a musician. On the
13 other hand she was quite pleased, she always wanted her children to play for
14 people and things like, that but I felt it was more a kind of, she wasn't inside it, it
15 was something she viewed from the outside and so erm er once I had decided I
16 was going to do music in a serious way, they were both
17
18 Did you consider becoming a doctor?
19
20 Yes, I started off doing sciences at school for 'A' level and all that.
21
22 Did you?
23
24 Yes, at school for 'A' levels and all that.
25
26 At what point did you decide to become a musician?
27
28 Really when I did my 'A' Levels and didn't get very good 'A' levels in maths and
29 physics, I decided to come back and say "What the hell, this isn't what I want to
30 do" and came back for a year and did sort of brilliantly in music in half a year,
31 because my teacher left after six months, so I did it on my own really and sort of
32 broke the back and they said sort of, "OK, all right then, you can go". [laughs]
33 But it was a matter of erm (2) I mean, I didn't assert myself to say that what I
34 really want to do is music, because I didn't, but when push came to shove then I
35 did and then I went on and did music. It was the same thing with composition, I
36 never thought of myself as ending up being a composer. I wrote little pieces, I
37 played the oboe, my sister played the clarinet, I wrote pieces for us to play.
38
39 When you were a child?
40
41 When I was a child, yeas, but it was, but it was just a pastime.
42
43 Was this for fun or because your father asked you to?
44
45 No, no, it was just because I decided to do it, erm and I mean I played lots of
46 little things on the piano and I did these things just for my own self. I mean I was
47 in a youth orchestra and there were boys in that Youth rchestra who already
48 were composing publicly and stuff like that but I never compared myself with
49 them, I just did my own little thing.
50
51 Did it have that kind of attitude for you, composing, kind of with a big capital C
52 and inverted commas, because it kind of came across like that to me when you
53 said it?
54
55 Well, no I think that they made a big deal of it, the few that did that.
56
57 OK.

1
2 I mean I didn't think they were particularly good so it didn't. It's just that it
3 seems for some of them (1). One of them went to Paris to study with Boulez.
4
5 It was very important [noise – "I'm just going to pause this"] Anyway these boys
6 composing and making a big deal of it.
7
8 Yes, I mean not er, just playing their own pieces and things.
9
10 I sort of got into erm doing a composing degree after my undergraduate degree
11 which was of course a general degree in most British Universities particularly at
12 that time, and I stayed on for another year to do a composition B.Mus it was
13 called.
14
15 Oh right. What made you decide to go for composition rather than any other
16 aspect?
17
18 Well I was, before I went to university I was really interested in contemporary
19 music and I listened to it on the radio on BBC 3 all the time and I was really
20 strongly interested by music that was being written at the time. This is all
21 classical you can understand. I wasn't interested in pop music at all. And erm I
22 mean I had a book, a dictionary of musical themes, which is a great big thick
23 dictionary like this, and I went through ticking off the new pieces that I'd heard.
24 I mean there weren't that many in this dictionary because it wasn't interested in
25 new music particularly. But I was really interested in new music and I was
26 interested in what was being written at the time. And so when I went to
27 university I opted for the course that was in New Music, which involved a bit of
28 composing, and in order to get onto this new music part of the course you had to
29 play, or produce a piece of your own music that you had already written. And it
30 was at this point that I took out a piece that I had written for my sister and me,
31 years and years ago, and played it for the professor and he said "Oh, I didn't
32 know you wrote music," And there was a big surprise, "Oh (name) writes
33 music" and from there on it wasn't a problem, because I was on the course, I
34 was writing music, I had a nice teacher who encouraged me erm and at the end
35 of that year my undergraduate degree, it was at that point I opted to stay on and
36 do the extra year in composition and my teacher encouraged me. I do remember
37 going back to that Youth Orchestra and saying to a girl who was, sort of, fairly
38 friendly with me that I was going to go back and do a year's composition. And
39 she looked at me in a very strange way and said "Composition, why
40 composition?" [astonished tone] and I thought, "Boy, that was really aggressive
41 for somebody that didn't" and I had a feeling that she would have liked to have
42 done the same thing. And in fact um she, her daughter-in-law lives down the
43 street from my son now in Bristol, and one of these days I am going to meet up
44 with her and ask her why she had this really, sort of, very odd response when I
45 said I was doing composition "Why composition?" and she was actually a very
46 good musician herself and I do suspect that she wished she could have done the
47 same thing.
48
49 So a mixture of sour grapes and jealousy?
50
51 Yes, well yes, you know, there was something about it, that I had broken this
52 sort of barrier, because there were no other girls around who were doing it.
53
54 Were you aware of that then, from people apart from her, than, that you were
55 doing something
56

1 Well, the thing was, it wasn't so much that I was a girl doing it, but that not
2 many people did it at all. I mean of my smallish group, I admit that as an
3 undergraduate there were only eleven of us I think, of us doing music at that
4 time, which was the same right across the country in music departments. There
5 were only a very small number of people. Two of us decided to do erm this 20th
6 century part of the degree and everybody else did Early Music, they weren't
7 interested, so to do Contemporary Music set you aside from everybody else in
8 the first place, and then to be a woman wasn't that big a deal because there
9 weren't that many people there anyway.

10
11 Do you think listening to contemporary music has informed your own
12 compositions in some way?

13
14 Oh yes, it has to, that is what a contemporary composer is. It is one who works
15 in contemporary music. If you didn't you'd be writing like Mendelssohn or
16 something, which wouldn't be, no-one would treat you seriously for one thing
17 and no-one would want to listen to it.

18
19 So you are drawing inspiration and encouragement really from what's around,
20 it's not anything else. Does it work the other way round, do you experience other
21 people drawing from you, from your own compositions?

22
23 I have no idea. [laughs] I don't know. The only people who have questioned me,
24 the way you are doing for other things, are people who have been writing
25 dissertations and things like that.

26
27 Do you ever get any feedback about your music? I am very curious to know
28 when you are writing, if you have any sense of who you are writing for, apart
29 from the commission side of it, do you have a sense of your audience, or a wider
30 public, or critics or whoever?

31
32 It's hard to know. I think that develops actually. The more you write music, the
33 more you get it performed and the more you are there to hear it performed, you
34 get a better sense of what your audience might be. But I think you don't write for
35 a particular group because, I mean. For instance I was in Northumberland two
36 weeks ago and I had a piece that was played twice in the concert and before it I
37 spoke about the whole concert, which was all contemporary music. Then they
38 played my piece and then I spoke about my piece, and then we had a break and
39 then they came back and asked questions and then they played the piece again
40 and then after the concert people came up and talked to me and the questions
41 were pretty good there. Now the first thing is, it was a concert of contemporary
42 music so the audience were people who were interested in the first place. They
43 wouldn't have come to the concert unless they were interested in it. But then I
44 did get some feedback from people who gave me their own responses to the
45 piece that were their own interpretation of the piece, which was really delightful
46 because I realised that although that wasn't the way I thought of the piece, in
47 fact it had given them some enrichment and that they had spent time taking it in
48 and making sense of it.

49
50 Was it enriching for you, having these different takes on it?

51
52 Enriching for me to know that somebody else could make sense of it. I mean the
53 particular take this woman made was sort of based on what I had said anyway.
54 But she had taken it into her own world kind of thing, but the fact that someone
55 could take it into their own world was really nice. And er I also think that erm I
56 have had, I had a very big piece done by the (orchestra) with a singer a few years
57 ago. It was called (name), erm which was a sort of a revisiting of (name) but just

1 taking the (name of playwright) speeches as he had written them down. But in
2 any modern presentation of (character) she is always an evil, wicked, mad
3 woman who killed her husband, blah, blah, blah. And so when I took the
4 (playwright's) speeches there is nothing about her being mad, she is entirely
5 dwelling on the fact that (playwright), that (husband) killed her child. And so
6 when he comes back from the war, with his mistress, she kills him and so all of
7 these speeches are all about how over the last ten years it has festered and she
8 has just waited for him to come back, and then she did it. And so that my whole
9 point was to let her speak for herself and at the end of that performance there
10 were a lot of women in that audience who were in tears..

11
12 Oh really.

13
14 And that made me want to cry you know, to see that it actually did move a lot of
15 people. But on the other hand, the one critic that was there from a London paper,
16 based in (name of City) said my piece didn't succeed because I didn't show what
17 an awful person (character) was. And he also did start his review, I have to say,
18 by saying since (own name) edited the (name of book) one would expect that
19 the piece would be about a woman staying at home to doing the ironing while
20 her husband went away on a spree, or something like that. So this, going back to
21 the original questions you asked me, when I saw that, in fact I did have a
22 correspondence with the guy, because I know him a little bit, for about three or
23 four letters in which I sort of gave him what I thought of him. But he never
24 turned around, he never would admit that he was prejudiced in any way.

25
26 How do you feel about criticism, just and unjust?

27
28 Well, what I feel about it is that it can really damage a composer to have bad
29 publicity. It's publicity that's what it is, and good reviews are good publicity and
30 bad reviews are bad publicity. What I think about the content is when I had my
31 Prom piece done two years ago I had about twenty reviews, and they ranged
32 from absolutely fantastic to people who said basically, "How dare she, who does
33 she think she is writing music for the Proms?" and there was everything in
34 between, which you know, that's the thing. If you could get twenty reviews for
35 every piece you ever wrote, you'd write it off because you could see that no two
36 critics are alike, and you have got extreme people on both ends. Give me the
37 good extremes! What's it somebody said, "I don't mind what a critic said, as
38 long as its good." [laughs]. But I mean ultimately, it doesn't matter aesthetically
39 to me. What does matter is like my (piece just discussed) piece has not been
40 performed since, and I do believe it is because of this one review. There was
41 only one review in the London papers. I got a really nice review in a journal but
42 that is not read the same way as the (daily newspaper).

43
44 So where you read about you can have a damning affect on its performance.
45 Does the idea of leaving a body of work behind when you die, is that important
46 to you? How do you feel about that?

47
48 Well, because I am writing this (name of book) I have had a number of bodies of
49 work given to me from women who have died, and somebody has found it in the
50 attic and given it to me. And I can see these bodies of work are not going to go
51 anywhere, I mean I can't do much with them. I could offer them to the British
52 Library but they wouldn't want them. They are mostly plastic bags of pieces so I
53 in my old age have become really erm, I find the whole thing to be such a hit and
54 miss thing as to whether a body of work even stays around.

55
56 How important is it to you that your work stays around?

57

1 I'd like it to stay around, but that's not why I write it really. I write it because
2 it's inside me to write. Erm I have a publisher, so from the point of view of
3 knowing that my music will stay around for a certain amount of time because its
4 archived by that publisher, it's not an issue. Erm I also think that with the way
5 classical music is going, that maybe in 200 years time there won't be any
6 classical music, and so maybe there won't be any question of whether classical
7 music stays around, and particularly you know a little woman composer from the
8 mid 20th century. Who's going to care? So that's not an issue I spend a lot of
9 time worrying about. If I did think about it too hard I'd think "Well my music's
10 not going to stay around, so what's the point?" [laughs] No, I write it for now,
11 for performance now.

12
13 What about the opinion of your peers, how important is that to you?

14
15 Not, not.

16
17 Some musicians I have spoken to feel that those who can kind of understand the
18 music in the sense of having a better grasp of the musical...

19
20 It's always nice if someone comes along and says something that shows they
21 understand the piece, but it's not important to me, for all these reasons and very
22 much to do with the female thing. Because I know that the way in which a
23 woman's music is appraised is so different from the way in which a man's music
24 is appraised. It starts off with the fact that you are a woman, even amongst close,
25 people that you might know closely as colleagues, there is always that little
26 difference. I may sound incredibly cynical, I probably am, but that allows me, I
27 think, to work within my own little huddle if you like and that's what I do.

28
29 In the sense of ignoring it all, keeping yourself separate from it?

30
31 Well, I do teach composition and I do have a certain critical faculty and I do see
32 where my music is going and I know when I've written a good piece and when a
33 piece is not so good. And I mean, I should go back and pull them out of my
34 publisher's list, because there are some pieces that I don't think are very good, so
35 what I am much more concerned about is that when I go back and hear a piece
36 again after ten years, if I think its good or not. That's what really counts to me
37 and there are pieces and I think "Oh God, that should really go out" and others I
38 think, "Yes, that's really not so bad after all", and that's what counts to me.

39
40 So friends, family, close family, is that important to you?

41
42 That's nice, it's always nice. I mean my husband is a musician and I mean I
43 would never play a piece to him before it's finished, because if he made a
44 comment about it, I would probably take it too seriously. And I've done that in
45 the past once or twice, let him hear something, and he'll say "I couldn't quite tell
46 what was going on there, I couldn't quite tell what was going on", so I'd go back
47 and work on it. So now I am very careful not to do that, I will only play a piece
48 to him when it's finished.

49
50 Would he be the only person whose opinion would affect you in that way?

51
52 I don't know. I don't get many opinions, I really don't.

53
54 Because you were saying that the opinion of those in musical circles, you know,
55 is governed by all sorts of factors. You wouldn't take any notice but

56

1 Well, I'll give you an example of an opinion that did matter to me, I had a piece
2 performed by an ensemble two years ago in Bristol and London and the double
3 bass player in that group loved the piece so much she went to another ensemble
4 she plays with, which is the (name), and said. "You must do this piece." And as
5 a result of her doing that, the head of the Ensemble got in touch with me and
6 asked to hear it. They put it on, I just got ten performances all over (name of
7 contry) because this woman really liked my piece. Now that counts. That's what
8 counts, right. So I think it's probably partly to do with the fact that I never had a
9 teacher who I thought had that much affect on me. Erm. I think I mentioned I
10 had a teacher when I was at my undergraduate university for a short time and
11 although I found him very good in helping me with other repertoire, I didn't
12 think he helped me very much with my own music. He didn't say very much
13 really, he just let me get on with it. And then when I went to the States, I had a
14 teacher there who became a good friend, but was hopeless as a teacher so I have
15 never, I mean, when I hear someone say, "Oh I had such a good teacher", I am
16 always really sort of envious because I never feel that I had a really good
17 teacher, who put me on a particular path or who gave me short cuts. That's what
18 a teacher should do, I think, is give you short cuts and so that's why, I think, I
19 am such a dedicated teacher myself. I feel that I could have had the things I tell
20 my students now and the ways I run my classes now, where I bring professional
21 performers in to play their pieces and to talk about them, I never had that.

22
23 I'd love to ask you about that but it's a bit beyond my remit.

24 OK, sure.

25
26 Coming back to you saying that your husband could affect the way that you, you
27 know, you continue with a piece.

28
29 Yes, if he made a comment about it before it was finished, a negative comment,
30 I would probably address that and I have once in a while and then made some
31 change which I later regretted so I don't now. I let him hear it but only after it's
32 finished.

33
34 Yes, so you are the main arbiter of what is good and bad in your music?

35
36 Yes, absolutely.

37
38 Right. Coming back to things that make it harder, you have mentioned a number
39 of things. Any other things that haven't come up?

40
41 Things that make it harder to compose? No.

42
43 We talked about the, sort of, downside of having snippets of time really and
44 being able to make the best of them but also finding that they can make it more
45 difficult because you are not always in a position to do what you may want to do
46 at that time.

47
48 No I think the reason I have no more to fill in there is because when I went to the
49 States I went there as a postgraduate student and I did a degree in composition, a
50 Masters degree, and then I got married and then I had a child and then I went
51 back and I did a PhD but not in composition because I didn't like the idea of
52 writing music for an exam essentially. I realised that what I wanted to do was to
53 write music for myself and you know, for me it's a way of life and not an exam.
54 So I went back and I did a PhD in musicology, in Early Music, and

55

1 Can I just ask you what it is about having composition as an exam that you don't
2 like? What is it that you don't like about it?

3
4 Oh well, because I felt that it directed the way I wrote the music, because I
5 always had to write an essay about it and it made me have to conform in certain
6 ways when I felt that writing music was a delight, it became a sort of a chore.
7 But it was only a short time and anyway I didn't, I decided I didn't want to go on
8 and do a PhD anyway. But then when I was married, my husband was doing his
9 own PhD and I was doing all the musical examples, which was 600 pages of
10 ruling the lines. This was a two year job and I thought, well I've done all this I
11 surely deserve to get something out of it for myself and I went back and did a
12 PhD working on the work that he had done, but in a different way. So I had the
13 body of music and then I could work on that to write my own PhD. He was
14 doing something else entirely. He needed me to create this body of music on
15 notation, there were no computers in those days, it was all done by hand, a huge
16 volume. And so then I used that volume for my own PhD. While I was doing all
17 of that I didn't write a note of music and er I had left the institution where I was,
18 the university, where I had performers, I was out of it, I had no performers. What
19 I did was, I was wrong to say I didn't write any music, I did arrangements for his
20 choir because he was teaching and I did jazz arrangements and I did folksong
21 arrangements and all that kind of thing, which really was creative but not in the
22 serious creativity that I considered what I had done before to be. And I think it
23 was for six years that I didn't write any music that I would say I had composed.
24 In fact all the stuff I did for choirs and things, and I also did some teaching
25 myself in a girl's school and I wrote their music, that's all disappeared I don't
26 have any of that now. So for six years I didn't do any of this and then after I got
27 my PhD I got a job teaching.

28
29 What was it like for you during that time?

30
31 (2) Well, I got divorced afterwards, and I don't think it was the fault of my poor
32 husband, he was a nice guy but I was obviously very unhappy but not obvious,
33 it wasn't clear to me, but I got

34
35 Was the fact that you weren't able to fulfil yourself creatively in that time part of
36 the reason that the relationship ran into difficulties?

37
38 Probably. I mean, what happened, I can't, I'm not very good at analysing, I can
39 only tell what happened. I went and got a job after I got my PhD and that's
40 really when I split up with my husband and I was suddenly finding, you know, I
41 was doing my own thing. Before I had just been a housewife. I had a small baby
42 and I mean I remember sitting at the table in the kitchen saying "Is this all there
43 is?" [sad tone] [laughs] I remember saying that and so it was just a gradual
44 realisation I think. My father died at that time as well, there were a whole lot of,
45 you know they say you add up all the points and it was.

46
47 What a time for you!

48
49 But I didn't actually start composing right then, I went back to, I went to
50 teaching and I had a full time job. And I was asked, (1) no, I entered a
51 competition with a piece I'd left, before I'd stopped composing, and I'd gone
52 back into this teaching and I picked up this composition, and thought "Right I'm
53 going to finish this". And there was a competition coming up and I won the
54 competition and that's really what kick-started me. And then also the Head of
55 the institution where I was teaching said "We've got someone who wants to do
56 composition, would you like to teach him and then also there's a (name of
57 region) Music Teachers' Association commission, would you like that?" And so

1 it was sort of stepping in and so it all sort of happened very gradually. Now since
2 that time I've never stopped writing music. I mean it was like, (1) it was almost
3 like it was a gift to be able to do it again and I'm not going to let that go, and so
4 there has never been, you say "Are there any obstacles?" No, there aren't
5 because it's so precious to me, I am not going to stop doing it.

6
7 Are there times when it is difficult for you to write, to find ideas? Anything that
8 affects that?

9
10 I don't think ideas are ever the problem, it's how good they are sometimes.

11
12 Right.

13
14 But no, I mean, I always, when I am working on a big piece and if I have got. I
15 mean I once in a while get a semester off, a term off here. I think "O God, if I
16 only had open time I have so many ideas I could just write and write and write."
17 I think that is the case. I have got more ideas than I have got time to cope with
18 them.

19
20 So any other difficulties before we move on to something slightly different?

21
22 No I don't think so, I mean, you know, I can't think of any.

23
24 What about erm, all right then. I would like to ask you some things about the
25 effect of being a composer on your personal, family and social life. You've said
26 something already, quite a lot really. Do you think having your child, your son,
27 had an effect on your work?

28
29 On composing?

30
31 Yes.

32
33 No, I don't think so, I mean when he was small he was always very pleased that
34 I wrote music. He's not a classical musician, in fact he plays a guitar in a band,
35 but not professionally, he just plays in a band. But then he did marry a girl who
36 comes from a very musical family even though he is sort of distanced. But I
37 mean I remember when he was about 5 or 6 in school, having to write about
38 your parents, and he wrote a long essay on me as a composer, you know. So it
39 has always been kind of nice and he has always come to my concerts and my
40 husband has always comes to the concerts whenever he possibly can, so I think
41 they are supportive. My difficulty, er, if it is a difficulty because it works both
42 ways, is my husband is head of a major institution, which is the (name), and so
43 erm I am very careful that I don't presume on that in any way whatsoever. So
44 whereas I have been offered a lot of performances there by people who know
45 me, I generally turn them down. And there are, you know, and in his job,
46 because it is such a powerful job, if he offends anybody then you can bet they
47 won't ever play my music. So my life is to some extent circumscribed by what
48 he does, and it's just because the world of classical composition is not that big
49 ultimately, so everybody knows me because of him or knows him because of me
50 and there are ramifications to that. So that's the only other thing, but it is nothing
51 to do with composing, it's to do with opportunities for performers and they are. I
52 have really got to be very careful, I don't want anyone saying that my career has
53 been in any way enhanced. And he doesn't, he never promotes me, which is
54 fine, it would be awful if he did. On the other hand he doesn't talk me down but
55 he doesn't use his position in any way to help me, which I would never want
56 anyway. And anyway I didn't marry him until I was 37 so I was already, you
57 know, at that stage a composer.

1
2 Yes. Quite a lot of composers find that their marrying and their friendships are
3 largely within music. Is that true with you, friendships too?
4
5 I think it is all musicians, not composers it's musicians. They have a particular
6 way of seeing the world, I think. [laughs]
7
8 What do you think that is?
9
10 I think it means that because music is usually so important to them, that they
11 find it hard to commune with people for whom music is less important or not
12 important at all.
13
14 Do you think musicians as an occupational group, or composers within that
15 group are different from other occupational groups in the way they see their
16 work as related to their lives?
17
18 Yes, I think so. They marry each other more often I would have said, because I
19 don't have any statistics, but I just know an awful lot of musicians are married to
20 each other.
21
22 Was that a factor for you that you would be better understood?
23
24 No I just think I just mostly met musicians [laughs]. Both my husbands have
25 been musicians, yes my life is music so
26
27 Do you think you would be less well understood than with people who aren't
28 musicians? Are your friends musicians?
29
30 Well yes, in our home in (name of area) our neighbours, none of them are
31 musicians, I find it very difficult frankly, particularly
32
33 Would you describe yourself as a composer to them?
34
35 Yes, but they don't know what that means really. What does bother me is that
36 they have no understanding of styles, they listen to any old crap basically, and
37 think it is great and I can't do that. You know I can't.
38
39 So would you be part of that for them then?
40
41 Would I what?
42
43 Would they think what you are doing is great because it is part of the greater
44
45 No they have never heard my music, I would have thought, they wouldn't play
46 it.
47
48 Does that bother you?
49
50 No but I would prefer to be surrounded by people. I mean, I enjoy my social life
51 in London where I mix with people who are interested in music. I miss it when I
52 go to (place) where there are very few people there who are in my area. So I
53 think it's important to me to be in a social situation with other musicians, I enjoy
54 that. I am happiest when I am with a bunch of performers. I mean when I came
55 back from (name of a place) in a car with four of them, we had a great time, so
56 yeah I do enjoy
57

1 That's from this sense of being understood amongst the community?
2
3 Yeah, it is, it is, yeah, yeah. And where you talk the same language, it's not
4 necessarily that they understand what I do, but we all have erm the same points
5 of contact or whatever.
6
7 How wide does it extend, that community in which you are involved within
8 music?
9
10 Erm. It's not really a community because
11
12 I mean a community not in a natural sense but a group of people that you would
13 include
14
15 (2) I don't know really. I mean, my life includes lots of people who are not
16 musicians, I am just saying that, er, the community, Maybe you mean
17 communing, how far does that extend? Well, I don't know because you see my
18 life is mostly amongst musicians, particularly given my husband's job as well,
19 we spend almost all our time. I mean I have a crazy life, I mean I work all day, I
20 go home, I go to a concert and I go to bed and then I start all over again the next
21 day, so I don't have much time, except in (name of place) when I have some
22 neighbours in the garden and things like that, but even in (place) I take my
23 computer and I work, I compose most of the time there too.
24
25 Any hobbies and interests outside music?
26
27 I like to garden, but I don't have the time to do it much. I like all kinds of things,
28 I like to read, and I don't have much time to do that. I love to travel and I do that
29 a little bit. Erm I used to paint when I was a kid, and will do it again when I
30 retire. [laughs] That's it really.
31
32 Do you go and listen to music a great deal other than what your?
33
34 Not so much now, I mean I should do more than I do. I don't have, I mean I
35 listen to music in concerts. They are not necessarily the kind of music that I
36 would choose for my own advancement to listen to. I really should be going to
37 more classical contemporary music concerts than I manage to get to, but because
38 of my commitments with my husband's job, a lot of music I listen to is classical,
39 but earlier stuff, which is fine, I mean it's good for me but I'm really looking
40 forward to Saturday night because I am going to go to the Festival Hall or to the
41 Queen Elizabeth Hall to hear a whole bunch of new pieces including one by
42 (name of contemporary composer) , so that's going to be a highlight because it's
43 what I really want to do.
44
45 When things get difficult for you how do you cope? Do you have any particular
46 things that you do, because you have a very full life, a very hard working life.
47 When things get tough, you feel stressed what helps you through it?
48
49 Well playing the piano can do, but I don't do it often enough. But I find it quite
50 remarkable, if I sit and play the piano everything disappears, the stresses and
51 everything it completely blanks out. I am just in the world of this piece of music
52 so that does help. Erm. If I have got stresses at work, I mean the last job I was at
53 I wrote a novel.
54
55 Right.
56

1 A complete novel, which involved all of my male colleagues. It never got
2 published although I did send it to a publisher and they said it needed more
3 characterisation, I thought "My God there's tons of characterisation" , but I did.
4 That was a real, I had a very, very hard time and so this was a real attempt to
5 release all of these frustrations and note it wasn't writing music it was writing a
6 novel.
7
8 What led you to that then?
9
10 Led me to writing a novel?
11
12 Yes.
13
14 Oh, I think I am very verbal. I think I write a lot. Obviously as a musicologist I
15 write a great deal. I am very interested in poetry, my bookshelves are full of
16 poetry and of course I look for it to set erm and yes, I love to write.
17
18 Do you write poetry? Do you set your own poetry?
19
20 No never. I did write poetry when I was younger, but I like the experience of
21 working with somebody else's work, I like the dialogue I get when I work with
22 them.
23
24 Do you work with contemporary poets?
25
26 Yes, I work with one particular one a great deal now, although previously I
27 worked with another one but then she died so I am working with this one now.
28
29 Any other things you do...
30
31 When I am stressed?
32
33 Yes.
34
35 I will dump it on my husband if it is stress at work. If it is stress with him I
36 write a diary, I'm the only person who knows that I write a diary but I do. I
37 don't so much now but if I really had stresses in my personal life I put it in the
38 diary and I found it got rid of it. I find words to be a real. If you write it down it
39 gets rid of it I think.
40
41 Yes, so getting it out
42
43 Yes, getting it out.
44
45 Expressing it can help. Any other things. Some people use relaxation, yoga,
46 meditation, that sort of stuff.
47
48 No, none of that. No. I mean there have only been a few times in my life when I
49 have really felt
50
51 Alexander technique of course?
52
53 No I don't do any of that. When I have really felt incredibly stressed. One of
54 those was when my father died. I think I didn't sleep for six months properly
55 and it was a real big stress because I came back, I was living in the States and I
56 came back because my mother had had cancer before and everyone thought that
57 he had his heart attack because she had cancer. And he died, so she was told that

1 by her friends so she was incredibly stressed and then her cancer came back.
2 And so there was a patch of my life, let's see, how old was I, it was between
3 when I was about 35 and 40 when I had all these problems with my parents.
4
5 And your marriage.
6
7 And my marriage broke up at the same time. On the other hand it was a time of
8 sort of exploration for me, because I'd never been completely independent
9 before, I had a son and everything, but so I think. Did I cope, I don't know. I
10 mean my marriage broke up, so maybe I didn't cope very well [laughs] but I
11 think in the long run it was for the best.
12
13 What do you think?
14
15 I don't know. You see I've always felt that what I have done is put my head
16 down and got on with it, I have never felt that I've had a chance to have a
17 nervous breakdown or anything like that. I have never been. I mean I have
18 always been told I am very normal and can cope with everything. Everyone has
19 always said that to me, so I have thought I'd better do that, and ...
20
21 Is that the way it's felt for you?
22
23 Yes, yes. I have been, I must say that probably when I got to the menopause I
24 felt quite depressed a lot and would sort of sit and some tears would well up in
25 my eyes but I think that was probably hormonal. I mean I don't know. I went to
26 the doctor once and said I was depressed he said "Well, how bad is it?" and sort
27 of dismissed it and that was it, so.
28
29 Did you focus on particular frustrations or feel generally down?
30
31 No I just feel really bad and sit in a chair and feel depressed and sort of enjoy it I
32 suppose you might say. But it went away.
33
34 Do you ever use any of these moods or emotions in your music?
35
36 No.
37
38 Are you driven by moods or those things in your music? Events?
39
40 Erm. I wouldn't say I'd start with a mood and write a piece about it, I wouldn't
41 say ever that, I think music is too important for me to force a mood onto the
42 music I think the mood in a sense comes out of the music. I once said in an
43 interview my music is not a soapbox for my opinions and points of view and all
44 that so in a way erm
45
46 Because for some musicians obviously what they write or what they play comes
47 from what they are feeling or what they have just done or ...
48
49 Well they might say that, but how do you know that's true? I mean there is a
50 big area of musicology
51
52 What is it like for you, I am really interested in you?
53
54 What is it like for me? I, when I am writing a piece I follow the inspiration I
55 have for the piece and I follow it through and I would hope that none of my
56 pieces are just one mood, I mean the point about classical music is that you show
57 a breadth within your music and so

1
2 I'm just wondering whether the mood or whatever is the impetus for starting to
3 do it rather than necessarily is reflected throughout because obviously it won't
4 be, necessarily?
5
6 I think I would not make a general statement that the mood is the impetus
7 because usually my impetuses are more localised, they are more to do with an
8 idea, or to do erm with a piece of music or a fragment or just. I mean, you know
9 I started a piece once
10
11 Would it be any particular musical idea, you know, a melodic idea or harmonic?
12
13 It could be anything. It differs from one piece to the next absolutely. Well, if it's
14 poetry then the poetry is obviously going to, and poetry will have a mood and I
15 am responding to the poetry in a sense trying to illustrate it and also to take it a
16 bit further usually. So from that point of view, yes there's a mood. But to pin it
17 down to saying I'll start with feeling sad then I'll write a piece that is sad, it is
18 much too simplistic, music is much more complicated than just
19
20 Would you say there is a connection between what's going on in your own life
21 and your thoughts, feelings and moods and what you write or not?
22
23 Well there has to be. I think maybe the key is the word mood, because if you talk
24 about moods then you tend to think of categories, of ways of feeling, but if you
25 simply say that...
26
27 Like what?
28
29 Like sad, happy, all those things.
30
31 Right.
32
33 But when you write a piece obviously what you are goes into the piece so moods
34 are only part of what you are, so I would say that to talk about moods is
35 simplistic. Everything that you feel is going to affect everything you do, whether
36 it's writing words or music or anything else. But to be able to analyse it and say
37 when I feel sad I write a sad piece, no, I think ...
38
39 No I'm not trying to say that's the case at all, I'm just trying to sort of
40 understand in what sense self expression goes into the, what sort of self, what
41 aspects of self expression go into the piece.
42
43 But defining self-expression is impossible isn't it?
44
45 Rather than saying that, I'm not trying to see the cause of, I'm just trying to see
46 it the way you see it, I'm not interesting in trying to
47
48 I basically don't see it.[laughs]
49
50 OK. A lot of people say that erm there's a link between, you know, instability
51 and difficulties and problems and creativity, what's your view on that?
52
53 Erm. I don't think it is proven, no. I mean, I think the people who are most
54 visible, like the guy in that film, you know, the pianist and John Ogden, there are
55 performers who are very famous for being crazy.
56
57 Which film?

1
2 No the film about, it's a movie about the pianist, the Australian pianist who
3 trained at the Royal College and then he went off and I've forgotten what it's
4 called now.
5
6 Shine.
7
8 Yes Shine. I mean there are composers and pianists and musicians who are
9 crazy. I think there are an awful lot more of them that aren't, it's just that they
10 get the limelight, you know. Of course there are people who are creative and are
11 also crazy but I don't know that anyone has proven that being creative causes
12 you to be crazy, I think it could be the exact opposite.
13
14 Yes. OK. Any other ways in which you think being a woman composer has
15 affected your family and social life? Perhaps you think being married to another
16 musician, has that affected you?
17
18 Well, obviously being two musicians my life is mostly in music. I think being
19 erm
20
21 You said you had to be careful to keep you own life, composing life, separate
22 from your husband's life.
23
24 Yes, that's just, yeah. I think also because I have to do a lot of social things
25 connected with his job. I am sort of quite forthright. When I first went to a
26 function with him, one of his Board, the wife of one of his Board members said
27 to me, "How are you getting on at the (name of place)?", and I said "I'm not
28 here", she said "Oh you don't participate very much here?" and I said "No not
29 really" and she said "Oh, what a pity that your own job does not allow you to
30 participate more fully in the (name of place)" and I was mad as hell. But it's
31 strange because years later I discovered that this woman was actually doing a
32 PhD herself and she was retired, she was in her 60s and she was doing a PhD,
33 so it might have been a little needling. [laughs] But erm I mean I feel I am
34 always slightly assertive because when, you know, erm previously someone in
35 that job would have had a wife who was like a vicar's wife, and so I am always
36 very keen to. I mean I use my own name, I have never used my husband's name
37 and I am obviously very concerned that people do not call me Mrs (husband's
38 surname), you know, I hate being called Mrs (name). I am very, very concerned
39 with maintaining my own identity and maybe that would have had an affect on
40 my family. My son has a different name from me, but has never worried about it,
41 plenty of people do. Erm. No I mean, I don't think so, I don't think it has been a
42 problem really.
43
44 Any other things that you think that we have missed out in terms of what makes
45 it easier for you?
46
47 I don't think so.
48
49 Any other aspects of the impact that your work has had on you life that you
50 haven't mentioned? Do you find that you have developed friendships with other
51 women composers?
52
53 No, I haven't developed friendships with other male composers either. I think
54 being a composer is incredibly solitary, erm I mean I know other composers. (3)
55 No, I mean I don't have time really to have close friendships.
56

1 Is that a good thing or bad? How has it affected you, that solitary, that need for
2 solitude or is this a solitary thing?
3

4 Well, er, I think I see male composers forming little clubs. There are those who
5 are quite close to each other that promote each other and so on and I think
6 women don't get that opportunity. I know other women composers, there are one
7 or two of my age, one, no two, two of my age who I know quite well and I am
8 quite friendly with them. (name) for instance used to come and do some teaching
9 for me when I was at (name of University) and (name) was the other one of my
10 age, is the other woman (job title), there are only two of us in the country who
11 are woman (job title) and whenever I see (name), but she lives in (place), we are
12 always very friendly. And so there is no, you know, there's no big issue, we are
13 quite collegial, but we don't meet up for drinks every weekend or anything like
14 that and I know there are composers who are very, you know, who almost form
15 little groups really.
16

17 Would you like to have had a little group of women composers?
18

19 Once in a while I think it would be nice to have a situation that my students have
20 where we have a seminar for all the post-grads and they all talk about their
21 music and encourage and all that. Once in a while I wish I had had that when I
22 was being educated. I not only didn't have any other women around, I didn't
23 have any men either so although when I went to the States there were about
24 seven people doing PhDs in composition or Masters in composition, because I
25 only went to do a Masters but they were all mature students and they were all
26 men and I was completely the odd one out because they were all in their 30s and
27 I was coming in as, a you know, a young British girl.
28

29 How were you treated there?
30

31 Erm Fine I think, but I didn't have much to do with them really. Nobody was
32 mean to me or anything or talked down to me but I had my own social life and,
33 you know, I was a sort of swinging girl from London wearing mini skirts and all
34 that kind of stuff and I did a lot of singing and we sang at the White House and
35 all kinds of things that that and so I had a really good experience there, but it
36 wasn't particularly with the other composers. I had very little to do with the
37 other composers and I did my own thing and I always have done my own thing.
38 There are various organisations of composers, for instance there is an
39 organisation of (country) composers and I have been asked to join it and I have
40 refused and it is partly because I am slightly suspicious of the reasons they've
41 organised it, I think maybe the person who has organised it is intent on pushing
42 their own career, if you know what I mean. But also I don't really wish to be
43 labelled as a (name of country) composer and I don't think I necessarily have
44 much in common with the others there. I mean I speak (language) and live in
45 (place) but I am not sort of nationalistic in maybe some of the ways they are and
46 I certainly hope I am not, I mean I think there is a bit of narrowness, looking
47 inwards and I am very much, I feel much more international than national.
48

49 So you feel more affinity with women composers wherever they are?
50

51 Yes, but it's very interesting because women composers do not have affinity
52 with other women composers and one of the big problems for women
53 composers, is that most of the successful ones, won't even admit they are
54 women composers. I mean they don't want to be labelled that way, which I have
55 no worries about and I think it is really important to stand up and say I am a
56 woman composer. I suppose everyone knows you are anyway so you may as
57 well say so, if you are not then they think there is something wrong with it but a

1 lot of the more successful ones done really want to be associated with the
2 subject.

3
4 And why do you think that is?

5
6 Because they see it as a negative, they want to be thought of the same way as a
7 man composer is thought of, not to be discriminated against. I mean it's a very
8 old fashioned view and it certainly was the case. Doing my (book), and I'm
9 sorry to keep coming back to that, if you have time, you might want to read the
10 preface to that (book), which is my essay about women composers and about
11 what has happened historically, what has happened to the present time. That
12 really sums up the way I feel.

13
14 Right.

15
16 And I think the time, only since about 1980, has been right for women to say yes
17 I am a woman composer, there is nothing wrong with being a woman composer.

18
19 As a composer are there ambitions you still have, things that you would like to
20 do in future that you haven't been able to do?

21
22 Yeah, I would like more international performances. I get quite a few in the
23 States because you know I have got the contacts there and I get performances in
24 other places. I don't even know about them because I just get my little bit of
25 royalties, you know tuppence in China or whatever it is, so I suppose there are
26 performances in places I don't really know about, but I am certainly not
27 particularly well known anywhere. I would like to have more performances in
28 other places and I'd also like to write more music, maybe some bigger pieces, I'd
29 like to write more orchestral music, it seems to sort of dried up. I had a big prom
30 piece and I haven't got a commission for a big orchestral piece now, I like to
31 maybe get another one or two of those because I like writing for orchestra and
32 keep going, keep doing what I am doing.

33
34 How important would public recognition be to you?

35
36 Only in that public recognition means you get more performances. That's what I
37 want, is the music to be played. No, I mean public recognition for a classical
38 composer, I mean even the most famous ones are not known except within this
39 small circle. If you want to be rich and famous then you don't become a
40 classical composer. I mean, I think maybe there are still classical composers who
41 have still got sort of Beethoven's name ringing in their ears, and they see
42 themselves as being something the whole world will recognise and bow down to
43 but that's crap. Classical music is a very small world now and you are only doing
44 something, a very specialist thing.

45
46 OK. As you know I am a psychologist working with musicians. Is there
47 anything you think would help that I should know about or consider particularly
48 that would help me in my work?

49
50 Well, it depends what it is that you are doing. When you say you work with
51 musicians that doesn't give me any

52
53 Helping musicians enhance their creativity.

54
55 Sorry, enhance their creativity?

56
57 Yes. Composers' work.

1
2 Well it depends how much they have got in the first place. [laughs] What I have
3 seen a lot is that people who are composers when they are young stop being
4 composers and I really think the strongest thing you need to have is this thing
5 that I've talked about, which is just put your head down and get on and do it
6
7 Self-belief too is important to you?
8
9 Yes, I suppose, I didn't put it in those terms but maybe you're right. I just think
10 of it as just being dogged, being dogged, that's what I think, whatever comes
11 along that's, whatever obstacles come along, you just ignore them and you get
12 on with it and that's what I think a composer has to do. You have to have
13 enough of a drive, that what you do gives you enough enjoyment, maybe the
14 word isn't enjoyment, but it is important enough to you, it is like breathing, if
15 you didn't do it you might just as well not be alive. And you see I had that
16 experience early on of not doing it and I think that's what drives me, so maybe if
17 you are dealing with people who have got a block, then how bad's the block?
18 How badly affected are they by it to feel really rotten, because that to me would
19 be the motivation for doing it again. I don't feel rotten enough.
20
21 Sometimes self-criticism can cripple people?
22
23 That's true, that's really important not to become too self-critical and to let
24
25 How do you stop yourself becoming self-critical? Because you have already
26 criticised some of your work.
27
28 Turn it off, turn it off. I mean for instance the piece that we have just done in
29 (place) I remember when I heard they were doing (place) I pulled that tape out,
30 and I thought "Oh God this doesn't sound good at all, this sounds dreadful and so
31 I put it away". I thought "No, it is going to be performed, I'll forget it". And I
32 then I went to the live performance and it was so much better. So you may be
33 self critical because you have got a bad tape of a performance and the way you
34 remembered it isn't the way it sounds on the tape and you have got to be really
35 careful that your self criticism is based on reality, because sometimes it isn't and
36 to not trust self-criticism too much, I think that may be the thing that the way
37 you feel today may not be the way you'll feel tomorrow anyway, so just put it in
38 a drawer and come back to it in a year's time and it may be better.
39
40 Anything else you can think of in your experience that would be useful to me to
41 know?
42
43 Well of the people, of the composers that I have known who have had blocks,
44 and I have a very good friend in the States who was very talented with a great
45 future in front of him and a very fine musician and he has written since he has
46 been in his 30s really very, very little music. Erm. My feeling about him is that
47 his personality has prevented him from doing it and I think it's sort of the way
48 he was born, that as he's grown older he has grown less capable of organising
49 himself, of being in charge of himself, of doing things and I think it has been
50 sort of something that was developing throughout his life and I am wondering to
51 what extent being a composer is so tied up with your character, that when you
52 get a block, is it just a little block, or is it something that says, your character's
53 saying, right you have done that now, it is not quite right for you, you have to
54 stop there. I really feel that I was
55
56 Which aspects of say that person, that character would be responsible for that
57 then?

1
2 I think maybe not having enough of that dogged quality. I mean I see so many
3 composers who compose when they are young and stop and there is something
4 about, it's just very hard, it takes such a huge amount of effort and enthusiasm
5 and all of those things and if you don't have enough of it you are not going to
6 keep doing it for your whole life and to do it for your whole life is a major
7 undertaking, I think.

8
9 Yes, because in a sense you are talking about a lot of different things in your sort
10 of idea of dogged, it is partly motivation, it is partly determination, it is partly
11 effort and energy as well

12
13 Yes. It is a complicated mix of things.

14
15 And partly putting your head down and not letting other things affect you too
16 much. Yeah, and also I guess the way you respond to things that are tough,
17 because I mentioned my first big orchestral piece where I had a reviewer who
18 said I was neurotic. In fact I had this piece which was like my first big public
19 situation and the next day I left to come to this country to take up a job for a
20 year, an exchange thing. And so I left there having read this nasty review which
21 said basically, what does this woman think she is doing. I had foolishly
22 dedicated the piece to the memory of my parents, so this guy jumped on this,
23 "Oh well she is neurotic she just, she can't cope with her parents". It was really
24 awful. And I came to this country and I had hanging over me the fact that I had
25 had a really nasty review. Well I had had very few reviews at that point so I
26 didn't know how to take them anyway. This guy was a sports writer for God's
27 sake, but I had to deal with that and I think what I did was, because it was good
28 that I could leave immediately. I had a year in a completely different situation
29 and I could mull over this and decide that ultimately it was of no consequence
30 but I had to sort of come to terms with it and decide. I didn't stop composing
31 while I was over there, but it was I would say, a big blow. If I think of the big
32 blows I've had in my life, there haven't been that many. You know I mentioned
33 my parents' illness and death, that was a big blow. This in terms of my career
34 was something I had to learn to cope with and I think that is the other thing that
35 composers have to do, they have to be pretty tough and I am always telling my
36 students this.

37
38 In coping with criticism.

39
40 Yes. I have one or two students now and you say the slightest thing to them and
41 they go off in a pout and you think, "My God they will never make it, they never
42 will", because to read a national paper and to see yourself put down.

43
44 Yes. Have you ever confronted the critics?

45
46 Well that one guy who wrote about (name of piece), I wrote him a series of
47 letters and I think I told him things he'd never heard before, it was about being a
48 woman composer it was about. Because I had just finished writing the (book)
49 and I knew all these things that he had no clue about, so I confronted him on
50 that. No, I've never confronted anybody else. I have seen one or two critics
51 change their opinion of me dramatically, over the same piece, so they'd write
52 one thing one year and next time they hear it a year later it is a totally different
53 review, but I did have, I mean I had a wonderful review for (name of piece) in
54 the Telegraph, which is really nice but I don't pay it any attention. I just know
55 that that will help me get another performance. So no, I think you have to learn
56 to cope with that. And I suppose in a lot of ways doing that (book) was really
57 important to me, but you see if you were asking me the question was that (book)

1 really important to you, I would have to say "Well I didn't have an opportunity
2 to not do it and find out if it was important," but I can see in a way I behave ever
3 since that I do recall the things I learned from that.
4
5 A very important thing for you.
6
7 Yes.
8
9 OK. Just a sort of last question, sort of thrown in. Quite a lot of your works
10 have got titles, but yet you wouldn't see yourself as a (name of country)
11 composer. Can you just say a little bit, for my own interest really about how the
12 (nationality) in you. I assume you are a (language)-speaker?
13
14 Did I give you a CV?
15
16 No. You didn't actually. It's more for my own curiosity.
17
18 I would say very few of my pieces have (name of country) titles in fact, I mean
19 it's only about five or six maximum out of sixty.
20
21 OK. Maybe I just picked up on those.
22
23 I brought you one of these so you would have one. When they have got (name)
24 titles there has been a (name) reason for it, like I wrote, I have only ever set one
25 set of (name) texts and that was for the (place) Festival and the second
26 performance was going to be at the (festival) which has an all (name) rule, so I
27 had to write (name) songs. Right so that's the first one. The proms piece was a
28 commission from the (Orchestra), I was their (name) composer, so I used a
29 (name) title for that, also an English title. I wrote a piano duo and I gave that a
30 (name) title and I don't know why, because the people playing it weren't
31 (nationality) or anything, I don't know why I did that. That's about it. Oh and I
32 also did, I wrote a piece for an anthology of (type of) music, commissioned by
33 (instrumentalist) and I called it (name) which is a translation of (name) so I used
34 a bit of the folk song which I sent up and I turned it a Mexican hat dance but
35 mostly I don't do (nationality). Now that I have this house in (country) maybe
36 there is more pressure on me because I speak (language) now, I didn't speak it
37 for 25 years or something because I was in the States and so there are more
38 (name) influences on me at the moment than there have been since I was 18.
39
40 OK. Thank you. How are we doing?

Transcript 2:

Robin

1 How would you describe yourself as a musician?
2
3 Mainly a composer and er pianist really
4
5 Right. I'd like to ask you three sorts of questions: to begin with, ask you
6 questions about your work, OK. Can you tell me what kind of thing erm makes it
7 easier for you to work?
8
9 Freedom really. Space, you know, and not having any commitments, definitely.
10 I'm trying to cut down as much as possible, so I can do more writing. That's the
11 one thing that stops me, is having dates and things you know, coming up.
12
13 What would you see as the right amount of space to be able to work
14 comfortably?
15
16 Oh, as long as possible really. Indefinite.
17
18 And within that space, what helps you to work better?
19
20 Lots of sleep, because that's essential I think, yes. Mainly that. I think sleep yes.
21 Dreams play a big part. Because when I'm composing and writing it's a bit like
22 dreaming really. I dream everything really in the daytime in a way.
23
24 Do you have a particular pattern of working?
25
26 No I like to do it when I feel like it most, because it is important to push yourself
27 sometimes, if it's essential, and then you really enjoy doing it, once you've
28 pushed yourself. 'Cause its like a dynamo going, I find. It starts very slowly then
29 gradually increases until it is going very fast then it winds down slowly again.
30 Just like a dynamo.
31
32 Has this pattern always been the same for you or has it changed?
33
34 Yes, always the same. Yes. But again I do dream things and I've written things
35 down after dreaming them at night sometimes. But it is a bit like a dream state,
36 when you're composing, or writing
37
38 When you are composing or writing do you have any idea who it is you are
39 writing for?
40
41 It's a very good thing if you do, because I think the quality of work improves
42 according to who you are writing it for.
43
44 How does it make a difference?
45
46 I don't know. You feel you've got to do your very best work for the person who
47 you're writing for if it's someone you admire, you know, it draws out the best
48 work in you, I've found that often. I wrote work for (name of player) and I knew
49 it had to be good. And it turned out well. That sort of thing, you know.
50
51 Apart from particular people, what effect does having erm an audience, a
52 potential audience to hear your music, make?
53
54 Oh I think it's essential. I think you've got to try and communicate. I can't see
55 any point in doing it if you're not communicating, so I'm communicating with
56 an ideal audience, even if it's just imaginary.
57

1 Do you have a firm way of thinking about that audience?

2

3 Yes,

4

5 How do you see it?

6

7 Well, I try and imagine all different people's reactions to the music.

8

9 Is this based on people that you know have heard your music?

10

11 Yes. Definitely. Yes. People I've met and I know their reactions. Yes, I think
12 that's what a writer would do too, when they write, books.

13

14 Before you had a clear audience, before your works were performed, let's say, or
15 read by people, how did you envisage that audience then?

16

17 That was harder, because I didn't really have such a view of what people were
18 like, generally.

19

20 And how does your music change in view of your thoughts and feelings about
21 that potential audience?

22

23 Well, only in the way I want to make it far more accessible and communicate
24 more. I can't see any point in writing music that doesn't communicate.

25

26 Do you ever write for particular players, performers?

27

28 Yes, it's very much the same as for a particular soloist. If you know a great
29 quartet is playing it, it has to be good and it brings out the best in you really. So,
30 it's a strange thing. Everything you write should be good and it should be the
31 best you can produce, shouldn't it, but unfortunately I don't think it happens in
32 real life like that.

33

34 What do you think prevents it then?

35

36 I think these people stimulate you more. It's like you are inspired by whoever
37 asks you to write.

38

39 But when you actually write you like to be given your own space and freedom.
40 At what point do you like to come out of that?

41

42 Only when I've finished or when I've erm completed what I'm doing. Yes. I
43 don't really like to be stopped or (2) I may not start again, that's the problem.

44

45 How do you know when you've finished?

46

47 Well, it's a question of getting to the end of a section, or a movement or
48 something like that. Not a full work, it might be just a section. If you're writing a
49 long work you might just get to the end of a specific section and you're happy
50 then, 'cause you know you can carry on. And it's a good thing sometimes to
51 write the opening of the next section, to get you started, then you, they often.
52 Like Galsworthy talks about that, writing. He used to leave a line every day, so it
53 was ready for the next morning. That's a great idea I think. So I would do that as
54 a composer. To try and get into the next little bit. And to add a little bit more,
55 than you anticipate, so that you can start another time and continue it. It's a bit
56 frightening the thought you might not go on with something. I've never suffered
57 from writers block. I've been very lucky that way, but I know how bad it is from

1 what people have told me. I know (name of composer) had it once or twice when
2 I was studying with him and he told me all about it. He was in his 2nd symphony
3 and he stopped completely. He just couldn't go on. And he actually asked me
4 how I would go on and I helped him by suggesting things. And the same thing
5 happened very shortly after that, he had commission for a Concerto from (name)
6 and he had the same problem, of writing something good enough for (name). So
7 it was a bit daunting and I think he had a bit of writer's block then, in the
8 concerto. It had to be done quickly, too, for Bath, the Festival at Bath. I
9 remember that. So it must be awful suffering from writer's block, knowing how
10 to get out of it if you can.

11

12 Do you approach writing music in the same way that you approach writing
13 words?

14

15 Yes exactly, and painting, exactly the same. There's no difference to me. So I
16 could sit down meaning to write music and then suddenly change it into words
17 or start painting or drawing, I don't think there's any difference, in the approach.
18 The approach is the same.

19

20 Do you find that like some people you need to be in a particular place and go
21 about it in a particular way?

22

23 Yes. I do. I said to my early teacher (name) I only could write in certain places,
24 light-coloured places, you know, painted white and modern looking. And he
25 said. "You know to learn to write anywhere, old fashioned libraries, places like
26 the British Museum, you know, or other places, you shouldn't be put off by
27 where you're writing." But I still feel that way. I like to be in a special place, or
28 comfortable. I don't really like to be tied to a desk, so a good place is an
29 armchair with a board across it or even sitting cross-legged on the floor, But it's
30 a bit daunting sitting at a desk, I find.

31

32 And have you ever found yourself having ideas or feeling inspired in other
33 places or in other situations?

34

35 Journeys make me inspired, yes, when I'm travelling outwards, not so much
36 coming back. But if I'm going somewhere I get inspired. The journey out.

37

38 Really? I wonder why that is?

39

40 I don't think I like the idea of returning. All my journeys I always hope they will
41 be outwards and not returning.

42

43 What's the difference? What changes on the way back?

44

45 I like the outward journey. I tend to like wherever I'm going so much I don't
46 really care for coming back, except when I lived abroad and I was pleased to get
47 back to England, but that's after about 8 or 9 months. Makes a difference.

48

49 Have you ever thought about expressing the coming back in some way?

50

51 Only in a sonnet I wrote about returning to England after living in France. I did
52 that. That was very interesting to do that. Even though it mentioned the white
53 cliffs of Dover so it was a bit corny really. [both laugh]. I didn't care that it was
54 corny. 'Cause everybody talks about the White Cliffs of Dover. But it was
55 wonderful seeing them in the early morning on returning after being out there all
56 that time. And it can get a bit tiresome sometimes being in a foreign country for

1 a number of months, 'cause I noticed some things which I hadn't noticed at first,
2 which I missed in England,
3
4 And the longer you were away the more you were aware of their absence?
5
6 The difference. Yes, like cups without handles on and things like that. It gets a
7 bit tiresome.
8
9 Would they have affected your attitude towards working?
10
11 Oh yes, I'd be put off, not having a toaster and that sort of thing and trying to
12 toast things on gas rings and that sort of thing and holding the cups without the
13 handles on, little things like that.
14
15 What kind of thing, apart from that, makes it harder for you to work? Are there
16 any other things that you haven't mentioned?
17
18 Well for all artists, I suppose, is post. Post is often a bad thing. Can be put off by
19 the post and the thought you've got to reply to the post, and not knowing what's
20 in the post, and bills and things. So it's better to avoid them if possible.
21
22 By the post can you say a little bit more about what you mean 'cause I'm not
23 quite sure.
24
25 Well unopened letters and letters you receive, not knowing what's in them until
26 you open them and not knowing whether they may need an urgent reply because
27 if you like to reply like I do immediately, you could be writing a composition in
28 that time or a piece of a book. So I think it's good. One composer's wife I
29 remember used to say that she only gave him his post at night, so it wouldn't put
30 him off in the day. She held it back for him 'cause she knew it'd be putting him
31 off in the daytime. So that was good.
32
33 How do you manage it?
34
35 Well I do them as quickly as possible. I read them and hope to reply to them. I
36 can't just leave them unanswered as they'd be preying on my mind all the time.
37 So I like to get some answer or phone or something.
38
39 Is this equally true of other pressures on you, too, other deadlines?
40
41 No I find them very stimulating, a real deadline. 'Cause that's a great
42 stimulation. If they say they want the work by a certain date that's a great
43 stimulation to get it done by that time and I like to do that. I'm a bit horrified
44 when I hear of the people who haven't managed to meet their deadlines.
45
46 You've done a whole number of other things as well as compose, over the years.
47 How have you managed to blend those activities in together?
48
49 Well I've usually done them in streams. Sometimes I've stopped writing for a
50 while, composing and then writing other things, words and painting, at different
51 times, then going back to the music.
52
53 So you like to keep it separate from other activities.
54
55 In a way. Yes.
56
57 How about combining academic work: teaching, and those areas?

1
2 Oh that went very well. I did that for 26 years at (name of College) teaching
3 composition. That fitted in very well, 'cause it was about three days a week so I
4 had weekdays in between and weekends free, and I could compose often when
5 pupils failed to appear, which was good.

6
7 That surprises me in a way that you were able to do that.

8
9 That's 'cause I was in a different building. I could set ten, half an hour or 25
10 minutes aside and use it very well in a classroom situation.

11
12 I wondered what it was about that situation because it seems to go against what
13 you were telling me earlier about the ideal conditions.

14
15 Yes, more like what (name of first teacher) said, you've got to make yourself
16 work in these different situations, places.

17
18 Um So you've been able to do that

19
20 I could do that, yes, in the (name of college).

21
22 So combining it with teaching was possible. Any other situations?

23
24 Libraries. I often found that stimulating, sitting in a library. I can sit at desks in
25 libraries. They are usually very comfortable and well laid out, and things to
26 hand, like that

27
28 And things that make it harder for you are?

29
30 Noise I suppose. I don't like noise. Noise from outside too and smells,
31 sometimes smells come in windows, you know, where they're cleaning the
32 drains. Yes. They put too much of the fluid down and it comes in the window.
33 Horrible.

34
35 When you've got these things coming in that interfere with your work, how do
36 you try and deal with them?

37
38 Well I've tried to get rid of them, really. Or close windows or try and stop them
39 putting this smell out. I'm a great believer in trying to do something about, for
40 instance, I was put off by all the noise of the aircraft round here so I used to get
41 in touch with Heathrow and also to Downing Street telling them, could they stop
42 the flights? And some of them were the Stanstead Airport I think. But they did a
43 lot. They did stop some of the flights in the mornings, because it's to do with
44 landing into the wind, Oh. Yes. So mostly they're landing the other way and we
45 don't hear them but occasionally they all land the same way, into the wind, early
46 morning and we might get about 40 suddenly one morning.

47
48 Oh gosh. That's a lot.

49
50 Every 5 minutes. And then it might be quiet for about 3 weeks and then we
51 might get 2 or 3 days of it especially when they are going on holidays. At
52 holiday times, you know. They are supposed to go a little bit further over but
53 they're almost this way, you know. Over here. Concord, too, comes over about
54 7, both ways and they are going a lot towards I think it's Heathrow really,
55 London. Very noisy it can be.

56
57 You got a very helpful response from them?

1
2 Yes. They were very good. They promised to do what they could and the local
3 MP was doing what she could too, which was marvellous and the Liberal MP
4 was trying and they helped. There was a whole set of people and I didn't belong
5 to it but they helped. And I thought it was worth trying really.
6
7 Any other things that have made it harder for you?
8
9 Dogs barking are very bad.
10
11 Noise is a real problem.
12
13 We've a dog that's very noisy here. Put you off a great deal.
14
15 Apart from noise? Any other things?
16
17 No, that's it mainly.
18
19 When you work do you allow interruptions from outside?
20
21 I usually do, yes, I try to live normally. I try to. Yes. I'm not the sort of person to
22 suddenly lose my temper and shout "Be quiet, I'm working" or something like
23 that. I try to fit it in with everything else.
24
25 Has that always been possible?
26
27 Yes usually. I give way a lot. Some of the best work I did was getting up at night
28 and doing it in the night. I love doing that. Especially in the summer.
29
30 Really. Is that something you do very much?
31
32 Occasionally, Yes, if I'm stressed and I need to do something quickly. I like
33 getting up about 2 or 3 in the morning and working through to 6 and then going
34 back to bed and sleeping again. And it's lovely in here in the middle of the night.
35 Wonderful. I like the idea of working when other people are asleep. It's harder
36 in winter when you've to warm up the room and that sort of thing. But it's
37 wonderful in summer because of the heat, you know, natural heat, that's good, I
38 like doing that.
39
40 Do you work with a computer, manuscript paper?
41
42 Manuscript paper, still. Piano too. I used to say, it's like working after the dust
43 settles, because you get the feeling the dust is settling in the early morning, it's
44 wonderful, inspiring. A bit like now, It's as if the dust has settled from people
45 walking around a lot.
46
47 Which is your favourite time, the best time for you to work?
48
49 I think that time, between 2 and 6 in the morning, and that's the time, yes that's
50 the time Puccini wrote Madame Butterfly. He got up and worked on Madame
51 Butterfly, so he wasn't distracted after all his problems. That was a good time
52 for him to write. If you think of Butterfly you imagine it may have been written
53 at night time.
54
55 Yes it has that quality about it. What do you see as the main rewards of working
56 as a composer, writing music?
57

1 Er I think if someone you admire says they've liked something of yours. That's
2 the main reward really. When you're admired. That's the only thing you can get
3 really, it's someone saying to you, (3) seriously, honestly that they've enjoyed
4 something, it has moved them.
5
6 What about the feeling you have yourself in being able to produce work.
7
8 Ah yes, its er, I'm very proud of it, yes proud of doing it. Yes. Nice to leave
9 something behind me, it's like having a child I think really. More and more the
10 older I get the more I think my compositions are my children. Its funny really.
11
12 Do they, like children, have an independent life apart from you?
13
14 Oh Yes, they do, yes and they're like real children, they are all different.
15 They've got their er (2) drawbacks and all the little different, you know.
16
17 Can you say a bit more about that?
18
19 Yes, I mean they're all different aren't they? You don't dislike a piece because
20 it's um got some faults, you might like parts of it, just as you would a child. I
21 find that very similar.
22
23 And do you find like children that you like them at certain times and not at
24 others?
25
26 Oh yes, that can easily happen and you realise they're not as bad as you think
27 later, just the same, yes, that's true.
28
29 Do you think that the way you look on your work has changed during the course
30 of your working life.
31
32 Not really, it has stayed the same, just the same. Yes.
33
34 How would you describe it?
35
36 Erm (4) Well its just this um endless feeling I want to communicate. You don't
37 just want to please people, you know. I mean I'd love to write something like the
38 theme in Gone With the Wind, but I could do that I think , if I got the
39 opportunity, but um you also want to have some quality in what you are doing
40 as well, in the communication.
41
42 As far as communication goes, a lot of composers have work that is never
43 perfomed.
44
45 Oh yes.
46
47 What difference does it make for you?
48
49 Well sometimes the best pieces aren't performed, they might be one day. At
50 other times pieces that aren't the best get performed quite a lot.
51
52 How do you feel about that?
53
54 It's sad really, because it's a pity the best pieces aren't the ones that get played
55 more. But it's not always the case.
56
57 Is this because for you they communicate better?

1
2 Er No, it's just what's taken up at the time. Its just sort of luck of the draw. You
3 know what I mean.

4
5 Sorry I meant they are best in the sense that for you they have that element of
6 communication which is important.

7
8 Yes they can communicate but it's also they are very well crafted. Some of the
9 best crafted works aren't always heard, but if one through the luck of the draw,
10 is taken up by somebody, it can catch on and it might not be the best. So people
11 are not hearing you at your best all the time.

12
13 How do you reconcile yourself to this luck of the draw business?

14
15 There's nothing much you can do about it. I remember talking to somebody who
16 worked for a big advertising agency, on holiday. He said "You've got to do
17 something about it". He worked for (name of company) and he said: "Oh you've
18 got to speak to one of my colleagues, and all this sort of thing". But it was very
19 difficult to make contact and it was very difficult. Somebody I know now is very
20 high up in (same company).

21
22 What was he suggesting that you did?

23
24 I went and got in touch with his friend and got him to book advertising space all
25 over the place and write more music for commercials and this sort of thing. Let
26 them make you better known. I never did it though. But he said that's the way
27 you must do it.

28
29 Have you ever regretted not doing it?

30
31 No, not really, no, but um I was tempted. It's very difficult to do what people
32 suggest. (3) Not knowing how to go about all that sort of thing.

33
34 Right. Do you think it is important for people starting out to know that?

35
36 Oh Yes, definitely. It's no good just putting things in drawers and not having
37 them performed. Like one or two I've known have done that. They've got the
38 feeling, you know, that it'll be discovered one day. Well it might be, but it'll be
39 a long time after they've died.

40
41 How do you feel about that yourself?

42
43 I think it's ridiculous, myself, putting things in drawers. I think part of what
44 we're doing should be promotion as well, a good percentage, they've got it right
45 in business, I think, where you're advertising, promoting, say 10% of what you
46 do. You've got to do that, I think.

47
48 So you think public achievement, recognition by the public and achievements in
49 the public domain are important?

50
51 I think it is, yes. Mm definitely, or you can't really go on.

52
53 How have you gone about erm that in your own work?

54
55 Erm. Well I think a lot of people did. I always remember hearing, and I said. Oh
56 isn't it marvellous how Benjamin Britten gets on well, and these old professors
57 and old people who knew him well told me that, "Well, he's got a secretary in

1 Aldeburgh and Peter Pears too and they're feeding stuff to the Press all the
2 time." So its going to the Associated Press and its getting into the Telegraph and
3 into the papers, what he's doing, you know. And it's quite a shock when you
4 think that was going on, 'cause you don't think in the old days that that sort of
5 thing went on.
6
7 Yes, what's your attitude towards that?
8
9 Good, I think it's sensible. But erm. It's a good thing that people know about it
10 erm when they're first starting out, I think
11
12 How far is having a body of work out in the public domain important to you?
13
14 I think it's very important. I think it's the body of your work that matters in that
15 sort of French way, the oeuvre, you know. Every single piece seems better when
16 it's near another piece of yours, you know. You've got a whole, it's nice that. I
17 think people will judge everything differently if they can see the other ones and
18 how they fit into place, you know.
19
20 Yes. So it's the balance, seeing the whole shape
21
22 Yes you're right
23
24 ...of your achievement, together?
25
26 Yes that's dead right I think.
27
28 Yes
29
30 As far as you looking at, you evaluating your own oeuvre in that way, how
31 important is it to you to feel that satisfaction about it?
32
33 Oh, very much so. Yes. I'm more interested in how it all fits in together, the
34 complete work list really, than in just individual works. Yes. That's like the
35 children again, they might all be accepted in different ways, you know.
36
37 Yes, can you give me an example?
38
39 Well erm, it is a bit difficult but um it's nice to see different sets of pieces, you
40 know, as they fit, like sonatas and string quartets or chamber works, and how
41 they progress from one thing to another through the years, comparing them. It's
42 rather nice that. Otherwise you're just known by one piece.
43
44 What kind of a pattern do you see in there?
45
46 I like to think I sees some sort of achievement, and some change, development,
47 proper development, but sometimes early pieces are often very good because of
48 the er inspiration that went into them when you're young, makes a big
49 difference. You don't realise sometimes how good your early pieces are until
50 later. Everyone seems to say that, when they get on. It can go down wrong ways
51 too and that's sad.
52
53 Has that happened to you?
54
55 Can happen. Not really, no, but it does happen to some people.
56
57 Right.

1
2 How do you see your development then from those early days?
3
4 Very much the same really. It's gone on the way I wanted it to.
5
6 And you are one of those people who have early work you are particularly proud
7 of?
8
9 Oh yes. I'm quite proud of it now, I wasn't at the time.
10
11 Which work are you thinking about then?
12
13 Well early pieces I wrote in my teenage years.
14
15 Like?
16
17 Well, songs and piano pieces. And I wouldn't have thought they were very
18 important at one time but they become more important later, when other
19
20 What changes then, what makes them more important?
21
22 Performers take them up and perform them or record them and they make you
23 realise that they're better than you thought they were, which is good.
24
25 How important is the evaluation of erm performers and critics? Well let's take
26 them separately.
27
28 Performers, yes. It's very important. You're lucky if you've got good performers
29 to perform your works.
30
31 Do their views inform you as you write?
32
33 Oh yes. Definitely
34
35 In what way?
36
37 They sometimes ask for works and tell you what they want. They might say they
38 would like a substantial work where you might have been thinking of giving
39 them a short piece. You don't realise what they want until they tell you. It's
40 more that than any money they pay for it. There's a lot of things other than
41 money.
42
43 Yes, you haven't mentioned money at all.
44
45 No, I try not to because of course everything is ruled by it especially in our
46 country.
47
48 How important is financial reward for the work?
49
50 I've got used to not having any really. Erm. It's lucky if it comes along. I did
51 some adjudicating last year in Cyprus, adjudicating some composers' works,
52 with symphony orchestra and that was well paid for the time. But that came
53 surprisingly suddenly. I wasn't expecting it. But that's rare. Something like that.
54
55 If your work as a composer had been erm better paid, let's say, better rewarded,
56 would it have made a difference to your activities?
57

1 Only in the sense that I perhaps would have more recorded now and more erm
2 available to hear.
3
4 Would you have funded those yourself?
5
6 I would've yes. I would have tried to, um definitely, but erm.
7
8 Have you done that? At all.
9
10 Only slightly. Occasionally I have helped things along. With publishing
11 sometimes I've managed to do a lot of the work myself, when they've accepted
12 something and they've been able to bring it out sometimes using some of my
13 original scores, you know, which was useful. That means I could get more
14 published than I would have normally had published, you know.
15
16 What about those composers who seek financial rewards for their work , 'cause
17 certain types of compositions are very well paid obviously. What are your views
18 on that?
19
20 Yes. I think it's good if you can get it. It's not easy to get, when people say they
21 will, they hope to get this. It's very rare that they do. I mean they're lucky.
22 They've to be in the right place at the right time. It needs to be needed.
23
24 How has this affected your own work?
25
26 Well, as I said it comes when you're not expecting it. It doesn't come at the right
27 time, and people let you down often. They say they're going to do a thing and
28 then it, they may do it but it might take a year or two longer than they say it's
29 going to be. You sit around waiting, that happens, where they get behind and
30 they've said "Oh definitely, we'll do so and so by" a certain date. A year goes
31 by, on top of what they've said, You don't like reminding them. That sort of
32 thing. You can be put off a bit by that.
33
34 What about another side of the rewards of composing, being recognised in
35 society, and by the critics. That side of it.
36
37 Yes, that's important I think. The critics aren't as erm difficult as I used to think
38 they were erm.
39
40 What did you used to think?
41
42 Well, I used to think, like Benjamin Britten and Lennox Berkeley, that they were
43 um annoying, but they're trying to do. I think when you, you've got to get used
44 to what they're doing. They're not writing about you for your benefit but they're
45 writing for their readership if it's a paper.
46
47 What was annoying about them?
48
49 Well erm, you know, erm. Reading bad reviews can be very off-putting and if
50 you're any good at all you really shouldn't be put off by bad reviews, because
51 the reviews are not written for you.
52
53 Bad in the sense of not liking the work or not understanding and evaluating it
54 fairly.
55
56 Yes if they dislike a work and they find weaknesses or something like that,
57 you've got to be able to realise that it's their opinion and they might be wrong.

1
2 Has that been difficult for you to accept?

3
4 Not recently, no. It was in my first 20 years say.

5
6 How did it affect you then?

7
8 Well if I hadn't have been going into teaching at the (name of college) in the
9 first years, I wouldn't have minded a bit. But facing colleagues and knowing
10 they've read it about you in the morning is a bit daunting, especially if the
11 review hasn't been very good. You might get an odd one in the Guardian that's
12 not as good as in the Times and the Telegraph and you think – "Oh they've read
13 the Guardian this morning about you" – ooh its very off-putting when you're
14 going to have lunch with them.

15
16 How did it affect you?

17
18 They'd keep quiet about it. And only tell you if they'd read the good things. But
19 of course you realise when you're older you should take it, the rough with the
20 smooth and not let it bother you and not even take it seriously.

21
22 Did it affect your own views about your work?

23
24 Not a bit, no, but it's a bit daunting and it's a bit er upsetting if they haven't
25 understood what you're trying to do. I mean, if it's constructive criticism and
26 you think they are right about it, you don't bother and you learn from it, because
27 they are right sometimes. But you know as I said, they are writing for their
28 public and the people who read their papers, and they are not writing for you so
29 really you shouldn't be reading it, because it's lovely to go and get a paper and
30 see what they've said about your opera or something, but it's not really for you
31 to read really because its for their readership and it might not be the paper you're
32 taking anyway, so why read it? And in the long run, it has very little um impact.
33 Some may have more impact than you think. Like that theatre critic in America
34 had, tremendous impact, didn't he, who came from England. 'Cause if he said a
35 show was poor, or a play, it would ruin it, the run. That's very bad when they
36 have that, But we haven't had, I don't think, critics in England in that way, that
37 could actually ruin er. They used to say what the Financial Times critic said was
38 the most important, because the backers read the Financial Times, so that was
39 interesting. I was very interested in criticism at one time and knew a lot of the
40 critics, so I found it very interesting and they were very, generally in classical
41 music, they were very, doing their best all the time. They were sincere people I
42 thought.

43
44 What about the public as it were? How do you see them in relation to your
45 work?

46
47 Well, I mean, that's why you're doing it, so you're trying to communicate with
48 them. Very little criticism goes on now, things have changed so much. They
49 don't seem to review concerts much now. At one time you could be sure that if
50 you had a major work played you'd get all the main papers there, but you can't
51 be certain anyone would cover it now. You know what I mean. Even the Times
52 and the Telegraph don't send anybody. Yes. Sad really. Yes.

53
54 Has it had an affect on your own erm?

55
56 No not really, no 'cause I was lucky enough to get very good reviews and a lot
57 of coverage earlier on. So I've benefited by that and I can quote the reviews if I

1 want to. But I was very upset to think how Britten and Berkeley were so upset
2 by the critics. 'Cause Britten stopped inviting them to Aldeburgh, you know. I
3 didn't know. He said they shouldn't take up seats any more in the Opera House.
4 Free seats. He didn't like the idea.
5
6 How do you feel about that attitude?
7
8 Well I think it's erm it's a normal reaction to how he'd been treated. People
9 forget that now.
10
11 You would react that way if you were treated like that?
12
13 Not really. I don't think so.
14
15 What would be the difference?
16
17 The difference is that erm I think that they are doing a job, and as I said I
18 wouldn't want to erm yes, take it so seriously.
19
20 Have you ever taken any critics on as it were?
21
22 No. Never. I've had them as friends and kept them as friends but I've never
23 discussed my work with them. Ever.
24
25 What about you discussing other peoples work?
26
27 I've done a bit of criticism, So I've done a bit of reviewing and that sort of thing.
28 I know how difficult it is so I'm not. I've always tried to be constructive and I've
29 tried not to be too dismissive 'cause you know how they feel about it.
30
31 How important is it to you what people will think about your work after you've
32 gone? How do you see it?
33
34 Oh very important, more than while I'm alive. Yes, I'm thinking of that all the
35 time. Definitely. It's important that. I always was brought up to believe that I
36 was writing for the future not just for. Because the great example was always
37 given to me of painters, how they would prepare their canvases so they'd last.
38 Now why would they prepare their canvasses so they'd last if they weren't
39 thinking of the future? You'd prepare your canvas so it wore out when you died
40 wouldn't you? So there's something in Art, isn't there, where they prepared
41 their, and they'd get the best. Henry Moore would get the best quality marble. So
42 there's some reason why they think of the future. I think more of that in Art than
43 I do in family life, you know. I think Art may survive as long as erm humanity
44 survives.
45
46 So, would it be a source of satisfaction to you now, the thought that you are
47 leaving something you're proud of?
48
49 Oh definitely. Again it's like children. That's my children, yes, definitely, with
50 all their flaws, and leaving them. All being well I hope they'll be safe [laughs]
51 and not disappear like Benvenuto Cellini's. Yes. That sort of thing. It's
52 important to make sure they're in good places and looked after, isn't it, really?
53
54 Yes. How do you think you can do your best to make sure that happens?
55
56 Well, I'm beginning to start cataloguing them and putting them in separate
57 envelopes and things and then I can find them more easily, and their opus

1 numbers and that sort of thing. Otherwise you tend to lose things, when people
2 die, you know and they keep things and you don't get them back sometimes.

3
4 Yes, so having your work documented, on record is very good, important..

5
6 That's very good that is. I love the idea of sound recording. It's marvellous. You
7 see I don't like noises when pieces are played. Coughs I hate. So I think
8 recording is fabulous. In fact you can get a recording without a lot of noise in the
9 background, so I love recordings better than live concerts. I like the idea of live
10 concerts and I like having pieces played but I think recording is superior to live
11 concerts, you know, really. I like the silences between the movements.

12
13 Do you like to get involved in the recordings?

14
15 Yes, I like doing that. I like recording myself playing, very much. I like doing
16 that, yes. Fascinating.

17
18 How do you feel about the process of translation of your works into recorded
19 sound?

20
21 I like doing that, yes. It's a nice way of leaving behind how you feel you want
22 the works to be played.

23
24 How does that take place for you?

25
26 Well you know I try to get them as close as I wanted them to be at first, when I
27 first thought of them.

28
29 And does it usually?

30
31 Yes. I try to, I try my best.

32
33 What happens when there isn't that much er closeness?

34
35 Well um only I notice it I think. I don't think other people will notice it very
36 much, unless they're following a score or something.

37
38 What's the consequence of it for you?

39
40 Well it's a bit irritating of course if you haven't got it just as you want it.

41
42 Do you leave it be?

43
44 I try to get it as close as possible. I try.

45
46 How about relationships with other musicians as a composer?

47
48 Oh they're very important. I think. But the ones you have that will be the best
49 are the ones you don't have really, 'cause you might not meet the people and get
50 on. I mean I've a very good. I think the pop people have the right attitude in
51 everything they do. They put over own work. I taught (name of pop performer)
52 and he's done very well. I think his attitude is right. He performs in his own
53 works, puts it on himself, arranges it, you know, writes it, erm records it. Tries to
54 do it live too in the recordings.

55
56 Is it that degree of control that you admire?

1 I do, yes. I like that but I like the way that they're um running it all themselves
2 and financing it themselves and then if a publisher is interested or a recording
3 company they take it over and they take a smaller percentage in the opposite
4 way round to the way classical people do.

5
6 What do you think the main differences then?

7
8 Well of course they are able to do that because it is commercially viable. With
9 our work and with serious, when I'm talking about the serious side, the classical
10 side, it's not. So we're in a bad state really, a very bad state, in England
11 especially. England is worse off than Scotland and Wales and Ireland, because
12 they have their own Arts Councils. We've hardly anything in England. The Arts
13 Council has almost disappeared and we've always come off badly in England
14 compared to Scotland, Ireland and Wales, 'cause they've had the additional
15 Councils of their own, and their own organisations. It helps them, but English
16 composers have suffered badly I think.

17
18 If the financial rewards are not there for classical composers and quite a lot of
19 works not performed or recorded, how do you get a sense of how well you are
20 doing if you know what I mean?

21
22 You just build that up from when you're young. You know whether it's good or
23 bad .

24
25 It's an internal value?

26
27 Erm you know that. Yes, it is internal, in the pieces you've written and it's not
28 always the ones that have been done and come off well.

29
30 Apart from the critics, are there any other sources of opinion that are important?

31
32 Just the odd person who you think is a good er you know (2) critic really, to look
33 at your scores and hear your music.

34
35 Have you had people like that?

36
37 I've had people like that. Yes it's nice to have one person often, who you rely
38 on, like that teacher Peter Pears used to go back to, always an old teacher he'd
39 had, to find out whether he's singing well and how he can improve. It's like that
40 in a way, one particular person who you can rely on. It's nice to have someone
41 like that.

42
43 Have you always had someone like that?

44
45 Usually, yes, I've been lucky. But in the profession it's very sad because people
46 can take you up, like producers, and then they may die or go and live abroad and
47 other people aren't interested because they've taken you up in such a large way.
48 I know a composer who was dropped by everybody because Thomas Beecham
49 took such an interest in him, and he's still alive, but er. No-one wanted to know
50 anything about him or his music once Beecham died. Its very sad that, so it's bad
51 to have somebody too interested. It's better to have a few people interested than
52 just one person. I've had that with BBC producers, who've gone to work abroad,
53 or Canada or places like that and it's very hard to make contact with others.

54
55 So it's getting this balance between the exclusivity and erm getting the help that
56 you need.

57

1 Yes. And people dying and people won't perform your works. It's like when
2 (name of player) died, she was doing my pieces a lot, and it was sad, she
3 suddenly died, so young, just as she was taking up a lot of my pieces and doing
4 them, it was sad that. That can happen and people don't realise how nobody fills
5 the gap. I had a few like that.

6
7 How did you get over it? How did you deal with it?

8
9 I just forgot about the works and put them away, and hoped one day somebody
10 might do them, again, the oboe works that she was interested in. It's hard to find
11 people with the same interest, once somebody's gone.

12
13 How do you try and replace them then?

14
15 Well it's just waiting and hoping somebody might be interested who is an
16 oboeist, say (3). Difficult.

17
18 So it doesn't work that you are looking around and it's kind of that person might
19 be OK? It works in a different way to that?

20
21 No, you can put them off if you contact them sometimes. [both laugh]. You have
22 to contact them in a very, in an offhand way. I remember Lennox Berkeley
23 joking. He was having lunch with me in Highgate and his wife was there and it
24 was summer and the window was open opposite and we heard a flute playing
25 and we could see the flautist practising across the road. And he actually said to
26 me, because he was a very modest person. He actually said, "Oh I ought to have
27 brought my Flute Sonatina. We could have popped it through the hole across the
28 road". And then he said. You could have gone across with yours, (name). [both
29 laugh] And I thought that was a bit unusual for Lennox too, that he could
30 promote his own music. And he was joking about it, but I'm sure he meant it as
31 well. But it came as quite a refreshing thing for somebody to say, like that.
32 Because he always appeared such a modest person who would never promote
33 anything of his own. You can overdo it, you know. It's no good promoting
34 things if your work is worthless. Or, it's got to have some quality as well.

35
36 Do you think people who know their work is worthless promote themselves?

37
38 They do. I do think so. I think there's a lot of that occasionally.

39
40 How do you feel about them?

41
42 It's sad really. There are very nice people too. 'Cause you don't often get the
43 erm balance, you don't often get the nice person who does the excellent work.
44 It's often the opposite way round as we know from history.

45
46 So you think you need a streak of nastiness to propel you on?

47
48 It does happen, I've heard that a great deal. Yes. I know one pupil I had who had
49 no talent whatsoever and his father was helping him with a lot of money through
50 the firm he worked for. And he is really getting on now and old erm orchestral
51 musicians told me. You'll find that name comes up in a few years, and he is,
52 he's running a festival now. So, his father's helped him with his money and it
53 has paid off, because now he's running a festival. It's taken him a long time
54 though but, 20 or 30 years has gone by, but he was right, that trumpet player. He
55 said, "You watch, you'll find that he'll get on, even though he has no talent"
56 [laughs]. So it does happen. I think the arts are full of people like that actually.
57 Hm. Sad really.

1
2 Do you get angry about it or just sad?
3
4 No. It's a bit ironic really isn't it when you look back over it, but it's worth
5 listening to what people say when they make these, tell you these things. You
6 could miss them. I try to remember all these little things people tell me. I think
7 it's very clever when they
8
9 What impact does it have on you then, remembering? How does it affect you?
10
11 Well um the thought that they were clever enough, you know they're very subtle
12 are those orchestral musicians. They turn their living every day through being in
13 the LSO and orchestras like that. They know what's going on, and they are
14 cleverer than the conductors as we all know. [both laugh] It's funny isn't it
15 really. You hear these things but when you're young you tend not to take them
16 very seriously or they may pass you by, but it's worth remembering what they
17 said.
18
19 Do you feel that you would have benefited or not by having that streak in you?
20
21 Oh, definitely. Yes. I mean I know one composer said to me. I wish I'd known
22 what I erm know now 30 years ago. I wouldn't be in this place now, or in this
23 position now. I never think like that, but I could understand he felt that way.
24
25 What's your own view then?
26
27 Well it would have been nice to know what I know now earlier, it would have
28 been useful.
29
30 If there were 1 or 2 key things what would they be, that you wish you'd known?
31
32 Well not really many practical things that I haven't done but I couldn't say, like
33 that person could have said, erm. He was giving examples like sending
34 Christmas cards to film producers. He said he'd got a lot of film music by just
35 remembering to send them a Christmas card and then he got this Christmas card
36 back late, for New Year, saying. "Come and meet me. We're going off to make a
37 film and will you come and do the music." Just because he'd sent a Christmas
38 card.[laughs] Well, that was a bit er strange.
39
40 So would you, was that one of the things you would have done if you had your
41 time over?
42
43 No but you learn by that sort of thing. No, but it was a bit unusual wasn't it.
44
45 What would you have done differently then?
46
47 Well, you can't really say, can you, because you don't know until they've
48 suggested it to you. Nothing like that I don't think. I can't think of anything I'd
49 have done differently to what I have done. No I'm happy really, and lucky. Very
50 happy.
51
52 Apart from that ruthless thing, that kind of killer instinct or whatever.
53
54 It's worth knowing about it, however you describe it.
55
56 What would be your name for that thing?
57

1 I don't know. It has been pointed out to me by eminent orchestral musicians it
2 has to be there. If anyone is going to rise, it's like rice pudding. [laughs] You
3 find it comes up like rice pudding or something.
4
5 What would you call it?
6
7 I don't know really. There's a bit of it in all these people who rise, a little bit of
8 it. It might not be much.
9
10 Is it ambition? Would you
11
12 No it isn't, but its something slightly ruthless. I wonder if it is something like a
13 mother or father looking after their children in extreme circumstances, to survive
14 and that sort of thing. Like in wartime, acting as if everything is against you,
15 like a war or something. They know what they're doing. They're protecting
16 themselves aren't they? Perhaps that.
17
18 Do you feel you have protected yourself?
19
20 On the whole. Yes. Yes. You can be very helpful to colleagues and you find then
21 that they have taken a lot of things that you could have done yourself. Right. It's
22 not a good thing that.
23
24 Has that happened to you quite a lot?
25
26 It can do. You can teach too much I think and you find your pupils are often
27 benefiting in things that you could have done yourself. But least you've got the
28 consolation you were paid for it. So it's good that. You can often think "Well at
29 least I was paid to teach them that lesson". That sort of thing. So you can always
30 think of the money you were paid. 'Cause that helps to, if you get feelings like
31 that, you can think, well, when you've had a difficult lesson to give, you can
32 think, "At least I'm being paid for it".
33
34 And that's a compensation.
35
36 That's a great compensation. You tend to forget when you're teaching, that
37 somebody's being difficult and yet you tend to forget that you're being paid for
38 that hour.
39
40 What sort of difficulties are you thinking about?
41
42 Well you know, students can be difficult, just generally. They can disagree and
43 all this sort of thing, try to learn too many things too quickly. 'Cause you can
44 only take away certain facts can't you? Every hour or every day. You can't take
45 too many facts away, if they're learning them properly.
46
47 Coming back to other things you think will help composers in their work. A lot
48 of people say that the link between real creativity and erm disturbance is very
49 close, that you need a kind of um suffering or difficulty as a kind of occupational
50 necessity. [laughs] What are your views on that?
51
52 I put something down about that. You thought I'd er
53
54 Yes. Something has led to me recently. Yes, I suffered very greatly for 4 or 5
55 years by OCD. Obsessive compulsive disorder.
56
57 You did? Really, what form did it take?

1
2 Oh it was dreadful. For 4 years between the ages of 8 and 12 about. I went erm
3 crossing roads and touching lampposts and things and pulling the chain in the
4 toilet and turning taps on and off and thinking my father, my parents would die
5 or I would die if erm didn't do these things. And saying prayers and things 100
6 times and going through lists of people in my prayers at night until I am not
7 going to sleep until the middle of the night. You get worn out by it actually and
8 there seemed to be nobody who knew anything about it or would treat it in those
9 days. And I think I was also dyslexic, which nobody knew about in those days
10 'cause I got things all mixed up and I still get things in the wrong order. But this
11 compulsive thing, once I mastered it, has probably led to me writing parts and
12 writing scores. It's very compulsive isn't it? I mean a typist's work is very
13 compulsive anyway. So it fits in with the composition.

14
15 Can I ask you about it? How did it erm end?

16
17 It ended by one aunt who I highly respect and love, seeing me doing it, through
18 the mirror in a hotel in Llandudno and seeing me pulling faces behind her, as
19 many times as I could so she couldn't see, 'cause I thought she wasn't seeing
20 and she turned round and shouted "Stop It!" in such a loud way and she'd never
21 ever raised her voice to me before. Now if my parents had've done it it wouldn't
22 have had any effect whatsoever,

23
24 Did they notice all these things you had been doing?

25
26 Yes but they didn't shout stop it.

27
28 What was their view?

29
30 They said "Stop it" quietly.

31
32 And how did that affect you?

33
34 She said it in such a way and it came as such a shock, it jolted me out of it and
35 gradually I stopped doing it after that moment, which was very good of Aunt
36 (name). She's about um, yes she's about 85 now. And she's the mother of the
37 horn player (name) who's the (position) in the Birmingham Symphony
38 Orchestra, CBSO, younger than me. But the fact that I admired her so much and
39 loved her so much that she turned round and said "Stop it"

40
41 Did you think you were doing it for her?

42
43 Well, I was trying to do it so she wouldn't see, behind her in the room, as she
44 was doing her hair and face, on holiday, but I'd been doing it for years. Oh it
45 was appalling the things, you know, not standing on cracks in pavements. Er. It
46 worried me too and made me very nervous, but I think it paid dividends later in
47 the composing, the music 'cause you do a lot of endless things, don't you,
48 putting little dots on paper.

49
50 How do you think it has affected your er?

51
52 It has been useful in that sense, but I think I have managed to get over the
53 compulsive things.

54
55 Do you think there are elements of the obsession or the compulsion, I wonder?

56
57 The compulsion is there in the music, in writing the music.

1
2 In what way do you see yourself as compulsive in the way you write?
3
4 Oh once I get started I carry on doing it and filling it in.
5
6 Do you have to finish things?
7
8 Yes I like to get things finished. That's why I like deadlines.
9
10 But you were talking earlier about having things carrying over so there's a
11 thread you can pick up.
12
13 Um I think there's a thread, there's something there still, but I've managed to
14 channel it into the creative work.
15
16 Sorry I don't quite understand.
17
18 I've managed to channel all the obsessiveness into the creative work.
19
20 You mean some of that is still there?
21
22 Yes, it's still there, but I've managed to cover it.
23
24 I'm very interested to see how you see that. Finishing things is one way. Are
25 there other ways too?
26
27 (5) Probably patterns, you use patterns a lot, don't you, in art, and keeping the
28 patterns going. You do in the music.
29
30 Right. Do you have a way of seeing pattern in the way that you work?
31
32 Yes, and rhythms. They all interlock.
33
34 Are you a visualiser – is it visual patterns?
35
36 I do. Oh yes. Very strong. Because at this period and just before this I used to
37 have a lot of hallucinations on the wall at night, where I could see things on the
38 walls, rather than, and I had very bad dreams in those days. I think it was mainly
39 due to diet. In those days we had a lot of meat and I don't think it was too good
40 for me.
41
42 Because when you were 8 it was, what, the end of the War?
43
44 Yes, yes, that period. I would be, erm, yes, just after the War. But erm (4) I
45 could see things on the walls at night, ghosts and things. I was terrified of gho-
46 of er witches as a little boy. I was very upset that they should have books with
47 them in, for children. Like those German books that they give little children, I
48 think they're terrible.
49
50 Did you have an unhappy childhood then?
51
52 I did, but not due to parents. I was very unhappy because of all these phobias
53 and 'cause I think I was dyslexic.
54
55 Do you know how they started?
56

1 I don't know. I can only remember things like turning the taps on and off, not
2 walking on the cracks in the pavements, washing my hands over and over again
3 because it was a bit like Lady Macbeth, they used to joke that about the Lady
4 Macbeth Being worried at school, too, I think, that also made it worse.
5
6 You were worried about your schoolwork?
7
8 Mmm but er turning lights on and off, and wearing bulbs out and things.
9
10 Did this affect your performance at school? Was it that way round?
11
12 No I don't remember doing this at school. It seemed to be on the way home and
13 going there. I seemed to stop when I got into the classroom.
14
15 Were you an only child?
16
17 Yes I was an only child. But I seemed to stop when I got into the classroom and
18 I can't ever remember doing it in a classroom. Or I'd do it in the lunch hour
19 break and then on the way home. Oh it was terrible. I'd be late often. I got into
20 trouble for being late. Because of these habits I couldn't get there on time.
21 'Cause I had to keep going back to things and touching them.
22
23 So it was really destructive and had a big effect on your
24
25 It was terrible, yes. I'd to go and touch lamps on cars and things. Touch each
26 lamp and then touch the back lamps and I couldn't go on until I'd done it so
27 many times. It was awful. Posting letters was awful
28
29 That can be a very persistent thing and I'm surprised that you managed to, it
30 must have taken a lot for you to be able to stop it.
31
32 There was nobody to tell, nobody to turn to about it. They didn't seem to know
33 much about things like that in those days.
34
35 Did you try to get help for it?
36
37 Not really. They all seemed to think it would work itself out.
38
39 Is that what your parents thought?
40
41 Yes. I'm sure my parents tried to find out, yes, but they didn't go very far.
42
43 What was their view of it?
44
45 I don't think they noticed it very much. They just used to notice who had been
46 using all the toilet paper and things like that. And I could use half a whole toilet
47 roll by throwing it all away. Things like that. I used to put money down drains
48 and things, 'cause I thought I was paying for a good holiday.
49
50 Oh really?
51
52 Because if I was happy on my holiday I'd put my savings down in the drains
53 from my pocket, I wanted to pay for it 'cause I was enjoying it so much. Things
54 like that.
55
56 Do you think this has all fed in, to your work in some way?
57

1 It was a weird thing. It was a horrible time really. Yes I think so.
2
3 Must have been awful.
4
5 Umm. Because once I started writing more, and composing more and erm,
6
7 Was that an escape for you?
8
9 I stopped doing this. Yes. I stopped doing this after my Aunt shouted.
10
11 How did this fit in with when you started writing music?
12
13 Well, if you think about it, practising the piano is similar. All this practising you
14 do.
15
16 Were you practising from a young age?
17
18 I was practising a lot so perhaps I channelled a lot of it into the practising,
19 because I could play the scales over and over again, until I got them right. And
20 that was a bit like continuing the
21
22 Did you start the piano after this OCD?
23
24 No, I was doing it at the time. So I used to do a lot of this on the way to the
25 piano lessons.
26
27 Were you obsessional about your piano practising as well?
28
29 Yes, I had to play things over and over again which fitted in well with the
30 practising. I would always do the scales so many times and I'd do it a few more
31 times. That sort of thing.
32
33 So you were a very driven and unhappy child?
34
35 Yes it was bad. I was very unhappy as a child. Very very unhappy and I couldn't
36 understand what was going on, really. I was lucky to have people who
37 channelled me into music. That was very lucky.
38
39 When did that start? When did you first?
40
41 Well the headmaster heard that there was an opening to go on a summer course,
42 at Harrogate. And so I went, I'd never been away from home, and I enjoyed that,
43 with an orchestra.
44
45 How old were you then?
46
47 Just helping the pianist. So I'd be about 12.
48
49 So this is after all this business?
50
51 Ummm
52
53 So 12 is about the time, you said you were 12 when
54
55 Just after, yes, about the same year, Yes. 12/13. And then the same headmaster
56 found that there was an opening at (name of college) to go to study music. So I
57 got in there. So I went early, about 13.

1
2 What were your first experiences of music? Do you remember?
3
4 Yes. That's singing hymns, with my father, sitting on his knee and singing
5 'Once in Royal David's City'. Listening to him playing the piano. By ear. He
6 played by ear. But then I walked around and tried to play the piano from
7 standing. And I used to play the piano and I thought; Well it's like giants in the
8 bass and fairies at the top and elves. And it was a little piano with a very hard
9 action. So I enjoyed doing that. Before I could actually sit at the piano and have
10 lessons and he taught me a few things and I went to his cousin who was a music
11 teacher. So that was all right. Six. And then I started composing at seven. So I
12 was able to take compositions to my music teacher to look at while he was
13 teaching me piano. So that's good.
14
15 What kind of thing was this?
16
17 All sorts of little pieces, sketches and things.
18
19 Were these with words or just music?
20
21 Sometimes odd songs, yes,
22
23 And were they for piano?
24
25 Some were for piano, mostly piano, yes. So I showed him those and then I
26 continued at (name of college) composing. But I was able to go to (name of
27 college) at 13 when I should have been 14 'cause I was always a bit early,
28 usually if they let me in early, because of being born in November. You get that
29 difference. Which is very weird. I don't know whether you – are you November?
30
31 No I'm February.
32
33 Ah but that might be similar but November's a funny time. 'Cause you're a bit
34 too early for one term and a bit late for the other.
35
36 Do you see those difficulties as affecting your path in life?
37
38 Oh I think so, yes. It was a great thing to overcome.
39
40 Yes. Um it certainly was.
41
42 Yes. It was erm.
43
44 Do you think people need that kind of um
45
46 I don't think so. I don't believe in all that myself.
47
48 I just wondered what your view was.
49
50 I have no view on that. I don't agree with the people being better because of the
51 difficulties they've had. I think the Americans are lucky where they have a lot of
52 an easy time and they are well brought up and they um are lucky a lot of them in
53 being nourished and brought up well and they should have a good life. I think
54 it's useful that. I'm not very much erm in favour of all this business of trying to
55 erm overcome difficulties and being a better person for overcoming difficulties.
56
57 So you think it's not necessary to have the difficulties in order to get

1
2 No I don't think so. Britten always said Frank Bridge had helped him to climb
3 erm bridges. It's funny he used the word bridges. Yes, go under bridges that
4 other people would have had to climb over. Yes. So he saw that. I never realised
5 he used that name 'bridge' and it helped him to get on quickly through not having
6 all the difficulties other people have and if you think of Britten's career it was
7 very, he had a lot of people helping him.

8
9 And you agree with that view?

10
11 Oh yes I think it's good. I think our um very talented people ought to be helped
12 more.

13
14 So you feel that, what has helped you apart from what you've already told me?

15
16 People I've met really. I've been very lucky in the contacts I've made. With
17 teaching at (name) 26 years you've met such interesting people who tell you
18 things, and pupils, you learn from your own pupils often. You can learn things
19 from pupils.

20
21 How has being a composer affected you relationships with people in your life?

22
23 Um You tend to try and be just the same as everybody else. In a way you're just
24 the same as everybody else. That's how you should live really I think. So it's
25 been very much in the same way. I don't think we are any different to other
26 people really, if you see what I mean? Yes I do. Everybody's got a gift. I had a
27 wonderful school before the Older school. It was a private school. She was a
28 headmistress from Scotland and she said everybody's gifted in some way, you
29 just have to try and find it. It's so true that. It's true. Everybody's got a gift of
30 some kind and they're lucky if they find what they're good at and they are able
31 to pursue it. So I found that and have been helped by a lot of people, which is
32 useful, very useful.

33
34 You feel fortunate that you've found your gift

35
36 Um advice can be helpful, can't it, meeting the right people.

37
38 Have you had encouragement and erm?

39
40 Oh a great deal Yes. Yes. Some good encouragement can be small things, which
41 is very fine.

42
43 Any other effects that being a composer has had on your family life, either when
44 you were growing up, that sort of family life, or as an adult?

45
46 Nothing I can really think of, no.

47
48 Do you think it's been the same for your wives and children um having you as a
49 composer as doing any other job?

50
51 I haven't had any children. I've been very lucky in having two wives who
52 haven't wanted children, so that's been very lucky. I don't know what would
53 have happened if I'd had a wife who'd wanted children. I hate the thought really.
54 I'd have probably have had to have children. Probably I'd have made the best of
55 it. But it's not the sort of thing I'm interested in. I will never feel sad that I'm
56 not leaving anything behind, you know, like some men do, in history, never. No
57 I don't want an heir or anything like that. [laughing] I can't understand it.

1
2 Right. Have you always felt like that?
3
4 Yes. [(laughing)] I can't understand that mentality.
5
6 Has it been a big thing with you, not wanting children?
7
8 Yes. Very much, since I was young. Yes. My parents never encouraged it either.
9
10 Do you mind my asking why?
11
12 I don't know. They didn't like large families, they'd come from large families.
13 And I've an uncle and aunt who I admired very much (not the one who helped
14 me by shouting) but, ... Isn't it amazing that a shout can do some tricks? The
15 Americans do that with young children often. Sometimes they have a way of, in
16 these rooms, they sometimes try shouting at them to try and stop them doing
17 some of these habits. So it must work occasionally. But it seems the wrong thing
18 to do, though, in a way. But erm
19
20 You're an only child, so um
21
22 Yes I don't know whether that makes me more selfish. I don't think it does. But
23 we are unusual, only children, in a sense. Are you an only child?
24
25 Yes I am.
26
27 Yes and (name of wife) is and my first wife was. So I've only known only
28 children. This is very strange.
29
30 What difference do you think it makes?
31
32 I don't know, it's very weird. You get everything new, don't you and you get
33 everything, you're used to having everything new, you're not having anything
34 passed down to you. You're not passing things on and that sort of thing and you
35 get everything.
36
37 Do you think it has affected your view of yourself?
38
39 I don't think it makes you selfish, I don't think that at all. No. You're not sharing
40 a lot, are you in a sense, family wise. You learn to share with others that aren't
41 related, though, don't you?
42
43 Do you think it may have affected your views about having children yourself?
44
45 Not really, no. I don't think that's it, but I always wanted a sister, 'cause I'd read
46 about people having sisters. It would have been wonderful, to have had a sister
47 to tell the troubles to. At this stage I would have loved a sister. I think she would
48 have got me out of it. Possibly. I often thought I'd like a sister.
49
50 Were you quite a lonely child at that age?
51
52 No not really. I was never lonely and I've never felt lonely, like a lot of people.
53
54 But you didn't have a sort of sister, like a friend .
55
56 I wish I had, I did. I wanted that.
57

1 What was it about the sister? Was it the closeness?
2
3 Mmm. What I read in er books mainly. I wished I'd had them, that you read in
4 books, about them, like Charles II had a sister Minette. That sort of thing. I never
5 wanted a brother, though. But the idea of having a sister I thought was
6 wonderful.
7
8 What was it about the brother that you didn't like?
9
10 I don't know. I did never think of having a brother.
11
12 Were your friends mainly girls or boys as you were growing up?
13
14 Both, early on, both. But then it was an all boys' school so that was more
15 difficult. So this headmaster was at an all boys' school.
16
17 Was it a day school or a boarding school?
18
19 Er it was a day school And he did all that for me and he got me to (name of
20 college) and got me a scholarship, for travelling and I got all settled and then he
21 got in trouble with his Secretary [laughing] who was the only girl, woman in the
22 building and she had to have a baby and they had to go off together, very happily
23 I think, to um the West Indies, I think. Jamaica, and that's where he ended up I
24 think, with his Secretary. I think he left his wife or something. It was quite a
25 scandal. That was unusual but at least he helped me to get to that college, which
26 was nice. He must have realised, he noticed that I was going for piano lessons
27 and he made it possible for me to go for an extra half hour a week to my uncle
28 and miss something at the school.
29
30 That's good. Yes. A great help to you.
31
32 But all the girls used to look out and shout at me when I was going into the
33 lesson on a Friday morning at 9. They were just starting at the girls' High
34 School. "Look at Lord Fauntleroy going along with his case." So I used to go
35 late to that, at this period. That made me have er habits. So I'd go late to my
36 piano lesson in order to avoid all these girls [laughing] waving out of the
37 windows at me.
38
39 Did it upset you?
40
41 Oh it did, and there was no back entrance. I'd love to have gone in at the back. It
42 didn't seem to have a back door you could get in. He had a back door but you
43 couldn't get in through. I'd have gone down the side street and round the back
44 but I had to go past their school to get into the. I didn't dare tell him or he might
45 have changed the lesson time. But it was very embarrassing for a little boy, to be
46 shouted at by all these girls. A bit terrifying. [laughing] Absolutely.
47
48 Earlier on you were saying that you saw your work as being, you were doing a
49 job, or work like anybody else. Do you think that's the way your family have
50 seen it, and (wife)?
51
52 Yes I do.
53
54 Despite the fact you were up working at night, which is unusual, and that kind of
55 thing?
56
57 Oh that's different, yes, I always have to tell her.

1
2 How would your work affect those kind of things?
3
4 I just say to her I'll be er. If you wake up in the night and I'm not there, you
5 needn't come looking for me because I'll be in the other room doing some work.
6 'Cause I'm always terrified she'll come looking for me and that'll put me off
7 what I'm doing. She'll wonder where I am and I don't want to hear her saying
8 "What are you doing in here?" I want her to know that that's where I'll be, when
9 she wakes up.
10
11 Are there any other ways you think that being a composer has affected your
12 relationships?
13
14 Well I don't think that family and friends realise its going on in your head all the
15 time, and that you might be having a meal or lunch or talking to people and
16 something's working itself out in your head, that you're planning to do. It's
17 going on at the time you're actually talking or travelling.
18
19 So as well as those conditions that we talked about to begin with, it's something
20 that's going on in your head all the time?
21
22 Yes, they don't realise it's going through your head all the time. Yes.
23
24 How is it, when it is going through your head? Are you hearing things? Yes Are
25 you seeing it?
26
27 Yes. You're planning it. Yes, you're thinking what you'll do next and you're
28 thinking what you'll work on next. You've got an imagination of what the work
29 is that you're working on.
30
31 What are you seeing when you work on those things: a stave, are you hearing,
32 seeing, um?
33
34 Just certain pages going by, pages of what you need to work on and get ready for
35 the scores. That sort of thing. Sometimes when photocopying machines break
36 down it can hold you up an awful lot, if you don't have your own photocopier.
37 You don't realise how held up you can be if you're relying on one and you find
38 it's broken down. It can put you back for a few days.
39
40 So you've got this kind of, your own life, your own consciousness with the
41 music going on, alongside, in parallel to the rest of it
42
43 Oh yes oh absolutely
44
45 Do they ever conflict with each other, the outside and the inside as it were?
46
47 No. Never. It's definitely. It's a bit like schizophrenia, 'cause when I taught at
48 (name of college) I used to think I must be schizophrenic to be able to teach
49 there. Because I could go there and block out my home life and composing. And
50 you could go there and then come back out of there and have another life. It's as
51 if you've two existences and you mustn't let one impede on the other.
52
53 How do you manage to keep them separate then?
54
55 That's why I must have that feeling in me that I can do that. I wish I hadn't
56 bothered too much about what they'd read in the papers, that sort of thing. They
57 probably hadn't read it and I was thinking they've read this odd line in the

1 Guardian or something. They probably didn't read the Guardian. I wasn't able to
2 guess that at the time
3
4 How about this internal thing going on when you're eating your dinner, or
5 whenever?
6
7 Oh yes it goes on all the time. You can't stop it. You wouldn't try to stop it.
8
9 Is it a good thing?
10
11 I think it's excellent because as I said your family and your friends don't realise
12 it's going on all the time. You don't have to have paper in front of you.
13
14 Is it controllable?
15
16 Oh yes, that's more controlled than everyday life. That obviously is 'cause that's
17 going through a filter.
18
19 How do you see it? How do you think about it?
20
21 Well, it's like waves of something going on all the time?
22
23 Is it going on now?
24
25 Oh yes. Hm. It's usually the one thing that's worrying you about a piece, a work,
26 that you've just got to get right by a certain date.
27
28 So if you suddenly talking to me now think "Right well I know what to do about
29 this" would you carry on talking.
30
31 Yes oh definitely
32
33 And just sort of file it away or
34
35 Oh yes. It's more likely to come out right while I'm talking to you than it would
36
37 And would you find yourself rushing off to write it?
38
39 No no definitely not. I could be talking to (wife) in the same way. You've got to
40 be quite excited. Because I think it's partly inspiration really. 'Cause if you're
41 doing something like an interview you get a bit inspired. Because general
42 conversations can be very inspiring. I've had a lot of inspiration talking to
43 people on trains. If you get on well. It's not so good if you don't get on well.
44 And the worst thing is when you are with people who say they're too busy. I
45 remember talking to a critic and she had to get her dance reviews out for the next
46 morning's paper. Well obviously she wanted to concentrate. She didn't want to
47 talk about ballet and that sort of thing. So you don't have the inspiration then.
48 You're told more nowadays to be quiet [laughing] than you were when I was
49 younger. People tend to tell you more how busy they are.
50
51 It sounds wonderful to have that. Has the flow ever stopped? Has it ever gone
52 quiet in there?
53
54 No. It's always the same. The funny thing is it's the least active when you've the
55 most time and the most time to yourself.
56
57 How do you account for that then?

1
2 I don't know. That should be the time when it's the most active and when you
3 need it the most.
4
5 That's a strange paradox really, to find that.
6
7 I know, that's sad.
8
9 I wonder whether other people will tell me that.
10
11 I don't know, it could happen. Because it's wrong really. It's sod's law really,
12 that, isn't it. The time that you need to er, I suppose some people would want to
13 dash off and write something down at the moment they're having it, whereas
14 I've learned to just keep it in abeyance until I want to use it. Things work
15 themselves out. When people have asked me to write them something I've seen
16 the whole piece over the phone as they're asking me. And I've generally written
17 it almost as I've thought it would be, the moment they've asked me. And it's a
18 weird thing and it often comes backwards from the last page to the front. It's
19 very weird. You get the ending first. You see it backwards almost. It's a strange
20 thing. That can happen. Especially as it is very inspiring to be asked.
21
22 Do you get moved by your own work as it comes to you? Does it affect you
23 emotionally?
24
25 Oh yes. You can be just as moved by your own piece as you can by other
26 people's.
27
28 How does it affect you? If I was with you, would I know that this was going on
29 for you?
30
31 No, I'd try and not show it, that I was enjoying it.
32
33 Would you succeed?
34
35 Well I wouldn't ever say, I like that piece of mine, that passage.
36
37 Is there ever a moment when somebody who knew you well would say to you,
38 that they know that you are, (wife) might be able to tell.
39
40 They can spot that there's something going on there?
41
42 (Wife) probably, (name) could, I think. Yes. But you know it's not very nice to
43 say.
44
45 Is it something you'd want to share with people?
46
47 Oh yes. I would probably say "Oh I think that passage worked quite well" when
48 I knew it worked very well.
49
50 If you were eating your dinner or something, you know what I mean, and
51 something gelled for you or you had an emotional feeling about something
52
53 Yes. Would you use it, you mean? Yes.
54
55 Would it spill over into,
56
57 What you were talking about?

1
2 Yes, or what you'd do?
3
4 Not really, no. I'd keep quiet about it because I've been told that by short story
5 writers. They've said. This woman, a famous short story writer, narrated this
6 story to all these people at this dinner and they all said "Oooh that's a wonderful
7 story. When can we buy your book of stories." And she said "I won't be writing
8 it now. I've shared it with you and now I'll be writing other stories but not that
9 one." It's gone, the impetus to write it down, now, I'm afraid. I've shared it with
10 you all and you liked it. I'll write a different one."
11
12 So would you say that it is important for you to keep it to yourself?
13
14 It's important, secrecy is very important, I think. There is a sort of law of
15 secrecy which comes into creative writing and creative work. Ravel had it to a
16 great degree. He liked to make his works appear, finished, to his friends and
17 people never saw him working on them.
18
19 What's your interpretation of it for you?
20
21 I can understand him wanting to do that. He didn't want people to see his
22 sketches or his manuscript paper.
23
24 Are you like that?
25
26 I could be like that. I don't need to be like that though. I don't mind people
27 seeing things lying around. No. But I think I can understand Ravel. He was a
28 secretive sort of person anyway. Smart and dapper.
29
30 How are you secretive? I know it's a paradox telling me. How does it manifest
31 itself in you?
32
33 I don't know. I suppose most people are quite secretive about things they do
34 aren't they, generally. (2) Erm. I wouldn't like to erm
35
36 Do you see music as a secret, an interior thing?
37
38 Yes I think it is in a way. When you're alive it is. You're able to change it before
39 you die, all being well, and not leave it as it is, you could make alterations,
40 which is good. To be able to get something in different.
41
42 And the process of arriving at it, composing it, is a secret process.
43
44 I think it is. Yes. You like to think it's something personal, of your own.
45
46 And you like to keep it private.
47
48 If I got advice, I wouldn't like people to know I'd been for advice about it. I'd
49 want to do it secretly.
50
51 And the secrecy, too, of this interior life going on when things are, your parallel
52 universe, as it were.
53
54 Oh yes, yes, definitely.
55
56 And that's better kept secret as well?
57

1 Not really. I don't mind sharing it with people, to say it's going on. I mean I
2 don't see why people shouldn't realise or know that it's going on. It's no
3 different to you. You might be thinking of what you're going to, in a mundane
4 way, you might be thinking of what you're going to have for your meal tonight,
5

6 Yes, my kind of consciousness
7

8 Cook, or what you, not meaning you do all the cooking, but you might just be
9 thinking of the dinner tonight, and what you need to do, while you're actually
10 talking about something. It's the same as that, really.
11

12 Do you have interests and activities that you have outside music?
13

14 Yes quite a lot.
15

16 And friends outside music?
17

18 Yes a lot of friends and organisations we go to.
19

20 Would they see you as a musician?
21

22 They tend to find out and know. I don't tend to tell them but they tend to find
23 out. I don't often tell them, I wait for them to find out. (wife)'s the same.
24

25 Why is that?
26

27 I don't know. Um. (Wife) she won't tell people. She won't tell people what
28 she's done or achieved, She waits till they find out.
29

30 Why do you like people not to know?
31

32 Not as much as (wife). I do more because I've met (wife) really. But erm I think,
33 you've probably found this, Carol, that people admire you more if they find out
34 for themselves. It sticks more with them doesn't it, than if you've gone round
35 telling them. It's much better if they hear it from another person or other people
36 than if they hear it from yourself.
37

38 Why?
39

40 I don't know. It's that business of why you have agents and why publishers. It
41 seems to be better doesn't it?
42

43 Do you find that when people know they treat, in what way do they treat you
44 differently when they know?
45

46 Well I think they overlook a lot of things they wouldn't overlook, in your
47 mannerisms and you can be more eccentric and get away with it more.
48

49 You've got license to be an artist.
50

51 Yes I always remember Lennox Berkeley when he saw that I saw him coming
52 down the road, he started jumping about, like a little boy. [laughs] And he was
53 about 60 then. And he seemed to want me to see him doing a little jig on the
54 pavement which is very unusual. But when he drew up towards me, he looked
55 surprised, that it was me there, as if I hadn't noticed, and I'm sure he'd seen me.
56

57 And what did you make of that then? Was that a bit of performing?

1
2 I don't know. It's very unusual isn't it? He wanted me to see that he wasn't staid
3 and erm. He liked wearing jeans too, in the days when jeans weren't very
4 popular.
5
6 So you think it gives you artistic licence?
7
8 No I think it's already there. You're eccentric. Born eccentric, I think. I notice
9 students. Particularly.
10
11 Do you think a lot of composers are eccentric?
12
13 I do, yes. But I think students like to see you, I used to stand on my head
14 occasionally when a student was coming into a room and that was a shock.
15 (laughs) But they take it in good, they accept things well. We tend to think
16 students don't understand that but they do.
17
18 Was that in the Lennox Berkeley spirit?
19
20 In a way, yes. But I did that occasionally, stood on my head. I stood on my head
21 sometimes for the professors too in the coffee room, [laughs] things like that. It
22 makes things more bearable. Things are changing a lot now aren't they?
23
24 You think some eccentricity is a good thing?
25
26 Oh I do think it's a good thing.
27
28 Do you think other composers are eccentric?
29
30 Oh I think a lot are very eccentric. Yes.
31
32 What sort of eccentricities do composers share?
33
34 Well, you know, the old fashioned ways. I think. It wouldn't be surprising to see
35 them walking about with one foot on the pavement and one foot on the road.
36
37 Do you think that's part of the territory? Do you think that that's an occupational
38 necessity then, coming back to that area?
39
40 No I think its more of this compulsive business . Yes. I remember meeting that
41 actor John Le Mesurier, and he was walking in the gutter. I talked to him. I
42 thought that was funny, in Marylebone High Street. But he wasn't walking on
43 the pavement or in the road. He was walking down the gutter and it was raining.
44 And I talked to him at the bottom, near Oxford Circus and I thought that was
45 very unusual. Things like that. People are a bit unusual.
46
47 Is there any other impact that you think your work has on your friendships
48 outside music?
49
50 Well, it can create a lot of jealousy. There's a lot of that amongst composers. It's
51 one of the worst places, I think, for jealousy is composing. Composers are very
52 bad.
53
54 Why do you think that is?
55
56 I don't know. They're very secretive about what they're doing. They're a bit
57 scared they'll have the ideas pinched. Not just the ideas, copyright and all that.

1 But apart from that they think the openings will be taken from them if they talk
2 too openly about what's going on. That could happen.
3
4 Have you felt,
5
6 I do, Yes. You can feel a bit threatened by erm talking too much about your
7 plans, 'Cause you know they might step in and that's happened quite a lot
8 especially in commercial fields. They'll go ahead and do it themselves and not
9 bring you in on things that you've agreed to collaborate on. You have to be very
10 careful. You can give opportunities to people and they take them very quickly.
11 You know what it's like and that goes on a lot I think. One of my pupils has
12 done very well. He's the Director of (name of music school) so he's got on very
13 well. He's a nice, he's very talented, (name). Some of the others have done
14 well, having works published, I'm very pleased. I gave them a lot of extra time.
15 Not just their set hour. I'd give them extra half hours, extra periods, sometimes
16 whole hours extra. Because I saw them personally. Had them to parties and
17 things. They show their appreciation in strange ways which is very nice, when
18 you're not expecting it. Not the way that you would expect it. They had their
19 own ways of showing it. You know what I mean. You think they're ungrateful
20 sometimes then you notice they are grateful later, but in their own way. You
21 can't expect gratitude in this life, I've found. And Adler said that. You must
22 never expect gratitude. You're looking for the wrong thing if you expect
23 gratitude from somebody.
24
25 But it has been a source of satisfaction for you that your pupils have done so
26 well with your encouragement.
27
28 Yes it is good, Yes. Very nice. Very very good.
29
30 Are there any more things you'd like to tell me about how your work has
31 affected your relationships with non-musical friends.
32
33 Yes. Well generally, if they're non-musical, they don't really know what it's all
34 about. I get the impression a lot of them, a few of them are tone deaf, so music
35 doesn't mean anything to them. They can't really weigh it all up. They don't
36 realise what you're doing. And a lot of them, too, family members like that,
37 can't see any point if it's not earning a lot of money. And they judge everything
38 by how much money it's earning. So they want to know how much you've
39 earned over a certain period, which is very weird, to say to a composer.
40
41 How do you deal with that sort of comment?
42
43 I don't know. It's worth, if you do earn a lot from something, it's worth telling
44 them, and then they seem pleased and happy. It's something they can pass on.
45 But it seems very worthless and mundane to a creative artist.
46
47 So that sets you apart really, as a creative artist?
48
49 You're right there. We are apart from the general, in that sense. Yes. I do think
50 so. Cause look how unhappy a lot of people like (popular composer) are in their
51 work, because he's very upset the critics won't say his works are masterpieces.
52 Well he didn't need to bother. He doesn't need to bother about what they say. So
53 he's got this. Everybody has this. They achieve whatever they want to achieve
54 and they're not happy, because there's something comes along to make them
55 less happy.
56

1 Does it bother you to have friends who can't appreciate your music or who show
2 you, who believe they can but you can see they can't? Is that a concern to you?

3
4 No that doesn't worry me. No. Not at all. It wouldn't worry me that. Because
5 they are members of the public and that's how it'll be with everybody else.
6 There's a lot of people out there who you don't know, isn't there? Who might
7 get to know your things. So things are going that you know nothing about which
8 is very interesting. 'Cause they say that when you have books published. Things
9 go on, to do with the book and you know nothing about it. And it's years later
10 that you find something has gone on. It's rather good if a few people like your
11 work, then you needn't worry if it's a huge set of people. Because just a few
12 people, it's good if you communicate with them. It's like when you do a show or
13 a performance. It doesn't matter how many are in the audience, it has to be the
14 same standard, hasn't it even if there's 4 or 5 in the audience, than a full room.

15
16 If you can communicate with discerning people?

17
18 Mmm. The most critical people might be there, for all you know. When there's
19 only 3 or 4. That's an unusual thing, isn't it?

20
21 Have you had the experience of seeing people very moved by your music?

22
23 Yes. I have.

24
25 How does that make you feel?

26
27 Oh, It's very encouraging, very exciting, yes. And they tell you afterwards. Or
28 you might get it in a review, which is nice. So you do read the reviews.

29
30 As far as your own friends and your activities outside music, you're set apart in
31 some ways, you said, and for others of them, they make the discovery that you
32 are a composer and that makes you very special and they feel special at having
33 kind of rumbled you,

34
35 Some do, yes, not many. Occasionally.

36
37 Are there any other ways in which your non-musical life and activities affects
38 your work?

39
40 No, I can't think of anything. Only libraries. I've had a lot of help from libraries.
41 Like the (title of work). I got that from a book on Adler which I saw in a library.
42 I took it home, read it, wrote the (title) and it was reviewed well when it was first
43 performed and then the review was sent to America and then the Adlerian
44 Society, the son was alive, Kurt, and Alexandra the daughter. He'd died on a
45 lecture tour in Scotland, in Aberdeen I think, in '34. He'd been dead a long time.
46 He died a long time before Jung and probably before Freud. And he'd be the
47 first to die, I think. They were living then and they invited me over and I stayed
48 with them for a fortnight. For the performance in Town Hall, New York and
49 then up in Bynghampton and broadcasts and things and interviews. It was all
50 because I chosen the Adler theme for the (title). And they'd read about it. So this
51 lady who'd been an Adlerian sent the cutting from the Daily Telegraph to them
52 or they wouldn't have known about it. And they wanted to do it for his
53 centenary. So it worked out very well for the Centenary. That was simply
54 because I'd seen a book by the Ansbachers on his work and I met the
55 Ansbachers and stayed with them, the husband and wife who edited all his work.

56
57 Has serendipity played a big part in your life?

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2
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57

I think so, yes. I've been in the right place at the right time a great many times. I've been lucky. Very very lucky.

Do you think it's luck?

Oh yes I do. Definitely. I haven't made it happen. It's just been one of those things.

I'll just finally ask you. Do you think, for therapists who want to work with composers who come to them with difficulties, do you think there are any particular things they should know, that you would find important?

Well. Creative artists are often very withdrawn people, aren't they. They are not really outgoing. What are they called, er um, oh I forget the 2 types.

Introverts, do you mean?

Yes, they are often introverts, so they need help, as introverts, to know that they are normal. They may think they are abnormal. And a great many are homosexuals, aren't they, which also, far more than we'd realised at one time, I should think. I wonder if about a third maybe are homosexual. So they need help don't they, to live with it. Not just in the creative sense, but in their own lives. So there's a great deal, but the younger the better. If you could help them with therapy when they're young. Then they get out of the habits they could form

What kind of help would you see as being necessary that's not available?

Well, most of what we've talked about really. Realising it's all normal, telling them that they are normal and that they are not abnormal. And that they are meant to be like they are and they should develop it and be proud of what they're doing. Not listen to too much criticism.

Do you think that there should be any special provision?

I do yes. I mean they are going to have all these drawbacks, aren't they if they are at the special schools, they are going to have hang-ups and things.

Do you think the special schools create or exacerbate the hang-ups?

No, I think they need some help sometimes.

What sort of help do you think, in your experience of people?

Well um at the special schools they are having to do the everyday curriculum aren't they, which is good, but at the same time they'll all have problems of their own won't they, individually, which they'll need some help over I think, coming to terms with.

They're not problems that are specific to musicians, training musicians?

I think no, I think it's the same with actors, yes I think so.

Oh you think they are creative problems?

Umm I mean there's one big problem that comes to a lot of the performers, is they are wondering if they are approaching their instrument in the right way.

1 Like Menuhin ceased to play for two years 'cause he wondered after all that
2 success whether he was playing properly. Then he stopped playing for two years
3 and he had to relearn the instrument. And that happens to a lot of them. They
4 wonder why they're doing it. Why they're doing concertos for piano in public,
5 "What's the point?" and why are they trying to be different from other people.
6 Are they showing off?

7
8 Coming back to composers, what about them?

9
10 They have the same problems, I think. They are wondering why they are doing
11 it. Of course they are not going to be able to live with the um lack of
12 encouragement, and the lack of openings. They are not all lucky enough to get
13 the commissions, and they're not all lucky enough to have everything on a plate,
14 as they wish, and they'll have to look out for their commissions, and look out for
15 the people to write for, make the openings for themselves. They can't expect
16 people to be. They are not going to find agents easily. And there aren't many
17 agents for composers, where you might get agents more for performing artists. If
18 an agent is interested in a composer they may only take on one or two.

19
20 How often do you think it happens that composers stop working because of these
21 pressures on them?

22
23 I think far less stop than we'd expect. I think a lot keep going. It's very sad
24 really. We've not encouraged a lot of our English composers. They are hard
25 pressed and if they've complained and made objections. I they think they are
26 badly treated.

27
28 How could they be treated better?

29
30 Well they could be understood for what they've said.

31
32 Do you think the training of composers is good?

33
34 Oh yes I think it's very good. Excellent, and inspiring and there's a lot of talent
35 about. Yes. It's very much what they've just said about the third channel. That it
36 should have more British content. And not all come from America. It's good is
37 that.

38
39 Do you think there's a lot of self-help that composers as a group could adopt?

40
41 Oh yes, I think so. That's a good thing in the future that they can do. Get
42 together in teams.

43
44 Would you like to see psychologists doing more for composers? –

45
46 Oh yes definitely.

47
48 What sort of thing would you like to see?

49
50 They could work helping them individually, especially when they get that
51 writer's block. Talk things over, you know. Definitely. We have the great
52 example of Rachmaninov, don't we? That's the big example that's always given.
53 In the 30s, wasn't he, 20s, he was helped, wasn't he? And it seems quite normal
54 now, but it seemed a shock at the time that Rachmaninov should have to go to a
55 psychiatrist.

56
57 Would you have benefited from that sort of thing?

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I think I had it without going to a specialist or a professional, by the odd people I bumped into and getting interested in the Adlerians. They made me more aware of it, speaking to them. I got it secondhand almost through the Adlerians. I said (name) hadn't been such a help in England, but some of those in America I met, a few in England too, helped, very much. I think being told things you can't expect. It's useful to know that you're not meant to expect people to be um you know, pleased with what you've done for them and that sort of thing.

You describe it as quite a sort of lonely struggle, a lot of struggle, managing the struggle, is that fair?

Yes I think so. It's a pleasure though, 'cause you're living in your own personality and your own inner world. You've got your own inner world going on all the time and it's marvellous that, to have your own inner world. You sleep with it, too.

Do you see composer's inner worlds as being different from those of other creative artists?

No I think they're probably just the same. The same approach. I think the same thing would be going on if you're a painter or a sculptor or a writer or poet, you'd be obsessed with what you were doing. You'd be thinking it over. That's why they're all the same to me, very similar to me. Some people can't see it that way but I do. You do need certain techniques to be able to do them, but you can learn those. The technique side, can't you.

Are there some things for you that you'd like to do in the future, that you haven't yet um

I'd like to develop the painting side more. Hopefully.

On the music side?

Yes, keep on with the music side. I'm happy with that. It's going very well at the moment. But I'd like to finish off with all the paintings more. I'd like to do more art. I went to Art School so that was a great help. Now they have a marvellous approach to it. They understand it more I find, the artists. More straightforward in their approach

In what way?

Well I think it's more straightforward to them. They just get on with it and they don't think of the reasons behind it and all that so much.

Do you think musicians do?

I think so, More. And if you.. The poor painters aren't always able to express it in words and defend what they're doing. They can be taken advantage of by writers.

On the other hand in music, just as in painting there are so many different choices, if it's not flowing through you as you do, a lot of people struggle to achieve that don't they?

Yes and we keep having to rely on other people all the time to perform works and that. It's lovely to be able to do something where you're presenting it to

1 people finished. Like a picture or something. Or most people read. It's rather sad
2 now that less books are being read, and stories. Everything is going onto the
3 Internet. And you don't hear of children reading books as much as you did. I
4 think far less books are read than people realise. But this Internet is marvellous.

5
6 When you started off as a composer, did you envisage it as being the way it has
7 worked out for you?

8
9 Very much. Yes, it has gone the way I expected. P'raps I've not got on as fast as
10 I thought I would. I'm probably now at the point, 63, where I would have been,
11 hopefully, at 50. I may be 13 years, a bit behind, in a way. I feel now very much
12 as I would have done at 50. So that 13 years I might have been held up by those
13 a bit, those obsessive things. Perhaps I ought to have got on better in those
14 earlier years.

15
16 What do you think stopped you getting on so fast then?

17
18 Openings I think. There were no teachers in the North. Like, er I had to send
19 things to these composers to. How I could do that and send them without return
20 postage and expect them to return these scores. They were kind enough to send
21 those scores back. Pay the postage. Can you imagine them doing that nowadays!
22 People like Lennox Berkeley and Benjamin Britten would pay for the postage to
23 be returned and not putting in a stamped addressed envelope. Not knowing
24 about it really. I was told later, but erm. I ought to have been told about things
25 like that. And you'd have got a quicker response too. Things like that. All those
26 little things you can learn.

27
28 They in fact helped you, didn't they. So what slowed you down then? The
29 impact of the OCD, all that?

30
31 Well yes, and earning a living slows you down. Teaching, and you're putting a
32 lot into the teaching, 26 years. So if I'd have probably been luckier, I could have
33 written earlier. And not had to earn a living

34
35 When did you start your teaching career?

36
37 I started about when I was 23 and went on 'till 77 about. A long period. It was
38 about 26 years. Keeping it on.

39
40 And that slowed you down because while you were doing that you were not able
41 to

42
43 I did write a lot but I could have written more I think if I had been freer, as I said
44 at first, freedom is the most important thing, if you make use of it and you don't.
45 They all say Sibelius was put off by being given a grant, and he stopped writing.
46 Well, there's a lot in that I think.

47
48 So there is something in the theory that struggle

49
50 It might be the period though he was writing in. Things might be different now.
51 You could imagine somebody winning the pools now and doing something with
52 it.

53
54 So if you won the lottery or the pools do you think it would erm

55
56 I'd still be a bit doubtful about using the money for things to do with myself. I
57 would use it privately. I would prefer to do it secretly, I think, like with the old

1 pools you used to put a cross if you didn't want publicity. I think that's a good
2 thing.
3
4 If you had um vast sums of money to
5
6 I wouldn't want to publicise it, the fact I'd won it.
7
8 To have your works um ..
9
10 I wouldn't want to do it openly. No. I don't think so, unless I could do it like the
11 pop people do. I'd have to do like the pop people do, completely open. It's hard
12 to do that.
13
14 If you had money, to get it all rehearsed and all the rest of it, recorded,
15 performed.
16
17 Its hard to do it isn't it?
18
19 Its hard to think about really. P'raps it's better as it is really, than that sort of
20 thing.
21
22 I've had friends who've won the pools, in the early days and they've been all
23 right. I knew a couple who got £75,000 and it seemed a lot in those days. I saw
24 them not long ago actually, at a funeral, and they're all right. They're not erm.
25 One was a bank manager, he worked in a bank, not a bank manager, and he
26 continued his job for about 2 years, before he went to live on the coast, and then
27 the boy who was next to me in my desk at school, at this school where the
28 headmaster was, before this headmaster came, won about £150,000 on the pools,
29 and it was Nicholson, whose wife wrote that play, that was on in the West End
30
31 Viv Nicholson, you mean, that one?
32
33 Yes, Viv Nicholson. But he was killed. In his car, soon afterwards. He got a
34 Rolls Bentley, and it turned over in a field coming back from the races. So he
35 didn't see much of it. About a year afterwards. "Spend Spend Spend", she
36 wrote. I shared my double desk with Nicholson. We were from (town) you see.
37 So that was interesting, So it also led to bad tings too, tragedy. It was his line
38 that won, not hers. He won with his line. Sad. He was a lovely person too. I
39 remember him well. Very straightforward person. I think he went to be a miner
40 after he left school, that's where she met him I think. It's tragedy that. That was
41 more money than the friends earlier had won, at the Littlewoods pool. But I
42 wouldn't know what to do with the money if I got it. 'Cause there'd be too
43 much anyway.
44
45 Well I think we should stop there.

Transcript 3:

Colin

1 When people ask you to describe yourself as a musician what would you say?
2
3 Yes I am two kinds of musician. I am a music teacher and I am a composer who
4 also performs.
5
6 Do you find yourself telling people that you meet that you are a composer?
7
8 I do actually. I think it helps. I mean some people will need to know that I'm a
9 composer for professional purposes and others need to know that I am a teacher
10 for professional purposes. It depends who I am speaking to.
11
12 And what kind of reception would you get when you say you are a composer?
13
14 They say what kind of composer are you erm because composer can also relate
15 to other arts as well, and erm so I say I compose classical music. That is a little
16 bit of a simplification because I do all sorts, but that puts me in a kind of a
17 bracket which shows that I am a trained musician as opposed to a pop composer
18 who is not trained.
19
20 And what kind of response would you get from people when you say that?
21
22 Oh they say that sounds very clever, which of course is the kind of answer I
23 want.
24
25 OK. [laughing]
26
27 And that sort of, that leads on to one or two other - it leads into a conversation,
28 which is quite nice, but I try not to overawe people with things that I do unless
29 I'm drawn on particular questions. "What are you working on at the moment?"
30 which often does come up.
31
32 What might overawe people about something you would say about what you're
33 doing?
34
35 Well if you were to say that I compose symphonies or piano concertos, they say
36 "Oh, that sounds so difficult I wouldn't even know where to begin. I can't even
37 write a note", so they begin to realise they feel their own inadequacy if you say
38 that. So I do not actually engage in these sort of discussions in a sort of ordinary
39 social basis at all, only if I am put on the spot and asked what I do. And in a pub
40 I would tend to say I am a music teacher. And if I am at a music conference I
41 would say I am a composer but I don't want to overawe people. In fact I want to
42 stay fairly anonymous, particularly within my erm own village and the
43 community and so on. I prefer to have a quiet life.
44
45 Would people in the village then know you as a teacher rather than a composer?
46
47 They would say - most of them know me as a musician, people in the cafes and
48 shops, but one or two people of course where I go photocopying know because I
49 have got all these fantastic scores and so on that I get photocopied and they're
50 interested in hearing what I do and "Can I have a CD of your latest piece etc?"
51
52 And do you?
53
54 Yes, and what's nice is they say "Oh we find that relaxing to listen to". Which
55 is better than saying that's a very difficult piece of music. I'd much prefer
56 people to say they enjoy listening to it because it is relaxing and er it means that
57 they can relate to it. It is not as if they're overawed by it, and I think that's

1 better because I like to think that well, this is communicating with people and is
2 not sort of impressing them, well it might impress them as sort of a secondary
3 thing, but at least they are enjoying the experience. So therefore I do also then
4 see myself as a composer, as also an entertainer. And in some ways that's a
5 nicer, I am more comfortable with that, than I am with being thought to be an
6 academic, which is the other sort of tag that you get.

7
8 So there's two sides to it, there's the side that gives you a distance between you
9 and people, this you know, that you say they'll become overawed. What do you
10 think is overaweing about being a classical composer to certain people?

11
12 I think they think of Beethoven, they think of Bach, they think of people who are
13 intellectually brilliant and that this kind of brilliance is very inaccessible to most
14 people. I'm hoping this wouldn't be so much the case these days with you know
15 younger people, older people would certainly be impressed in that way, but
16 younger people who have had experience of doing composition at school, would
17 think oh, that is just another sort of composition. They wouldn't be so impressed
18 because they think of pop composers and so forth and those would be the
19 uppermost people in their mind, and classical composer would be you know, a
20 little bit remote.

21
22 Going back to your own experience, have you experienced people feeling
23 overawed by you telling them that you are a composer?

24
25 Well, I did the other day and I had to diffuse it.

26
27 Tell me what happened?

28
29 Well, I gave them a CD. This was my favourite pub in the countryside.

30
31 Who was it?

32
33 It is called the Jolly Woodman! [laughs]

34
35 Thanks for that! No I mean, I was wondering, it was just someone you met in
36 the pub was it?

37
38 It was the lady who owns the pub, who runs it, and because I'd written a
39 Woodland Concerto, partly based on the scenery around this particular area,
40 which is called The Woodman, the Jolly Woodman, that is the woodlands
41 around, one of the movements is based on that scenario and I said "Well you
42 might be interested to hear this piece. This is our favourite pub and here you are
43 and I hope you enjoy it." And we came back about four weeks later and I
44 happened to er sort of have a little chat to her eventually and said "Did you
45 enjoy the music?" and said "What do you think?" "Oh, you are a genius," she
46 said,

47
48 Oh wonderful.

49
50 I said "That sounds good", I said "Obviously you enjoyed it, that's good", and
51 that's how I put it, so that hasn't happened to me much, but someone obviously
52 recognised that it is a high level of music making on that CD.

53
54 How does it feel to you being treated as a genius?

55
56 Um, fine! [laughing] Any massaging of my ego is always very agreeable! It
57 doesn't happen often enough, and erm, so, because you are working in isolation

1 most of the time therefore any encouragement you get from anybody of that sort,
2 if it is well intentioned, is not done as a joke, it is sincerely meant. It is only
3 when you come across people who are sarcastic about it and say, "Oh, you
4 know, you are a genius", in that kind of frame, that's not very.

5
6 Have you come across that experience?

7
8 Or you come across people who are sort of erm ."Oh yes, I composed a
9 symphony last week as well!"

10
11 Oh right, sending you up.

12
13 Oh yes, because they don't believe you anyway.

14
15 Right. Why do you think that is?

16
17 Erm, Because erm they think they have been taken aback. They'd like to think of
18 themselves as talented but they actually think of someone who does composing
19 at that kind of level to be super-talented and totally beyond them. So they want
20 to have a go at that because erm it maybe reflects a certain society which
21 applauds philistinism er and which prefers er moderate talent and not
22 immoderate talent and is looking for mediocrity and not anything too good.

23
24 And it feels threatened by it?

25
26 Yes, anything that is beyond that level of mediocrity.

27
28 Do you feel threatened by it? How does it affect you when you get that kind of
29 reaction?

30
31 Well I very rarely get it, but I do actually in a sense, in my own mind, feel that
32 there is er quite a part of society which is philistine in terms of its regard for
33 classical music, and who, sort of, are disdainful of it because it is threatening in
34 an intellectual sense. They see it as being high civilisation.

35
36 Challenging?

37
38 Yes, too challenging, brainy, and this does not accord with your Daily Mail
39 reader, your Daily Express leader, and who therefore just wants to see, just
40 moderate talents, sort of, people who have come from nowhere, who are stars
41 overnight but with not an awful lot of academic talent behind them, you know.

42
43 Yes. Do you find they are not aware of the work and training and skill and
44 inspiration that goes into producing a major classical work?

45
46 Erm, they haven't the faintest clue, and.

47
48 A bit of a disruption there. When you are writing are you aware of writing for
49 any particular person or group or audience in general? Thinking about what
50 you've just been saying about understanding or lack of understanding that there
51 is in the wider public.

52
53 What I have a sense of is a sense of style that I am writing in, and that style
54 would have a certain kind of appeal and I have been taking quite a long time to
55 actually come into a style which I feel is a fusion of contemporary techniques
56 and what I call classical idiom, which would have a broad appeal. It has taken
57 me a while to get that together so that in fact I am no longer operating in what I

1 consider to be a cultural cul-de-sac, but I've got potentially a much broader
2 appeal.

3
4 When you were in the cultural cul-de-sac, how would you have seen it?

5
6 I saw it as being erm (2) er obviously to me, I felt like a free spirit because I can
7 then, I've got these marvellous techniques which I can use to erm express
8 whatever I wish. It could be as difficult as you would want, and I've got players
9 who can actually play it and I actually can make recordings and I am actually as
10 free as a bird. So that's the sort of artistic ..

11
12 It does not sound like a cul-de-sac at all.

13
14 Ah, artistically, it's not a cul-de-sac, but in that sense that you are making a
15 journey, you are discovering, you are stretching your horizons. The only
16 problem is when it comes to an audience, you haven't got one. That's where the
17 cul-de-sac is.

18
19 What about fellow musicians?

20
21 Fellow musicians. They need to get paid for their work and you need to have a
22 performing venue.

23
24 Do you have a group of musicians that you write for or with?

25
26 I have worked with a variety of musicians, obviously over the years. We had a
27 group together called the (name) in the mid 1990s and I worked with a sitarist,
28 pianist, flautist and I used a lot of electronics myself and so we did produce
29 some things together.

30
31 So would the way you wrote be influenced by the fact that they would be
32 performing the works?

33
34 Oh yeah absolutely I would write particularly for that performing group.

35
36 Their strengths and so on?

37
38 Yes. That's right and I would actually be collaborating with them. We'd have,
39 in a rehearsal time. I'd say, I'd ask them, "Would that particular section work?"
40 and they would say "Would you like to compose that a bit differently or
41 something, that particular section er, er, would be nice to have another
42 movement, a nice fast movement to finish" I mean actually I couldn't
43 necessarily oblige them but I'd certainly usually get a positive response and the
44 performers themselves, when they happened to be also to be quite esoteric, like a
45 sort of bansori player or a sitar player, would be quite happy to have something
46 unusual to play because it challenges them.

47
48 So as far as the wider public then, that was a cul-de-sac in the sense by not
49 being able to reach

50
51 You couldn't reach it, there wasn't going to be a wide audience for that, but
52 there would be people who enjoyed listening to it who came, but I would say
53 they would be called a friends and relations style of audience, which is fine in
54 itself and as it were it was a culmination in a sort of arrival point for a certain set
55 of ideas which were then achieved. So that sense it was a sense of achievement
56 but then you'll say that was just a stepping stone to, shall we say, a wider sense
57 of success, which is very elusive in any case, even if you are writing popular

1 stuff it is still elusive, but I think that I moved away from what I would call an
2 esoteric style from about the mid 80s onwards I started to get more mainstream,
3 but it still had esoteric elements like Indian music because I worked with Indian
4 musicians through to the mid 1990s and now since the mid 1990s I've moved
5 into a much more, what I would call impressionistic er vein like Debussy, Ravel,
6 that kind of a sound world and I have actually forged a link between er what I
7 call these modern techniques, that I had before, into what I call classical forms
8 like concerto form, symphony form and I'm producing music which has a much
9 broader appeal, which actually accords with my original intention when I was a
10 composer when I was 15 I said I want to compose something which had as broad
11 an appeal as Rimsky-Korsakov or Dvorak or Smetana in their time.

12
13 What does it represent to you having that broad appeal?

14
15 Well it means that you have a sense of satisfaction that there is a certain kind of
16 service that this work is doing in the community That it is actually entertaining
17 obviously. It also has some kind of a thematic erm element which also has some
18 kind of enlightening aspect to it and the enlightening aspects are both I would
19 say aesthetic and also er in a broad sense political because I also do a lot of work
20 which is based on nature conservation and I think that is broadly enlightening for
21 people. It is also uplifting.

22
23 How important is the idea of leaving your body of works behind 2h3n you die?

24
25 It is very important to leave an organised body of works behind, that is so
26 important. I am very, impressing it on my colleagues all the time. I said you
27 must get an archive together. What are you doing about publishing your stuff or
28 what are you doing about making sure there are copies in the British Library?
29 And I have an archive now which I assembled two years ago of 3,700 pages of
30 work in the Bodleian Library, which are highly organised.

31
32 Is this manuscript?

33
34 Mostly handwritten manuscripts.

35
36 What about recordings?

37
38 This is, mine are all stored in a small envelope on microfilm. I get 50 pages on
39 one small sheet and I have 100 sheets of that and you have got 3,700 pages in a
40 small envelope on microfiche which can be read by a university. Sorry, your
41 question, you had another question after that.

42
43 No, it's OK. So talking about the audience, OK, and leaving work behind and
44 writing for particular groups of people, I want to move on to the way that you
45 work, the way that you write, OK, and to ask you about the things you think that
46 make it easier for you when you are writing.

47
48 All right. The thing that has actually revolutionised my whole way of working is
49 to have access to um electronic media. From the mid 1980s I then had access to
50 what are called a sampling keyboard with a sequencer and I actually built up a
51 library of 1500 sounds for a sampler which included, I made up my whole raft of
52 renaissance sounds and I hypersized that, all kinds of electronic effects as well
53 as a whole range of conventional instruments and wonderful instruments like
54 harpsichords and things like that which I'd never had access to before which I
55 could then load onto this sampler and then make up the music for these
56 particular instruments, but also have an 8 track recorder in the keyboard, which
57 would give me the possibility of making up 8 tracks or 8 levels, 8 layers of

1 instruments which actually probably helped me produce quite a number of works
2 which otherwise I wouldn't have produced. That's the first thing. The second
3 thing is the computer technology which has enabled me to publish music for the
4 first time, since 1999, when I got the Sibelius software which has actually meant
5 I have now got 17 major works published under my own publishing company
6 and this has cheered me up enormously. Both those things have revolutionised
7 and extended my work and indeed they also help me as a disabled person
8 because they have shortened the length of time of writing things down and they
9 have also liberated my hands - within a, instead of using a piano, which is
10 heavy, they have a very, very light touch on these little keyboards and I can
11 actually fly across and I can continue to play. So for many different reasons that
12 is a very, very important question for which I have given you a complex answer
13 but which I could extend on for another half hour on the benefits of technology.
14

15 Do you use that technology to make recordings as well as produce scores of
16 compositions?
17

18 I do, I have actually produced two film scores on that for television, in which I
19 performed, I not only composed it, I performed it, recorded it and then hired a
20 DAT machine for a week, put it on the DAT machine and then send the DAT to
21 the BBC and then off they go and they play it, or the Film Director and then he
22 edits from the DAT tape and they kind of splice it into the film, so 45 minutes of
23 my music for them, would turn into 13 minutes on the film, so that was
24 electronic, that was 1997. I did another one in 1995, erm, so yes.
25

26 Any other things that have helped you apart from the electronics and the
27 computer technology?
28

29 Well, I mean you are going back much further really, learning studying modern
30 techniques of composition with (name) in the Conservatory of Milan completely
31 upgraded my technical level and competence to a national level, so in fact the
32 first thing that happened when I got back was writing those works there, because
33 I received two National Awards, and so therefore I got more confident because
34 of that, but it also, more important from my own point of view, is that it
35 broadened my vision, so I was no longer held in, which I thought I was before,
36 by the style which I couldn't actually see beyond. I had all these techniques
37 which took me to a totally different distance, exponential, exponential level, into
38 a different language of music.
39

40 Has that helped you to find your own voice?
41

42 Well I did have my own voice before I went fortunately, otherwise I might have
43 become a mini (name of teacher) you see, and this is where a lot of composers
44 come to grief, 'cause they study with a very impressive composer and then they
45 follow them.
46

47 But not you, I am particularly interested in you.
48

49 Yeah that's right, well that's true. I was advised personally not to go to study
50 with Messiaen in Paris, because my tutor at that point said you are too, quite
51 close to him already in your style and you'd only become a follower of his, so he
52 advised me against it and he was probably right.
53

54 You thought that was good advice?
55

56 Well I took his advice. I then studied as it turns out, I needed not to have I didn't
57 want Messiaen's techniques in the end. I wanted the techniques of Stockhausen

1 where the best person to study it in Europe was this chap (name) and he was the
2 top composer professor in that particular subject. I studied that with him, at a
3 masterclass for eight weeks and then at Milan for a year.

4
5 So having that technical input has helped you a lot too to develop technically
6 and to develop your own voice?

7
8 It has, it has actually extended my voice and it gave me a tremendous stimulus
9 and I think encouragement. He was very encouraging to have accepted me in the
10 first place and because he respected me as an artist when I went there, I went on
11 an international award, so he wasn't going to teach me the basics. He then let
12 me compose my pieces but he asked me to justify every note I wrote, which I
13 then did and after about six months he said "And I believe you, you know, you
14 have convinced me," but it took an awful long time. He did keep on telling me
15 to go back and compose the same thing again, and again week after week until I
16 actually convinced him that what I said I meant, and I could actually analytically
17 define. And from that moment onwards I would say I composed by analysis,
18 and that is I would say, a strength.

19
20 Do you find that in your day to day working, turning to that aspect of things that
21 help, that that analytical approach and other methodical, systematic things help
22 you? Is that the way you approach writing?

23
24 Very much.

25
26 Do you have a certain pattern of working?

27
28 Erm (2). It depends, I think I've a pattern of thinking when I am improvising,
29 which is an analytical set of er

30
31 So improvising is one of the ways in which you work?

32
33 Yes it is, because I set up a

34
35 At the keyboard?

36
37 Yes, I set a priority, as I sit down there I say, I am going to work out, I am going
38 to explore certain intervallic relationships, I actually say so, I am not trying to do
39 something that is dreamy and romantic, I don't do that. I say to myself today I
40 am going to look at minor thirds, seconds and tri-tones. I start exploring this and
41 I wander round slowly and after a while I start getting, seeing little patterns form
42 and sort of getting a sense of a rhythm as well in which these intervals move.

43
44 Does it generally start in that way?

45
46 Yes.

47
48 Would it start any other way, for instance from a melody or a rhythmic pattern
49 or a harmonic sequence or something?

50
51 It would tend to start off melodically and would tend to be either something that
52 either I'd explore on the keyboard now or I'd remembered from a while ago, an
53 earlier work which I now want to rethink. For example there's (name of piece),
54 which started off as a clarinet and piano piece back in 1967, which was based on
55 a, influenced by Miles Davis, a jazz trumpeter, and I am picking up his mood.
56 Now I picked up that particular little theme 30 years later virtually, yes more

1 than 30 years later, and I thought right I am going to actually do something
2 about this (name) for piano, so and then

3
4 So those kind of elements help you to work. What about pattern in your day? I
5 mean, would you say get up and start doing things at a particular time, in a
6 particular place as well as in a particular way?

7
8 No I don't.

9
10 Or do you find its going through your mind, you're working on it when you're
11 somewhere else as well rather than in front of a keyboard or screen?

12
13 Oh yes, I think actually it tends to be something artistic which usually then
14 stimulates my mind to work on, it then triggers something on something else I'm
15 working, so that if I've just read a biography of Mussorgsky and there are two or
16 three things about his way of working which triggers something off in my mind.
17 I said, "Right I think I should like to apply this treatment of folk song in future if
18 I actually have a folk dance I am going to work like Mussorgsky did, multi-
19 patterning and variations on a theme which is what he did, I'd like to try that."
20 So that's the kind of a stimulus which is educational. There's another kind
21 which is er like technical, and which I actually get an actual picture in my mind,
22 an actual little technical thing. I'd be listening, for example, I've just put in my
23 new piece for piano which is a very like arabesque piano decorative little
24 decorative sort of broken chord but with little notes dancing on top of it. I was
25 just thinking of that this morning.

26
27 So you can see it visually, the way you were depicting it to me?

28
29 That would be a starting point for a new piece, yes that is it and I could then
30 picture it, it is like visual, Then that just then goes into the same process of work
31 when I come to actually writing something. Erm. When I'm actually writing a
32 score erm it becomes clear to me what the process of development is, only on
33 the paper. It's not in my head it's on the paper, I see it actually coming out of the
34 paper, almost coming up out of the paper. I just see it like a, I can

35
36 And that helps?

37
38 Well it does, because if I write a melody for piano for example, I immediately
39 see from the actual patterns in the way that piano is written, "Goodness gracious
40 that will turn into a canon straight away" and I look and I say "Within one beat,
41 if I start that a beat later I'm going to have a canon and that is going to work"
42 and blow me down it does, but I couldn't see that if I didn't put it on paper. So a
43 lot happens on paper which, the actual development of these ideas comes
44 through.

45
46 So it's not so much where you are, but it's that process that goes on?

47
48 Yes, and it can happen at let's say, it can be stimulated by also going to an art
49 exhibition or

50
51 Or could it happen when you are sitting in the car or walking down the road or in
52 the supermarket anywhere else or other places, talking to people?

53
54 Not really. Very rarely. Yeah, I like, I think that to visit woods and woodlands
55 and so on is beneficial and it's sort of, but it's something that gets into the
56 system but it is not something which directly says "Oh that's a little tune, I'll
57 write it down."

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OK. Any other things that help you with your work? What about, do you work at a particular time, do you find particular times are better for you than others, or conditions, you know?

I tend to work intensively and sporadically, therefore because

When the mood takes you is this?

Well, when I have decided, when something is coming up, something is bubbling up. I've just done a bit of improvisation I have said "Right, " and I can see a whole sequence of things coming out of this, "Right I am going to focus on this and when I have time now I'm going to spend the whole next two or three weeks on it. Something is coming up, I can see it's coming, I am going to work this through".

Do you ever have, do you have deadlines?

I do, I do work to deadlines, I have just worked to a deadline.

How do you respond to those?

I have no problem with deadlines and I work very fast anyway because I say once I've decided on something I write quickly, I mean I can write a movement for an orchestra in one day.

Fantastic. Do you like deadlines?

I am quite happy to. I like deadlines because there is money involved, and you know there is money at the end of that process, because, not necessarily because there is money, but because that is part of the as it were, professional aspect of the work that you have a stimulating project to do, that you've got a performer who is interested in playing it. This is all incentive and you have therefore, you must give them sufficient time to practise it before a date which is coming up three months hence and they have got to play it and you say the sooner I have to get this finished, proof read and so on, by my colleagues, the better.

So you see it as an encouragement in certain ways, the fact that you are being commissioned and paid as some kind of

It's an additional thing but it's not essential, I mean there are times when you're writing a piano concerto when a deadline wouldn't be very helpful because I need to, you need to sort of consult with different colleagues and they would say "Well". And then it would occur to me that I need to put a cadenza in there and then I'd spend another month working on a cadenza, I'd need to probably spend another few months refining it, let it all settle, you know like a painting, you have to let it settle, you want to rework it and if I could have issued my piano concerto back in 2000 it would be, it would have been, I should have issued two concertos in 2000 that lasted about 35 minutes, I have waited two more years and I have issued three concertos lasting 65.

So deadlines can sometimes interfere with the composition process, let's call it, which operates to a different time?

Yeah, I think deadlines are OK if you have a short, a small project to do, which is realisable and which is focused and which is fine, but if you have got quite an expansive kind of project in which in a sense there is no particular limit and

1 which you obviously want to give yourself, you want to do a major work, then I
2 think you should, you do, you should be given time and you, I would have
3 thought with a concerto you normally would be given time to accomplish it.

4
5 Any other things that make it easier that we haven't covered?

6
7 Well, I think the location that I am writing in is very important, which is (name
8 of village) and in a tranquil street with very little traffic, a quiet sort of garden at
9 the back.

10
11 You have a music room there?

12
13 We do. I have a studio which I share with my wife erm and

14
15 Is she a musician too?

16
17 She is a musician, but she uses a, she often plays keyboard actually in the next
18 room whilst I am composing in my room. She has headphones on, so I can then
19 carry on but I don't have any problem with her being around, you know. I don't
20 have to have a big head in order to actually compose and you know "There is the
21 big composer sitting here in his lonely office" [laughing] as it were.

22
23 What about dealing with interruptions, distractions and that kind of thing?

24 We're perhaps moving on to things that make it harder, I wonder. You're talking
25 about being left alone.

26
27 Well, I get irritable about that sometimes but then I think that is a sort of classic
28 sort of archetype of what you'd expect composers to do, to get very irritable
29 when they are interrupted.

30
31 Does that apply to you?

32
33 It does occasionally but because I am married I have to be very careful and you
34 know, go along with the flow, and if dinner's up I should be thankful I've got
35 my dinner and be very pleased and thankful and grateful that I've had this dinner
36 made for me, abandon my crochets and whatever, and go down and have it.

37
38 Do you mind, you know, having to deal with the phone and post and whatever,
39 that sort of thing?

40
41 I like if possible. I am not personally interrupted much in that respect, because
42 I'm not someone who is constantly on the phone like a builder, taking orders all
43 the time and sort of, you know, dealing with all kinds of people who need your
44 services. I don't, I'm not in that position, so I do not get troubled much
45 personally. And therefore I can go through a whole day uninterrupted actually
46 and I will sometimes quite often work for four to five hours with hardly a break,
47 which is not particularly good because I ought to get some exercise.

48
49 Do you have a favourite time of day?

50
51 Um, well I tend to work in the mornings now and I tend not to do it in the
52 evenings, because I think evenings should be for relaxation and so forth and I try
53 to do it. Sometimes I get up quite early in the morning, from you know 8 o'clock
54 onwards, I'd be quite pleased if I'm actually starting to do some writing at 8
55 o'clock in the morning. But I say because it is sporadic, much of the time I
56 would say I am not doing creative things, I am doing administrative things to do
57 which the music, which is designing CDs, covers and texts.

1
2 You do all that yourself?
3
4 I do it all myself. I publish everything myself, I publish all the scores, I publish
5 the CDs.
6
7 Is that through choice?
8
9 It is partly, it is also a realistic situation, I said until I become a very well known
10 composer the scores I have to offer are not worth much to the publisher.
11
12 How do you market your CDs then?
13
14 Well, I send them to a variety of organisations like BBC Television Nature
15 Department, you know if it's a wildlife programme.
16
17 I am just asking because if you do that then you are in a unique position to know
18 who is buying them in a sense, aren't you? Who your audience is.
19
20 Well I think that I spend too much time on the ideas process and not enough on
21 networking and the distribution side at all. That is something which is not, I have
22 yet to develop because I have been much more in the process of creating
23 something and then making sure I get very, very high quality publications. This
24 is where I am at the moment. Distribution is coming along now, I've got a
25 whole list of people. I consult big reference books like Performing Arts Year
26 Book for Europe and the same one for Asia and America and I have got a whole
27 list of people I am going to send CDs to.
28
29 That's a process that is on-going with you?
30
31 It is on-going and I am not sure what the result will be. Advertising agencies, I
32 am starting to work with them now and I get sent the various sample CD of
33 different things to send to them and then I suggest if they might like a classical
34 style would appeal to high prestige clients, who are looking for a sort of stylish
35
36 And is that producing?
37
38 We have only just started that, because that's where we are at the moment.
39 We've just finished a big major project of doing three piano concertos, which
40 has taken four years and a symphony as well and we're only in a position now of
41 having a product to show. I mean we did bring out a CD of piano music two
42 years ago, made 200 copies and we've only got ten left. Quite a number have
43 been distributed by the pianist herself and erm I haven't really done much except
44 for in terms of, I was intending to put them into various music shops around
45 New Oxford Street and so on, but I didn't get round to that because I then got
46 very much involved in writing the piano concertos.
47
48 So that's another side of
49
50 It's important to be able to promote things yourself because I think. I don't feel
51 at all happy with being on a list of composers with Oxford University Press of
52 which you are one in a hundred of big numbers.
53
54 That's not something which was part of your training. Do you think it should be,
55 very briefly? It's something that people mention quite a lot to me, the issue of
56 having produced the work, getting it out there and getting people aware of it,
57 buying it.

1
2 No I think this is personally, and of course I have a probably not a particularly
3 practical view of this, but I am essentially a creative person and I'm not doing
4 sufficient, and I'm not interested in doing sufficient about the marketing side. So
5 the creative skills and performing skills, recording skills are all the most
6 important things and that's where I've put an awful lot of effort into.
7 Distribution, we are going to work on this now but I've spent most of my time
8 creating and getting things ready, and I think I am in a state of readiness now
9 with 17 major published works.

10
11 OK. Coming back to what makes it harder for you. Any things you would like
12 to mention there?
13

14 Well, I think in terms of what's harder, thing is I don't have much, that time to
15 do, this work.

16
17 You'd like to have more time?

18
19 I would like to have more time. I would like to be free of teaching to do this
20 work but of course I need to earn a living.

21
22 You teach what, how many?
23

24 I am teaching two days a week here, and I have been teaching four days a week
25 up until fairly recently, for about 20 years, four days a week, and there's no time
26 for composition in that, except for a bit in the summer holidays really and either
27 in the summer holidays I've either written a book or I've written a work of
28 music.

29
30 Do you approach writing, just very briefly, writing words as it were, in the same
31 way as writing music, because I haven't asked you whether you write words as
32 part of your music?
33

34 Writing words is a different thing and I write poetry and I write books. I've
35 written education books as well.
36

37 Do you approach it in the same way?
38

39 Erm, I approach it analytically yes, and um I work on a tremendous amount of
40 refinement as well, just as I would in music, very similar actually, very similar
41 techniques in essence, it's quality of mind which I apply just as much and just as
42 carefully.
43

44 And do you approach writing in a similar way, like you take elements like
45 intervals or something like that. Is there a counterpart to that in the way you
46 approach it?
47

48 No, but I do work in specific, erm erm, shall we say in historical frame, and I
49 take an historical frame, like I use the Ming dynasty of China and I work on, I
50 use a particular voice which is a voice of a female, a dancer in the Imperial
51 Court which I seem to be able to pick up now and again and run with it and then
52 I actually do a lot of research on the Ming dynasty, I have found out a lot about
53 the treasure feasts.
54

55 So you are just as systematic. The emphasis here is on the music, just as
56 systematic, just kind of characterise it in general terms. OK.

1
2 I get a lot of influences from other readings, again of Chinese poetry or
3 horoscopes, I research Chinese astrology, you know, Zen and Buddhism, and
4 things like this, a variety of other things, and they all feed in, but of course then
5 you have got to organise it all and a compositional process.
6
7 So a similar sort of problem then, a similar process. OK. Any other things that
8 make it harder for you? Teaching is obviously a major one, not having enough
9 time.
10
11 Not enough time and therefore because you are responsible for earning money,
12 therefore you must keep this going and erm erm, but I think the actual part of
13 the problem is one's own problem which is of self discipline and perfectionism,
14 which makes me delay a lot longer in releasing things and makes me much more
15 cautious that I would otherwise be.
16
17 I can see that you want to work and work at something and get it better. How
18 do you see when it is right? How do you know when to stop?
19
20 Well, I do test it out when I think it's nearly right, with other professionals. I
21 show it them and we actually run it through together and then we find, oh, paged
22 in the wrong order or something [laughs], and you know, or you say this is not
23 linked up to this section here because you haven't got an overlap, you know, you
24 must put the piano part through from the back there and link it up properly, so
25
26 So you talk to musical colleagues?
27
28 I do, I talk to composers, I talk to performers and I talk to theorists. I work with
29 about four different editors who I trust, and er one or two are excellent on the
30 copy editing side. I have a concert pianist I have worked with who's, who can
31 put me right anything that catches her eye if she is looking at, surveying a piano
32 score.
33
34 So you are prepared to listen to what they say?
35
36 Oh yes, not only will I listen, I definitely act. I have no problem with acting on
37 that and I've just done quite a revision on various things, they have said that is
38 practical, that is not practical, you must knock out the bottom note of each chord
39 there to make that playable, So I said fair enough, just do it, you don't lose
40 anything by that. Obviously I do consider whether that is going to actually make
41 a major effect, but in that case it didn't.
42
43 When that process is finished are you usually satisfied?
44
45 Well, I am still cautious, I am still ready for the next person to say you have got
46 another two mistakes in that score. I'm expecting that any day. I'm just
47 expecting that from a pianist who has got it at the moment, and they'll be very
48 happy to have found a couple of mistakes and they can point them out to me and
49 they'll enjoy doing that.
50
51 So that is part of the perfectionist in you?
52
53 That is why, because I do not want to give them that satisfaction and that's a
54 professional kind of attitude in a way, but you see you do not want to be found
55 out making any mistakes, but as we're only human we're making mistakes even
56 when we're doing a high level of work.
57

1 Beyond mistakes though, as far as expressing, what shall we call it, realising
2 your vision shall we call it that, or whatever you want to call it, the piece is as
3 good as you want it to be in that artistic sense, as opposed to the technical sense.
4

5 I should say correcting every error is the most important thing which delays me
6 and which stops me in my tracks and makes me, and sort of keeps me humble in
7 a sense. It's the message I got from my teacher (name) *corregi omni errori*, and
8 he meant that and he says that he meant that and you suffer for that, you do. That
9 is the worst thing actually as far as I am concerned.

10
11 So have there been times when there have remained errors and what's
12 happened?

13
14 Oh yes, in a performance, well the performers get annoyed and they say you
15 have to abandon one movement for a performance, which is drastic.

16
17 How do you cope with that then?

18
19 Well I don't find it very good. but I say, well I explain I can understand why I
20 did it because I was having difficulties concentrating at the time. I was having
21 other pressures on me which made it difficult for me to write out all the parts,
22 because you have to write out all the parts yourself when you are doing this by
23 hand and of course that job is no longer a problem for me because I can do
24 things on a computer and it can write all the parts out for me in an instant.

25
26 Any other difficulties?

27
28 Yes I would say concentration on the parts side of things. If you are writing for
29 orchestra, I haven't written for orchestra between 1979 and 1999. The practical
30 reason is that erm if you write out a score you have to write out all the parts as
31 well unless you have a copyist. I didn't have a copyist. For one thing it takes a
32 long time to write out a score and you've got a mental task then of writing it all
33 out again in a most boring situation, and tedious, of writing all those parts. I
34 just couldn't face that. That prevented me.

35
36 So having to copy all the parts and the time that it takes is a real downside?

37
38 It is a real downside, and that is a terribly tedious chore and it demands total
39 concentration. That is a real downer if, you know, and which you know in a
40 sense made me probably write chamber music for 20 years.

41
42 Really, it had that much effect on you?

43
44 Oh yes I stopped writing for orchestra in 1979 and I love writing for orchestra.
45 I'm back to writing for orchestra now, I have written with a vengeance now, I
46 have written three piano concertos, an organ concerto, two double harpsichord
47 concertos and a symphony in four years.

48
49 That's incredible. OK. Any other things that make it hard for you?

50
51 What makes it hard for me erm, erm.

52
53 You talked about the financial thing, keeping on teaching, you talked about parts
54 you talked about a number of, anything else that you haven't covered?

55
56 I suppose yes, the fact that erm one is working in isolation, and you are not in a
57 sense being asked to do lots of different things and therefore you tend to be

1 working on your own inner resources erm and this at times because you are not,
2 I do not get pressure from outside particularly much. If I was in demand I would
3 perhaps feel that particular pressure but I'm not that much in demand, so
4 therefore I can in a sense do my own thing, but on the other hand if I was maybe
5 asked to do more things for other people that would probably broaden my
6 outlook or broaden my repertoire of things that I am doing or broaden my
7 portfolio. I should probably broaden my portfolio beyond what I would call
8 perhaps a limited range of subject matter, within conservation or particular
9 themes which interest me.

10
11 What would you like to extend it to?

12
13 I mean probably erm er romantic film or that sort of thing, erm possibly
14 advertisements, possibly erm some electronics, more electronic music with
15 multimedia, mixed media, theatre.

16
17 So things that would bring you more in contact with people and break that
18 isolation?

19
20 Well, yes, I am in sort of two minds about that because I really like working on
21 my own and er producing a large work on my own.

22
23 What's the best thing about it for you?

24
25 The best thing about it is um the control, responsibility, the actual, enabling me
26 to actually draw together various ideas that I have wanted to put together before
27 or which I can now work out on my own, put together. So I have got plenty of
28 resources to work on, and to bring it together into a large work gives me the
29 most satisfaction at the moment. But possibly you know, if I was stirred into
30 writing, if I was approached to write another film, I would probably enjoy doing
31 that because although it would take me, I would probably only get about two
32 months notice to do it, it nevertheless would stretch me in certain ways, in
33 certain techniques and I like being stretched.

34
35 OK. So working predominantly on your own doesn't give you the opportunity
36 to stretch in those kind of ways that you would have if you were receiving more
37 commissions for films and things like that, but it brings the other advantages of
38 control and responsibility.

39
40 It does, control, exactly and let's just say you are able to therefore work on
41 themes which are very important to you in terms of what you would like to say
42 to people, which is you know. I want to have a conservation theme, that is a
43 very strong theme, which I believe in and I can enjoy working out aesthetically
44 and er you know there is plenty of scope there.

45
46 Any other things on the negative side?

47
48 Well, I mean my health is always quite difficult, you know, because I am
49 disabled and therefore I have had a very difficult winter. Instead of being able to
50 go out and promote the CD I've done, I've just had to keep warm and get
51 physiotherapy and so on. It's always been, for the last 35 years I've had, you
52 know, its probably, erm I try and say it doesn't really affect me but it has sort of
53 probably slowed me down in terms of the actual number of works I've produced
54 or possibly erm the number of ways in which I can actually network with people
55 has been stopped because the energy is

56
57 Has your health been sort of consistent or does it fluctuate?

1
2 It tends to fluctuate and goes quite a low level in the wintertime.
3
4 So it is seasonal?
5
6 Yes I just have to survive the wintertime in which I cannot do much more than
7 teach and rest and that is it.
8
9 How does that make you feel?
10
11 Well I mean it's just er something that, you look forward to the spring really and
12 it is frustrating of course.
13
14 Have you a way of accepting it, coping with it?
15
16 Well I have been able to produce a very fine piano piece in this last couple of
17 months, even when I've been feeling very poorly, so it doesn't actually affect the
18 quality of work I produce, it doesn't affect that.
19
20 It affects when you are able to work?
21
22 It affects when I am able to work. Some days I can't do it but when I do I can
23 work.
24
25 Are you in pain, great pain?
26
27 Yes not a pain, discomfort, a lot of pain in my back and so forth and I get the
28 infra-red lamp out and all this you know, and I have to think about going to see
29 the acupuncturist and I just can't afford these things much
30
31 Have you had those disabilities since you started writing?
32
33 More or less, since I was about 18, yes 18 was when I started. I started
34 composing when I was 15, at 18 I had this problem.
35
36 Do you think it has affected your work in any way, apart from when and how
37 you have been able to approach it?
38
39 No, actually it's only made me more and more sort of, in the fact that I've lost,
40 can't use my hands since 1985, it's only made me more annoyed rather than
41 anything else. It just stirred me into action, I said right, just for that I shall write
42 a piano concerto.
43
44 You've seen it as a challenge to be to overcome?
45
46 I just say "Right, sod that", excuse my French, "I'm going to write a piano
47 concerto just for that, because I am not going to put up with that". Because I
48 know I have been a very good pianist, the fact I can't be a concert pianist any
49 more, just for that I shall write a very difficult concert piano work, which I have
50 just done for a commission and I am really pleased I have done something as
51 difficult as Transcendental Studies by Liszt for a commission, which is a
52 beautiful looking work and it is as difficult as Franz Liszt. It is playable, I've
53 checked it out with my pianist [laughs], with my concert pianist who works with
54 me quite often.
55

1 That's amazing! There is a view isn't there that overcoming difficulties is very
2 important in the creative process. Is that something that you hold in your own
3 work?
4

5 Oh I think so. I don't sort of, I sort of try and as it were disregard these
6 problems, health problems, but of course, I mean I'm telling you. It stops me
7 some days definitely and it slows me down overall, and er I'm usually better in
8 the summe. But the things that really got me in the early years was the fact
9 between 1973 and 1979 I was freelance. At that time, I was supported by my
10 father really most of the time, who wasn't a well-off man, I must admit, was the
11 fact that I had this very irregular income and that eventually did affect my work.
12 Irregular income, of having six months of scholarship, international scholarship
13 and then six months, on you know, on supplementary benefit or something is
14 very, very disheartening.
15

16 How do you manage in feast and famine like that?
17

18 Well you know you, obviously to a certain extent you are feeling that you've got
19 these marvellous techniques that you have just learnt, therefore you've got a lot
20 of resources to produce good music, but I felt towards the end of that time that
21 this rollercoaster, of having, a sort of a marvellous day out and the concert and
22 so forth and then the next day starting from square one and no money, I didn't
23 think there was much fun in that and actually I felt
24

25 How did you actually cope with that now and then in the mean times?
26

27 Well what I say is "I must do something about it and make sure erm". I for
28 example get an operation to get a new hip, and the doctor said, I said "I can't get
29 a job. People won't give me a job, I'm too disabled. Give me a new hip." And he
30 said "I'll give you a new hip and then you can go and get a job" and six months
31 later I got a full time job. My solution to that was go and earn some money as a
32 teacher, that was my solution to the problem. It took six months to do but I felt a
33 lot, lot better for having that financial independence because I felt right I have
34 got a stability here, because I felt it was throwing me emotionally.
35

36 Up and down on a rollercoaster?
37

38 Yeah, if you don't have an income some days for six months and then there is
39 nothing, then you are not looking forward to that next six months.
40

41 How did it affect you emotionally?
42

43 Well I think erm it made me erm feel as if it was rather a vicious cycle being
44 disabled, not able to get a job.
45

46 You felt trapped?
47

48 You felt trapped, yeah. You've got to somehow get out of the cycle because you
49 know clearly erm unless you make a big breakthrough with some major work or
50 other, erm even then you know you must have some regular income.
51

52 And did you manage to get out of the cycle?
53

54 I got a regular income base. Yes I did I got out of the cycle because I got erm.
55 Eventually from 1976 they couldn't give me an operation then because the
56 research wasn't good enough for the operation. By 1979 the research was good
57 enough, the doctor gave me, this surgeon went ahead, had a left hip, totally

1 changed my walking and within six months I had a full time job and then from
2 early 1990 through the present time I have worked, and earned a reasonable
3 income and that gave me a lot more confidence and I felt it as being very
4 important.

5
6 That's good. I am really glad that they were able to do that but there was a
7 period when it was out of your control in medical hands, which you weren't able
8 to do very much about, that side of it. How did you cope then?

9
10 Well yes 1976 – 9, it was, there were let's say good times and bad times in that
11 and therefore the good times were sort of, you can say "Well yes I know I am,
12 can do it, I know I'm going to be good at this particular kind of skill, but at this
13 moment things are not going well."

14
15 So belief in your own abilities helped you through?

16
17 Oh yes definitely you have to have belief. You know you've been given
18 recognition at a national, international level, there must be something good even
19 though you're not getting any money to show for it, and even if your health is
20 not that good and all this, so because you are not well enough to actually do a
21 job you nevertheless think, "Well hopefully there will be an operation coming up
22 shortly which will help me" erm and another thing is that I am fully qualified to
23 do a teaching job when that happens. But there were some bleak times. Early
24 1979 was bleak whilst you know, there was no commissions, I had a couple of
25 commissions but they were small amounts of money and then people turning me
26 down for jobs because they say you're not walking well enough, I can't give you
27 a job.

28
29 Really.

30
31 Oh yeah, in Liverpool and Birmingham that happened, fully qualified but you
32 know you can't walk well enough. They said you wouldn't pass our medical.
33 And in fact I went for a medical with the Inner London Education Authority and
34 they said we're not giving it you, but we'll give you it once you get your hip
35 done. Fortunately, and I told my surgeon this, and he said, "Right, we'll give
36 you a new hip, it's all right now, we'll give you it." So it worked out all right in
37 the end, but you know if you looked at my sort of journal for 1978/79 there is
38 quite a sort of a bleak journal there as far as that goes. It looks quite as though I
39 was having quite a hard time, but since 1980 I've worked consistently either full
40 time or so forth as a teacher and I've been able to do some either some chamber
41 music or electronic music for film.

42
43 So you've made a real triumph over adversity in that sense. Do you think what
44 you have had to suffer has affected the music at all, the sort of music you have
45 written?

46
47 Well actually I do see it as very important that, when people listen to my music
48 they have absolutely no clue whatever that I was disabled at all and they would
49 particularly think that I was very happy and had marvellous hands, so I actually
50 go on the other side of the pendulum and I make sure that my music is really
51 difficult to play partly because I'm..

52
53 Deliberately?

54
55 Deliberately.

56
57 OK

1
2 Because erm in any case I am again a free spirit and I have got these techniques
3 and I can do it, and I know pianists who can actually play this stuff, and who do
4 and I am not going to sort of hold back, I am going to write to the edge of my
5 ability here and the people who are going to play this are going to have to play it
6 right at the edge as well.

7
8 So it has affected it in that way, but in any other ways?

9
10 Yes, I mean, sometimes it is virtuoso style and other times though, it is more joie
11 de vivre, which again is something which counters any image they'd have of an
12 arthritic person, who'd be a bit sort of dour and a miserable sort of person. I'll
13 say right, this is going to be jolly. That's another thing I do, actually, although I
14 don't actually set out to be jolly particularly. I would say that nevertheless the
15 music that you'd hear on these piano concertos for example, is full of joie de
16 vivre and you know, and partly inspired by living in a nice location. I've been
17 lucky to live in a nice location, with a nice companion, and all these things
18 which probably you wouldn't be expecting a disabled person to be doing, or
19 have these extra bonuses which I don't underestimate, of being in a wonderful
20 location out in the Chiltern Hills.

21
22 You refer a lot to the sort of, a view of a disabled person. Is it something that
23 informs your thinking a lot?

24
25 Well, I mean I have to er

26
27 Is it something that other people have, you know, the way you have been treated
28 or what?

29
30 No, I just think that probably artists are treated badly anyway, I mean I know
31 sufficiently about the history of classical music to know that most people,
32 including Bach and Mozart, had a very rough time one way or another.

33
34 And you have?

35
36 No, I think I have, well I've had some rough times and there are certain
37 organisations, who will remain nameless, who seem to have been able to sort of
38 stop my work from being put on, you know, and stuff.

39
40 What sort of thing are you talking about?

41
42 Well, radio, you have these panels who tend to put on the same people all the
43 time and why is it if you are someone who has got national recognition,

44
45 A bit of jobs for the boys?

46
47 Well it's a cosy club, absolutely cosy and it's who you know. I said I have never
48 operated on that principle and I have, fortunately some recognition has been
49 better coming from abroad than from here.

50
51 You haven't felt discriminated against, let's call it?

52
53 I don't know whether, you see I can feel these things, I do feel these things but I
54 don't say them, because I say I'm not sure, because these cosy clubs can be
55 operating in a very secretive manner and I don't know how they operate and
56 that's the whole point. They've got the power and they make sure that they
57 themselves and their friends get put on and you don't.

1
2 And your answer to it is to be self-sufficient?

3
4 Yes I am, I make sure therefore that I am in control, I have my own designs and
5 my own production, erm best artists and the interpretation of the work is done
6 the way I want it. It's coming out the way I want it and I think the music will
7 stand up for itself.

8
9 I just, OK.

10
11 Well I think this aspect that we've just touched on here is something that's a bete
12 noir for not just for me but for many, many composers that

13
14 The old boy's club.

15
16 That national level composers like me are quite often sidelined or refused, we
17 are like the French Impressionists were a hundred years ago where they were
18 called les refusees and they set up their own stuff, they set up their own market
19 and I think this is the way I am going myself.

20
21 You and other composers?

22
23 Other artists and composers, I mean I have my own website, (name), in which I
24 include quite a number of colleagues, who again I would say are either people
25 living in a garret or who have evidence of a high level of skill and who I would
26 like to assist and promote. I am going to put in a gallery of an artist, his work is
27 in a gallery on the net, and I am going to put an access to his gallery from my
28 website so people can see what he's got. I hope to help him out, you know, and
29 people like that and I'd like to help another chap who writes operas and who for
30 some reason because he wrote music for black people, he got his work played
31 abroad but you could not get a black set of people together in this country.

32
33 How do you mean music for black people?

34
35 I mean like this is called The Kingdom based on the story of Haiti and the
36 revolutions in Haiti.

37
38 You mean black characters?

39
40 Black people, like Negroes, you know and it was all a Negro cast but the British
41 music establishment won't stand for that, not the classical music establishment,
42 the pop music establishment was different, they wouldn't mind, and they have
43 Amogu and whatever it is down in the West End now, they don't have a problem
44 with that.

45
46 So you see that as being as being endemic in that classical world, elitism or
47 whatever you call it?

48
49 Elitism, conservatism, it's chronic in this country, but it's not only chronic in
50 this country, it's chronic in France, it's chronic in Germany.

51
52 Do you see that as a problem for all those composers and others that are outside
53 that club?

54
55 Outside the club, yes, because I've studied abroad in Sienna, Florence and
56 Milan, and I've not been in the Royal Academy, Royal College, Oxford or
57 Cambridge and that's where the people are coming from, and that is where the

1 network is, it thrives. But it has not just happened to me, it goes back ages, I
2 mean people like William Walton suffered in his time.
3
4 So it hasn't changed?
5
6 But he suffered, he said it was because he was the only one who wasn't gay.
7 You can always find some reason for it.
8
9 So there is always a clique or an elite in charge of the resources and the
10 opportunities
11
12 That's right, it seems to be.
13
14 Even if they are excluding different sets of people?
15
16 But on the other hand these people are as it were sort of, thick as thieves among
17 themselves but they've got their own little rivalries and they are also quite
18 unhappy anyway, and as far as I can see probably this particular radio station I
19 am thinking of is a sort of graveyard for academics. In fact I rather hope it is.
20 [laughs]
21
22 So your theory is you are not going to join them so you are going to beat them?
23
24 Well, it's a bit like Charles Ives, was he accepted by the American
25 establishment? No way, but he actually had a nervous breakdown as a result of
26 that.
27
28 He couldn't give up the day job!
29
30 Well, he was a millionaire, but he nevertheless suffered a nervous breakdown
31 from not being accepted. And I accept there is this aside there, a tension which is
32 inevitably there on a daily basis for me, which you are bringing out now which I
33 agree, there is that which is this sense of injustice at the highest level because
34 you know you have been getting all these national awards, international awards
35 and they can't play your music. Well, OK, so nevertheless, what do I do? I get
36 many performances in London, and I will get performances abroad. I will do
37 other things and eventually, you know, it will get accepted, but in the meantime
38 the Saudi areas of this world triumph and there is the wonderful film Amadeus
39 which illustrated that and it still absolutely applies today. I am not saying that all
40 the people are not talented who are involved here, but it is just possible that a
41 number of national level composers are being denied, by what is supposed to be
42 a national service radio. That to me is not being er fair to the people of this
43 country who are entitled to listen to the best that this country has to offer, erm
44 so it does mean that people like myself have been malingering in sort of, you
45 know, educational establishments earning a living this way, instead of being, as
46 it were, funded at a high level to produce big works and have a fairly easier life
47 financially. On the other hand, you may say so many composers have done
48 better as a result of having to struggle and most of the history of music tells you
49 that is the case, and it hasn't actually phased them, either Mozart or Beethoven,
50 they have been in the most terrible financial situation and they produced the
51 most beautiful music. I have been quite ill or have not been particularly well off
52 or anything like that and I have produced some really beautiful music now, and
53 this is a kind of paradox and erm I think that maybe because something is mind
54 over matter or whatever it is or mind over commercial circumstances or you
55 know, you have ...
56
57 Mind over adversity or whatever.

1
2 Whatever, and also mind against the establishment as well possibly. I am not
3 particularly against the establishment, because I have been accepted by certain
4 parts of it. I have always had recognition, but certain parts of it cannot recognise
5 my work or hasn't been able to so far. I shall still be polite and send them stuff
6 but I am under no illusions about what they are like, but I think therefore you
7 have to think positive and think, well I have my very good people who I love to
8 write for and who are always very, very considerate to my work. You have got
9 to think of the positive side of the people like that.

10
11 Coming from there, I would like to talk about the impact the composing has on
12 your life. You have been talking about having fulfilling and constructive and
13 helpful relationships with fellow musicians, either fellow composers or people
14 performing your works. What about how being a composer has affected your
15 personal life and your social life?

16
17 All right. Well, briefly from, I should say, 1980, 1983 when I actually moved
18 into my own flat, my father was living with me, but anyway, let's say he was a
19 fairly poorly man but through till about 1993, about ten years, I was quite
20 content to be on my own, work on my own and I spent all my summer holidays
21 working on my own, free from people, where I would normally be working with
22 them as a teacher. But I think from 1993 onwards I thought this composition is
23 not enough, music isn't enough, I need a companion and I need an emotional life
24 as well as an artistic one.

25
26 Do you think being, leading the life of a composer is a solitary pursuit in certain
27 ways?

28
29 It is a solitary one, absolutely, and I erm produced an enormous amount because
30 of that. It hasn't phased me up until a certain point then you say, you realise it is
31 not enough. It took me until I was about 43 to recognise that it wasn't going to
32 be enough. Then I realised well, I think a partnership is in order here and music
33 is no longer enough.

34
35 Did you find you had a social life outside music over that period?

36
37 Hardly at all, I mean I had my teaching and my family, they were quite
38 interesting, my sister and my father and my favourite aunt.

39
40 Was it a supportive family of your music?

41
42 Yes, very supportive, very supportive, but of course I am earning a living so they
43 do not have to support me financially. You know but supporting me

44
45 Encouraging you?

46
47 Encouraging me. They'd come along to a little bit of my

48
49 Understanding what it's like for you?

50
51 They would come along to my event and so forth or whatever but I have to
52 understand them and you know it's all kind of give and take and we are all on an
53 equal level.

54
55 OK. So you decided it wasn't enough and you needed a partner?

56

1 Definitely not enough, definitely needed a companion. I entered an executive
2 dating agency.
3
4 Did you?
5
6 Oh yes, and that's the way I found my wife.
7
8 Right, fantastic.
9
10 But I think because I am a busy person, either teaching or doing my own writing,
11 I am not actually, I cannot think of any particular places in London that I can go
12 to where I actually meet people. Pubs, no, most people you meet in pubs are not
13 that level of education anyway, wine bars – well they are people usually in
14 couples in any case, and where are you going to go, a church? I joined a church,
15 I tried that. That is a social way of doing it, I did try that. I joined a choir and I
16 found I was co-opted onto various committees, but I don't think that was
17 particularly, you know, that wasn't my motive for going in there wasn't
18 probably correct, I wasn't necessarily particularly believing what they were
19 saying, but socially I thought it would help me a bit, because I realised I had
20 driven myself into a state of isolation, through my composing undoubtedly, and
21 writing. I either wrote books exclusively in the summer and wasn't meeting
22 people. An occasional composer for a drink or something but it didn't phase me
23 up to a set point, but then when it does hit you.
24
25 When you were looking for companionship, how important was it that that
26 person should understand what it was like being a composer, particular needs if
27 you like or?
28
29 I think that was so much the important thing, because I realised that that
30 particular aspect of my life was actually not constructive in terms socially, it
31 wasn't constructive socially, therefore I have to go out beyond being a composer
32 to be somebody else.
33
34 So it wasn't of particular interest to you to have somebody who was in music or
35 musical?
36
37 No, but somebody who could actually tolerate classical music I think, that is
38 what actually I found, because this person happened to have given up pop music
39 five or six years earlier and started listening to classical music and this and that
40 on a general basis, she wasn't a musician.
41
42 How does it work in terms of you know, you seeing being a classical composer
43 is something very antithetical to being social and something which is separate?
44
45 I think it is, I do feel quite sort of irritable when I get interrupted and so forth. I
46 can see it as being in a sort of rather archetypal sense, antisocial, but that's what
47 I would call a caricature. It's not strictly so because you have to work with
48 people when you are actually having works performed, and you're writing for
49 performers.
50
51 As far as home life is concerned, you have to make adaptations.
52
53 Yes. You have to put it in perspective, it is no longer, or it is not the prime thing.
54 The prime thing is your relationship with the person who is your companion and
55 to be considerate for them
56
57 A shift in priorities

1
2 Yes and for that reason in some ways the music then becomes more of an er m er
3 enhancement of life rather than a necessity, or the necessity has kind of moved
4 into the emotional sphere and your music has become an enhancement on top.
5 Therefore music has sort of shifted from a central focus to the side and the home
6 and that sort of
7
8 What effect has that shift had on the music or on you?
9
10 Well, I have become much more prolific actually.
11
12 Really?
13
14 Oh yeah. I haven't actually done less.
15
16 How do you account for that then?
17
18 Partly because I have lessened my time teaching, my wife said "You should give
19 up some of your teaching". So instead of doing four days a week, I am now
20 doing two. She helps support me a bit, so supporting me financially actually
21 liberates me and she says "This is important because you are doing good work."
22
23 So that encouragement. I just wondered when you were saying from it being the
24 main priority it shifted more to the
25
26 Yes, obviously in actual in terms of days I spend on it, I am actually spending
27 more days on it, but in terms of the actual perspective I have, you know.
28
29 Because that is actually a paradox in itself, isn't it? That change.
30
31 I produced more work in the last seven years since I have been married than I
32 have in the past twenty years I would have thought.
33
34 What do you put it down to then?
35
36 Being contented, contented within a partnership because you are no longer going
37 to bed at night in a certain sense of solitariness, and you have a sort of a sense of
38 warmth, an emotional warmth and somebody which you can talk to and relate to
39 and so on and I think this is sort of liberating, it is a liberating effect this sort of
40 thing and
41
42 Is it all good or does that have a downside too?
43
44 Well it does, yes it can be, erm, you have a downside to it. Well I think the good
45 sides definitely are the most important parts of it erm and the fact of being part
46 of the real world, you have to go out shopping, you have to do jobs and help this
47 person out.
48
49 You give up a certain freedom, which I know you value which you had.
50
51 Well the freedom had become a itself a prison, that's the problem, and therefore
52 you've released yourself from the prison but you can then go back to your music
53 when you have the time, and I know I work very fast when I do get the time.
54
55 And added responsibilities.
56

1 I have added responsibilities, yes but that's fine because erm I also conduct a
2 choir now as well and all this sort of thing. But the main thing is that you have
3 this sort of sense of er well-being which has I think made an entire difference
4 from being on my own, feeling I needed a companion and having a companion
5 seemed to sort that problem out and actually. But then of course you have to be
6 attentive to that companion, there's no doubt about it and but then you feel, but I
7 was just ringing up at about 8 o'clock this morning when I arrived at work, and
8 she is up in Scarborough or something erm because she'd probably appreciate a
9 call. But I'm not doing that because I have to, but I think I'd be like that myself
10 if I was up there, I'd like a call from my partner. You know it's that kind of
11 thing. She fortunately is a very particular person, a particularly different unusual
12 person for me, with whom, I have, although we are totally different ends of the
13 political spectrum, we get on extremely well and have hardly had an argument
14 from day one. And I think it's because she seems to have the same situation of
15 being too much on her own for many years, and then finally say OK then you
16 can help each other out and then separate for a little bit, and you do your own,
17 she does her writing and I do my music then you come back, but then on a daily
18 basis you have got a sort of nice.

19
20 Do you think having someone who is artistic helps?

21
22 Not especially, no, she is not particularly artistic but she is becoming artistic.

23
24 Do you find yourself talking about the process of composition?

25
26 Only recently, when she has understood more about it, but she has been teaching
27 herself to read music and to play music and so on, so she can start to compose
28 music as well.

29
30 Really. How do you feel about that?

31
32 I think it is amusing, you know, because she is quite a strong personality and
33 wouldn't do something if she didn't want to do it. I don't teach her, she just
34 helps herself. Fortunately she has found music to be very helpful and relaxing so
35 she is finding her own sort of way in music, separate from me and that's fine.

36
37 What about the effect it has on your social life now?

38
39 Well, I think I have a social life, now because weekends we see friends whereas
40 my weekend before

41
42 Friends you have made together?

43
44 Well you know, or her friends will come over or one of my odd composer chaps
45 comes along.

46
47 So are they a mixture, do you have friends outside music?

48
49 Absolutely, mostly, mostly outside music, I mean my best friend is a composer,
50 but other friends, you know, he is actually a musician but he is also a
51 psychologist, you know, and I suppose we have interests in common like jazz
52 and things like that but not necessarily playing interests but listening interests.
53 Another pal of mine from schooldays, you know he likes listening to jazz and
54 we'll talk about that and my wife likes talking about football, so she noses into
55 that and I sort of again support her a bit in that and you know and our common
56 interests were cricket and cats not music when we met and I think that's fine
57 because these are also important, you know.

1
2 And any activities outside music or other music related activities? You've
3 mentioned working for the church.

4
5 Well, I have been a series editor for an academic publisher for six years. That's
6 probably given up now because the publisher has changed, I mean bought out,
7 but I worked for about six years as an editor in performing arts, which was very
8 interesting but I didn't get hardly any money, I got a free lunch now and again.
9 But that was interesting.

10
11 Kudos.

12
13 You know academics are like that, no money in it. [laughs]

14
15 Just the kudos.

16
17 Just the kudos and your name in the front of the book, and I've got that on a few
18 of the books, but that was just a little experience, I am not totally impressed by
19 that actually, it was quite interesting. What is interesting erm is the actual
20 evolution of the creative ideas I am getting at the moment, both in writing and in
21 music, I'm beginning to write children's stories which I have never written
22 before and erm you know, moving forward with a whole range of what I call
23 virtuoso piano pieces.

24
25 So having the companionship, the relationship has made a huge difference.

26
27 A big difference, absolutely, it has made all the difference.

28
29 Practically.

30
31 Yes, but it only made the difference when I actually felt I needed that difference.
32 Up until then I was still writing quite prolifically anyway, but at the point where
33 I needed it, then it took me about a year and a half, two years to find it, then I
34 found that that was certainly then lifted me up again and raised my spirit and I
35 have written

36
37 How did you cope then during that the period when you were looking but hadn't
38 yet found somebody?

39
40 Well, I think it is very difficult, you know, because you realise there are so many
41 people in London like that. In fact 40% are single and you are just one of so
42 many and so I didn't feel on my own in that respect, but I did feel, yes I have got
43 to find a solution to this problem, but how to find that solution, so I said well a
44 dating agency is the only answer because I do not have a social life.

45
46 Was it easy to find your partner through them?

47
48 This particular one was quite good, I was just lucky. But one or two other
49 agencies...

50
51 And how was it for you, presenting yourself to people?

52
53 Well, a bit difficult I think because they are not expecting to meet a disabled
54 person but they hear someone intelligent and educated over the phone, so that's
55 a good start, then they find out you are interested in cats and cricket, so that
56 takes away a bit of the problem that you've got.

1 I'm asking because obviously you didn't come across, coming back to my
2 original question, you know I'm a composer that kind of thing?
3
4 No, I think we were interested in cats and cricket and composition was a bit of,
5 sort of on the side, as it were, probably on the side for me at the time because I
6 wasn't particularly happy with composition at that time, because I thought well
7 It's not doing me any favours at the minute so because it's just driving me into
8
9 Had you considered at any point not continuing with it?
10
11 Well I hadn't given up composing, but I've done writing instead. Certainly when
12 my father died I couldn't compose. You need a lot of concentration and you
13 need to be in the frame of mind, but I had actually returned to composition in
14 some way or another after about two years.
15
16 So the more content, the more you have a sense of well-being the easier it has
17 been for you to return to music?
18
19 Well yes it has and also probably it's a combination of other things, of the
20 marvellous techniques I have got and with moving towards a mainstream style
21 which is going to be more accessible and have a broad appeal, and then also
22 having a location where I've got some woodland around me and things like that.
23
24 No, I accept that I was just thinking psychologically because some people seem
25 to find that they produce more when they are very unhappy, others it works
26 when they have a sense of well being.
27
28 Well I've written, I had one of my most productive years in 1968 when I first...
29 when I was sort of, when I was writing my first major works and I was virtually
30 house bound for about nine months and I wrote, I had my most, all my ideas
31 seemed to come together. I had been improvising for about three years I came
32 out with a piano sonata and then shortly after a string quartet and shortly after
33 that a ballet, that when I was nineteen and at the same time I came up with two
34 books in the same year, wrote the first drafts of two books and I virtually could
35 hardly get out of the house. Fortunately I was in a positive frame of mind
36 because I was going to go to university that year and fortunately I had some
37 acupuncture which helped me on my way. But I was seriously ill most of that
38 time and could hardly get out of the house. But actually I think because of that
39 not being able to get around therefore one of the stories I wrote was a journey
40 right through the universe as far as I could possibly go, where no one could
41 possibly go in any case. So I said right, I shall go further than anybody. Just for
42 that and I shall go not only through the universe, I shall go right to the end of it
43 and get beyond that and see what happens and you've got to read the book to
44 find out. [laughs]
45
46 Yes. I'd like to. We're coming towards the end of the time now. As you know
47 I work with musicians. Do you think there is anything as a therapist you think
48 that I should be made aware of know that I may not know that you think is
49 important, for my work, from your own experience?
50
51 Well I think that its under tensions and it's sort of anger which is prevalent in
52 many composers of national level who are - and indeed musicians of national
53 level - who are, many of them, I mean I'm just one of many, who do not think
54 they are given the recognitions that they are due, and that they will not tell you
55 much about, but I'd say that is something that is a daily basis in their mind.
56
57 Do for you, too?

1
2 Yes it's there, but I've actually overcome it like I overcome everything else.
3
4 By?
5
6 By refining, getting my scores even better, making me even more of a
7 perfectionist about my work so that people can't find fault in it and this of course
8 takes a very long time. The result is I am going to have work, which is very high
9 level work which can't be criticised which can't be sort of downgraded or
10 demoted as it were. Its going to be there standing for itself in the end. Hopefully
11 sooner or later, sooner rather than later it will get recognised.
12
13 The only other thing I think I haven't asked you about is, on a day to day level,
14 quite a number of composers I have spoken to have said they have things like
15 relaxation or certain ways they have of unwinding. Do you have any particular
16 things you do when things are getting tough that help you?
17
18 I often go for a walk, yes a walk is very nice, because I am in a very pleasant
19 scenario, a little village I walk around and I go to our local pub etc and it is very
20 pleasant and then we go for walks, my wife and I, up in the Chilterns you know,
21 that is very therapeutic.
22
23 Anything else? Meditation, yoga anything at all?
24
25 No, meditation I don't believe in, my meditation is my composition.
26
27 Yes, anything else you might do that helps you?
28
29 No I believe even, well I like to listen to jazz and I basically read about other
30 composers, lives of composers is one of my favourite pastimes actually and I
31 learn quite a lot that way, but also I find it very enjoyable and I love to, the other
32 thing...
33
34 Do you find it helpful?
35
36 Yes, and then I love to visit places where they have been on holiday, like the
37 Austrian Alps, is one of the best. My most favourite thing to do is to visit the
38 Austrian Alps, you know the lakeland above Salzburg.
39
40 Yes, so you feel a particular, that you are drawn towards that landscape.
41
42 Oh very much, yes absolutely, I love mountains and lakes, mountain and lake
43 landscapes. We went to the Rocky Mountains a couple of years ago and I wrote
44 a couple of pieces.
45
46 So travel helps you too?
47
48 Travel, and I can hardly afford it really but I do enjoy mountains and lakes if I
49 can, Lake Como, Lake Garda, Austrian Alps, the Rocky Mountains, those are
50 soothing.
51
52 Any other particular daily things type of things that you have?
53
54 Cats. I talk to our cats, exactly. And my wife is very very easy to talk to and she
55 finds me easy to talk to and she and I both kind of find each other helpful, as
56 people, someone who is sympathetic who can be there for them. So we both find
57 each other helpful in that respect and then I talk to my sister Rosie is very very

1 good and my aunt as well who is like a surrogate mum for me. So these are my
2 family, who I talk to with most. And of course I have got my best chum, Robert
3 who is another composer and we often have an hour's talk on the phone and
4 meet up for an occasional drink or meal in town, you know, and have done for
5 many years. And so on with one or two other friends, the same. I had a
6 marvellous day out on Monday with a friend who is an ex colleague here
7 actually, who has had to take early retirement, but he is not a musician at all.
8 But he is a very very nice friendly chap and he has got things that he likes to talk
9 about, like redecorating houses and things like that and its just nice to talk about
10 something totally different.

11
12 That's right. And he is a total character. I am sorry, it's five past so we will
13 have to stop very, very soon. Yes, I am just intrigued by your reading about
14 other composers, what that is about.

15
16 Is that important to you?

17
18 It's very important to me, yes very important to me.

19
20 Can you say a bit more about that?

21
22 Very briefly I'll just say I realised through the, I'm going to say the word
23 struggles, the struggles of these composers that you are not alone in these
24 struggles. This is very important to understand, therefore it doesn't phase me, or
25 it does not surprise me the establishment, or some parts of the establishment,
26 will never recognise or will not want to recognise what you are doing, because
27 these people encountered the same thing and they are probably twice as good as
28 you. So the point is, that they are going to give you encouragement because they
29 had their marvellous successes as well, but they often did not live a long life and
30 through ill health, and the fact that they didn't have a National Health Service or
31 good treatments and things like that, so that's sad. But I, I find it is helpful to
32 think, well these guys can just produce some perfectly wonderful music without
33 having either material support or necessarily health, and I say this is precisely
34 how I feel. This backs up exactly what I feel and erm it is perfectly true, it's true
35 of them, it's true of me and you know, you learn from history in a good way.
36 Because you say right, you know Beethoven was very deaf and he said "Right,
37 am I going to commit suicide or am I going to carry on?", so he carried on and I
38 thought to a similar extent about my hands becoming very disabled in the mid
39 80s and so I thought I just won't be able to write music for pianos any more and
40 in 1994 I started not only writing, but playing some very very difficult piano
41 music and since then I have written three piano concertos which I mean, this
42 comes from reading something like that, that is what it comes from.

43
44 So it's an inspiration and a consolation and a vindication too?

45
46 That's right. Yes. But is also says you can do it. If you're someone like
47 Beethoven and you've got the techniques, you can do it. You have got the inner
48 ear to do it and I know I can actually compose from my inner ear as well,
49 without the use of a piano and I've done that. When I've not had an actual piano,
50 I've done that, I've written without a piano.

51
52 That's what I was asking you about earlier.

53
54 All the year in Milan I had no access to a piano, I had no money for the piano. I
55 thought I was going to have a piano but they hadn't one and I wrote in the
56 library and I wrote entirely from my head. And it didn't seem to have phased

- 1 me particularly, so these things you can learn to do and therefore you get more
- 2 skills, you know.
- 3
- 4 OK, thank you, right.

Transcript 4:

James

1 How would you describe yourself as a musician?
2
3 As a musician?
4
5 Yes
6
7 Um Mainly a composer. I used to perform piano but don't really do so now. Bit
8 of conducting now and then. Really I'm an educator and a composer. Basically.
9 Bit of, Yes. Chamber music coaching for students. Coaching people when they
10 are playing my pieces as well. Um that's what I do really. So I teach degree
11 students at (name of college) and coach at the (name of college) and run
12 educational projects as an amateur in various places including toddler
13 workshops which are just going to start soon. At the moment I'm doing
14 something for GCSE kids as well, which is a bit traumatic [laughing] but then..
15
16 So if people ask you what you do, how would you respond? I mean would you
17 call yourself a musician, a composer or what?
18
19 I think if you ask me now, I'd say I am a composer, [laughs] but however when
20 people actually ask me that I very often say um, the teaching thing sort of comes
21 first, oh, and then, I compose. It kind of comes out that way round, not that I
22 mean it to, but it sort of does, because the bulk of my work is actually teaching.
23 And I suppose as a composer I'm not particularly good at pushing myse-,
24 pushing my works forward either, quite reticent about it. Um, so you know, it
25 becomes a bit more embarrassing and if you start saying; "Oh I'm a composer",
26 they go "What do you compose? Who is your favourite composer" and it just
27 gets a whole reel of other questions that you can't really answer, actually, but
28 saying um
29
30 What makes it so difficult to answer those questions?
31
32 Um. Well, a question like "What sort of music do you write?" [laughs] Well you
33 know if you say, "Oh, its concert pieces," or I kind of say, "Oh I'll write
34 anything that anyone will pay me for", which is also true. It boils down to that,
35 which doesn't really do it justice, and you can't really encapsulate what you're
36 trying to do in your music just in a conversation with somebody. I mean perhaps
37 you can't ever really encapsulate it to yourself while you're doing it, um. So I
38 suppose that's the reason it becomes a difficult question. You answer it, and
39 whenever you answer it, it's not the whole story at all. You can't really cope
40 with it because it's much deeper than you can. So if it's at a dinner party or
41 something [laughs] you can't go into all that, so it's much easier to say. I
42 compose but I do lots of teaching and work with kids and do this that and the
43 other. It gives other people I think much more to grab hold on to.
44
45 So saying you're a composer is a bit difficult for a lot of people to understand.
46
47 Um Yeh
48
49 What's involved in it.
50
51 Well I think, yeh, there is a, depending on who you're talking to, very much.
52 Um. Yeh. I think it can be. It's something which they've never come across
53 before. Certainly if it's somebody who, from my point of view, they have no
54 interest in classical music. When you start referring to classical music, that's a
55 conversation stopper. Um. Or can be. If it's a more creative type of person, for
56 instance a writer, or an artist or something, then you can actually, that becomes

1 much easier because they are going through the same creative sort of problems
2 and issues.

3
4 Do you see musicians' creative problems as similar to writers and other creative
5 people, painters and so on?

6
7 Yes I think there's a. Yes. I think creativity, the, I suppose the problem of
8 creativity is um. First. One of them is doing a specific piece, creating something
9 specifically, but there's a much longer term one as well, which is how do you,
10 once you have done a few pieces, what do you do next? How do you actually
11 keep a sense of regenerating what you are doing in your work without it going
12 stale or flat. Because you do see it, well you certainly see it in lots of composers,
13 where they start out really well [excited whisper] with really exciting, really
14 interesting things and especially, especially ones who then get picked on and are
15 quite successful quite early. Then there is a real question of where do you go
16 from there. Because you've done things that you've, that have been very
17 successful, but then you've got to regenerate yourself to actually um carry on
18 with that. You know, you can't really be just doing the same stale thing over and
19 over again. Or you can do, and I can think of some composers who I think do
20 erm [laughs] but I don't think they are very happy about doing it. So there's two
21 things. There's the creative on a day to day basis, the creative problem of
22 actually what you do. How do you get notes onto a page? How do you look at
23 the sounds? How do you listen to them? How do you find the ones that you
24 want? And there's a much more career-oriented one about what do you do over a
25 lifetime if you're going to be a composer. How do you actually make it last and
26 still write interesting music? Quite what the answers are I don't know [laughs].

27
28 What kind of things have made it easier for you to carry through those processes
29 of regeneration and so on in your own work?

30
31 Being aware that it is a problem. I think that's the first one. If you. If you.

32
33 What have been your experiences of those kind of problems?

34
35 Oh. [laughs] I suppose it's writing pieces that you're not happy with. Um. Or
36 perhaps writing a piece that somebody's asked you for, and what you've kind of
37 done, you haven't really thought it through fully, because you haven't had time
38 or you haven't really wanted to do the piece that well. Or it's. Or, I often find
39 with me, it's setting yourself a brief. With any new piece that you've got to
40 write, I've got to find out why I've got to write it. Why am I doing this piece? If
41 I don't really know why I am doing it, then I won't write it very well. Which
42 often means that if I started a piece, as you begin writing you get halfway
43 through you think. Hang on, what am I doing with this piece: Ah, that's what it
44 is, and then you have to go back and restart it. You may be using the same ideas
45 but that's the point, it has to reach a point where you know why you are actually
46 writing it. Um I think, both. I suppose that's both on the small scale, of writing a
47 piece that's one of the problems, one of the issues which you need to cover.

48
49 What kind of answer would satisfy you, in terms of why you are writing it?

50
51 Um, hmm, I think. There are two things, I suppose. One of them is just issues of
52 somebody's performing it, it's a commission, I know the person. I want to work
53 with them. I'm writing for them. I know what they like to do. I know what
54 they're good at. And that can give you a kind of brief. For instance I wrote two
55 pieces for harpsichord, one of which um was using, kind of used the harpsichord
56 in the twentieth century manner, which is as a kind of mechanical instrument

1 that kind of mechanical music. You get this rather dry twentieth harpsichord
2 style of writing. So one of them was like that, but the player I was writing for
3 was an astonishingly good early music performer, is a very very lyrical
4 harpsichordist which goes diametrically opposed to what you could think of as
5 what a harpsichord can do but he's a wonderful lyrical player, but he can't do it
6 with dynamics, um, he can't really do it with phrasing, He does it all with
7 *rubato*, and manages to get this wonderful sound, this wonderful sound, and with
8 articulation. He's a very fine articulator, very subtle. And so that gave me a
9 starting point. Two pieces, one in a sort of twentieth century style, but it was, it
10 still suited him, and one using the interpretive skills that he had. So that gave me
11 the brief, of what I wanted to do. Then I could go to it from there. So that can be
12 very helpful. So working with a performer can be extremely useful.

13
14 Is simply having a commission itself, is that something?

15
16 Yes I find that very useful. I don't really. Well I don't write pieces if nobody. If
17 nobody has commissioned them. Because there are far too many pieces of
18 contemporary music out in the world. Half of them are rubbish and I don't really
19 want to add to that. And certainly from a competitions' point of view, there are
20 so many competitions around for contemporary music and they're all for pieces
21 that haven't been performed and haven't been recorded, and I don't enter them
22 because all my pieces have been performed, because I've written for people,
23 which is very nice. You end up. Some people might say, some composers might
24 say that are you compromising your style when you're doing that, if you're
25 writing for somebody. For instance I wrote a violin piece for another early music
26 performer, a solo violin piece, which was to go with the Bach unaccompanied
27 Violin Sonatas, and um. That was a kind of compromise. I started off writing a
28 fairly modernistic piece, and. She hadn't played contemporary music for 30
29 years, and so she couldn't cope. She couldn't cope with the way it actually
30 worked, and so I had to find my way into that and that gave me the brief, the
31 reasoning of what I was trying to do. I was trying to write for her to use the best
32 qualities of her playing in a way that she could, but not compromise my style so
33 much that it wasn't still me. So it was, yes, I love that sort of working with
34 people and finding out who they are through the piece of music and writing for
35 them, to give them something. So that's a very good starting point for me.

36
37 And do you, during the process of writing the music, are you in touch with the
38 person commissioning?

39
40 Yes. Often, Yes. I am. Often I'll take drafts to them. They'll play them through
41 and we'll discuss them. They'll throw ideas at me. It's very nice. I don't like the
42 ivory towered sort of composer syndrome very much at all. It's not really me.
43 But then there's another, there's also. That can give you a starting point, but
44 there's also the problem of what do you do with your material. And what I've
45 found more and more with that is that actually I tend to spend a much longer
46 time on the beginning of a piece rather than anywhere else in the piece. So to get
47 the right idea, for this piece, is very important. An idea which you want to work
48 with. Which I want to work with, as a composer. I really want to write a piece on
49 this idea, and I might have had to hone that idea down.

50
51 Can you give me an example of an idea, without going into it in a lot of detail?
52 What would count as an idea?

53
54 Well. I don't know. This is where your ears come in. So you've something that's
55 not cliché'd but that doesn't mean that it's the kind of novelty for novelty's sake.
56 It's not something that's a new idea for the sake of being a new idea. 'Cause the

1 whole idea of there being new ideas in music is a bit of a misnomer anyway. But
2 an idea that is perhaps something that for me is a new idea that has some seed of
3 development within it. I don't know how to describe it really.

4
5 Why I'm asking you is because there's a sense that if you are writing when you
6 are commissioned then you have a person or a group of players in mind to
7 perform it and how far that informs the way you

8
9 Actually, Yes, the initial ideas. Well with this piece for (name) the solo violin
10 piece, it was, I started off with talking to her and she was playing bits of the
11 Bach Sonatas and Partitas to me, showing me the fingering, showing me the
12 various awkward things that you have to do, but what the possibilities were. I
13 think I went away and came up with a kind of Passacaglia scheme, that ended up
14 being used very loosely and very rich chords. You can kind of pick and choose
15 which notes you are going to use. So you can't hear it as a passacaglia at all, in
16 the piece, but it's sort of there as an underlying scheme of things. That was fine.
17 Wrote a lyrical opening for her, which suited her perfectly, and I don't think that
18 changed. Then I went into a much more modernist, not necessarily more
19 modernist musical language, but the way the material was developing was much
20 more modernist in that it was two contrasting ideas, that kept on interrupting
21 each other, which is a fairly [phone rings – pause]

22
23 So it was two diametrically opposed things that were interrupting each other.
24 Because, I kind of. It was also one of these things where it seemed like a good
25 idea, but underneath it. I was working with it but underneath it I kind of wasn't
26 happy I don't think with the idea itself. Although I couldn't really articulate that
27 and it's just kind of, have a little feeling that it's not quite right but you don't
28 quite know what to do about it. So you're. And if you've got pressure of having
29 to finish it by a certain time and you don't want to admit that it's actually not
30 quite what you wanted anyway.

31
32 How do you react to deadlines? Because presumably you have deadlines for
33 your work?

34
35 Yes I do. [laughing] I try not miss them. I do my utmost not to miss them.

36
37 And does it help to have deadlines or do they have the opposite effect?

38
39 Well, it helps if they are far enough away, and if they are very close, and I don't
40 really have that situation anyway, where a piece has to be done at short notice,
41 then that's tougher. I like to give the piece time to mature so that it's not written
42 in a hurry. I kind of think that half of it is, half of composition is done without
43 you really thinking about it, mainly an unconscious process, that's going on.

44
45 Can you say a little bit about your writing. Do you have to be in a particular
46 place, do you have to do it at particular times of day. Do you have that kind of
47 pattern to your work? And how do you allow for the unconscious? [he is
48 laughing and shrugging shoulders] You don't know!

49
50 I don't know! I'm hardly composing at all at the moment. I used to get up at
51 about 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning and do a couple of hours then which felt
52 really good and I did a lot of pieces like that. But also got very very tired and it
53 wasn't really. It was good, um, but it was just all a bit too tiring,. Made me a bit
54 too grumpy really.

55
56 What was it about getting up early that was good?

1
2 Oh I liked the quiet, the erm. No sounds. No-one else around in the house. Um.
3 Just time to really concentrate on it and then it comes to 10 o'clock and you've
4 still got the rest of the day to do other things. But you've done a nice wadge of
5 composition to get you started. I was always doing that. When I was a student. I
6 was getting in at 7 or 8 'clock in the morning to practise the piano as well. So
7 it's a similar sort of work scheme but it, that's stopped now, It doesn't happen
8 any more.
9
10 And how do you combine your pattern of writing with other things that you have
11 to do?
12
13 Well when I've got a commission, I kind of just find the time.
14
15 Do you find it easy to go from one activity to another?
16
17 Ye. Fairly easy. Yes. I'm fairly focussed on whatever I'm doing at a particular
18 time. So that's never really been much of a problem.
19
20 And how about this allowing the unconscious its' sway and leaving things to
21 settle?
22
23 To mature, yes. Doing it over a certain amount of time helps, so you've got a
24 problem at a particular part of a piece and instead of trying to, you work on it for
25 a bit. It's important. You do need the intellectual side, the conscious intellect
26 looking at it and thinking about it, but your unconscious is doing a lot as well, so
27 you've got to give that space just to happen. So going away from it and
28 forgetting about it for a couple of days or even 10 minutes can help and coming
29 back to it and then I find you can often have that moment of "Ah, of course"
30 with it, And I think that's a general thing. I think I've always been aware of sort
31 of doing that, of that sort of thing happening. If you go away, you leave it, sleep
32 on it, and come back to it. I think it happens in teaching as well, if you're putting
33 together a course of work or something,. That same sort of thing happens.
34
35 What's your explanation for what's going on there?
36
37 Well, I've been reading a really good book [both laugh] that explains it, by a guy
38 called Guy Claxton who you may have heard of, a Reader in Educational
39 Psychology, I think, at the University of Bristol, called 'Hare-brain, tortoise
40 mind', which puts this scheme of three different speeds that the mind works.
41 You have your wits, which work before even you realise they're working. For
42 instance, when you're riding on a bike and somebody opens a car door, you just
43 swerve and miss it and you only realise, your mind has actually done that,
44 afterwards. And then there's the intellectual
45
46 You think that what he has to say applies directly to your work?
47
48 Oh um, well, yes. I just thought it would apply to most people depending on
49 what they are doing.
50
51 I'm just really curious, everybody's different.
52
53 Yes, I think it does. The slower speed of the intellect, where things are
54 consciously ruminated over, and you obviously think about them, and then this
55 much slower speed, where very complicated problems can be resolved, but you
56 can't do it if you start thinking about them consciously and start taking them

1 apart, often it gets very confusing and you can't really put them back together
2 again. You can't find an answer. But also, if you do that too much you limit your
3 possible options. You can't see the new way of looking at it, at that situation
4 which would be the key thing to actually find the solution, to find a solution. So
5 this slow, ruminating, just let it happen, which might crystallise at a certain
6 point, and finds a way, gives you a way through particular problems.

7
8 So how do you know when it has happened?

9
10 Oh, you just have a click, you just kind of [clicks fingers] catch it.

11
12 So would you be on the bus, as it were, when it happens?

13
14 You could be, yes! It could be anywhere. It's most often when I'm actually
15 working on it. When I'm working I suppose I've found a way that works where
16 that can happen. Where you can kind of go a bit, conscious brain off, a bit.
17 'Cause I use a sequencer, so I can play things in, and I just muck around with it,
18 and sometimes the click will happen. But you can muck around, you can play in
19 a sort of mindless way, with that. Certainly for me I can be much more mindless
20 playing on a computer and moving the sounds around than I can with a pencil
21 and paper. You've got to be much more conscious there. So if you're much more
22 conscious about it it kind of feels that, you need that there. You need to
23 understand and if you can explain what you're doing, that can be helpful, but it's
24 the, it may not let the unconscious through so easily.

25
26 Do you always write with a sequencer?

27
28 I do now. However in the last few months it hasn't been working, so I've done a
29 couple of pieces on piano, actually, which has been fine, because they've been
30 single line things like a piece for solo double bass.

31
32 And you play around in the same way, on piano?

33
34 Yes I suppose I do. It's not quite as easy, But I am sort of constantly trying
35 things out. I suppose letting my fingers work in their own way without telling
36 them so much what to do and not being very directive. I suppose this is why I
37 found, find the 50s and 60s a very disciplined, organised way of composing. The
38 pre-compositional schemes that you follow doesn't really work. Yes you need
39 some kind of pre-compositional idea about what this piece is about, but of
40 course, you've got to allow it to change. If you delineate exactly what is going to
41 happen at any particular point and make it all fit together like a little machine, I
42 don't find it very inspiring musically. It becomes an intellectual piece, not a
43 creative one that involves the subconscious.

44
45 So you've worked on a number of ways of developing your methods of, partly
46 based on what other people have done and what you've read about, or seen?

47
48 Yes I suppose so. Yes, whatever feels natural at the time and for a particular
49 piece, I suppose.

50
51 Has it changed a lot?

52
53 No I don't really think it has. I think I'm just more aware of what's going on,
54 really, now. More aware of the my way of working and that other people don't
55 work in the same way. For instance when I went for an interview for post-
56 graduate study at (name of college) the composer there who interviewed me,

1 actually one of them said "I notice you haven't really been composing that much
2 this year". Because I'd been doing a dissertation for my finals and I said: "No,
3 I've been doing a dissertation for my finals." "Well, you really should. You have
4 to compose." A composer should. This should. A composer should be
5 composing this number of works per year. I don't quite believe it. I think it's
6 much more quixotic and personal than that. And another composer I heard talk,
7 who is a film composer actually, said that his students, basically he demands that
8 they write three minutes of music per week, which I think just makes it too much
9 of a conveyor belt. Where do you get the time to really think about it or let
10 things ruminate, let the musicality come through, let the ideas come through in a
11 creative way rather than just kind of. You're so busy trying to get dots on a page
12 that actually it might do more harm than good. Or certainly would for me. So
13 having coming across other attitudes towards it, I have found my place.

14
15 How do you react when people say "You should do this and you should do that"

16
17 Well I just react : well that's what they feel they should be doing, not. I think it's
18 quite possible that they are trying to tell me that or other people that because
19 they actually don't do it themselves. It's that sort of thing of erm transferring
20 their own problems onto somebody else, which I find a bit bad in a teacher, to be
21 honest, because you've got to be very aware of what trying to find what the
22 pupil actually wants.

23
24 So for you it's a matter of finding your own individual pattern?

25
26 Yes it is. Absolutely, finding your own way of working. It can of course go the
27 other way. You can spend your whole life ruminating about something and never
28 getting anything down on paper. [laughs]

29
30 So it doesn't bother you if there are weeks or months going by and you're not
31 composing at all?

32
33 Not really. No. It worries me in the

34
35 It doesn't change the way you look at yourself?

36
37 I don't think so. It's worrying in that I'd love to have people phone me up and
38 saying : "Would you write this piece". That would be fantastic. I'd love to have
39 the commissions rolling in. And they don't. [laughs] Basically. You have to go
40 and find them.

41
42 How do you deal with that? How do you deal with the ups and downs, the
43 vagaries of work coming in?

44
45 Well, having something else that I do. If I was just. If I was expecting to earn a
46 living on just composing in the contemporary classical field, would be, I'd be
47 bonkers by now. 'Cause you just can't rely on it at all.

48
49 Was this something you would like to do, if it was possible?

50
51 It would be lovely,

52
53 If the money rolled in, as it were.

54
55 Absolutely. It would be great. That would be fantastic. But also it's a certain
56 amount of ego massage in that it's very nice having people wanting things from

1 you that you can supply, thinking that you can supply a product that they would
2 enjoy having.

3
4 So you like the thought that all the work that you do is work that people
5 particularly want you to do for them?

6
7 Yes, that's very nice. That's a very nice idea. But then of course there's it's
8 very nice to have that initially, but there's always the fear of getting it wrong for
9 a particular piece. What if this piece is just bad. No-one goes out to write a bad
10 piece of music but there are plenty of them out there for whatever reason.

11
12 What kind of difficulties have you had in that way? Or is it just a fear that you
13 have?

14
15 I don't think I have written a really bad piece for some time, because I've
16 become much more aware about the creative things going on, behind writing a
17 good piece, and how I should go about writing to actually get the best thing that
18 I can. So I am much more aware of that. But that doesn't mean, I am sure I will
19 at some point write another piece that's appalling. Or in retrospect it's appalling.

20
21 What was appalling about the piece that you did, way back that appalled you,
22 without going into the musical side of it?

23
24 Oh, bad briefing, really. Bad. I did a piece for, I didn't know what to do. That
25 was what it was. I didn't know what I was doing in the piece. It all comes back
26 down to having an idea of why you are writing it. It was a piece for harpsichord,
27 and a couple of strings and a couple of wind and it was a kind of commission
28 and I just didn't know what to do with it and so it sounded like, it came out as a
29 sort of horrible eclectic mix of all sorts of things that sounded like somebody
30 trying desperately to find out what they were trying to do with it. That's
31 probably the worst example. There are other pieces, there are bits of pieces
32 where you think. "Well, that's not really up to the quality I'd like, but really..."

33
34 Tell me would anyone else have known this apart from you?

35
36 I'm sure they'd have been aware. I don't know about Joe Public audience. I'm
37 not sure about that.

38
39 Apart from people that are playing it, do you have an audience in mind when
40

41 Yes, me. The only audience I've got is me, basically. It's like having rows of me
42 in a concert hall. I am writing the music I would like to hear, basically and
43 hoping that other people would like to hear it as well.

44
45 How important is it to you that you are publicly recognised? By either the critics
46 or Joe Public and your peers? Perhaps you could talk about them separately?

47
48 Oh God! I'm in two minds about that. It's important. It'd be very nice to be
49 recognised. It'd be very nice to have that sense of stability that you had got
50 somewhere. It's like I said to you before. I think that's kind of fairly imaginary
51 anyway. I don't think. Even if you have achieved a certain status, you'll be there
52 and you won't feel like you have at all, because you'll see all these other people
53 getting commissions and in the back of your mind you're always thinking.
54 "Well, they're not as good as me! Why have they got that commission? I could
55 do that far better." You've got all that sort of stuff going on, which I don't think
56 you can really do much about.

1
2 You sound like you're very much aware of your rivals in that way, if that's the
3 right word to describe them? Those people out there also getting commissions.
4
5 Yes. Those people out there also. Yeh.
6
7 Is that fair?
8
9 Yeh, er. It sounds like I am, but I don't think I am actually, because I've kind of,
10 I don't really go to concerts so much now. When I was a student and just after
11 being a student I went to lots and lots of contemporary concerts, to see what was
12 out there, and I have to say, most of the time I was very very bored by a lot of
13 the music. I just found , a lot of people seem to find the actual language
14 offensive, of contemporary music, but I don't. I just find it dull.
15
16 I just wonder whether your awareness of other people, the other contemporary
17 composers, how it informs you and whether in any way it affects your sense of
18 how well you're doing?
19
20 Well yes, of course it does. I suppose I am not aware of the pieces they write,
21 because I don't get to the concerts, generally, and there are far too many now to
22 be able to get to anyway. I occasionally hear the odd recording. But I am aware
23 of them being in listings. I am aware of other composers, seeing their names
24 around, and I suppose
25
26 How do you feel when you see other people's names?
27
28 Depends who they are! [laughs]
29
30 Oh right, OK [laughs] Can you elaborate a bit?
31
32 Without being too specific [laughs] Well sometimes you just feel jealous. You
33 feel why have they got that? But it's often, and I'm sure this is a much more
34 general thing, in the way the world works. If you see a name and you know the
35 person, or have heard good things about it, the friend of a friend or whatever,
36 then you are much more happy with them having that. Good for them! Well
37 done!
38
39 You feel they kind of deserve it? Is that it?
40
41 Well I dunno. The concept of people deserving it, I'll come back to that.
42
43 All right.
44
45 If you know them, then you feel they deserve it, and if you get on with them,
46 then you feel they deserve it. If you don't know them, regardless of whether you
47 know the music is actually good or not, then the tendency is to kind of try and
48 find a way of knocking it, so it shouldn't be there, and I'm sure that that's
49 exactly the sort of thing that happens, for instance, when you're sending scores
50 in, to an organisation. That's the unconscious process that is going on with that
51 selection. Because all these places, all these orchestras, they get loads of scores,
52 and they've got to pick and choose. And they're not doing it deliberately, but
53 I'm sure if they have heard of somebody, if they've seen their name around, or
54 even better if they know them or they're a friend of a friend, then they will just
55 kind of, they'll look at that score, listen to that piece a bit more positively and
56 I'm sure people they haven't heard of, they will look at a piece not negatively,

1 but the criteria perhaps have slightly shifted towards how can I not accept this
2 piece?

3
4 How do you get a sense of your own response, in those kind of situations, how
5 people respond to works from you?

6
7 Well, in those situations, I don't really have those situations because I don't send
8 scores into people and I don't do competitions.

9
10 Yes you said.

11
12 That's the advantage of writing pieces for people you know. But I do get that at
13 concerts, where people come up and say they've enjoyed a piece and you get the
14 feedback then, which is great. I'm in a small scale sort of world, and part of me
15 would love to be writing pieces for the London Sinfonietta and big orchestras
16 and all the rest of it. It would be wonderful, fantastic, what an opportunity! But
17 another part of me is saying "Well actually, do you want the pressure of that? Do
18 you want to have to push yourself and appear very pushy, to get that kind of
19 work?"

20
21 What kind of pressure would it put on you?

22
23 I mean the pressure of writing a full orchestral piece is big, whatever. If it's a big
24 orchestral piece for the London Sinfonietta or the LSO or something, that's even
25 more pressure, there'll be all those people there and it may be, that's a different
26 kind of pressure. It's just a fear, sort of thing. And that's perhaps where, with
27 that kind of pressure, it's where the creativity thing becomes really important,
28 about letting the unconscious do its job, without the fear getting in the way. If
29 you fear something you try and control it, and you become much more conscious
30 about what you're trying to do and I think that can backfire, which I think can
31 happen, does happen with young composers who become successful very
32 quickly. The first pieces they've written are about um you know, they've just
33 sort of done it, and the conscious has been there quite happily

34
35 Was this true of you?

36
37 That's what I'm trying to avoid in being aware of this

38
39 Was this true of you when you started?

40
41 Um Yes I think so. Um. So that when a young composer does become
42 successful, they suddenly start thinking too much and don't sort of let it happen.

43
44 Again, have you experienced this yourself?

45
46 Um. Only in that what I try to do is let the unconscious have its

47
48 Is it something that you are aware of trying to avoid?

49
50 Yes I think so.

51
52 It's a fear?

53
54 [Laughs]. What do you mean? Do you mean a fear of writing a bad piece, or a
55 fear of the pressure, or

56

1 Yes, you mentioned that it's something that is a difficulty for other people, so
2 I'm just asking you how you see it in relation to yourself.
3

4 I'm not really. Yes, I'm kind of hypothecating about all sorts of other people
5 aren't I? I'm not in that situation. I haven't put myself in that situation. That's
6 one of the other things I've avoided doing is kind of. I've not really wanted to be
7 a pushy composer. I'm much happier being kind of small scale, writing for
8 people I know, and hoping that word of mouth goes out and that leads to other
9 people wanting commissions and things like that and that's what I kind of hope.
10 I think that feels like, in terms of a longer career, a much more stable sort of
11 foundation to have, rather than being flavour of the month one month and then
12 just not interesting the next, because of course everyone commissions.
13

14 Is that the way you see it, as a fashion thing?
15

16 Yes I think there's a lot of fashion in who gets commissions, and then it
17 disappears and they don't get them any more and they are yesterday's news. I
18 much prefer to have something that's smaller but more sustainable in what I'm
19 trying to do.
20

21 Coming back to who you are writing for, your sense of your own public and
22 other musicians, your peers, can you say what your views are on that? Are you
23 aware of writing for a public and how the reception that your pieces receive
24 affects you?
25

26 Well, it's very nice to have people coming up afterwards and saying they've
27 enjoyed them.
28

29 How do you feel when you're there, hearing your pieces played, and you've
30 sometimes performed as well, haven't you?
31

32 Well I have in the past, I haven't done recently at all. I'm just happy to hear it
33 really. If it's a bad performance, which does happen, yes, it's a bit cringey, but
34 it's out of my hands. I can't do anything about it. They're doing their best,
35 hopefully.
36

37 So you've got an accepting attitude towards what happens between what you
38 write and how it
39

40 I kind of realise, working with performers, that it's a bloody difficult job, up
41 there, actually playing any piece, let alone a new piece, that is coming from a
42 different direction that they may not have experience of. I don't write technically
43 easy music. It can be very very demanding. It can sound in some places quite
44 traditional, that doesn't mean it's not hard. And I really appreciate that they're
45 trying to do it and I'll help them as much as I can. I'll help them in the
46 composition process, if I'm dealing with them. But I'd also help them, coaching
47 them, if by just putting my more teacher's hat on. 'Cause often they'll think. "Oh
48 my God, I've got to play it to the composer". Even if they know you, it's nerve-
49 racking for them when they first play it to you. But just kind of being accepting
50 that they've got to live with the piece, that they've got to grow into the piece,
51 themselves, that it's never going to be perfect and they're going to find their own
52 way of doing it that's going to be slightly different from what I expected,
53 whatever I write on the score. And I'm not going to be unreasonable about it,
54 they're doing a very difficult job.
55

56 So coming back to your audience, who you're writing this for.

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It's for me! [laughing] It is for me!

Mainly for you.

No, it is for me in that when I'm composing I'm using my ears, my audience ears to work out, does that bit work? Does this piece work as a continuous piece? Is it a satisfying piece of music? I'm using my audience ears. If I was sitting in the audience and listening to this piece would I find it satisfying?

How important are the views of the critics, say, to you?

Yes they're very important [both laughing] 'cause it's always nice to have a good crit. I suppose I'm sort of hoping, I'm very aware that I am writing for me, but I'm hoping that there's enough of general humanity in me, warts and all, that there's enough of that that other people will latch into it and enjoy the music as well. I suppose that's kind of what I'm hoping. So when they do, and you have a nice crit, or somebody comes up afterwards and says they enjoyed it or the audience reaction at the end of a piece is really good, all that sort of stuff makes a difference. It does make it feel worthwhile.

How affected are you by less good criticism or comments from people? What effect does that have on you?

Oh it's horrible! It can be very depressing and you look at it and you think. Well, it depends what they're saying actually. Sometimes if you think, well they've got totally the wrong end of the stick. They haven't understood what this is about or, seeing it from their point of view, they might be doing this every night of the week, and they've got to find something to say about a piece, and quite often, they are going to go for a more critical reaction to it. Partly because of their lives: they hear so much new music anyway. And there's also something I think cultural in teaching and music about looking for faults, actually, not necessarily looking for the good things, but looking for the things that don't work.

Does any kind of informed criticism affect the way you approach your work?

It can do, yes, yes. If somebody's made a good point you think, yes, yes, I accept that. That certainly has happened. 'Cause I did a short opera which was, am still doing actually, just coming to the end of its tour, and it was done at the (name) Theatre and there was a review in the Independent (I think it was the Independent. No it wasn't the Independent.) Another review said, basically commented on it, that the whole evening lacked a sense of each composer having a sort of musical identity. And that came from a comment in my piece, specifically about my piece which opened out into, he said basically the same thing about the whole evening. I kind of looked at that and yet it was a bit of a harsh criticism. You don't like to hear that. 'You haven't got a distinctive voice, I'm afraid.' Well thanks! But actually for that piece I knew exactly what he meant because the whole concept behind the piece was it was supposed to be farcical, very fast-moving, real time, no room for your lovely arias and all the rest of it, the things that make. No room, no real room for the places that let the music sing, and make it become much more distinctive, or there's one place which it did, which he kind of. But it was a whizz bang piece which went kind of [sings] bom bom plonk, clap clap clap at the end, and it won laughs, which they did, which was good. So I could see where he was coming from, but my aim for the piece was to do a farcical 10 minute very short, [clicks fingers] very slick

1 piece of music theatre, where actually the music, in many ways, was not as
2 important as the drama, as the dramatic action. The jokes, the farcical nature of it
3 had to work more than the music had to work. OK the music had to work to
4 support that, but it's not the foreground. It's a bit more like writing film music
5 where if you hear the music, then it's actually not very good film music. If it just
6 supports what the action is, then it's good film music writing. So it's much more
7 like that. So I could buy his comments within the sort of context. That's fine.
8 Because perhaps the next one that I do I will concentrate on something different.
9

10 Have you had personal contact with critics. Do you have an ongoing relationship
11 with any of them?
12

13 No not really. My librettist on this opera is also music critic as well.
14

15 Tell me, when works are in process, apart from having contact with people that
16 you're writing them for, are there any other people that you would discuss that
17 work with?
18

19 Very occasionally. Again with this opera there was, it went through [laughing]
20 Actually talking about bad pieces, yes, we had a series of workshops, rehearsing
21 them all, and my one just didn't work. It was wooden, It was quite funny but not
22 as funny as I wanted it. It didn't have the right sense of pacing and there was lots
23 and lots of criticism. Having looked at this I'd kind of been through the process
24 of it with the conductor, the singers, the *repetiteur*, the director, the designer, all
25 that, all those people there giving you lots and lots of opinions about why your
26 piece doesn't work, is very difficult.
27

28 How do you deal with it?
29

30 You go and hide! [laughs] Well you can't. You have to just take it, and I had to
31 go away and sort it out. Sort out, not trying to rewrite the piece according to
32 what they all thought, because they all thought different things, and were coming
33 from their different opinions, in a crude sort of way. The singers want the music
34 easier and the
35

36 How do you deal with that kind of stressful situation?
37

38 Well it was literally a few weeks of just being quite upset about it and really
39 having to think about it, but going through that challenge ended with a better
40 piece.
41

42 How do you turn that distress into a better piece?
43

44 Into creativity? Well, you think about it. Well I had to think about what do I
45 want to do, not what they. They'd come up with some good points. Like this
46 character, well, it's a bit wooden. Or, the Director's comment about one of the
47 characters: Could he be an android? Which was kind of like – no way! But, I
48 know where you're coming from. Because it's actually quite a wooden
49 characterisation. What can I do about that? So if I, kind of filtering out what
50 they are saying, into the deeper levels of what's not working in the piece. So
51 finding out that and trying to distil that,
52

53 And beyond the working situation. If you've had a day where you've had people
54 making these comments which have affected you, what happens when you get
55 home? Are there any ways that you have of dealing with that stress?
56

1 It's constantly on your mind really. It's just constantly on your mind. You just
2 get on with other things, I suppose.

3
4 What kind of thing helps in those situations to get on with?

5
6 Just going through the process of thinking about the problem. And eventually
7 you kind of know, if you have that. It's kind of a learning resilience, if you like,
8 and you're learning something from it, and if you keep picking away at it,
9 thinking about it, eventually it will come out, it'll be fine. If you are sure that
10 eventually you'll get there, then you go through it. You're much happier to go
11 through it. If you weren't sure that it would ever improve, that you'd ever get
12 through that despair about it, then you would probably just stop and not do the
13 piece.

14
15 Has that happened to you?

16
17 No it hasn't, no. So I'm very aware that eventually, if I keep away at it, keep
18 chipping away, it'll get there. With this piece it meant total revision, total
19 revision of the libretto, total revision of the music. Rewriting a whole lot of it.
20 And there is a point where when you get to that sort of thing where something
21 doesn't work, where just tinkering around with the edges is a kind of
22 diminishing returns. You can tinker with a piece, and it'll improve for a bit, but
23 then the more you tinker with it, the less it'll improve. If it's really not working
24 you've actually got to go back and rethink the whole thing from the beginning,
25 which is what I had to do. I didn't want to, because there was a time limit on it,
26 but that was the only way that I was going to actually get the piece that I wanted.
27 So I reached a point where it was. I think actually [laughing] it reached a point
28 where, it was about 3 weeks to go, and the deadline... Oh that's right, I thought
29 the deadline for the final draft was actually after Christmas and it was actually 1st
30 December, [laughs] It was like "Oops!" and so I think it was mid-November, and
31 I just. That all happened in September or something, and I'd let it sit, and it just
32 reached a point where I just couldn't. Well I suppose I was trying to avoid it
33 actually, I wasn't really tackling it but I knew it wasn't going to go away..

34
35 Is that typical of you? Is that something you do?

36
37 It is, a bit, it can be. I was. Sometimes. Not always. I am quite often very good at
38 getting down to things. But if they're tough things, like that, where you have to
39 totally rethink something. And I suppose it's also because there's a very personal
40 nature to what you compose. You feel very tied to it. If somebody criticises that
41 piece, they are making a personal criticism of you. And I'm sure it's also, other
42 creative artists feel because you're so personally tied to it, so actually having to
43 make those kind of criticisms yourself and rewrite it and admit it's not good, can
44 sort of feel like it's a very personal thing about yourself.

45
46 So how do you deal with that?

47
48 Well [laughs] in that case I try to avoid it until the last possible minute and just
49 have to get down with it and try to get a result.

50
51 Do you take it as a personal criticism of yourself?

52
53 I try not to. I suppose there's always that niggling feeling that it is or it might be
54 um, but I don't think most criticism is given in that light. You might find, it
55 hasn't happened to me, but I'm sure some composers have found the odd

1 vehement critique which encompasses their whole lives rather than just the piece
2 which is supposed to be criticised. Historically that happens.

3
4 That hasn't happened to you?

5
6 No. That hasn't happened to me, no. But I wouldn't expect any critics to know
7 who I am or a range of works. So that doesn't happen.

8
9 And you've generally managed to negotiate a way through?

10
11 Absolutely. Yes.

12
13 With the work and with the people?

14
15 Yes. Absolutely. So the end result with this piece was infinitely better than the
16 first draft, so you feel much better about it then, whereas before you're taking it
17 as a personal slight, well not a personal slight. A personal slight makes it sound
18 like you personally are still right and everybody else is wrong, when it's not like
19 that at all. They've made perfectly good comments and you have to go back and
20 you have to kind of look at yourself and actually re-judge where you've gone
21 wrong yourself, so it's. It'd be very easy to see it as any criticism is their
22 problem when actually it's not. It's much harder. I suppose that would be a very
23 defensive attitude but you've got to actually take it and look at it yourself and
24 think what have I done wrong?

25
26 Suppose you do think it is their problem, what then?

27
28 Well then as I said I read this critique about, the one that said it was, there's no
29 identity to the music particularly. Because I can see where that's coming from
30 and I know where I'm coming from in the piece, I'm happier with that sort of
31 criticism. I suppose I can intellectualise it and say "Well, that's"

32
33 Is that what you do?

34
35 Yes. I do. It helps. It helps to have an idea about where they might be coming
36 from and the standpoint that they've got as a critic. Accepting one does have that
37 standpoint, you find out what it is. So I suppose it's hardest to know...

38
39 So you couldn't see yourself falling out with people or disagreeing to the point
40 where there's no compromise?

41
42 It hasn't happened yet. I'm a very compromising sort of person [laughing]
43 Hopefully! I think so! Actually if I definitely want something, then I'll, like for
44 instance in a piece of mine somebody wanted to change some registrations for an
45 accordion and played it to me. And it was like: "No definitely, that is wrong. I
46 can tell you why it's wrong. It's a nice idea. Thanks for trying, thanks for
47 thinking about it, but it's wrong. It's not going to work." I'm not at all. I don't
48 feel like

49
50 You'd put your foot down?

51
52 Well, not aggressively, but I'll tell them firmly that no, that doesn't work there
53 but I'll tell them why it doesn't work as well. Or if I can't, sometimes you'll
54 know that what they're suggesting, well nice idea, but it doesn't quite work, but
55 I can't quite think why. And you've got to go away and think about it or let it
56 kind of gell and think, ah "that's why" and you can tell them. So I'll tell them

1 what I want and be quite specific about it but, I don't feel, I don't do it
2 incredibly firmly, but I'm quite kind of forceful, well, not forceful, but quite
3 confident about what I want.

4
5 Assertive?

6
7 Yes, sort of.

8
9 Any other difficulties that you've had in connection with your work that we
10 haven't mentioned at all? Like people difficulties? Practical difficulties?

11
12 Well I suppose where it fits into your life can be difficult, and doing other
13 things, finding the time for it, and also other things in your life as well. I am sort
14 of gradually redoing this house, so finding time for that, laying a front path and
15 doing the rest of it can be a bit of a challenge.

16
17 How do you think your work as a composer affects your relationships with
18 people?

19
20 Um. Depends who they are?

21
22 Non-professional relationships.

23
24 Right. Um.

25
26 With your partner, family and so on. Friends.

27
28 Ask me in six months, when he's a bit older. It's all changed [indicating baby he
29 is holding on his lap in a sling - both laugh] Up to him, before him.

30
31 It's a bit difficult to say at the moment!

32
33 Yes exactly. You don't quite know what it's going to be now. All I know now is
34 I have to spend much more time 'cause we are splitting work time so when
35 (name of wife) is at work I am looking after (name of baby son) and vice-versa.

36
37 Do you find that is working out OK so far?

38
39 That's fine, yes. It's actually only been a couple of weeks that she's gone back
40 from maternity leave, it's about 3 or 4 weeks. And that's fine. It's really nice to
41 have the time with him. What I used to find was that when she was at work and I
42 was here, I would run around doing all these different things and try and be
43 really really busy and actually get sort of get frustrated because I wasn't getting
44 enough done and however much you wanted me to there still wasn't enough
45 time to do it.

46
47 What was it that wasn't getting done?

48
49 Um. Well. I suppose there'd always be something left over. I might do some
50 composition or I might not get round to it, that day, or there'd be some teaching
51 stuff that I hadn't done, or I should be sending out some CDs to people and
52 hadn't quite done that or I hadn't got as far with a piece as I'd like to or on a bit
53 of work or whatever. Or if I had done all that then well I should have
54 wallpapered or painted the, there was something else in the house that should be
55 done.

56

1 So pressures from all the different activities?

2
3 Yes exactly. And never quite getting round to them. Some things you want to do
4 and some things you don't. I'm not the world's best DIYer but we've got his
5 kind of big job on trying to actually renovate the house and sort it out. It has in
6 the past, certainly, weighed us down, both of us down, a lot. We went through a
7 very bad patch which was to do with that. And the accusation that I was, spent
8 more time doing the composing rather than actually keeping up with the
9 domestic stuff certainly flew around.

10
11 Would you like to be able to spend more time doing the composing rather than
12 all this other stuff?

13
14 Yes and no. Yes I would, yes in some ways. I sometimes feel, wouldn't it be
15 wonderful to just lock myself away and go and compose for days on end,
16 wouldn't that be really really nice. But on the other hand, half of me also thinks
17 that I wouldn't. I don't think it would work for me. I actually need all the other
18 things that I do to feed into it. That's where, the creativity part of the creative
19 side. I don't know how it feeds in but I'm sure it does, because it's not like I go
20 and do something else and suddenly have a musical idea about a piece I'm going
21 to write. Well actually saying that, sometimes I suppose it does happen. But just,
22 partly, meeting people as well, and being amongst other people. Just being a
23 composer would be a very ivory-towered existence, where I think you could
24 very easily stop kind of connecting with other people. I do think the music does
25 connect sometimes.

26
27 Is it something you see as a solitary thing?

28
29 Composing? Well, it can be, yes. If you are just doing that, well I'd be a very
30 solitary person. I wouldn't really enjoy it. Whereas doing all the teaching,
31 discussing musical things with other people, be it doing toddler workshops, and
32 doing very basic stuff, to degree students and talking about the problems they've
33 got in their pieces and going through them and helping them there does give you
34 a different point of view, and I think that does somehow feed in, but I can't tell
35 you how it does, but I'm sure it does. I'm sure it gives you a broader base for
36 what you are trying to create yourself. So partly yes I would like to do that but I
37 think it probably wouldn't work for me.

38
39 So if you were berated for spending too much time on composition and not
40 enough time doing up the house, is that because in (name of wife)'s mind the
41 composition is less important than that?

42
43 I don't know. I can't really speak for her.

44
45 Is it a matter of priorities?

46
47 Yes it is. It's a prioritisation thing. Yes. I suppose the problem with my life as it
48 is, is that during term-times, I'm doing a lot of teaching, and a lot of preparation
49 for that, and a lot of thinking about it, so other things tend to get pushed to the
50 background. And then during holiday times, not only is it when I'd like to
51 compose, or compose without, or if I compose, have to compose in term time it
52 often feels kind of like quite forced, like you've got to work really hard to try and
53 fit it in, by getting up earlier or whatever. Whereas in holiday times that's when
54 well, we want to get the house done, and I want to do the composition as well,
55 and so that's where actually it starts to get tough. So often I look towards for
56 instance the summer holidays as this kind of wonderful utopia. Oh! I'll have all

1 this free time, weeks and weeks, with nothing else to do, and it very rarely works
2 out like that. 'Cause usually I'm incredibly busy doing all the things that I
3 haven't done during term time and actually it can feel more stressful than
4 term time. Partly because I set myself up with this feeling of "Oh great!
5 Summer's coming. I can do all that in the summer" and half of it doesn't happen
6 anyway so it becomes quite frustrating. But with (name of baby) it might change
7 with (baby) now, because when I'm at home with him I'm not running around
8 nearly, well I can't run round nearly as much and get nearly as much done, so
9 I've got to be much happier about doing less and I'm already feeling more
10 relaxed about being at home and playing with him, taking him out for a walk,
11 going for a cup of tea somewhere, and not so worried about it So that might have
12 quite a positive effect.

13
14 So juggling activities has changed since (baby) has been here and there's less
15 pressure really.

16
17 Yes it does feel less pressurised so I can kind of, I have to relax, I have to not do
18 anything, 'cause I have to, he won't let me.

19
20 Are there effects that your work as a composer has had on your personal and
21 social life?

22
23 Um

24
25 What about your friends. Are your friends mainly in music, or do you have

26
27 Yes they are, basically, they're musical friends, basically.

28
29 How about family? How do they see having a composer in the family?

30
31 Well my dad is from a musical background anyway, so he's quite happy about it.
32 There's a cousin of mine who's also a composer as well, so that's fine and
33 they're from a very, the whole family is from a very church musicky sort of
34 background so they all sing and so that's fine. It's not an issue really that's, my
35 mum was also quite musical. Played the piano and the like she was quite chuffed
36 I think that I was a composer. I wouldn't necessarily say that my parents, mum
37 or dad, liked my music at all.

38
39 Right. Has that affected you?

40
41 Not really. No. I always did just get on with it and do my own thing. If you don't
42 like it, well, it's tough really [both laugh] I'm not sure about my sister. Because
43 she. Yes, she's never been, enjoyed music at all, so I've always felt kind of
44 embarrassed with her around saying I'm a composer because it's a kind of like a
45 weird thing to do. [laughs] Well what a weird thing to do. I'm sure she'd
46 understand it if I was writing film music or pop music or something.

47
48 What would be the difference for her then?

49
50 Well it's much more profitable, and much, just much more relevant to the real
51 world. Why write this weird stuff for a very small elite group of people or
52 clique?

53
54 How do you respond to that?

1 [both laughing] I ask myself the same question actually. Every week. It's kind of
2 like – why do I do this? Why am I doing this?
3
4 And what answers do you give yourself?
5
6 Oh I don't know. Well I just like doing it really. There's some.. I suppose it must
7 ultimately be, you personally get enjoyment out of it. I get enjoyment out of
8 writing a piece of music, what I consider to be a good piece of music and I get
9 enjoyment out of hearing somebody play it. And that's what it comes back to.
10
11 How important is the thought of the future and leaving music behind, leaving a
12 body of work behind for people?
13
14 I suppose there's something in there saying you want to leave something for
15 posterity, but that's not as strong as it was. I'm much happier now writing for the
16 moment writing for people who want a piece now, that's going to work for now,
17 because I worked at the (name of college) library and I remember their stack,
18 where there are so many manuscripts, and collections of manuscripts by
19 composers who were really quite well known in their day and are now totally
20 forgotten. And basically when I'm gone, I'm sure that a lot of manuscripts that'll
21 happen. They'll sit on some library shelf and occasionally somebody might think
22 of looking at them but quite possibly not at all.
23
24 How do you feel about that?
25
26 Well, I won't be here so I'm not really bothered about it. I much prefer to kind
27 of get pieces performed now rather than going for the "I am writing for
28 posterity."
29
30 What about public recognition in the wider sense? Popularity? Returning to your
31 sister's comment
32
33 What do you mean?
34
35 You were saying her criticism of you is that your
36
37 Well it's not a criticism as such. She's never really stated it. It's what I perceive
38 to be, or could be. I think she's relaxed actually. She was the sort of person who
39 was very driven, very driven to succeed, so, and that's where my feeling she
40 probably wouldn't understand somebody who is working in a very cliquey
41 world, would – why? With such a limited sense of success, if you are successful,
42 which is probably not meant to be anyway.
43
44 Your sense of success comes from being, your own fulfilment in the work, the
45 work is as good as you want it to be, and also
46
47 Also the performances. Being able to say, I've had 40 whatever performances
48 this year in that sense and that there are people around out there who have got a
49 work and they want to keep performing it. That's the success I like. I suppose
50 from a public or audience point of view I'm not that bothered. I can't really
51 control that. I can't do anything about it, but I can write for performers.
52
53 Would you like to be well known, recognised, You know, I don't mean in the
54 street recognised, but recognised as a name?
55

1 As a name, who knows, I might be! But as a figure [both laugh] back to that kind
2 of well, perhaps I am recognised. People have said to me "Oh I have heard of
3 you", and it's like "Oh" [surprised and pleased] "Have you? Blimey! I didn't
4 think anyone had."

5
6 How do you feel then?

7
8 Well it's nice but when any comments that people make about the work I usually
9 take with a pinch of salt, be them good or bad. I don't rely on them. To only
10 write when you've got a good reaction and to write for a good reaction from
11 somebody else, is not the way to go. You have to do it for yourself.

12
13 You take note of it but you don't

14
15 It's nice but I'm not going to let it go to my head, let it affect me, likewise the
16 bad criticism as well. Or I try and take the bits that I feel are relevant for or
17 trying to distil what they are saying. 'Is that true? Have they come from the
18 wrong direction when they're making that comment? Is that something I should
19 be taking on board?' But taking it on board for me, not

20
21 And what makes you decide you are going to take it on board?

22
23 Well it depends on the piece, depends on the context.

24
25 Does it depend on the person too?

26
27 Yes it does. Depends where I think they're coming from, so I have to kind of
28 work out why are they saying that really.

29
30 Do you feel there are a number of people out there who truly understand what
31 your are trying to achieve, whose views you can take notice of?

32
33 I don't think so. I couldn't say there's anybody out there who knows the body of
34 my work apart from me really. I might be wrong. Perhaps there are.

35
36 Does that concern you?

37
38 Sort of I suppose. It'd be nice, it'd be icing on the cake if there were a few
39 people out there who did sort of know quite a few pieces, or interested in
40 knowing quite a few pieces. That'd be lovely but it's not that important.

41
42 Would you say it's important for you to be known by the totality of your work
43 rather than for particular pieces.

44
45 Not, I'm not really bothered either way. It'd be nice to have people say- Oh I've
46 heard that piece, let's go and hear some other pieces. That'd be great. Fantastic.
47 But I'm quite happy if somebody says, well I really like that piece and that's the
48 only piece they know. That's perfectly good as well.

49
50 Any other ways in which you think your work as a composer affects your own
51 life, day to day and the people in it. You've said a bit about family. Friends?

52
53 Well a lot of the friends, my friends are the people I write for, a lot of the time.
54 That's how it works.

55
56 Any interests and hobbies outside music?

1
2 DIY I suppose. Childcare. [both laugh] Not particularly. No, Reading, actually
3 reading general science books. I'm far happier, I don't go and read books about
4 music. I can't stand it. I can't. The whole.
5
6 Do you mean about musicians or about music?
7
8 About music. I mean both actually. I don't read about music. I suppose
9 biographies of musicians would be interesting, not necessarily biographies of
10 composers, but mainly contemporary musicians could be very interesting. I'm a
11 bit dubious about the whole analysis musicology side of things and there's reams
12 and reams of stuff there which I kind of guiltily feel that I ought to have read, or
13 should be reading, especially since I am doing lecturing and things like that.
14
15 Why should you be reading it do you think?
16
17 Um, to um just be aware of what's out there, of what the new thinking in
18 musicology is, in terms of analysis and the like and
19
20 You feel it should be informing you in some way?
21
22 Not necessarily informing my music. I could quite believe that I'd read it and
23 then in terms of composition sort of ignore it and just do what I wanted to do.
24 But perhaps in terms of teaching at a Higher Education establishment, it
25 would be good to know, but to be honest I find a lot of it, what I have read, it can
26 often feel like, rather a concocted, contrived discipline. People finding quite
27 intricate little arguments about things that don't actually matter very much, and
28 certainly don't matter to me or don't really matter to my students.
29
30 I'm not surprised you don't want to read it in that case!
31
32 Well exactly, so I don't but I kind of guiltily feel that perhaps I ought to be. But
33 I'm much more happy reading about general science and things.
34
35 Are there any other things that you feel this 'ought' about, that would affect your
36 work as a composer?
37
38 Beyond this? No I don't think so,
39
40 OK. Are there any areas in terms of what makes your work easier and harder
41 that haven't come up yet? Are we missing anything?
42
43 I don't think so. No I can't think of anything offhand. That's about it really.
44
45 As a psychologist working with musicians, do you think there are any things I
46 should be made aware of about particular problems or difficulties or special
47 needs that composers have
48
49 Special needs composers! [both laugh]
50
51 Sorry! I'll rephrase that!
52
53 I think one of the biggest things about probably musicians and composers and
54 probably lots of artists is a deep seated sense of inferiority. I'm sure a lot of them
55 have it.
56

1 Do you have it?

2
3 Yes. I do. It's there, or it was. Well, it certainly was there much more than it
4 was. Previously it was much stronger than it is now. It's a kind of, I've got over
5 it a bit.

6
7 What changed then?

8
9 I think understanding. Things like learning things like not to take criticism to
10 heart too much, being aware that there's a distance between me, who I am as a
11 person, and the piece of music I write, that people have different opinions and
12 come from different viewpoints when they're looking at a piece, all that sort of
13 stuff. I often found that, when I was being taught composition I was very very
14 happy to take criticism from a teacher, because you put yourself automatically in
15 that position where you do take criticism. It's part of being a student, and taking
16 it and working with it. But when it came from somebody else, taking it really
17 badly.

18
19 Like who? What sort of person? A peer?

20
21 Yes it could be anybody really. It could be a peer. But I suppose then part of me
22 would always be kind of saying "Well, that's them, that's their opinion, they're
23 saying that because, they come from that" and finding reasons for it. But now I
24 suppose that's got stronger and I'm happier in myself in what I'm doing. But I
25 think there is a sense of inferiority and partly: perhaps that's one of the driving
26 things about why you want to create something, is that you are actually feeling
27 quite inferior and want to create something that perhaps shows you're not. I
28 don't know really.

29
30 There is quite a widespread belief that you need this, some kind of difficulty to
31 overcome, to help you to work better. Do you accept that? What's your view on
32 that?

33
34 I think there is a sort of difference. I think it can be useful to have them. For
35 instance, my mum was a slightly paranoid schizophrenic, which made life at
36 home very very difficult and I think one of the reasons I started composing was a
37 kind of retreat away from it and going into music means I could create my own
38 thing, create my own world if you like. So that was a starting point for it.

39
40 Did you help look after her?

41
42 Yes, a bit, when she'd accept it. She also had cancer, for about 15 years and died
43 of that eventually and was eventually housebound. It was a horrible situation.

44
45 How old were you when she died?

46
47 She died about 7 years ago now so I was 25, but for 15 years she'd had cancer. It
48 was a very difficult situation. There were lots of things that happened, where she
49 generally just made life at home incredibly difficult. So to escape into music was
50 great. But there was also a sense of, feeling a bit out of everything else as well.
51 You know. Into music is sort of different from all your peers and that can give
52 you a sense of inferiority.

53
54 Did you feel different because of that?

55
56 Yes I did. Very quiet and timid and

1
2 Were you treated differently?
3
4 Er, whilst I was at school and things? I don't know. Strangely enough I think I
5 was avoided actually, It wasn't like I was picked on. If I was picked on actually
6 people often came to my defence for some reason. I don't really know why they
7 did. But yes it was kind of a feeling of being timid, intelligent but timid and a bit
8 out of it and you know, not knowing the latest pop songs and all that. But being
9 kind of absorbed in this music stuff.

10
11 When did it start, your interest in writing music?
12

13 In composing? When I was about 14. But I'd already been playing the piano,
14 learning the piano, for a few years before that. So the sense of, yes, having a
15 difficulty, for me, yes, that was a difficulty that spurred it on, that helped a lot.
16 So it can help, and having any kind of struggle means you have something to
17 overcome and you learn new skills, you learn new ways of doing things, you
18 learn ways of being able to cope, through a difficulty. But there's also, I don't
19 think necessarily that you should create difficulties [smiling] so that you can
20 overcome them to give you those things. I think. Now I'm in quite a sort of
21 happy existence, and having emotional crises or something I don't think
22 necessarily would be particularly useful for my composition now.

23
24 So you're not suggesting you need difficulties in order to be able to write?
25

26 No, no. But I think they can be useful if you. It depends on how you approach
27 them, I suppose, any difficulty. If you approach it as something to overcome and
28 something which you can usefully use in your life somehow, however you use it,
29 then you get something out of it when you eventually overcome it. But if you see
30 it as something that's just a hindrance, and it's going to get in the way and it's
31 going to be awful, then you probably won't. So I'm sure it's all to do with
32 attitude, personal attitude towards it. So I wouldn't open my arms to difficulties
33 and say "Oh wow, good! It's another difficulty. This'll really improve my
34 music" [both laugh] I wouldn't do that at all, but if it came along, then I'd find a
35 way of perhaps using it, if I could. So try and find something positive out of it.

36
37 As a psychologist working with musicians are there any other things you think I
38 should be aware of? Any ways in which I could be helping?
39

40 I don't know actually.
41

42 Any help that you think you might have benefited from if you'd wanted to ask
43 for it?
44

45 Er. I dunno. In a funny kind of way I'd say less education.
46

47 Less education?
48

49 Yes. Because I think what you're not told at college is that it's a very personal
50 thing. You have to find your own way. What happens at music colleges is you're
51 shown loads of other people's works and look at how you do this and, which is
52 fine on a technical level but you actually have to absorb it to make it your own.
53 I'm not saying you don't need any of that. 'Cause I think that if you don't have
54 some kind of awareness of the outside world and what's going on, then you can
55 write rather insular music.
56

1 You feel people should be encouraged to develop their own individuality
2 without so much emphasis on what other people have done before?

3
4 Yeh. Yeh. Basically. That's something. It's not psychological but I can see it, I
5 can imagine it might lead to certain problems perhaps as a musician where
6 you're trying to find yourself, but you're just getting all these other voices and
7 all these other things that you should be doing. And that's what I think often, or
8 it can be, the way it is presented, that these are things which you should be
9 doing, when perhaps they are not, at all.

10
11 So people don't feel its OK just to be themselves?

12
13 Yes. I think that's partly it, but then there's also, I don't think it's easier saying
14 just to be themselves. It's actually going to be a struggle to find out who yourself
15 is. Not because. Oh you say, just be yourself, and actually people come up with
16 something that's really derivative and not themselves at all. It's just the easiest
17 thing they can do. So actually it's a struggle to find yourself.

18
19 Was it a struggle for you to find yourself?

20
21 I think I'm still going on with that. It hasn't happened yet, I don't think. Getting
22 there perhaps. I think there are things that I do, in my music which are Me, but I
23 think there are things that perhaps aren't. I can't tell you which bits are which
24 but there's just a sense of, it's something that develops and probably something
25 that changes as well, over a lifetime.

26
27 Do you see that as being true of everybody, that finding yourself is a process,
28 which just continues?

29
30 Yes, it's a process, it's not an end result. I suppose it's that thing where,
31 historically you look at ... Once a person someone has died, you say that's
32 Dvorak – Dvorak sounds like that, and until they've died you can't do that 'cause
33 there might be something that's totally different but actually still sounds like
34 them.

35
36 So somebody looking at work, your earlier works and the works that you're
37 doing now, would see a development?

38
39 Yes I'd hope so. I hope they would. I'm sure they'd see some change.

40
41 Yes I think they would. It goes from eclectic and derivative hopefully to
42 something where, yes. You can still see the seeds of that, but it's much more
43 measured hopefully and with a greater sense of overall architecture that absorbs
44 the different influences more coherently. Hopefully.

45
46 Final question. A number of musicians I talk to have ways of helping themselves
47 when they feel times are difficult in different ways, could be relaxation or sport
48 or something like that. Are there any particular things that you do that help?

49
50 Cycling I've found really good. The last couple of years I've been doing lots of
51 cycling and that's really nice. Something physical has been good. Well I haven't
52 done it in the last few weeks because I've been here with him and so it hasn't
53 really happened but still. It doesn't seem to make much difference. That's good.
54 We did last year start doing transcendental meditation. We went on a course for
55 that. And we didn't, we kind of, it just stopped. We went in the summer and it

1 kind of stopped by the winter so it wasn't, perhaps we weren't doing it right, but
2 it wasn't really doing anything..
3
4 What were you looking for in it?
5
6 Kind of relaxation. The sense that, giving your mind time to relax, this kind of
7 unconscious spring of creativity might be enhanced. It didn't really happen and
8 then it got harder to find the time to do it and so we haven't
9
10 Do you think it wasn't the right thing? Or was there some other reason you
11 didn't continue?
12
13 Well, perhaps it wasn't the right thing. Perhaps we just weren't doing it in the
14 right frame of mind. Or there was something that subconsciously said "No you
15 don't really need this." I don't know.
16
17 Would you look for some other form of relaxation?
18
19 Not really, no. And I've got him now [indicating baby] and being at home here
20 and kind of, that's sort of relaxation.
21
22 Anything else that you do, favourite ways of chilling out?
23
24 Watching telly is I suppose the main one. [laughs]. Cooking.
25
26 When times are difficult and things aren't going as well as you'd like them to be:
27 would you be heading for the stove or the bike or ? [both laugh]
28
29 I don't know actually. No. I don't think you'd do anything different really.
30 Financially if things aren't going so well then I suppose looking for work is what
31 I do differently, sending CVs out and phoning people up a bit more.
32
33 Anything else you think I should bear in mind that would be helpful for young
34 composers that you've come across, apart from finding yourself? Anything that
35 you struggled with that you think professional help could?
36
37 Not that I can really think of. I'm thinking of some of my students. I've got one
38 student who is at a classical music college but writing kind of pop sort of stuff,
39 indie dance tracks and in his first year I said "What are you doing here? Why are
40 you here?" Why have the college accepted you, is another issue ('cause they get
41 the money for him) and that was a kind of question about find yourself. If you're
42 going to be here, studying classical music, work out what you're going to want
43 from it. Why is it relevant to you? Why do you think it's relevant to what you're
44 doing or is it just something to do for 4 years 'cause you can't think of anything
45 better to do. And he kind of, that was really good for him. He really took that on
46 board and has made the best of it and found things in the classical music he's
47 been studying which he can use. So finding yourself but finding a focus of why
48 you're doing things as well, I suppose which is all very much related to it, a
49 similar sort of question, that's all.

Transcript 5 :

Ian

1 When people ask you to describe yourself as a musician, what would you
2 normally say?
3
4 Erm. Normally say, a working musician, I suppose.
5
6 If they ask you exactly what you do what would you tell them?
7
8 I would erm. It's difficult really because I do anything that is asked of me, and
9 have done lots of different kinds of things. I do find that difficult. If we're doing
10 a gig and some people at the bar or something, and they say that, I find it really
11 difficult, because I haven't got an hour to talk to them and I'll just sort of say
12 really anything.
13
14 Does that usually satisfy them?
15
16 No it usually baffles them.
17
18 Right. So they ask you anything else, like what do you play, that sort of thing?
19
20 Well they tend to know, if it's people at gigs, they've seen you so they know.
21
22 And what about people that you know erm better, not just strangers that you
23 meet, how do they see you in terms of your musical work?
24
25 Again they probably know, because they probably would have come to
26 something over the years, erm, so I tend not to describe myself really.
27
28 If you meet new people and you said what you just told me, how do you think
29 they would they see you? How would they regard you? Do you think it's easy
30 for them to understand what it's like for you?
31
32 No I would just try and then. What I've learned over the years, well only quite
33 recently is this. It's simpler to tell them one thing, possibly the kind of thing that
34 they want to hear, or the only kind of area that I've worked in that they might be
35 interested in hearing, but obviously I don't know if I'm saying the right kind of
36 thing or not. I just have found that it does baffle people to say you do anything.
37 So if I was at a gig and we were playing rock music, if they said "What have you
38 done?" I might say I've played with (name) a rock singer they may have heard
39 of, and leave it at that. Otherwise they might get a bit confused, so which is a bit
40 daft, because I shouldn't really have to compensate for, if someone asks me
41 something, I shouldn't really have to tailor my reply to them but I have done that
42 over the years.
43
44 Yes. I have found that with other people that I've spoken to too, that erm a lot of
45 musical work is very difficult for people outside music to understand. Would
46 you be more forthcoming talking to fellow musicians?
47
48 Yes. Yes. The people that were here today and the people that I've spoken to on
49 the telephone know, that I'm doing this today, and that's a lot simpler.
50
51 When you started off in music did you see yourself doing such a variety of
52 musical work?
53
54 No I didn't really have any erm predictions or projections. I was just doing what
55 I liked, in the moment, then.
56

1 What kind of thing drew you into it initially?

2
3 Erm the Beatles and so on when I was a young child. Erm. Pop music generally,
4 erm, even from being very very small, ballad singers and so on in the 50s, just
5 any sounds that I heard really.

6
7 And thinking about the way you were when you started out, in music, could you
8 have seen yourself doing what you are doing now, this range of things?

9
10 I didn't erm (2). No, I didn't have any concept of how it would end up, but it
11 depends when you mean started out. I did start out back in the early 60s, if it's
12 back to then, no. Just literally to play for anyone at any time, playing anything.
13 No. No I had no concept of the business then.

14
15 When did you start writing?

16
17 About '63. No earlier. I used to write music for recorder groups at school. But
18 before that I wrote on the snare drum in the Boy's Brigade! [laughs]

19
20 I never knew that! So it has always been part of your life, pretty much.

21
22 Erm. I suppose. Yes. I can't remember as a very small child. The first instrument
23 I remember playing was the snare drum in the Marching Brigade in about '61 or
24 '62 and making up my own rhythms.

25
26 Would you say that the type of music you write is also related to the types of
27 music that you like and listen to as well as obviously what you are asked to do?

28
29 Erm. Not necessarily. No. It can be completely erm unrelated. I did something.
30 Last year I did country music which I've never listened to or played.

31
32 Right. How was it to do that?

33
34 I found it quite daunting but it's just music really, isn't it?

35
36 How did you go about it?

37
38 I just researched it by listening to the best people and wrote my own tunes after
39 listening to them and then got in the best people I could get in Britain who play
40 that kind of music as their main thing and it worked out really well.

41
42 Right. Coming on to the things that make it easier and harder for you in music,
43 when you approach a piece of musical work, I'm thinking about writing music
44 now really, because that's my main focus, how do you go about it? Are there any
45 particular things that make it easier for you? Sometimes for instance people like
46 to work in a particular place or at particular times, or in a special way, for
47 instance?

48
49 Oh right. (3) Not that I am aware of. I'll quite happily to go anywhere. No not
50 that I can think of really. Erm I work here all the time but I don't particularly
51 prefer it. No, I'll go anywhere really.

52
53 So you're very adaptable, really where you can work. And do you work in a
54 particular way? Do you work from the keyboard, guitar, or computer, or what or
55 does that vary too?

1 All those ways. Keyboard, guitar and computer, yes. Erm .It depends what it is.
2 Today we were doing Motown, and so that came from erm (2) getting old
3 drumkit sounds and starting with a drum rhythm which I had to program from
4 the keyboard, or I could do it at the computer with an edit pen or, there's so
5 many different ways now, it's all so open.
6
7 Is that something that you like, the fact you can approach it in different ways?
8
9 Erm. I suppose it makes it easier. I don't really have any feelings about it to be
10 honest.
11
12 And has the way you work changed since you started writing?
13
14 Oh yes. Enormously.
15
16 Can you say how?
17
18 Well, from having to memorise everything in my head, and write it on paper,
19 which I don't write notation any more. I used to when I was very small, but I lost
20 it during my teens, and now to being able to not have any musical technique
21 whatsoever and just use the computer and just work on the edit pages and so
22
23 What do use Sibelius, Cubase?
24
25 No it's Logic.
26
27 Oh Logic.
28
29 But there's quite a few things on there now. The different things have got, things
30 suitable for audio recording, and then things that are suitable for synthetic
31 recordings. But it's like Sibelius or whatever. They are all similar. They do a
32 score and they record the audio as well. So that is incredible really I suppose.
33 Yes. I mean literally in the early days, my first recording was in a booth in the
34 bus centre, in (name of City) I had to take the guitar and I couldn't get in. I had
35 an acetate, which is a shame I don't have but it probably wouldn't play, and so
36 to now, yes, there's quite a big difference.
37
38 Any other things that you do? Do you work at particular times of day or do you
39 prefer to, if you've got free choice?
40
41 Only to fit in erm with the home schedule with the family side. I quite like
42 working 9 until 3. But I work anytime to be honest. If I wasn't here, or when I
43 am here at the moment, I'll probably work erm after supper as well. And the
44 other night I did work through the night, because I had something to do, but 9 to
45 3 just suits me pretty much.
46
47 Any other things that help, that make it easier?
48
49 Erm. Different instruments sometimes. Yes I had to do some, when I was doing
50 the er country stuff I borrowed a mandolin and a banjo that I wasn't familiar
51 with so I wrote tunes for both of them, and even though I can't play either I
52 could write a tune on them which I did and recorded them
53
54 What about having the instruments there with you made it easier?
55

1 The sound, the unique sound. Erm That you don't get from computer samples. It
2 is that sound, but it's not that sound, you know. If you put the little thing on your
3 lap and it's really [smiles and mimes] echoing round the room, it's not the same.
4 So the actual physical instrument gives you a stimulus and I've got a few things
5 there [pointing] they're all for different bits and bobs.

6
7 Yes I can see, lots of instruments.

8
9 Anything else that makes it easier, that helps you?

10
11 Easier, erm. (3) Seeing what's been done before, in the area that you're trying to
12 work in. Like [laughs] (name of band), (name of artist) or whatever. The
13 Beatles must be turning in their graves, but I don't know of any law suits, but
14 how have they sold millions of records, that's so clearly lifted directly from the
15 Beatles, is just beyond me. So that is a classic example of erm making it easy
16 for yourself just by borrowing very heavily or I don't know where the.

17
18 How do you draw that line between being kind of informed and helped by
19 listening to things and

20
21 Copying?

22
23 Copying. Yes.

24
25 I think because I've done a lot of that kind of thing and there are legal erm
26 stipulations that you can't take more than this or that per bar, so a literal
27 translation of what is legal and what isn't. Also there's a clause called Sound
28 Alike which you can't be in breach of.

29
30 So that's something that you have to be aware of when you're working.

31
32 Yes. Well I do, because I'm quite often asked, like say this week, we are doing
33 Motown-sounding music. I've played Motown records since I was a child and I
34 play in bands that play the songs, the original Motown songs, but now I have to
35 do that without infringing copyright. But it's quite easy in a way it's like Blues.
36 There is no copyright on the Blues. In a way Motown, the three chords that they
37 often use, there's no copyright on that, so so long as you don't infringe their
38 melody, you can in fact use that kind of sound and it can't really be copyrighted.
39 It's like saying we can't speak English because it's copyrighted by the English.
40 But erm (2)you never know. If someone decided. I think people in their best
41 faith have copied records melodically identically. I mean George Harrison with
42 "My Sweet Lord" did, and he paid. Erm, I don't think in his mind that he truly
43 thought he was copying, I don't think he had any idea that he was copying.

44
45 Has that happened to you. Have you ever copied something inadvertently?

46
47 No never. No.

48
49 But it's something you are obviously aware of anyway.

50
51 No I would never do it. I would never do it just out of respect for erm the
52 original's copyright but I wouldn't do it because there's no point. I'm doing. I do
53 it to make a living so it would be pointless to seem so closely to copy other
54 people's work that I'd be infringing their copyright. There'd no point in doing
55 that whatsoever.

56

1 Any particular type of musical work that you find most enjoyable? What do you
2 like doing most in what you do?
3
4 Erm (3) Not any more no.
5
6 You like doing it all equally? Or you feel the same....
7
8 Erm (2) Pretty much, yes.
9
10 How do you feel when someone offers you some work?
11
12 I feel quite happy to be having another project to do.
13
14 It doesn't make much difference to you what it is that you get asked to do?
15
16 Not really. No. Not any more.
17
18 Right. That has changed, has it?
19
20 Yes. When I was younger I would have said. "Oh no, I only do this," but I don't
21 see any reason to be limited now.
22
23 So you see it as a broadening, opening out and being able to do it.
24
25 Yes, and if they say "OK like country". I mean certain people think country
26 music's really naff, and I have no real knowl-. I know that there has been, it had
27 a bad phase when. Grandad's dead, the dog's dead, my wife's left me, and all
28 that! But that's such a generalisation and I think if you look into any genre you
29 can find something. I've done a marching band. I've done bagpipe players
30 [laughs]. I've played tunes here on my own, on the kazoo, I did an orchestra of
31 kazoos, so I just don't really care any more.
32
33 It's amazing to be able to produce music in all those styles.
34
35 Yes but the thing is that I do think it limits if you say "I only do this and I only
36 like this". And I don't feel that I have to be limited like that any more, whereas I
37 used to when I was young because I was so fashion led, but I don't adhere to any
38 trends any more, so erm I feel erm liberated from that.
39
40 As far as music that you write for yourself is concerned, has that always been
41 there?
42
43 No I don't write for myself at all any more.
44
45 Right. Tell me about that.
46
47 Or again I only did that when I had erm an impression of what I thought was me
48 and that was, I think, by looking back on it, was only what I thought certain
49 other factions wanted me to be.
50
51 Was that in your 20s?
52
53 No it's quite recent actually. Probably when I stopped working mainly in
54 mainstream pop, so about 10 years ago. So in my 30s.
55
56 Can you say a bit more about that. What other people wanted you to be,

1
2 Well actually nobody wanted me to be anything. It was what I thought other
3 people wanted me to be. I think now, that's the way I look at it. Or perhaps other
4 p... No, it's not true. People did ask to be, give us a new kind of this and that,
5 that's already sold or been popular. But as far as I know, and I haven't looked
6 into erm music history particularly, but as far as I know it's gone on from the
7 year dot. People that were being patronised by kings 600 years ago. OK Like
8 Mozart's done this, you give me one of these and we'll show all my mates that
9 we've got the best, so erm.

10
11 What was it that happened to you then along those lines?
12

13 Just that I was working erm within the mainstream of the pop industry and then
14 the particular artist, (name), you know, (name), stopped working, particularly
15 and needing sidemen and so on. So I stopped doing that, and concentrated more
16 on just doing things that were self-generated erm and then
17

18 Were you gigging with that band, or your own band then?
19

20 No just writing material, writing any material that people asked for. And then I
21 realised that was equally or more fulfilling erm and like I say I was being asked
22 to fit into one narrow stereotype. So if I'm being asked to fit into one I might as
23 well be available to fit into 20, and then also not be dependent on anyone else in
24 particular.
25

26 So it was a kind of liberation from having to work in one particular style, and it
27 was the discovery that you were able to do it, to work across a wide range, and
28 get offered, it opened up the work area for you in a much wider way.
29

30 Yes. Yes. Erm. But I think it was mainly a difference in lifestyle in that I thought
31 it was important to follow these trends that were being laid down. But I don't
32 know. The way I see it now is just...
33

34 Laid down by what though?
35

36 Well exactly. Yes, That's what I'm saying. Were they? I thought they were
37 being laid down so really it was the way that I saw my position in things and it
38 possibly wasn't even a genuine reflection on what was going on. Erm. I suppose
39 what it was, that was my niche and my clique amongst the Industry and I just
40 found it, when I didn't have to rely on that, I just found it, I found no reason to
41 be constrained, (3) I don't know. I don't know how else to explain it really.
42

43 No I think you've explained it very well. Any other things that make it, that
44 help the work along?
45

46 Erm..
47

48 What about deadlines, are they good or bad? How do you see them?
49

50 Oh they can be both. They can be really good erm and bad at the same time.
51 Erm. I don't mind them usually. I have always met them, so I don't mind them.
52 Er. It's quite a good focus.
53

54 Is it easy for you to meet deadlines.
55

1 Yes pretty much. I've got a lot of deadlines to meet at the moment. They're only
2 within, well yeh, they're in weeks, but there's a massive volume of things to do
3 within those weeks, but I'll quite happily meet them. It depends on your frame
4 of mind. I mean. In the past, deadlines. I don't know. It depends really. I think it
5 depends on your general make-up, erm how you feel at the time. A deadline can
6 be inspiring or it can be erm.
7
8 How can it be inspiring?
9
10 Well you think OK right. They want this by then. They want this in 2 weeks. I'll
11 do it in a week. And. It doesn't make any difference, but sometimes you feel that
12 way about it or
13
14 So it's a kind of challenge for you to get it done as soon as you can?
15
16 Yes, yes, that's right.
17
18 But other times it can be "Oh, 2 weeks! It's going to take me at least 2 months."
19 So in a way the deadline's irrelevant, it's the way that you feel about the
20 deadline.
21
22 Yes. It's the way you feel about what you have to do in the deadline, what it is
23 you are asked to do.
24
25 Yes.
26
27 So if you find yourself thinking "Oh my goodness am I going to be able to do it,
28 does that change the way you approach the work?"
29
30 Yes. I mean I have had it where it's been like that and then I just feel that I can't
31 do anything and it can grind to a halt.
32
33 Yes, is it kind of, you seize up a bit, you find it impossible
34
35 Yes Yes. So it's interesting. I've tried to figure out why I've had it, but I haven't
36 found any erm constants, that I can say - it was because that that time, and Oh
37 it's the same thing again then. It's always different things.
38
39 What kind of different things?
40
41 Well I've never actually tracked it down to anything - apart from it might be the
42 moon, or [laughs]!
43
44 Right! It's not about other pressures,
45
46 Not that I can think of to be honest: I can't find any constants and I can't blame
47 other people for it
48
49 Would it be purely musical reasons, to do with the work itself?
50
51 No not even that. Just sometimes you can do loads and sometimes you can't.
52
53 Do you find that that's always been true of you, your capacity for working varies
54 quite a lot?
55

1 Erm. No I've only found that since I've been working on my own a lot, and been
2 in control. Normally I can just start. I'll do it no matter what I'm like. Rather
3 when I'm sort of. I used to think I was employed you know, whereas now I feel
4 self-employed
5
6 What changed then?
7
8 Well because then, if someone rings and says "OK. We're doing this on Friday",
9 you just go and you do it. Whereas if you don't, if you don't, if someone says
10 "OK right this is your next project." I want to record it in June." Like at the
11 moment. You have several months and they are not saying "I'm picking you up
12 on Friday and it's got to be ready and we're doing it", you know.
13
14 How important is the sense of control to you in what you do?
15
16 Erm it's quite important now, but only because I've realised how much time I
17 used to waste when I wasn't in control.
18
19 What gives you that sense of control?
20
21 Well just the fact that I know that I can come in tomorrow and do X amount
22 whereas if I'm dependent on someone else I've got no idea what I'll be able to
23 have achieved by tomorrow.
24
25 In what way would you be dependent on other people? Are you talking about
26 musicians playing things you write?
27
28 Yes, and asking them to do this. Erm at the moment. I've got someone.. I can't
29 play trumpets and saxophones, he can. Yes. So he's got to do them for me. I've
30 been waiting two weeks.
31
32 For him to be free?
33
34 No just for him to do it.
35
36 Do you find you use the same people?
37
38 No. Erm I have done, but also now it's quite a wide range.
39
40 Is that through choice or because the music is very wide-ranging?
41
42 Erm. Yes. Wide-ranging music but also some people get busy, so busy that you
43 can't get them for weeks and months, so you have to branch out and get a wider
44 range of people to draw upon.
45
46 Do you like that, having the wider range?
47
48 Yes I do.
49
50 Do you have any feelings about that either way?
51
52 Erm. No I don't, because all I've decided now is that I'm not going to be
53 dependent on anyone, because I'm quite happy just to go through obstacles. But
54 I find the more that you get other people involved, their obstacles become part of
55 it. So it's just easier and more productive if, erm, if you can er, OK so I'm

1 blocked there so just take the right turn instead and use someone else, that kind
2 of thing.

3
4 So negotiating your way through keeping control is very important so that you
5 can?

6
7 Only in that otherwise erm (2) I'd just be held up so many times by so many
8 people that I just decided I was not going to do that any more. Not in terms of
9 hav, I don't feel it's like I'm in control, it's just, I can get A and B done this
10 week. If I then put it out to other people, they come up with other reasons why it
11 can't be done this week and if I let them go that week, they'll give other reasons
12 why they can't do it the following week, so I just find then that if I'm blocked
13 from that route, like I say, I just take a diversion and get there within the time-
14 scale that I want to do it in.

15
16 So you have to find different ways of achieving the same goal really.

17
18 Yeh. Yeh.

19
20 Coming back to this question of working on your own that you mentioned, how
21 do you find that? Is that a good thing or ?

22
23 I like interacting with other people, but I must admit I suppose, I've worked on
24 my own so much now that that's the only thing that I don't like, is when, and
25 I'm quite understanding about their problems but erm I just find people quite
26 slow. A lot of other people.

27
28 So it's a bit of both isn't it really, because you're writing the music here on your
29 own mainly, and then when it gets to be recorded, you're with other people.

30
31 Yes.

32
33 Do you play as well on the recordings that you do?

34
35 Yes. But also quite a lot we actually finish here now as well. Because in there
36 now you've got everything you've got everywhere...

37
38 Is that how you prefer to work?

39
40 Not really. No. I'd rather, because that means I have to do 10 jobs. What I like
41 is, I like to write it here, or finish it here with a couple of other people to help.
42 I'm not a great technician, I've just done it because I had to, and there's people
43 that can do it much better, so I prefer to go in with other professionals: an
44 engineer, a recording expert, a producer, and then all the best players and then...
45 I don't get arrangers. I have to arrange it as well. But, all the best string section,
46 brass section, that kind of thing, to get a better result.

47
48 And getting that sorted out is one of the practical problems.

49
50 Yes.

51
52 Getting people available when you, when they are not available how do you get
53 round it? You were saying you had to, but how do you?

54

1 I just know so many people now. There's an MU guide there, that second book, I
2 just go through that in despair, but! No, you just ask other people, You ask the
3 person who can't do it and then

4
5 So you book the session and um

6
7 We book the session and the engineer. We book the studio and then we book a
8 band. And quite often they change and at the time it seems really fraught, but I
9 can't remember now the people who've not done it. Er it doesn't really matter in
10 the end.

11
12 So is it important to build up a relationship with a particular studio?

13
14 No 'cause there's so many, everywhere you go you find them.

15
16 Right. So you work in lots of different places too.

17
18 We just did one in Brussels last year, oh no, January, this January. And it was
19 fantastic! It's one of the best ones I've been in. Because the people there were so
20 pleased that people had come from England to record there. It was just so
21 incredible! And the facility was, it's like Abbey Road. A huge orchestral room
22 with lots of smaller rooms. Little things that made it really nice, like they pick
23 you up and make you breakfast at the studio and stuff like that. Or they'd, every
24 musician in there had his own little mixing desk where he could hear exactly
25 what he wanted, how he wanted. And normally you're at the mercy of one guy
26 in the room, you know.

27
28 How do you find it when your stuff gets played? What's that like?

29
30 I'm usually sitting there. What, on the media and stuff? Is that what you mean?

31
32 No I'm talking about getting it recorded first.

33
34 Oh, in the studio.

35
36 In the media we'll talk about in a minute.

37
38 Oh right. It's so, you're so focussed on recording it, it doesn't feel like anything.
39 You're just going, OK that's one. You just tick it off. I usually have a list and I
40 cross it off as I go.

41
42 And does it usually go OK. Do you get any problems and things that go..??

43
44 Yes there's always things that go wrong, like erm. The worst problems I've had
45 has been ethnic instrumentalists from, erm say, sitar players, tabla players, to
46 banjo players, erm, fiddlers, people like that, because they're not really versed in
47 studio techniques. Whilst they come in and they start to play and you say "Wow!
48 They're incredible!" You go then "OK right. This is the track, this is the music,
49 and here's a click track, and then they just go to pieces. And there's nothing you
50 can do then. And you haven't got time to find another one. So you have to really
51 tread carefully and get the best you can out of them and then

52
53 How do you do that?

54
55 Just try and be really nice to them and just say. I mean I never actually tell them
56 that they're not cutting it, just try and be really nice and with them and get lots

1 out of them and you have to go in there and then just take one note at a time and
2 you have to edit it, which you don't have the time to do when you're paying a lot
3 of money for a studio.
4
5 So you're involved all the way through the process really.
6
7 Yes.
8
9 When you are writing all these things, are you aware of writing for any one in
10 particular, a particular audience or person.
11
12 No.
13
14 Has that always been the case?
15
16 Well like I say when I was younger I used to feel that it had to be just for the
17 young trendies that wanted to listen to that kind of music. But no, I realised erm
18 (2) after a while erm I'm just happy for anyone to listen to it really, erm or not to
19 listen to it.
20
21 Do you get any feedback on what you write?
22
23 Erm, Yes. Quite a lot.
24
25 How does that affect you?
26
27 Erm. It doesn't have any effect now.
28
29 Good or bad comments?
30
31 Er. No. I don't really care! [laughs]
32
33 It's all the same to you?
34
35 Yes. I've had people say "I thought that was really dreadful." And I say "I can
36 understand why you think that." Erm I don't really care. I just gave up
37 identifying with it personally a long time ago, so I don't mind. It's only a bit of
38 music, you know.
39
40 Do you take any notice of it at all?
41
42 Not really, no.
43
44 Would it make any difference if the people were well-informed musically as
45 opposed to,
46
47 No. because it's just if you get another job or you don't. And if you get another
48 job it means that the last one you did was good otherwise they wouldn't be
49 paying for the next one.
50
51 Yes OK. Any thoughts about leaving any music that you have written behind
52 when you die?
53
54 Yes I think it's quite a nice idea. Yes. It's like memoirs isn't it?
55
56 Yes.

1
2 Erm But . I don't know. I don't know how people would receive it. I suppose...
3 Mmmh. Yes I think it's a nice idea. Like photo albums.
4
5 Do you like the thought of things you've written remaining?
6
7 Erm. Yes, it's not a bad thing to think of. Erm (1) I think erm. I think there are
8 some things. Well, I know that. You can't ever know, but I think there are quite
9 a few bits and bobs that I've written that will be around, because they'd be
10 perceived as classic items from that identity of its' time.
11
12 So when they were labelled or described as classics, didn't that affect you at all?
13 Being told that you were...
14
15 I took it with a pinch of salt. There was one particular thing I did early on. The
16 first thing that I did where I was doing it on my own and it was 50s and 60s style
17 rock and roll, which obviously must have been in my head from a child. I'd
18 never ever played rock 'n' roll at that point, and it became used, the most used
19 piece, from this (name) group.
20
21 Wow!
22
23 The entire album that was, for 18 pieces. And it turned up everywhere. All my
24 kids grew up hearing it and they kept saying to me "Don't forget to register your
25 grandchildren, when they are born, with PRS, you know, that kind of thing.
26 'Cause they reckoned that its just perceived as the genuine article.
27
28 And how did that make you feel then?
29
30 Yes. It's nice! It's nice but I didn't believe them at the time.
31
32 And did you have good crits of it at the time?
33
34 Not really. I didn't believe them. Because I've heard people tell me so many
35 things. I don't er. I just listen to it and file it away but I don't actually have any
36 feelings about it. But no, it was nice. I'm not saying it wasn't. But then I tend to
37 think. I've got a namesake. I still haven't linked, but they reckon that William
38 Byrd was one of our ancestors.
39
40 Really
41
42 So I mean he's been remembered for a while, but for slightly more religious sort
43 of music.
44
45 Yes. So you'd like to leave that behind!
46
47 Of course, yes.
48
49 Any other things that make it harder for you to work
50
51 Erm. (4) Interference really, from other people who aren't in erm er, sorry I'm
52 losing (2) erm (3) interference from people who aren't trying to move something
53 forward.
54
55 Trying to interfere with what you are doing
56

1 Yes.
2
3 Can you give me an example
4
5 Yes. I've come across people who have been sort of , trying to I don't know
6 what they are doing but I assume they are so trying to prove how good they are
7 that they sort of say "No, that's no good. That's no good. Right. Let's do this."
8
9 Are you talking about musicians when you are recording that sort of thing?
10
11 No I don't mind it during recording. No, during the creative process. People who
12 are trying to say erm (2) er.
13
14 Would this be when you are trying to produce something and people are saying
15 "Well, blah blah blah"?
16
17 No, no, when you are actually at the inception of it. Where you are trying to co-
18 write with other people so
19
20 Oh OK. Because you haven't mentioned co-writing. I've got his image of you
21 here on your own.
22
23 Oh no, I've done a lot of co-writing as well, which is why I write on my own
24 now! [laughs]
25
26 Right yes OK!
27
28 No, people are erm, egotists really. I don't know what the correct word is,
29 because I think I'm a bit of an egotist as well, So, people who erm. What are
30 they trying to do? Trying to stamp their own identity on something so much, that
31 in a way they are destroying it.
32
33 Right.
34
35 Say we are just going to do a piece and someone is going and I say "What about
36 if we?" "Oh, no no no, you can't do that!" "What about if we did" "No, no, look
37 let's do this." "Hang on." "Well what do you think about it?" "Well I haven't
38 got an idea yet but I will have soon and then we'll do that." I don't know. What
39 is that? Just idiocy.
40
41 Yes it is. Yes.
42
43 Yes I've come across a lot of that which led me to thinking. Right I can't be
44 privy to that any more. So I have to at least be able to do something on my own.
45 And I'm not a great singer, so I couldn't be a singer/front-person. I don't want
46 to be a front person, lead guitarist, again that's a bit naff. So I just thought
47 general, all round composer. I could do that and feel happy doing that and can
48 make a living doing that.
49
50 So for you it was an answer to some of the difficulties that you'd been having
51 with people's egos and stuff.
52
53 Yeh yeh.
54
55 And offered you the chance to work in a number of areas.
56

1 Yes and sidestep that.

2
3 And the freedom, and sidestep all that.

4
5 Yes. I just don't like to see people, erm, to see erm people's time wasted. I
6 suppose I must have a highly tuned concept of time wasting, because ever since
7 the first ever work I ever did, everyone's always looking at their watches,
8 everything's so expensive, and everyone's time is so expensive. But they've got
9 a very highly tuned idea of what wasting time is and probably in fact if I think
10 someone is spending 5 minutes I would probably feel like they've spent hours,
11 you know. So maybe I'm quite impatient, I don't know. But I also know there's
12 so many people that can do things just instantly that you don't really have to
13 waste the time, you know.

14
15 What about you own sense of time? How does that work? I mean do you like to
16 work uninterrupted? Is interruption a problem for you?

17
18 Erm, if there are a lot, yes. But no, I don't mind. I quite like it if the phone rings
19 and it just takes your mind off things. You just hit "Save" before you answer it.

20
21 And you don't mind it.

22
23 No not really.

24
25 As far as the rewards of writing music are concerned, what would they be
26 mainly?

27
28 Rewards, I suppose became more financial after having family commitments,
29 but the basic reward is the same, since when I was 8 and just played tunes that I
30 could play for people, just you like doing it.

31
32 What about recognition for what you do?

33
34 Yes I don't care any more. I used to care enormously but all the time that I cared
35 enormously I didn't have any, so [laughs].

36
37 What were you doing at the time? Tell me more about that.

38
39 Just being in bands. Erm. I'd desperately be looking through the papers for
40 reviews, and not finding them and thinking "Oh that's dreadful" and then seeing
41 other people's reviews and thinking "They're rubbish!" Why can't they write
42 about me! I mean in my, oh God, 25 years of playing with people live, I
43 probably only ever had a mention about 2 or 3 times. Yet I can look at other
44 people, hundreds and thousands of other people, that probably have got books
45 full of reviews written about them, so I just thought. "Well, they are obviously
46 never going to pick me, so stop caring about it."

47
48 How did you account for it?

49
50 Account for it? I never could. I just assumed I was in the wrong place at the
51 wrong time and that I wasn't - that was part of the thing I suppose - wasn't in
52 the right area that they wanted to be writing about.

53
54 It's very difficult. Isn't it. it's so much fashion led.

1 Yes But I think a lot of that comes down to friends of friends and family. Or
2 being in the latest thing or. I don't know.
3
4 So when you let go of all that, it became
5
6 Oh a lot easier, yes.
7
8 How do you feel about recognition now. You mentioned it would be nice to
9 leave stuff behind.
10
11 It doesn't bother me at all. I really don't need it at all. I don't crave it. Erm. If
12 there was any, it would be nice, but if there was any I don't think I would feel
13 anything about it now.
14
15 So the reward's doing the job, doing it well, being pleased with what you do,
16
17 I have to do that on every job,
18
19 and getting paid properly for it...
20
21 I have to do that on every job, so it's just what I'm used to now. People will just
22 say "Oh yes, that was good." And you go "Oh Right. Great" There doesn't really
23 have to be any more than that. And that's fine.
24
25 Do you see working in music as the same as any other job or do you see it as
26 having something different and unique about it?
27
28 Er (3). I think it's both. It is the same in fact, in that you've got to have the same
29 job skills and people skills. I think you have to have that in everything. But its
30 also, it's not unique, but it's different to working in a bank or an office or a shop.
31 Erm, but only in that occasionally you erm (2) you get this external recognition
32 that somehow it's better that you did that, than in a normal job.
33
34 And how do you feel about that? Do you compare yourself to other people in the
35 creative arts? Do you feel more affinity with them or not?
36
37 Erm. I try not to because I only think it leads to disappointment, because I think
38 you'll always find someone better at what you do, in any field that you pick, and
39 you'll always find people that are much worse, er so
40
41 You see it as very competitive world, people very much thinking how well other
42 people are doing?
43
44 I used to, Yes, yes. There certainly is, but like I say only really within this, I
45 don't know what it's called, I don't know what this area is called any more. I
46 used to say the pop world, but it's not even the pop world, you might find it in
47 world music, you might find people that are really aggressive and competitive.
48 So I don't know what this thing is that I am trying to describe. But it's
49 something that people have. It is this egotism, and this erm aggression and I
50 assume that you get that in every kind of job, so in a way I think it's the same.
51 The only difference is, I don't even know if that's different, if you,
52
53 But you're producing something, aren't you, you're producing music that people
54 can hear, as opposed to a painting or an object that you're making.
55

1 Yes. I mean. I suppose it doesn't hold any attraction for me if someone is
2 swayed by listening to anything that I've done, either way. I just wouldn't feel
3 anything about it actually. If they say "That's the best thing I've ever heard" I
4 just think that it's not so

5
6 So it's primarily the way you feel about it that's important and the fact that you

7
8 Mmm, er (2) It's not even that. I don't have to feel anything about it. I just do
9 it.

10
11 I'm trying just to understand the, the object of it, for you.

12
13 It's just that that's what I'm here doing and erm at the moment I can't think of
14 anything else that I can do. [laughs] I can't do anything.

15
16 So you don't see it as a vocation or something like that?

17
18 I used to but not any more, no, it's just what I do.

19
20 So there's a big difference for you between performing, being in a band doing
21 the music that you write, playing with a band and actually doing what you do
22 now.

23
24 Well there wouldn't be now, but there used to be. Yes, because when you're
25 doing that, with a band and so on, you're so tightly focussed on it that you don't
26 see anything else and it becomes really important. Erm. And I haven't done that.
27 I am going to do, I mean we're doing an album in June and writing some tunes
28 for it, but I won't look at it that way any more and it'll be a lot easier.

29
30 But when you say we, who are you talking about?

31
32 One of these bands, the (name), we're called, playing mod music!

33
34 You're still in a number of bands, you play with?

35
36 Yes

37
38 OK, 'cause you haven't really said that. Is it important for you to continue to be
39 in bands and do gigs and stuff?

40
41 That I should do. It's not actually important, but I think that I should do it.

42
43 Howso should?

44
45 Just so that I can actually also show that I am at a professional standard to play
46 the guitar, or whatever. Because it is a prerequisite for doing the composition
47 that I do.

48
49 How so?

50
51 Because they only give it to people who've got a high level track record of being
52 an instrumentalist. Otherwise they'd be doing it themselves. Also I would never
53 have gotten the opportunity if I wasn't. At the time I was on Number One
54 records and stuff like that, which is why they asked me, and I was writing. So
55 because I was number one in America with a guitar solo on the record they said
56 "Oh can you do us this?", you know and then having done that for a while. Well

1 I suppose having never done that, if I'd never done that. Lots of people who are
2 really good who have never made a record, but they don't get asked.
3
4 You're being totally modest! So it keeps up your kind of profile in that area.
5
6 Yes.
7
8 Is it enjoyable for you to do as well?
9
10 Yes I do enjoy it most of the time, except when it's raining when you're getting
11 your amp out at 1 o'clock in the morning!
12
13 What about the other side to it, travelling about and all that?
14
15 I don't do it any more, really. Hardly ever. I used to love it. Yes. But it was very
16 unreal. You spend 18 hours waiting to do the show and then spend an hour and
17 a half on stage. And then the next day, another 18 hours, It's a long day, isn't it?
18 [laughing] No, it's 15 hours! Whatever it is, but! Yes we do occasionally travel.
19 We do really bizarre travelling now like to Bosnia and places like that. Really
20 strange places.
21
22 Is it you that decides where you go?
23
24 No.
25
26 You do it together?
27
28 The last one we did was a billionaire's party on a yacht in Sardinia. So I couldn't
29 really decide that, could I? No, it's just whatever. People ask us.
30
31 Right yes. And is that out of your control, you've got management, or?
32
33 No we do it all word of mouth. We just do it ourselves. Between us. I mean the
34 band is like six people- there's the keyboard player from (band), a drummer
35 from – no, bass player from (name), the singers work with er, what's his name –
36 (name). They've all got so many connections between them. They're always
37 being asked.
38
39 You get lots of work.
40
41 We get lots of just private work. We don't have to work for anyone really. We
42 just do it and then people like, we had a brigadier was at a gig and he said "Oh
43 I'd love to see you play for the troops!" So we played in Sarajevo at the
44 liberation of the City, and stuff like that. We do some amazing stuff.
45
46 And is that something you enjoy?
47
48 Ye, that's really good fun, but it's just one-offs.
49
50 You said a few minutes ago it was just something you feel you have to do, like it
51 was something you didn't like doing.
52
53 Well, I don't like it in the UK, because I actually have to pick up that amp, put it
54 in the car. In the old days I used to like it. I used to, everything was taken care of
55 with roadies and limousines to pick you up, which I didn't mind! But, no, I'm
56 just la-

1
2 You like doing special gigs that take you to unusual places.

3
4 I like it when you're on stage. I like it when you're on stage. And I like the
5 travelling. But I don't like erm (2), well I don't like the loading out at the crappy
6 club at 1 morning in the rain, that kind of thing, and I now increasingly don't
7 like being in smoky environments and stuff like that. So it does limit you a bit

8
9 When you get stressed out, particularly writing stuff rather than playing, how do
10 you handle it? What do you do to help yourself?

11
12 Erm. Try and have a break. Get out in the countryside. There's a great pub just a
13 few doors up there. Fullers beer. A couple of pints. Erm..

14
15 Do you do any sport, exercise?

16
17 Unfortunately I don't. I've done bits of cycling. Oh I do my new thing, last few
18 years, is clay pigeon shooting, which is great. It just gets you out in the country
19 and you don't think about anything. But generally it's to erm (2) Actually the
20 best thing is to actually just finish it, but normally I just have a break and go and
21 walk on the Downs.

22
23 And you come back to it?

24
25 Yes.

26
27 What about relationships, problems with people you're working with. How do
28 you handle that when that's getting to you?

29
30 Erm (2) I don't handle it very well and I don't tell them and I tend to bottle it up
31 and then I tend to just blow them out and not do it again. Not very good.

32
33 So you wouldn't start shouting, ranting and raving at them

34
35 No

36
37 You'd just not say anything

38
39 Yes and then I'd usually give them a terse email or a phone call and erm. More
40 to the point, I just wouldn't do it, because I just don't really need to. But when I
41 have, I've handled it really badly I've just felt terrible about it.

42
43 What makes you think it's bad, whatever you've done?

44
45 Erm because I've felt so bad about it. I haven't slept, and you know, I've got
46 really angry about it, but I haven't

47
48 You were worried about what you'd have to do or say? Is this to criticise people,
49 really, that's very hard?

50
51 No, it's things like when erm I've agreed to do something with someone and
52 then they say "Oh I'm really sorry but I've got a 3 month tour" and things like
53 that. I haven't felt like telling the client that we can't do it for 3 months. Yet
54 neither have I felt like telling the person OK I'm getting someone else, so I
55 haven't wanted to upset anyone. So I've just like been stewing over it, and then
56 in the end I have just said to the client "Look I'm sorry I can't do this with this

1 person because they're not really pulling their weight." And they've just said
2 "Oh OK. Do it with someone else then."

3
4 You find it very hard to do?

5
6 I do because I don't erm I don't like upsetting people really. Which is one reason
7 why I find it easier not to have to work with them. Erm. But in a way I suppose
8 that I wouldn't accept it.

9
10 Does that work the other way round too, that you wouldn't get upset by people?

11
12 Erm. Yes there was a period when I would, but erm I've realised there's no point
13 really. So I don't do it any more. And regards to being upset by other people, if
14 the, obviously I take certain upsets but if I thought it was major upsets then I just
15 wouldn't be party to it.

16
17 Like what? What sort of thing?

18
19 Well like I wouldn't wait for someone for 3 months ever again, with something
20 that I knew I could have just done on my own anyway. But this person wants
21 such and such a person because he's a famous instrumentalist. Erm, I'd just
22 scrap the project or say "OK, I can't do it with him, I'll do it with someone
23 else" or er whatever. But then I suppose really at the end of the day, if that
24 person is going away for 3 months, maybe you should just say OK, well I'll wait
25 for 3 months. But I don't really feel like that. Quite often I just want to do it. I've
26 found it very frustrating this particular thing. Doing something that's quite,
27 we're trying to do really well, and this person was supposed to be really into it
28 and then all of a sudden: "Oh sorry, I've got 3 months work. I've go to go",
29 which you can understand. But then I would say "Well then don't be telling me
30 that you're available to be co-writer, if you're going to be like that". So again, it
31 was a learning process and I wouldn't do it any more. If someone said that to me
32 now, I'd say "Oh fine then, I'll do it with someone else". But I did find that very
33 tough.

34
35 How did you manage to find a way of dealing with it, if you've learned to do
36 that?

37
38 Erm, er (3). I didn't deal with it very well at all. It made me, like I say, sleepless,
39 and really angry and uptight. In the end what happened? Erm (6) I can't
40 remember. I don't think I did deal with it really.

41
42 But in future of something like that happened, you feel you could handle it
43 better.

44
45 I'd either go to the client, as I said, and say "OK well I've done a certain amount
46 with this person that I know you want, but I can't do the rest, because they won't
47 be here. Do you want me to finish it with someone else? Or is the thing off, or
48 what do you want to do?" I suppose I'd say that. And then I'd sort it out in a few
49 days.

50
51 And you've had to learn from your own experience really how to handle these
52 difficulties.

53
54 Yes and because also, maybe at that time, maybe that was the only major project
55 I had and I thought it was really important. But looking back on it, it wouldn't
56 have been the end of the world if I just hadn't done it.

1
2 I noticed in your thing you said you'd had some therapy, which was to do with
3 your work. Can you say anything at all about that?
4

5 Yes just sort of erm writer's block I suppose, culminating from erm, I still don't
6 know what it is. I didn't find the therapy that helpful, to be honest. I saw a
7 cognitive therapist, for a while. I can't say, I personally don't think that I found
8 it very helpful, 'cause we also did regression and things like that. And I've got
9 quite a troubled past, family circumstances, so I actually felt worse after it, six
10 months of it. So I didn't find it that helpful
11

12 Did it help with the writer's block?
13

14 No, I just got over it myself after another 3 to 6 months.
15

16 How did you manage that?
17

18 Just time.
19

20 Right. So it kind of went after a while.
21

22 Erm. No. Books. I bought quite a lot of books and research on the Net. But I
23 don't know in the end, maybe it was just time. Who knows?
24

25 What sort of writer's block did you have? How did it show itself?
26

27 I just felt erm that I was useless and that I couldn't do anything and it was so
28 erm
29

30 It was a real crisis of confidence really rather than writer's block.
31

32 Yes. Yes. It was so severe that I literally, I just couldn't bear to touch any of
33 these [instruments]. I thought everything, which physically meant that my
34 fingers just wouldn't do anything that was erm productive. And so I had that for
35 about a year.
36

37 Boy, that must have been terrible for you.
38

39 Yes. It was. It was a bad year. And I don't know. Maybe the fact that I did see
40 this person, maybe it did make me come out but I don't know but personally I
41 didn't find it that helpful. But from what I read I was never told of any cognitive
42 erm techniques during this counselling, whatever. It was all about speech and
43 regression.
44

45 Oh really. It doesn't sound very cognitive to me.
46

47 Exactly, yes. That's right.
48

49 So you had to help yourself through it really.
50

51 Yes.
52

53 Did you get any help from anyone else?
54

55 I did see the GP. But she just sort of prescribed. Oh God that really dreadful
56 Seroxat.

1
2 Yes. You had that, did you?
3
4 I took it, but I stopped it. I just knew after a couple of weeks it was not going to
5 do any good.
6
7 It sounds like an awful experience you had in every way. But you got yourself
8 through it in the end.
9
10 Yes. But then again I don't know you see. I think what. I didn't erm discuss
11 finishing the therapy with this erm therapist I just
12
13 Did you just pack it in?
14
15 Yes I just packed it in. But in a way I don't know. But the fact that she made me
16 go and see the GP and she fixed up an appointment etc etc So who knows. You
17 know about the Seroxat thing, don't you? You know how terrible it is.
18
19 Yes I do. How long were you on it for?
20
21 Just for a few weeks and erm it started to
22
23 Did you have side effects?
24
25 Yes terrible. I really hated it so I stopped. I did do, as I was told, tail it off, but
26 I'm so glad I didn't stay on that for a while.
27
28 There are so many other things they've got that they could prescribe that they
29 don't have those effects.
30
31 Yes. So in the end erm (2) I don't know what it was. I went through dark
32 periods, all my family dying and stuff and I didn't suffer from that. I don't
33 know. I just don't know what it was.
34
35 Was there any particular work that you had that triggered it off?
36
37 No. Erm. Well possibly. I was like that before but I was also then given work
38 that I found difficult. But then I might not have found it difficult. It was to do
39 music for comedy, so this (name) and stuff. But I mean now I just think it's a
40 laugh. At the time it seemed like the end of the world to me. Right they're
41 asking me to write comedy. That's it, It's all over, you know. But in fact the
42 reason they were asking me is 'cause comedy is one of the most used erm
43 products, you know. All around the world people want comedic sounding media.
44 So in fact they were doing me a favour and I thought this was them just getting
45 rid of me. At that time. But anyway in the end
46
47 Did it affect your relationship with the people giving you the work?
48
49 Erm. Not that I'm aware of
50
51 Did it have an impact on the family?
52
53 Yes. It must have, yes. Yes. I was down in the dumps for ages. But erm I don't
54 know what it was in the end.
55
56 You did well to get through that.

1
2 Yes I think it might have been, I don't know the specific book. I've got it
3 upstairs I could show you it. I think it's a best seller. But I think there are 10 or
4 12 cognitive erm rules to do with thinking about things and it was them and it
5 took a year and a half to sink in and I just thought I can understand them in
6 principle.
7
8 This was dealing with negative thoughts
9
10 Yes that kind of thing yeh exactly and erm
11
12 Building your self-confidence up again.
13
14 Yes exactly. Yes.
15
16 Doesn't sound like you had any of that to me.
17
18 And they erm, I don't know what it was but anyway it passed.
19
20 Have you had writer's block since?
21
22 No not at all. I've been absolutely fine.
23
24 Well I'm glad that you managed to get through that. Sounds like a terrible time
25 that you had.
26
27 Yes it wasn't great. And obviously because of being erm so erm withdrawn
28 during that period, no work offered as well, which was a by-product. So.
29
30 But you get yourself out of it in the end and the work started coming.
31
32 Yes I did
33
34 How did you manage that? Did you have to contact people and say "Here I am"
35 or what?
36
37 Erm. I think I must have done. I must have just started phoning people up again.
38 'Cause I just wouldn't ring anyone. I'd just think "Oh that's it. It's all over now."
39 But yes I think I did and then bit by bit erm just build it back up.
40
41 So it must have taken a lot of guts really for you to get back and get in there.
42
43 Sort of, but the truth is that when you feel fine again you don't really see what
44 the problem was!
45
46 That's right. Yes. But there was a stage in there when you think you are
47 beginning to get there and you make those first steps.
48
49 Yes. Yes.
50
51 You take those first steps and they are difficult aren't they, when you've been
52
53 But it is funny now. In a way it's funny. I definitely did just think that was it and
54 all right. I'll just get a car on hire purchase and be a cabbie [laughing]
55
56 Did you. You thought of giving it all up.

1
2 Well I thought it had given me up. There is no
3
4 You had no ideas at all. You couldn't do anything
5
6 No I just thought I couldn't do anything
7
8 Did this happen suddenly, or was it gradually?
9
10 Erm. I think it must have been quite gradual but I don't know exactly when it
11 started and I don't know. I was trying to think of that, to give you dates but I
12 know I stopped seeing this person in erm, I saw this person from, was it, not this
13 winter, not last winter, so what are we talking, erm, 2001 the summer of. So it
14 must have been bad prior to that for a while. And then I saw this person. I went
15 through the MU actually. I went and saw someone in the West End through the
16 Musicians' Benevolent Fund and he said "Look you really do need some help".
17 He put me onto this therapist, all in good faith I'm sure. And so I think it was
18 probably, so it must have been 2000 I was feeling rough, into 2001 I tried to do
19 something about it and then erm I started recovering last spring.
20
21 What was the point at which you decided you needed help rather than you could
22 handle it on your own, any particular thing?
23
24 Erm, just er (2). No just that, because I thought I could do it myself. Or I
25 wanted to get out of it, so I wanted erm assistance and I suppose other people,
26 I've known other people be the same, and they've always said "I'll go and get
27 some help". No specific trigger point or anything.
28
29 I am glad you were able to give yourself the help that you weren't getting from
30 the professionals.
31
32 I don't know, it's hard to say. Maybe I'm discounting what happened with the.
33 It's just I couldn't tell at the time. I don't really genuinely feel he did. I don't
34 know though.
35
36 If you don't feel it did, then it didn't. It's as simple as that, and you're the expert,
37 you're the best judge of that.
38
39 Yes I suppose so.
40
41 Anyway I think you did really well to get yourself through that. Moving on,,
42 because that's obviously a real down side when you doubt yourself, that's about
43 as down as it gets, isn't it, doubting yourself and your abilities. Turning to the
44 effect of music on the rest of life, OK. Are your friends, is your social life
45 mainly in music or is it outside as well? Do you have interests and friends
46 outside music?
47
48 I suppose unfortunately all the ones that are supposedly outside music seem to
49 be getting more and more involved.
50
51 How do you mean supposedly?
52
53 Well. The people we know locally, they start forming bands and all their kids are
54 forming bands.
55
56 Is that partly 'cause of you doing it?

1
2 I've no idea. I don't know.

3
4 Do you think you might have been inspiring them?

5
6 Or I think maybe everyone has a latent desire to be a musician. This guy round
7 the corner who works for the GPO and it turns out after years of knowing him he
8 invites us round and he's got a studio at home and a keyboard, and his kids have
9 got guitars and basses. And then other one, he's in advertising, which is fairly
10 obvious. He's built a studio in his garden, he's filled it with drums and guitars
11 and then another one up here has got a woollens company. He's a bass player
12 and lead singer in a blues band now! [laughs]

13
14 That's extraordinary! Yes.

15
16 And it turns out all the wives have gone out with musicians when they were
17 younger, etc etc. I can't think of anyone that's completely not. All my kids have
18 got friends or they like music.

19
20 Are your kids into music?

21
22 Yes. Yes.

23
24 How do your kids feel about having a dad who's a musician?

25
26 You'll have to ask them. I've got no idea. They never tell me anything.

27
28 What do you think they would say? Come on, have a guess!

29
30 I don't know.

31
32 Would they be pleased about it?

33
34 I think they are yes.

35
36 Would they rather you were a cabbie or somebody who worked in a bank?

37
38 No. I think they like it but they would never give me the benefit. [laughing]

39
40 Do they know what you've done?

41
42 I don't think they do really know. (daughter) was, when I was playing, we took
43 her to see Michael Jackson at Wembley Stadium. We played there, still it's a
44 record. Seven days at Wembley Stadium. Not the Arena, the actual Football
45 Stadium. We took (name). But I was carrying her. So she must have been. Well I
46 was carrying her around the site. She must have been maybe 3 or 4. But she says
47 she can remember it now, because she wants to say. "Oh yes. I've seen Michael
48 Jackson backstage!" But I don't know.

49
50 So what about you though, what would they say about you being a musician?

51
52 Erm I don't know. They never tell me anything.

53
54 What would you guess they'd say to their mates, 'cause kids talk about parents,
55 don't they all the time with their mates at school.
56

1 I wouldn't like to guess, because literally they don't give me a clue as to what
2 they.
3
4 Do you think they'd be pleased?
5
6 I think they must be I suppose. But I don't know. They just don't let on anything
7 to me. I assume that they think it's good, yes.
8
9 Do you think that having the lifestyle of a musician that you have had, has had
10 an effect on the family?
11
12 Erm. (2) It must have. I haven't been like some people I do know, that have
13 been on tour all their lives. At the height I only ever did 2 or 3 months in a year.
14 Whereas I know people that are on the road 10 months of the year.
15
16 Was that deliberate on your part?
17
18 Erm. It was a mixture of how things were offered and erm (4) wanting to stay at
19 home. So it was a mixture of both. In latter years I just haven't done it at all
20 apart from very occasional trips.
21
22 Is that so that you have more time with your family?
23
24 Yes. I'd done what maximum 2 weeks away at a time in the last few years. Then
25 it's only once a year so it's gone right down to nothing now.
26
27 Do your kids play musical instruments?
28
29 They have done, yes. Erm. Yes they have.
30
31 Has it been of any interest to you that they are musical, or interested in music? Is
32 it important to you that they are?
33
34 No it's not important at all. I'd like them to be, erm, but not to see it as a career
35 thing, to do it for pleasure. (daughter) was erm er just an average viola player, as
36 a what, about 10 year old, for a couple of years and then a few years ago she saw
37 her first band. She said "Right" So I bought her that bass, really nice bass and
38 within 3 months, 4 months she's playing quite advanced, I mean really quite
39 advanced and then she decided that she wasn't the best one in the world so she
40 was going to give it up.
41
42 Oh right, so it was just a phase for her really.
43
44 Mmm. And (son) is, I find the kids today, I think it's not true of all of them,
45 most of them, but maybe that's what it was like when I was young, they don't
46 want to put in the commitment. You've got to be really quite committed, and
47 what they want to do is
48
49 They don't want to practise?
50
51 No they just want to pick it up, have a laugh and be a pop star, you know. And
52 once they realise. Yes, OK that was actually no good, you'd better do that again,
53 it's "No I'm not. I'm going to watch the telly instead or go on the computer." So
54 I don't know, but then I do know kids, because there's quite a few kids coming
55 through now, playing. There's just one out of maybe a dozen that I know at the
56 moment. And he's definitely very keen. And he does it completely for his own

1 pleasure. Doesn't make a big deal about it and he could do really well. But the
2 rest of them, they just want to be on MTV.

3
4 Fame. Fame and glory.

5
6 Yes. You don't have to play. They're not interested. They don't want to put the
7 work in.

8
9 Any other effects that you being a musician has had on family life? How about
10 your relationship with (wife), has that affected that?

11
12 Well it must have yes. But then again I suppose any job must.

13
14 Do you think it's harder to be a musician, for a partnership?

15
16 Not really, not unless you're touring. I do know someone who has been away a
17 lot who is having a massive crisis but, it's fairly obvious, if you're not at home...

18
19 It's up and down isn't it? For a lot of musicians it's money, it's feast and famine

20
21 Exactly yes.

22
23 That has an effect on family life. How have you managed that?

24
25 Erm (2) I suppose it's been relatively stable since we had the children. Maybe
26 we didn't feel daring enough to have them until it looked like we were erm er
27 stable enough not to be in dire straits. So (daughter) was '85. I suppose it's got to
28 be said since then really, that really it was only the mid to late 70s that were a bit
29 feast and famine,

30
31 That you felt you had to be in a position to have a steady income to bring up
32 kids?

33
34 Yes to be reasonably stable, although to be honest I'm not sure how important
35 that is. I mean it helps. It's nice I'm sure. It must be terrible, and we have been
36 absolutely broke. I suppose when (daughter) was a tiny baby it could have been
37 hit or miss at certain times, but fortunately we've been OK. It's balanced out
38 over the years. But I suppose what it is, it has had massive peaks and troughs.
39 But you just take the mean line through it all.

40
41 Has it been important to you to have had somebody like (wife), who's into music
42 and cares about it?

43
44 Yes. Oh yes, it's been important to erm. Well yes, she cares about it, but also
45 even if she wasn't, because I know a lot of wives that aren't into music, just to
46 be a stable supportive partner. Oh yes, these guys, I think most of the people that
47 erm just frazzle out don't have that thing, so I would say that is very important.

48
49 So it has been something that has been a strength and support for you? Is that
50 during that difficult period too?

51
52 Definitely. Oh yes. Definitely.

53
54 So, how do you think it has been for (wife) to have had you as a musician
55 partner?

1 Ha! [laughing] Well. I think it has been a source of amusement for her! No I
2 think
3
4 Pride?
5
6 Yes. Yes. It must have been that as well. See I try not to think what other people
7 think, because whenever I do it I'm always wrong. So I don't do it any more.
8 But erm.
9
10 You don't ask them, you check it out?
11
12 No. Oh. I'm sure that it's been mixed. But that she must have had, 'cause the
13 problem is, the biggest moments, she's been to all these stadium gigs and she's
14 been around the world to a certain extent. But not as often as she would have
15 liked, but
16
17 In connection with your music?
18
19 No. No. Doing my thing. I just do it here. Or in the studios in town or elsewhere,
20 And she never goes. There's no point. She's welcome to but er
21
22 She never has, she used to go?
23
24 Not since the old days.
25
26 The old days, meaning?
27
28 When, when people used to have people hanging around studios. The '70s. That
29 all stopped in the '80s and it just doesn't happen any more. And erm it's
30 incredibly boring anyway, listening to a bass drum for 12 hours!
31
32 Have you shown the same interest in her music as she's shown in yours?
33
34 In hers, what when she used to make it?
35
36 Yes I used to make it with her. We used to do it together.
37
38 Was music an element in bringing you together in the first place?
39
40 Oh yes. We met because we were in erm similar bands at the same time and, oh
41 yes definitely. And she only really, well, she stopped for many reasons, you'd
42 have to ask her, but pressures on being a female artist during. She sort of
43 stopped, what about the early '80s, erm because she didn't want to accept the
44 strictures of just being a dumb blonde, which she definitely wasn't. There's no
45 question about it. She wasn't writing in that area, it's not, there was nothing to
46 do with the business that interested her in that area. Erm. So unfortunately she
47 didn't want to, but she decided she'd rather not do it if that was, and at that time,
48 I mean looking back, the thing is for her, people now still say that the stuff that
49 we did was fantastic and still sounds it, but unfortunately we didn't have the
50 connections, we didn't have the erm (2) Nowadays you can do it on your own on
51 the Internet or on this [recording gear], but it didn't
52
53 You still could, couldn't you?
54
55 Yes, but unfortunately its 27 years on or whatever it is. What is it – 20 years on.
56

1 How do you think she sees what you are doing now?

2
3 She loves it when I get a new commission. Because she knows that we'll,
4 everything is 2 years off. All the stuff I do, it takes about 2 years for the royalties
5 to come in. The same as I do. It just means a positive thing and everything is still
6 rolling on. Like any business, if you have work, it's good.

7
8 Just very briefly, did you come yourself from a musical family? Were there any
9 musicians?

10
11 Erm. Only. No musicians that I am aware of. Unfortunately I let all my family
12 pass away without learning anything about them, so no-one knows now. And
13 I've tried searching slightly on the Net and so on, there's nothing. So the only
14 way I could do it is to go back to (place) or get one of my sisters to do it.

15
16 But as far as you remember growing up?

17
18 The only direct, my uncle, this is his high fi here, all this black stuff. My dad's
19 brother. The eldest of three brothers. But he would play music, and it's funny. He
20 only played instrumental music. He didn't like singers. So when I was about 4 or
21 5 he played Django Reinhard and so on and then he survived everyone else, you
22 know my dad, his younger brother, erm all the aunts and uncles. He held on till
23 he was about 85 and he only died about 3 years ago and he left me his
24 equipment.

25
26 So he was thinking about you then?

27
28 Well yes, and that was my direct connection. But back then, you are talking
29 about covers of Herb Alpert and stuff. He only liked easy listening and. He did
30 like classics and so on and he did like. He would listen to Billy Holiday and
31 people like that but on the whole he just decided during the 60s he didn't like
32 pop music so he just kept listening to all the old bands, all the great old bands,
33 which must have had vocalists but on the whole he would always just play me
34 instrumental music. Quite bizarre really!

35
36 Any things that you still would like to do that you haven't yet done in music?
37 Any ambitions that you have?

38
39 Erm (5) Not really. 'Cause the things I used to be ambitious about aren't
40 important to me.

41
42 How do you see the next few years then?

43
44 Just carry on what I'm doing. Yes I wouldn't mind, if these bands that I play in,
45 if we ended up being stadium fillers, but it doesn't matter to me if we do or not.
46 I've been quite happily playing to clubs. We have done some large gigs but, we
47 play at private parties and if people enjoy it and dance and have fun and

48
49 Ask you back?

50
51 Yes. That's fine by me. So erm, no I am not ambitious.

52
53 So more of the same?

54
55 Just anything really, whatever comes.

56

1 OK As you know I am moving into working with musicians is there anything
2 from your own experience that you think I should know about that would help
3 me in my work? Any things that you have come across?
4
5 Relating to psychology, or just the job or
6
7 Helping musicians to, in my work helping musicians to be more creative, and
8 deal with their problems.
9
10 Erm. I wouldn't know how to be more creative, apart from just basically keep on
11 a balanced sort of keel,
12
13 Any things that I should be aware of really, that might not be obvious to
14 someone on the outside of music?
15
16 Erm. (6)
17
18 One or two people have mentioned to me, from different musical backgrounds,
19 for instance, being shocked by how much self-promotion is needed.
20
21 That's true. If you brought up maybe hundreds of points I'd probably agree with
22 you.
23
24 That it isn't enough to be a good musician.
25
26 Absolutely. Self-promotion is everything. If I didn't promote, nothing would
27 happen.
28
29 You were saying that in yourself you found some of the personal situations you
30 got into with people are very difficult.
31
32 Self-promotion is everything, but I don't want to be involved with people like
33 that, so it's not important to me any more. But
34
35 How do you mean, people like that?
36
37 That's what I'm saying, who am I saying? I haven't figured out who I am talking
38 about [laughing]. I just know that erm, yes but self-promotion is very important.
39 It's probably everything. I've worked with so many people who have got no
40 talent whatever, who are multi-millionaires, so self-promotion is absolutely
41 everything.
42
43 How do you deal with that? How do you feel about that when you see them?
44
45 Well, it's funny because they don't, they don't know why they've done it either.
46 They don't know how they've done it so I don't feel anything about it. Because I
47 definitely would have envied them initially and then then when I realised what
48 they were like I have been puzzled, and then I've just thought. "Well that's the
49 way the world is."
50
51 If you had loads and loads of money, what difference would it make to your
52 musical life?
53
54 I probably wouldn't do it, I suppose. I'd probably just play over a bottle of wine
55 with friends. But then I don't know, 'cause I haven't got it!
56

1 I'm just asking you to speculate!
2
3 I have this idea that I would probably have a few yachts and take up flying and
4 erm
5
6 So there's a few objects and things you'd buy.
7
8 Yes, And then at the end of the day go home and eat rice and veg and [laughs]
9
10 So a different lifestyle
11
12 But it's probably not true is it, because I know people, I've met people, very
13 successful wealthy people, who just want to be in a band. And they're hopeless,
14 and they can't do it, so they. I've been in bands where millionaire film
15 producers, have hired, have said "Right get me a really good band." and hired
16 the best band in London for them just so they can sing 3 songs for their mates.
17 So I don't know.
18
19 What do you make of that then?
20
21 I don't mind it. We're getting paid! But I suppose it's because they really want
22 to do it and they really enjoy it, and we don't mind doing it because they are
23 paying us, they're buying us a beautiful dinner and
24
25 If you had loads of money would you want to carry on doing it?
26
27 Well, I'm saying that. I don't know if I would. But I don't know what you do
28 when you have loads of money, What do you do?
29
30 Do what you want, don't you? Whatever that is.
31
32 Yes. Yes Like I say I'll speculate, that I'd probably have a castle and a loch and
33 employ people and have yachts and planes and wander round and just play
34 occasionally.
35
36 Would you carry on writing?
37
38 I suppose so.
39
40 Would it be for you mainly?
41
42 Well I wouldn't know what I would do then? If I was in a castle I'd have to
43 write bagpipe music! [laughs]
44
45 All right! Any important areas that we haven't covered?
46
47 See I'm hopeless I don't think about anything!
48
49 Yes you do, come on!
50
51 I don't. Unless. If you ask me, what about, I could give you an opinion, but if
52 I'm not prompted I don't have any opinions.
53
54 Anything from your knowledge of your own work and what it's like for you, any
55 big areas we haven't mentioned? The only thing I can think of is you haven't

1 said very much about, now you are in this stable position and you do get the
2 work,
3
4 But it isn't stable is it? It could end tomorrow.
5
6 About this transition from being a player mainly to actually writing. Anything
7 you want to add to that?
8
9 Well I always wrote. I wrote from the very beginning. I played guitar and wrote
10 my own tunes because I couldn't figure out the Beatle's songs. So I don't know,
11 that's what I've always done.
12
13 But being paid to write rather than
14
15 Erm. If you're paid to write you've got to write what the people want. You have
16 to do what they want. But then see most of the time they don't know what he
17 want.
18
19 I'm just thinking about the nuts and bolts of it actually. Getting into the position
20 of getting the work. You made that transition.
21
22 Right, well. The way I did it was at that time I was getting booked a lot as an
23 instrumentalist and played on erm well known records.
24
25 That's right. So it was just a seamless move really, as you described it earlier.
26 OK.
27
28 I wouldn't know how you'd do it without this. I do know all the publishers I
29 work for, on the websites or whatever, or it happens with every kind of
30 publisher, people will send them work all the time, you know. Unknowns.
31 Unfortunately it probably won't get ever listened to, or if it does, even if it is any
32 good it probably won't get noticed.
33
34 So you were headhunted really?
35
36 Yes, sort of.
37
38 Anything else that hasn't come up? That you think I might be interested in?
39
40 Mmmm. Yes I'm not good at posing questions. I can answer them. I might think
41 of something tomorrow but
42
43 OK. All right then. We'll stop there then.
44
45 I'd like to say something but I can't think.
46
47 OK I think you've done very well actually. Thanks.

Transcript 6 :

Nigel

1 When people ask you to describe yourself as a musician, what do you normally
2 say?

3
4 I say I'm a composer of music for erm films and television.

5
6 How do people react to you when you say you're a composer?

7
8 Usually with a lot of interest. Sometimes I actually avoid talking about it at all
9 so they don't end up getting too focussed on it, but yes there's usually quite a lot
10 of interest. Particularly anything connected with the media I think. Probably if I
11 said I wrote string quartets it may not be quite the same. I think when I did used
12 to say that there wasn't so much interest. They always want to know what did
13 you write for and is it anything we know and that sort of thing and I always
14 fumble through and try and remember what I've written for and find they've
15 never heard anything. [laughs]

16
17 Do you like being asked?

18
19 Erm (2) Yes it's fine. I used to like it. I used to revel in it at one time. I think.

20
21 What did it kind of tell you, if people were interested in what you do?

22
23 I think it was more to do with stroking my own ego really, and feeling important.
24 [laughs] I'm not really so interested in that 'cause actually that cuts both ways
25 really and you end up, I don't know, not talking about anything terribly profound
26 or deep, which is more interesting.

27
28 Do you always get questions that relate to the fascination with the media world
29 or do you ever get questions that are more to do with your contribution to it?

30
31 Oh yes, the questions often do relate also to the.. yes, that would be if it was a
32 longer conversation in a more intimate setting, yes.

33
34 When you write the music that you do, are you aware of having any kind of
35 audience for it?

36
37 While I'm actually writing? Erm. No, not really. The audience is the director or
38 producer as far as I was concerned, because erm they have a very distinct idea of
39 what they want, and my job is to find out what that is, and then do it. Erm. And
40 that can take quite a lot of time sometimes, because they'll say something is
41 happy or sad, and they'll mean something quite different from what I would
42 think was happy and sad in the music. And then I'll write something and they'd
43 say "Oh no that's too sad", and so I'll write something else and they'll say
44 "That's fine, you know." And quite often I'll write a lot of music. So they are the
45 audience and it's them I have to please. If the general audience for the television
46 don't like the music, erm then it's the director's fault in a way, it's my fault as
47 well. I don't really think fault comes into it but it's just the way that it goes.

48
49 At what point do you get to know whether what you've done is right or not for
50 the director?

51
52 Well quite often it's just simply I send them say 5 pieces of music for the same
53 piece of film. This is early on in the business. And they'll come back and say.
54 "Well we really like 2A. Could you just do a little bit of that", and then I know.

55
56 So there's a tremendous amount of effort involved in producing a certain amount
57 of music for someone.

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A tremendous amount of creativity. I wouldn't necessarily call it effort. I tend to erm write very fast, I view it rather like throwing paint at a wall, to see what it looks like. A lot of it's improvisation and I think the composition gets more into it when I have to start fitting into the film and making a structure.

So you start with a fairly loose idea and play around with that and then develop it and refine it and focus it later on in the process.

Yes. It does depend on the project too. Some projects erm are fairly straightforward, and following on from other projects and therefore I know what I'm working on, I know the Director, and I've got a very good idea. Other projects, I'm working on one at the moment, being completely experimental so I'm throwing everything out of the window, and just seeing what ideas I can come up with.

How does the relationship with the Director affect what you are able to do musically?

Erm (3) Quite a lot really. I think the most important thing a director needs to be is supportive, of what I'm doing,

Do you find that erm many of the Directors feel they need to know about music, or do know about music, so they can talk to you intelligently about it as opposed to "I want a happy feeling" and so on.

Not many know it in detail and actually that isn't always an advantage.

How does it work?

Because they get slightly stumbled over their own knowledge and they have too many prejudices.

Can you give me an example?

Well there's one Director who was, goes to all the things like WOMAD and Glastonbury and gets backticket passes and backstage passes erm and really takes an interest in music, but he had very fixed ideas, about the way music worked. He thought that it was one piece of music that would work in a particular place and you couldn't have anything else. It was like he was painted by numbers. And he specifically didn't like chimes. You couldn't have chimes anywhere.

So he chose the instruments to use as well?

He certainly had a, yes, he was very very prescriptive.

What sort of thing would he say? How precise was he?

Not totally precise, I have to say. But he really went in for (2) penguins coming up on the shore. "This has to swell into something big. Can't you make it bigger?" But actually we'd just had the big sea, just before it, things like that.

And how do you react when this happens to you then?

I get rather turned off really. It doesn't help. He was particularly difficult to work for.

1
2 How do you – do you discuss it with him, argue with him?
3
4 Yes, oh yes. And in fact I threw a slight wobbly because I went above his head
5 to the main producer and said “I don’t know that this is going to work and then
6 there was a big talk with him. But in fact he was a good guy and he did
7 everything he possibly could, but this all came out gradually. All this stuff still
8 came out. [laughing] It was the way he thought of it, you know. And that was a
9 negative end of one of the most difficult series I’ve worked on.
10
11 Would you describe that as a personal difference or is it a musical difference?
12 Apart from the music issues between you, personally were you able to get on?
13
14 Yes [hesitant] erm but I think his personality was reflected as well and it was
15 very very hands on, very unable to let go.
16
17 Was he like that with other people too?
18
19 Yes. Quite well known for that.. The whole, his producer was very hands on as
20 well, but she somehow had a flair for working out how to get you creative.
21
22 So these personal difficulties, people breathing down your neck, can make life
23 much harder for you?
24
25 I think it can, but then on the other hand I’ve got another hands-on composer I
26 work with. That’s was a slip! [laughs], producer, if they get two hands on, they
27 do become the composer! Who we just have a bit, it’s like a joint creative thing
28 and he’s incredibly encouraging about the creativity and we have done great
29 things together. It really works very very well.
30
31 Do you get involved in other aspects of his work as well?
32
33 What, saying what I think of such and such?
34
35 Yes
36
37 He is always talking about it, he is always interested. I don’t know that I. I think.
38 He is one of those people who does take on board all sorts of things and all sorts
39 of people. At the same time he is very very strong. That’s probably why he is
40 able to do what he does so well, because he has such a strong an idea of what he
41 wants and I think it tends to be directors who have a very professional and firm
42 idea, a confident idea, that are the easy ones to work with.
43
44 Is it mainly directors that you are in contact with over your work or producers
45 and others?
46
47 Well it’s very complicated this, because erm in one field in which I work, which
48 is animal films, they’re all called producers. They don’t have directors. So it’s
49 very odd this. So in the case of them, yes I tend to just work with the producers
50 and I think they should be called directors actually.
51
52 Same role?
53
54 Same role really. Yes, certainly in post-production its is identical because
55 they’re in the cutting room with the editor and in my studio Erm,, with drama,
56 and that’s a more recent thing, there is much more input from a producer, and a

1 producer plays a bigger part. Drama's more complicated and more difficult to
2 work for, because you're having to please not one person but two or three.
3
4 How do you manage it when you've got lots of different people there?
5
6 Not very well [laughs]. I like to work for one person and if there's a difference I
7 will still try and work for one of them.
8
9 How do you choose which one then?
10
11 I try and work out who's likely to get their own way! [laughs] It's pragmatic
12 really. In the case of the thing I was talking about earlier, I walked out. I was
13 with the wrong director. Well she was the right director for me, but she was the
14 wrong director for the series, really, and she knew that and the producer, the
15 executive producer was just being absolutely terrible to her, and by effect to me
16 and I had no contact with them that was worth anything. So I was lost really.
17 Completely lost.
18
19 What happened in the end then?
20
21 Well, I kept thinking this isn't my kind of music. They wanted much lighter, I
22 think more pop orientated music and originally the drama was going to be quite
23 a lot deeper, in its feel.
24
25 'Cause it sounds like you have quite definite ideas about what kind of music you
26 think works well for a piece.
27
28 Well you get to pick it up from people
29
30 I'm just thinking about this balance between what you think is right and what
31 people are telling you they would like you to do. How do you resolve that one?
32
33 What I think is right what they are telling me?
34
35 We were talking earlier about people giving you an idea of what they want,
36 presumably you have to strike a balance between that and what you feel is
37 possible and what your preference would be.
38
39 Umm. That's quite a tricky question, erm because I think I do try to find out
40 what they want and work to their preference, but sometimes it's quite true I just
41 feel that what they want is not going to work, because actually what they're
42 asking for erm is ill conceived, I suppose, in that musically it's not going to
43 work. You just cannot go on say getting bigger and bigger, which is one of the
44 problems with a particular series with that chap I was talking about earlier.
45 There always seemed to be this thing where they were wanting everything to be
46 bigger and bigger. And erm you need to have a much more subtle approach to
47 make music sound big. 'Cause it has to come from somewhere small, and get
48 big, or it's big and it goes away. It can't be big for ages because everybody just
49 get used to it. Erm. So that's, I'm talking really, I think, of an ill conceived idea
50 of what music can do. And I think a lot of it's born of panic about wanting their
51 film to seem big and wanting everybody to be all the time engaged in it, little
52 realising that in fact you get engagement by pulling back and then pushing
53 forward and pulling back. You get it by change and development not by sort of
54 always being up there in the top of the crescendo or
55
56 When you have this kind of dilemma how do you deal with it?
57

1 (2) I suffer! [laughs]
2
3 Ah! Sounds awful!
4
5 Do you have to reach some kind of compromise?
6
7 Oh I have to compromise, yes. They're paying me to produce what they want so
8 I give them what they want, and I try and do it as well as I possibly can. Erm
9 sometimes, in the case of that series, it worked out quite well, in the end. Most
10 of it I was pretty pleased with really. The only bit was the music was in the
11 wrong place for half the film but that's another story!!
12
13 How do you mean, in the wrong place?
14
15 It was about a second out.
16
17 Oh I see what you mean!
18
19 Somebody who'd laid the track had got it wrong, for about half the film. So it
20 was very odd and all of a sudden it was in again.
21
22 Is that something else that can go wrong in the situation?
23
24 Technical errors?
25
26 It was a technical error and I can understand how it could have happened
27 because it was all done in such a hurry and under such pressure.
28
29 What other difficulties are there, working in that complicated world?
30
31 Well there's always, there's the money thing. We want a big orchestra but we've
32 only got £3000! [laughs]
33
34 Do you have a budget for each job?
35
36 Yes and actually the budget is quite important because it's a way of fixing what
37 you can do
38
39 Who decides on the budget?
40
41 The producer.
42
43 Is it after consultation with you? Do you have a say in it?
44
45 Yes we do, and I have an agent now who tends to try and get the budgets higher
46 for obvious reasons. Erm. But budgets are interesting and they are a part of the
47 creative process.
48
49 So if you don't have the budget that's big enough to do what you'd like to do,
50 that again is something that has to be resolved?
51
52 It does, yes, and it's er it's um, it's quite tricky, that one, particularly if you know
53 the people are particularly ambitious about how the music should be and you're
54 saying "Yes, but we've only got enough for two musicians. The rest is going to
55 be electronic and we can make that sound big but it's different"
56
57 Is this a difficulty that you come across quite a lot?

1
2 Erm. Yes, quite a lot, yes. Quite frequently
3
4 Is this again something you have to compromise over?
5
6 Erm. Yes. You always have to compromise.
7
8 Does this affect the way you feel about the work that you are able to do, when
9 you're having to compromise in different ways quite a lot?
10
11 Erm. (2) Yes. It depends on how much you're compromising and why. Because
12 there is a lot of, I look in at myself as well to see if it's just me being on my
13 high horse, and if it is then that's fair enough. I'm just going to accept that
14 someone else has a different view and erm work with that, and if I can find my
15 way then that's actually often a point of growth rather a point of, the other way
16 round.
17
18 So you question yourself to check whether you're right to do what you are
19 doing?
20
21 Yes. I should point out that at some point in every project I swear at the Director
22 in his absence! In his absence, yes.
23
24 What gets you to the swearing point then?
25
26 When I can't find the theme I'm looking for! [laughs] I usually blame someone
27 else!
28
29 It's a pretty turbulent business for you then?
30
31 There are turbulent times in it, yes.
32
33 When would they be mostly?
34
35 Well it's usually at the front end of things. When I'm trying to, say, get the
36 theme for a series, or something like that, and I'm, that's always a point.
37 Because everybody wants the best they can possibly have, and we'll always push
38 it. It's almost agreed that you push it as far as you can unless something
39 extraordinary turns up that you say, "Well that's it and we can't possibly do
40 better", everybody's trying to get the best possible theme, or whatever.
41
42 Yes. Do you start with a theme very often? Do you have a particular way of
43 working, like you start at some particular point, a mood or a key, something?
44
45 I've worked many ways. With (name of series) which I did last year, it was
46 definitely a theme and the theme actually funnily enough is always there. It was
47 when I was cleaning my teeth I came up with this idea about a year before I
48 knew about the project.
49
50 Oh really! So you thought I'll keep that!
51
52 Yes well, and I said to the Director, "How about this then?", and he said "Mm.
53 That's quirky, that could work very well" and it took ages to persuade the
54 Producer er but I dressed it up in various ways [laughing] and eventually and it
55 actually pervaded the whole series, this quirky little tune, erm and that was that
56 way of working. Probably in a later drama I did I was given a nursery rhyme, a
57 Scottish nursery rhyme, which I knew the two-part series was going to end with,

1 erm and then I just simply let my mind go and just wrote anything. It was a most
2 curious experience. That was the least prescriptive I've ever worked on because
3 he didn't even tell me where to put the music. He said "Just make up your own
4 mind where you want it to go." And I had a panic [laughs], a moment of panic,
5 thinking "Oh no! I'm so used to somebody telling me what to do" and it was
6 very successful,

7
8 How did you resolve it then?

9
10 I wrote everywhere that I thought the music could possibly go. So he got twice as
11 much music as he really needed. But it didn't matter.

12
13 Did he decide where he wanted it in the end?

14
15 Oh he did yes. It was very convenient for him because he had every possibility
16 covered!

17
18 Any other difficulties?

19
20 Well, as I say, getting started is always the worst bit.

21
22 Do you have a particular way of approaching work? I mean do you have routines
23 or do it in any particular place? I know you just said you were brushing your
24 teeth, but is it that too, is it pretty fluid?

25
26 It's best if I have a routine of time. So 9 o'clock in the morning I start,
27 theoretically, it usually is 10.

28
29 And a place?

30
31 Well, the studio.

32
33 Are you are working with a keyboard, or a computer, guitar or what?

34
35 Basically with a keyboard, computer, and a rack of samplers.

36
37 A computer keyboard or a keyboard?

38
39 A keyboard keyboard, yes, a piano keyboard, and then I use a Mac.

40
41 And do you stop when you stop, or erm do you keep going until you've finished
42 what you have to do?

43
44 I stop when I stop. Well the thing is about media music is that it is generally in
45 pretty short bursts. I mean 3 minutes would be a very long piece, so usually I
46 know when I'm coming up to 6 o'clock, I'll just finish this one off, save it and
47 then come back the next day.

48
49 How do you know when you've finished with it?

50
51 I don't but it sits there in a file, in its current state and I come back to it again,
52 have a look at it, and if it looks good I send it off to the director and that's it.

53
54 So you find that having a deadline helps you?

55
56 Oh. Fantastic. Deadlines are great. They are frightening too. That's another
57 fraught point, I was going to talk about actually. Although it's a funny one

1 because it's very much to do with my own psychology I think. Erm because the
2 most nerve-wracking part for me is erm just before the session, with the
3 musicians. Er and the bigger the session the more panicked I become.

4
5 Do you have to conduct the session or what?

6
7 I used to and more recently I've

8
9 Make, do all your own arrangements and everything for it?

10
11 It's funny actually When I started I used to do everything, put everything on
12 Sibelius, and copy it out, and go and conduct it, and as time has gone on, I've
13 been able to afford to get a copyist. Actually it's another composer, who comes
14 in and puts the stuff on Sibelius and maybe suggests putting in a tuba in the bass,
15 the brass or something like that, but generally just does what I've told him to do,
16 and then he'll go and conduct it, because he can (2) he knows the score.

17
18 He makes the arrangements, hires the musicians and stuff, he does all that?

19
20 I actually make the arrangement, he scores, he puts it over, he converts it, if you
21 like.

22
23 What is it that is getting you nervous and worried about then before the
24 sessions?

25
26 Well it can't be the conducting, because I still get nervous even though I'm not
27 conducting. Erm. It's a great moment of erm proof, really. It's actually. I think
28 musicians, other musicians are more nerve-wracking than the Director. The
29 Director's already had the proof, he's already heard the stuff, admittedly
30 electronically but he knows how it's going to sound, more or less. But it's in
31 front of all those amazing musicians and they're all going to sit there and –
32 course they don't sit there and criticise but you know that's...

33
34 You feel very much under scrutiny, and it's a different kind of scrutiny from
35 fellow musicians then than from other people?

36
37 Yes it is. Yes. It's much more (3) of the same family, a sibling, sort of thing
38 really. [laughs] And probably.

39
40 And is that a good thing or a bad thing?

41
42 (3) I don't think it's particularly good because actually what always happens is
43 they put their heart and souls into it and erm we get a good result and everybody
44 goes away feeling very happy. But nobody goes away saying "That is the most
45 brilliant piece of music I've ever played", because they've played more brilliant
46 pieces of music than that [laughing] like Beethoven..

47
48 Do you get any comments or feedback from them?

49
50 I do. Yes. Well it's

51
52 And do you like getting feedback?

53
54 It's gorgeous, it's lovely. I have to say. It is. You see that's the other end of it.
55 When you're in the session and things are going it's the best part of it. Before,
56 it's the most frightening, the most worrying bit, but once it's going.

57

1 What are you thinking about when you're worrying about it beforehand?
2
3 The parts mainly.
4
5 So details mainly – is it going to be all right?
6
7 Will I find there's something wrong with the parts, will we have to scrap the
8 session?
9
10 And has that happened?
11
12 No. Perhaps it would be a good thing if it did, in a way. 'Cause then I would
13 know I could deal with it all, or I'd know what happens. [laughs]
14
15 So you're wondering whether you're going to be able to deal with it if anything
16 did go wrong?
17
18 Yes.
19
20 But it hasn't.
21
22 No. I got into a panic once because I thought we'd lost half the parts for the
23 orchestra. And they were just in a pile somewhere else, and that was because I'd
24 got in a panic earlier on [laughing].
25
26 When you get into a panic, how do you cope? I mean if I was there would I
27 notice that you were in a state or not, or do you manage to hide it?
28
29 You'd notice that I was very nervous, you wouldn't say he is throwing things at
30 the walls, no, but people notice I'm nervous.
31
32 And how do you try and deal with it?
33
34 Well I'm trying to solve the problem, whatever the problem is, causing the
35 panic.
36
37 Right, so focussing on
38
39 But unfortunately when I panic I'm not as good at solving it as I would be if I
40 was in a calm state. I can't see the wood for the trees, [laughing], I can't see the
41 pile of music sitting there in front of me.
42
43 And is it always like this?
44
45 When I panic?
46
47 No in the situation when you're going to have stuff played through for the first
48 time?
49
50 Yes it's always quite twitchy yes.
51
52 So is there anything that has helped in that situation? Presumably having
53 someone there taking some of the responsibility for the parts.
54
55 It doesn't seem to help at all!
56
57 It doesn't.

1
2 No.
3
4 Anything else?
5
6 Erm. Has anything helped? I think only my own inner inner development. I
7 think what actually helps is realising that it is a very nerve-wracking moment
8 and that there's nothing you can do about it. It just is. If it wasn't, then it
9 wouldn't matter. The thing does matter. It matters supremely at that point.
10
11 Are you kind of thinking that because it's important that it becomes nerve
12 wracking.
13
14 Yes yes.
15
16 And how do you feel afterwards when it has gone OK?
17
18 Euphoric! [laughs]
19
20 So it's a real roller coaster experience for you?
21
22 Oh it is a real roller coaster and the pint in the pub afterwards is the best part!
23
24 Do you go for a pint with the musicians afterwards?
25
26 Oh if possible, yes.
27
28 And is that where you get some feedback?
29
30 Yes you do sometimes. I've had just amazing feedback. I think everybody gets
31 quite euphoric so one has to take it a bit with a pinch of salt, but it's lovely
32 anyway.
33
34 Do you work with the same bunch of musicians if you can?
35
36 I do quite a lot, yes. There's a violinist who I always want to lead, although she's
37 got a friend who won't be happy with two, and sometimes they box and cox. Do
38 you want to know their names? She is very well known.
39
40 No no not at all. I was really interested in whether you were developing a
41 relationship with them over time.
42
43 Yes. Definitely.
44
45 And does that help?
46
47 It does.
48
49 You know them and they know you better.
50
51 It does help actually. There's less dread involved, and panic. 'Cause there's a
52 certain amount of dread, this unknown, that you don't know how they're going
53 to react but I know with (name). She is just so calm. If something ever goes
54 wrong, she's the best person to have in control.
55
56 Good. So they can be very supportive as well.
57

1 I think the leader of the orchestra is just the most important person actually,
2 really more important than the conductor. (2) I get in players that I particularly
3 want. There's a wonderful horn player I love using.
4
5 Do you find sometimes you're actually writing for them?
6
7 Oh yes, there's a cellist, two cellists I use that are quite different but both superb
8 cellists and one erm has an ability to cover all sorts of styles. She can play sort
9 of very Indianny and she can play very poppy, very jazzy, and
10
11 You presumably are writing very Indianny, poppy and jazzy as well?
12
13 For her, if I'm going to do that. But if I want something really emotionally taut,
14 and with extraordinary passion, there's another cellist who I use for that, who
15 would do that. (2) There's a sax player I use as much as possible because he's
16 such a lovely person to have in the studio and he can, he's one of those people
17 who can do so many different things.
18
19 So that must be one of the good sides, that you can choose who you have and
20 develop a good working relationship with them.
21
22 It's a huge plus, actually.
23
24 Are there any other big pluses? Things that make it easier for you in the work?
25 Presumably having your routine, your working routine helps?
26
27 The routine, yes.
28
29 And does your routine ever get disrupted by anything?
30
31 Yes. Oh yes and it has been recently because I've moved house and that really
32 did disrupt the routine. Erm, Yes it does. And it doesn't always work out and
33 what's quite interesting is when it gets disrupted, sometimes erm ending the
34 work just won't happen and at other times it happens very quickly. Because I
35 think "Oh damn, I'd forgotten I have to go off and do this that and the other this
36 morning," I was planning on having a whole morning and I think "Well I'm
37 bloodywell going to write 3 cues before I go" and I'll suddenly find I've come
38 back in the afternoon, having thought "Oh, that's a day wasted!" to find that
39 actually those three cues worked and they are often are the ones that work really
40 well.
41
42 So pressure again - sometimes under pressure it helps you?
43
44 Pressure's good if it's the right kind, yes. Time pressure's fine.
45
46 What's the right kind then?
47
48 Well, time pressure. Yes.
49
50 And what isn't?
51
52 It's people saying "I don't like it, do it again", but we don't know what we want.
53 That's not good pressure and I think the very worst pressure for me is when
54 there's an argument between er a producer and a director.
55
56 That you have to get involved in?
57

1 Yes. There was a case where that happened and I actually phoned up my agent
2 in LA and he phoned them up and said "Now come on chaps." He was going up
3 the wall.

4
5 So it helps to have somebody else like that who can get involved and protect
6 your interests?

7
8 Yes

9
10 Does he also get you the work?

11
12 Yes.

13
14 So is that something you don't have to do.

15
16 It's only very recent. (name) was my first drama. And after that I decided to go
17 in with the agent. Well the agent had actually wanted to represent me for some
18 time but we just didn't get any drama and he said "There's no point in me
19 actually being your agent for animals, because you get plenty of that anyway and
20 it doesn't seem fair me taking my 15 per cent for your animal work." Which is
21 nice of him. But finally we got a drama, (name) which was shown last year.
22 And since then he's been working as an agent, getting me work.

23
24 So it works both ways, you're not in the situation where you have to go out and
25 apply for work, go after a particular sort of work. Presumably he does that for
26 you?

27
28 Yes he is doing that.

29
30 He does that when it need to be done, so you're not involved now in any of that.
31 Either people approach you or he approaches them on your behalf..

32
33 Yes. I mean I have gone through him before. I have gone for a few things erm
34 but very rarely got them actually and what's interesting is that most of my work
35 has come because people wanted me, and (2) I think when we've gone lock
36 stock and barrel for something, it hasn't necessarily been the right thing. It's
37 almost as if the work finds me. It's more likely to be OK. Not necessarily,
38 actually.

39
40 What do you think it is about you that makes people want you – is it the way you
41 write?

42
43 Yes it's the way I write. They like the style.

44
45 Is that something you have deliberately cultivated?

46
47 The style?

48
49 Yes.

50
51 No I think I've been pushed into it by what I've done. Erm I mean I've always
52 been very interested in ethnic music, and that's been one of the big, certainly in
53 the animal music stuff. People have got me, the whole of ethnic music. "Why
54 don't you try (his own name)?" So er I got involved in that. (Name of series 1)
55 was very successful on the Indian thing, and then (name of series 2) I was asked
56 to do by a completely different producer on the basis of (series 1) again. So
57 there'd be quite a lot of that, yes, the ethnic stuff.

1
2 Do you see yourself having certain erm things that you do, and not others,
3 musically speaking?
4
5 Yes, I think erm, what do I do, musically speaking? What do I do?? I mean
6 obviously period is very much my thing, pastiche,
7
8 As far as work that people don't ask you to do, do you write music for your own
9 thing?
10
11 A little bit. It tends to be very un- erm, what's the word? I don't spend hours
12 working on some score, because I spend hours working in the studio in the day.
13 But for instance (name of partner) and I play together, violin and guitar, and we
14 basically play from the folk repertoire, the more traditional repertoire of
15 different countries, and I wrote quite a lot of stuff in various styles, for us. And
16 that's very satisfying.
17
18 It is satisfying to perform, to play it as well?
19
20 It is. Very very satisfying to play it.
21
22 How do you look upon the two activities, your work writing the music on the
23 keyboard and computer and going out and playing?
24
25 Well I think the composing is (2) how can I say it? I suppose, is my main
26 career, it's my job, Yes, I think it's my job. Whereas going out and playing is
27 my (2) pleasure.
28
29 Right. Did you see yourself erm having writing music as a job?
30
31 When I started, do you mean? It's funny that, because there was a point where I
32 did, and then I got back into being convinced I wanted to be a guitarist.
33
34 What moved you out of that then, back into writing again?
35
36 Feeling I wasn't getting anywhere and having children and the need of money.
37 Really when I was working as a guitarist playing I was earning less than a
38 postman, and I thought "Well why don't I become a postman?"
39
40 Really?
41
42 Yes, There was pressure in that, too, there was nerves and pressure of concerts. I
43 was always quite nervous before concerts and I used to think "God, I'd just like
44 to have a peaceful life!" And then I thought that being a media composer would
45 be a peaceful life!! [laughs]. The thing is it's peaceful in quite large chunks.
46 There are patches where you're just being creative.
47
48 And how about the income, when you started.
49
50 It was a huge difference. One concert could take ages to get, and in the end
51 you'd be lucky if you got two hundred quid for it.
52
53 So that must have put you under huge family pressure?
54
55 That's right. And then one film would be three thousand quid. Back in the late
56 80s. So a huge difference. And it was only a couple of years before everything
57 took off, financially, completely. Completely different.

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What kept you going then during that early period, when you weren't getting the work in, while you were establishing yourself?

The earlier period of being a film music composer? I think it was just a conviction that this was right. And as I said earlier on, I had a glimpse of it when I was at college, of just. "Why don't I?" And people were saying "Oh (name)" I wrote something for a film for the (name of College) students. And they were saying "Oh that's brilliant. Why don't you become a film music composer?" "Oh I'll never get into that!" I thought it would be too difficult to get into or something or some part of me,

And you thought it was easier to perform as a soloist on guitar? [both smile]

And I couldn't have been more wrong really! But er they didn't work! Yes. I may have got into it earlier, who knows, but I didn't and I suppose that one of the good things that comes out of that is that I've got a wide variety of experience as a player, and composer stroke player as well, 'cause I wrote quite a lot of stuff I played and actually when I came to doing film music I wasn't floored every time somebody said "Well actually we don't like that style, can you do it another style."

Yes, and, seeing it from both ends, you knew what it was like to have to play other people's music and what the pressures of performing and reading and stuff were.

That's right. That's right. And I now do perform on my own films again. I'm beginning to use the guitar again.

Yes. Does that mark a change for you?

Yes I really hadn't. I mean the first film I did I played the guitar on it. It was very central to the whole film. And then gradually I stopped doing that and just used the electronics and then I got other musicians. It was only very recently, about a year ago, that I. Oh actually, no, I did do some before that, when I did (name) but I did quite a bit and the reason for that was being South America, the guitar was the instrument we wanted to be involved, so I played that. But then, yes, more recently, the director said, asked the question, "Why aren't you playing on this?" And I said "Oooh, (hesitant) don't know!" And she said "Go in there!" and she made me virtually go into the studio and record, and I did it of course and it was great, and made a big difference.

Does that mean you'd been keeping up your guitar playing all the time, your practising and stuff?

Well I had fortunately, over that period, and I'd been working with a flautist, and so forth, but it has dropped off a bit at the moment but I still play once or twice a week!

What does it feel like playing your own music rather than somebody else's, in that situation?

Erm, very good. At least I knew I could change things if they didn't work! [laughs]

Is it hard for you to feel things are right, sometimes?

1 What, in my playing or composing?

2

3 In your composing

4

5 I don't think, erm (3). It's more of a degree, really, of right and wrong. I don't
6 think there is a, this is completely right and that is completely wrong. It's, this
7 could be better. I tend to think that things could always be better, but actually the
8 time limit is there, and thank God for it, otherwise I would just keep going!

9 [laughs]

10

11 When you look back on things that were finished, how do you feel about them?

12 Are you happy with what you did?

13

14 Sometimes. But sometimes not. What is interesting actually is it's often the
15 performances I'm not happy with. And it's often that that I notice and I think
16 "Gosh I got a fantastic performance of that" and then I listen back later and I
17 think oh actually "I'm not sure I really want to show that to anybody. It's not
18 quite..." But maybe I'm blaming the performers for something that's lacking in
19 the music as well. Sometimes I'm just always pleased when I hear some pieces
20 and I always think I'm lucky that I've got so many good performances of stuff.

21

22 So as you develop an even closer relationship with the performers you feel you
23 can say to them when it's not quite right, and ask them to do it again? Can you
24 do that, or do you work under very tight constraints?

25

26 Oh I think, it's not so much saying, it's really getting to the bottom of how to
27 communicate with them to do what I want. So you can go over it over and over
28 again, and they still may not get it. But I think you are right though. I am more
29 exacting now than I was. People get used to that, the intonation and stuff and the
30 way I hear it, unfortunately is not always the way they hear it. But if they are
31 good players they brilliantly adapt to what I want. I think probably the piece of
32 music I've written that I like the best was mainly electronic with one player in it,
33 this sax player I was talking about. And erm it was a piece I'd written in anger
34 really, because the director had said. "I want to put this piece of Jan Gabarek on
35 the end of this film. But you could have a go, (name)!" And I thought: Well, I
36 bloodywell will, then! So I did, and in 3 hours, I wrote this piece, and, played it
37 to him over the phone and he said "Yes, that's all right. We'll use that."

38 [laughs]) And I got the sax player to play it, and it's rather an odd piece of
39 music. And he looked very puzzled and he played it once and I said, "That's
40 perfect". And he came into the studio and listened to it and he said "Oh that's
41 what it's about! [amazed tone] . I couldn't work it out when I was playing it!"
42 He had absolutely no idea what he was doing and it just sounds extraordinarily
43 beautiful and very very free. And yet he didn't realise what he was doing and I
44 think that's an interesting . It says something interesting, actually

45

46 Are you like that ever?

47

48 Yes. And I think in a way that piece of music was like that anyway.

49

50 Yes. It was written like that and also played like that! That is extraordinary!
51 Does that often happen? Do things kind of write themselves?

52

53 Well I think there is that, again it's a matter of degree, but that tends to happen
54 particularly when things are going well, they seem to write themselves. It's not
55 that I don't create the music. I think I find it. It's like something I've found, and
56 I pick it up, and there it is.

57

1 Where does it come from, do you think?
2
3 Well, er, God! [laughs] You could try God! I don't know what you mean by
4 God, but reality, there is a kind of, there's a well.
5
6 You think you are drawing on something out there?
7
8 There's a well of it that is just there and it runs through people and it runs
9 through their unconsciousness and the great thing is, that erm if you allow things
10 to get on with themselves and don't interfere too much, I think you get some
11 very wonderful creative and original ideas. If you spend too much time fiddling
12 and worrying and interfering with it, it all sounds a bit premeditated and a bit
13
14 It loses its kind of spontaneity.
15
16 Yes.
17
18 How do you allow yourself then to develop, let it be and let it flow, without
19 interfering with it?
20
21 I think a lot of it's to do with writing very fast, so I don't have time to think. I
22 say, well I'm going to write so many pieces in an hour, or whatever, and score
23 fast. Then I can look back and say "Oooh!" It's like taking a lot of photographs,
24 almost without knowing what you're doing and then you suddenly see one and
25 you've caught a really interesting shaped one.
26
27 So making it very conscious, slowing it down, makes it harder?
28
29 Yes. It means it's less good.
30
31 Yes. It's tricky to say that, because erm (2) I think what I'm talking about in
32 some ways is material,
33
34 How do you mean?
35
36 Well, it's the phrases, the tunes, the sounds are the material. And then the
37 structures, the composition. Sometimes you have to work to get material and
38 actually then you need to structure it, later on, to the film. And then there's
39 always, even in that piece I was talking about earlier, there was a bit of
40 restructuring done, to pull it into line so that it fitted with the film. Erm. But I
41 think if you start with structure, erm, well if I do, then the music becomes too
42 premeditated. I can't find the right word...
43
44 When you're talking about structure, you're talking about a harmonic pattern, or
45 a melody or something, any of those...
46
47 Yes, Rhythmic pattern. Oh, Structure? Sorry, I'm talking about proportions, of
48 er what's going on, so you have an 8 bar structure which is going into a - you're
49 going to have a climax at the end of that structure,
50
51 That kind of architecture?
52
53 Yes. But the material within that 8 bars, or you might if you're working with the
54 material differently, you might find that there's 23 bars of much faster music.
55

1 I see what you mean by material and structure. It seems to be a bit of a balancing
2 thing really, between a lot of different demands and pressures and finding your
3 way through to allow the freedom to express what you want within that.
4

5 Um. Yes. It's certainly. There's quite a bit of stress involved, but it varies from
6 period to period sometimes.
7

8 I notice that you said you'd had some therapy before, for music related things,
9 can you say anything about that?
10

11 Um. Yes. I can a bit. I'm still in therapy, so I'm not going to go into it too much.
12 I don't want to put things on the table, as it were but erm. I think a lot of it was
13 to do with why I wasn't getting anywhere, and erm the therapy was actually
14 before I became a film music composer. It was during the process of the therapy
15 I became a film music composer. And I think I have all that therapy er, to thank
16 for that.
17

18 So it helped you to find your direction?
19

20 Yes. Yes it did and to find out what was authentically me. But it carries on
21 because you've still got to deal with your erm (2) reasons for doing something,
22 and the reasons change, and particularly as you look into things that you find
23 that some reasons aren't particularly good and aren't very well supported and
24 actually cause problems. Like the typical egotistical I want to be King of the
25 Castle reason is always doomed to failure because [laughing] there'll always be
26 someone out there who's going to beat you, if you look at life that way.
27

28 So are you talking about certain ways of thinking that have not helped you to do
29 the things you want to do, or not helped you to see things?
30

31 Well they help for a while and then they can become problematic and I think the
32 competitive side can help but it also can be problematic, erm because it sort of
33 means winning. And actually I think composing isn't really about winning!
34

35 What do you think it's about then?
36

37 It's about creativity, it's about producing something.
38

39 But the idea of doing very well has obviously been very important to you?
40

41 Doing very well?
42

43 Winning, in that sense. Coming first.
44

45 Yes. Yes.
46

47 It's something that perplexes me. How do you know how well you are doing, as
48 a composer? How do you find that out?
49

50 (3) Well I don't think you do, in the deepest sense, I don't think you do find out,
51 and I think you really have to live with that. You have to live with that. I think in
52 a less deep sense, if you win awards or you just keep getting lots of work. So it's
53 other people actually feeding back to you. Erm I think I know when I've written
54 something good, because it sticks.
55

56 It's your own feeling about it.
57

1 But it also sticks with me. It stays with me, whereas the less deep stuff tends to
2 go away.
3
4 Are you proud, do you have a feeling of pride over some of the things you've
5 done?
6
7 Yes I think so. Yes I do. I'm proud that I got through it and came out the other
8 side and there it is!
9
10 Yes, That's great. You've already said it's important to be recognised by other
11 musicians, and it's good to get more work, that is a public recognition. What
12 about the public in general, or the future, posterity and that kind of thing, is that
13 a concern to you?
14
15 It was. I don't know that it is, because, I think in my business it's unlikely that
16 anything'll last for very long. There's a possibility, but most television
17 programmes and films that are made will disappear, and it's a cloud of dust in
18 50 years' time.
19
20 They're fairly ephemeral?
21
22 They are pretty ephemeral really. And the music I write is quite ephemeral but
23 there are original moments, but a lot of it is very much on the backs of other
24 composers of the past or whatever.
25
26 Does that concern you? Would you like to be involved in
27
28 Some more original?
29
30 Less ephemeral.
31
32 Errm I still think that even if you consciously make that decision, you will still
33 run the risk of getting lost. But I don't think that the great composers of the past
34 knew (3) whether they were going to be, they might have thought that they were
35 going to be famous for ever, but I don't know that they knew.
36
37 I'm just wondering whether or not it would matter to them, or to you? Is it a
38 good thought that something that you've written will be left behind?
39
40 I think it's a lovely thought, but I don't know that you can be sure of that and
41 you have to accept that. No actually it's quite true. It's like the idea of living on
42 in your music. But (2) I'd rather have an afterlife or something. [laughing]. I'm
43 not too sure about living on in my music! I think that's rather a gruesome
44 thought.
45
46 Gruesome?
47
48 Well it springs to mind – dying, which is a bit
49
50 Oh right. Any other things about your work that make it easier for the flow to
51 come through. Having a deadline is obviously one of them and you've
52 mentioned some others.
53
54 Frequent breaks. If I can get in the right thing then I walk.
55
56 You mean it's going through your mind as your walking, that kind of thing?
57

1 Sometimes it does and sometimes it doesn't, but a good walk usually shakes
2 things up and I come back and find myself at rest.
3
4 Any other things that you do that you think feed into the music, the writing? Any
5 aspects of family life that affect it at all, either way? Help or hinder.
6
7 I think well, the constant demands on the phone have a detrimental effect, no
8 doubt about it.
9
10 How do you deal with it?
11
12 Erm, [sighs]. Well it's difficult. I try to make sure that people don't phone me
13 unless it's essential stuff. Erm. I'm not good at that, actually, because, something
14 we haven't talked about which I don't know whether other composers feel the
15 same, is I find it quite a lonely existence, and I do get lonely and erm the phone
16 rings,
17
18 'Cause you work at home, don't you?
19
20 Well I've got a studio in the garden. The phone rings. There's nobody around,
21 and I'm on my own, and my heart leaps, "Oh someone! [delighted]" and it's not
22 good discipline, 'cause actually really I should probably put it on ansaphone
23 when I'm working hard, and then look at the ansaphone and phone back when
24 I'm having a break. But I do find that that stuff doesn't often break up my mind
25 as to what I'm doing,
26
27 How do you deal with the loneliness?
28
29 Um, well, going out, going for walks, pottering round to see the odd friend for a
30 cup of coffee, erm but it's difficult, I don't like it.
31
32 How does having the life in music that you do, affect family life?
33
34 Erm. I think for a musician it's great, because most musicians I know have to
35 travel a lot and they are spending a lot of time out. I have fixed times. I don't put
36 a lot of my music into my family, although the boys just seem to have picked it
37 up. But I'm not kind of rigorous "You shall do your practise now for 3 hours." I
38 know quite a lot of musicians and composers who have children who have got a
39 very long way in music, at quite a young age because they've followed in their
40 father's footsteps.
41
42 How would your boys describe you? Are they aware of you as a musician?
43
44 Oh yes, oh they're terribly proud! I won some awards for nature films, two
45 (name of award) in a row which is quite good, and (name of younger son) got it
46 into his head that "My daddie's the best musician, no, the best composer in the
47 world this year!" And I said well, "Within nature films, this year" [laughing]
48 And actually it's just one award. Yes they get terribly, it's a very competitive
49 world.
50
51 How does it affect them having a celebrity dad?
52
53 I think they rather like it. They rather like it. I'm not very celebrity though
54 really.
55
56 Do you find you have other interests outside music that you follow up?
57

1 Literature.
2
3 Friends outside music?
4
5 Friends? Oh yes, quite a lot of them, 'cause I live in a village, and hardly any of
6 my friends in the village are musicians. One works for the Halifax, there's
7 another one who's an art historian.
8
9 And does it make any difference to them the fact that you're in music? How do
10 they see you, doing something artistic and different?
11
12 Yes I think they do, and some of them are real, quite definitely fans, and they
13 say.. ..One of them always plays this game and he says "If we can just pay you
14 to stop writing this music it will be ..." but he is always watching everything and
15 is a great supporter. There is support in that. It's funny, it is.
16
17 So it kind of draws people to you, in a way?
18
19 Yes but it also creates a kind of barrier, as well, because they say "Oh, he's a
20 musician, he's not quite one of us."
21
22 What's the difference in the way that they see you then?
23
24 Slightly as if I am made of porcelain.
25
26 They think you're rather delicate?
27
28 Rather delicate. Well I am quite! [laugh]
29
30 How does it change the way they treat you then?
31
32 Erm. I don't always feel part, of the group. It's very difficult to say. Well, it's
33 difficult to say that, because it could just be my personality and nothing to do
34 with me as a composer as such. Erm I tend to deal very much better with these
35 kind of friends on a one to one basis, than in a group. You tend to get a group of
36 people who all work in a similar area, like I daresay, when I think about it that if
37 they were to come in and I was with a few musicians and composers they would
38 feel a bit like a fish out of water. 'Cause we are, we have, some different
39 immediate concerns.
40
41 Yes, what would be some of the most important differences in those concerns?
42
43 It's just a practical thing about erm, musicians would talk about music, and
44 about so and so. "Do you know, did you hear that? And what do you think of
45 that?" And these other friends would maybe talk about a car, or something
46 different.
47
48 So it kind of spills over in a way to more of life?
49
50 I think musicians are quite obsessed about their music, in a way. It is a language,
51 it's a way of life. And it's a bit like, I think religious people would be the same,
52 who lived in a religious community or something. You'd find that they tended to
53 talk about the spiritual side of life rather more.
54
55 So you have both, you have that talking with musicians about music and life
56 without...
57

1 Talking to normal people!!
2
3 About normal things like what?
4
5 It's not so bad, really – well, cars, you know!
6
7 Village life
8
9 Even feelings, whatever.
10
11 When you get stressed out, and I know you do, 'cause you've talked about it a
12 lot, are there any other things that you do? Do you do relaxation, anything like
13 that? Any techniques that you have, any things that work for you that help you to
14 unwind?
15
16 Well there's stuff that did work. Again, when I'm really stressed out, I don't do
17 any of the things I should do, when I get to that stage.
18
19 What should you be doing then?
20
21 Well, like, I had a routine of. I'd come in and I'd meditate for 15 minutes, which
22 was simply erm watching my out-breath, and allowing my mind to clear,
23 breathing quite slowly. And then I'd sing, for 10, 15 minutes, do some singing
24 warm-up exercises. By the time I'd done that my whole body and mind were in a
25 kind of much more warm and vibrant state. I really should go back to that
26 actually 'cause it was a very successful way of starting the day.
27
28 That's something that when you do it, works very well. What about exercise,
29 anything like that, sport? Relaxation?
30
31 Well, as I said, walking every day. I was playing tennis and badminton and hope
32 to go back to it.
33
34 So it's kind of now and again?
35
36 Well the tennis and badminton were until I damaged my knees and back and
37 stopped and now I've got some treatment which I'm hoping will get me back.
38
39 Any other occupational type of things that you have had – stresses and strains -
40 anything related to work? Like physical ones?
41
42 Physical stresses and strains? No I don't think so. Well, yes, there is this small
43 thing which lots of people have, is my wrist sometimes gets very painful, and
44 that was one of the reasons for stopping the tennis and badminton, now I think
45 about it, because I can't afford to put my wrist under any more stress. I think the
46 wrist with the mouse, is one of the trickiest things actually.
47
48 Are there any other things that make it easier that we haven't yet mentioned and
49 ought to be added?
50
51 Right. Erm. Trying to think (4) I don't know. (2) I mean, erm, I suppose there is
52 the. Obviously if things go wrong, it is pretty awful. There was the series that I
53 walked off from, and it did get to the point where I really wondered whether I
54 was going potty. Maybe I was.
55
56 Really, that bad. Tell me about that.
57

1 Well it was a romantic comedy erm with a well-known actor, and I met the
2 Producer and Director. The Director I'd worked with before, and we got on
3 extremely well and the Producer I'd never met before. And I was kept waiting
4 for an hour for this meeting, which is unusual, and actually something in me
5 should have said "Hang on, there's something a bit odd about this whole set-up,"
6 because generally meetings are prompt. Erm.

7
8 What were you thinking it could have been, if it wasn't just a delay of some
9 kind.

10
11 Well there was a delay, but it showed lack of organisation and it also showed
12 lack of respect. And that lack of respect continued, really. It was very
13 interesting. I worked with this actor, a brilliant guy, he was too, and a fantastic
14 experience, but I was treated really like a minion and I was expected to turn up,
15 and just do this and do that. So that started something going in me that I didn't
16 like and then the whole, the script was lovely, erm and then when they came to
17 do the editing they decided they didn't like some of the things in the script, and
18 they didn't like the gist of the way one of the characters was being treated. And
19 it all began to look as if the thing was going to change shape completely. And
20 we carried on, the Director and I, and then it just got more and more painful,
21 more and more difficult, as I was getting more and more negative feedback and
22 people were going round saying "Where's this great theme we are waiting for?"
23 and all that sort of thing.

24
25 So all this was making it harder for you to work.

26
27 Yes, and I got, we're talking about stress here. I got a terrible back problem.
28 Erm. It was related to a specific thing, which was, I was moving house, so bad
29 lifting, but I've never had a back like it. I was. I couldn't move. Erm. And before
30 that I had 'flu for 10 days, which again was almost unheard of. So my body was
31 just simply saying "You do not want to do this. You do not want to do this." And
32 in the end, the Director said something to the effect that "I don't want to
33 influence you" she said, "But I think it might be advisable if you actually left
34 this project".

35
36 How did you feel when you heard that?

37
38 Well I felt relieved. I thought "What a great idea." That was what was exactly on
39 the tip of my tongue to say. And I said "Well you're not influencing me because
40 I was thinking of doing that anyway."

41
42 Do you think it would have got to that?

43
44 Yes. Well, It did get to it.

45
46 Yes. In that way, I meant.

47
48 Would I have taken the lead? Well, it had been on my mind. I just decided that
49 the set up just wasn't right for the way I am and I just couldn't cope with it.

50
51 Could you cope with it better having gone through that experience?

52
53 Yes. I probably could. I know what I'd do. When it was getting like that I'd go
54 to the person who was most in power which has always been what I'd done
55 before, who was the Executive Producer, and I'd then try to get a briefing from
56 them as to what was wanted and get into some kind of relationship with them
57 where the thing could be sorted out.

1
2 Sounds like you've had the opportunity to learn a lot from these difficulties?
3
4 Yes, yes.
5
6 As you know, I work with musicians. Are there any things that you think from
7 your own experience it would be important for me to know about the kind of
8 difficulties that composers have that would help inform me in my work?
9
10 I don't know [laughs], because all composers are different, that's the trouble.
11 They have been my own things.
12
13 Sure. You think there's very little in common?
14
15 I suppose you probably know more than I do about that! There's obviously lots
16 of stress. The stress is very uneven so it gets, there's much less stress sometimes
17 and in fact it's the most wonderful life a lot of the time, and then its very very
18 stressful, and it's more stressful than a lot of people experience, at other times.
19 Because you put yourself on the block when you're a composer. It's your
20 material and if you really have worked from the right place, then it really is your
21 material and it can be knocked, it is knocked continuously.
22
23 So when it's being knocked, you are being knocked.
24
25 Yes. And it's learning to cope with that and not take it personally.
26
27 So what helps you to not take it personally?
28
29 Erm, I think a sense of worth, of what you're doing and the fact that if you're
30 working with a good director they won't say "That is a load of rubbish", they'll
31 say "That's not suitable for what I'm doing. It's a lovely piece of music. Perhaps
32 we should put it one side" or say "Put it in your spare folder!" which I do
33 sometimes and use it again somewhere else. And I think the other thing is the
34 ego thing, your reasons for doing something, and if it's too ego based then you
35 do run the risk of being erm too hurt.
36
37 What do you mean when you say it's too ego based?
38
39 Erm. If you're looking to get rewards in terms of having your ego stroked, then
40 that could be a tricky one, because there are going to be times when you don't
41 get any of that, you're just being bashed all the time. And that's a hard one.
42
43 OK

1 When people ask you to describe yourself as a musician, what would you say to
2 them?

3
4 Well, in my passport, where it says profession, I put musician stroke composer,
5 erm because that's really where I earn my money from. Erm. My life has
6 changed quite a lot over , well I've been around for 60 years and my
7 professional life started I suppose about 40 years ago. I've always been
8 interested in music, always been interested in composition but I didn't really
9 start doing proper composition until about the age of 30 when I went to work at
10 a place called the (name), which was a BBC department which provided music
11 and sounds and things for radio and TV programmes. And I discovered that I
12 had had this, well maybe it was latent, erm a talent for, ability to get on with
13 writing music which er was fine for incidental music for TV programmes,
14 wildlife programmes, adventure stories. I discovered I could also write songs for
15 children. I must have written about 2 or 300 songs for children while I was at the
16 (name). And it was erm a bit like a music factory really, and I was there for 20
17 years and commissions came in, people came back, were happy with what I'd
18 done the first time, mainly, entirely er from people within the BBC, because we
19 were a BBC department. And then eventually the (name) closed down and I left
20 and set up at home, erm with my studio, erm and have been doing a similar
21 thing, only on a far less grand scale. I've certainly done some composition. I've
22 certainly worked on one or two small films, but erm in some ways, having
23 worked very hard for 20 years, it's not that I feel as if I'm worked out. It's just
24 that I feel I want a little bit of a rest from the pressure, so I pick and choose what
25 I do now. And I don't really have a burning desire to compose in the sort of
26 abstract sense, but I'm always quite pleased when somebody comes along and
27 says "Would you write some music for this?" I throw myself into it with
28 enthusiasm but I'm not self-motivating in the way I've just described.
29

30 When you got that first job with the (name), was it something that you chose to
31 do or was it something that kind of offered itself to you? I'm just asking about
32 your path into that kind of composition rather than any other type?
33

34 Well I think to er look at it you have to look back over my whole life in music. I
35 started playing the piano at a very early age, at the age of about 4. I didn't really
36 enjoy it very much until I got about to the age of 10.
37

38 Was it not your choice then, initially?
39

40 No I think my mother pushed me into it. And she said: "You'll thank me in the
41 end" like parents do, and I have to admit she was right. It was a good move on
42 her part, but you don't see it at that early age, do you? I had this, I think the
43 problem was I had this rather ropey teacher who wasn't very inspiring but erm er
44 he was eventually given the sack at about 10 or 11. He came along and said "I'm
45 afraid (name) is making no progress", and my mother said. "Oh well, all right
46 then, let's leave it for the time being." And we were about to move house, to a
47 different place, and I was about to change schools, so we left it. But I discovered
48 that after I stopped having piano lessons, instead of completely turning my back
49 on the piano and music, I found myself sitting down and improvising and
50 enjoying myself, by sitting down and playing the piano spontaneously.
51

52 So freed from the constraints of having to do what other people wanted you to
53 do it kind of liberated you.
54

55 Exactly. Yes. But I mean not all children would have done that I don't think.

1 So looking back on it it was, maybe a strange thing to do, but obviously there
2 was something in me that drew me towards the keyboard and playing and I
3 continued to play and enjoy myself playing. At the age of 10, 11 and 12 I used to
4 write little piano concertos. Mind you I never got further than about the first 30
5 bars. But the first 30 bars were magnificent! Eventually the music teacher at
6 school who knew I'd played a bit of piano and who I'd had 1 or 2 lessons from,
7 he said. "How would you like to play the double bass and be in the school
8 orchestra?" He said "I know you can read music and you're a big tall chap
9 now." [laughs] Five foot six! And he said. "Learn the double bass, go and have
10 some lessons and you can play in the school orchestra." And he said "I don't
11 mind if you go and play a little bit of jazz as well.!" So I thought, well, this
12 sounds like a nice idea so I went and had double bass lessons and it wasn't long
13 before I was playing in the school orchestra, on the double bass. And one of my
14 school friends saw me carrying this bass into school and said "Why don't you
15 come and play in the school jazz group?" To which I rather looked down my
16 nose and said "Excuse me, I'm a classical player. I play in the school orchestra."
17 He said "Yes, but we need a bass player in our jazz group. Why don't you come
18 along? We meet every Saturday night at the local community centre and we erm
19 we have a few coffees and a few laughs and a few girls come along. Try it
20 anyway." So I went along that first Saturday and (1) that was a turning point. I
21 discovered that I really enjoyed the improvisatory nature of jazz. It was
22 something that I'd been sort of doing before.

23
24 What kind of jazz were you playing with them?

25
26 I suppose you'd call it traditional Dixieland sort of jazz. That's the sort of band
27 it was and I was sucked into that world, at the age of about 14 or 15.

28
29 What was it you liked about that world particularly?

30
31 Um well I think. Well first of all the music. I loved the music. The sound of the
32 music was wonderful and I used to go to concerts and hear bands like Chris
33 Barber's Jazz band which we thought was great and got the records. Ironically
34 20 years later Chris Barber offered me a job in his band but I had to turn it down
35 because at the time my life had moved on a little bit. Erm. It was the
36 improvisatory feel about it. It was also, I have to admit, the life that surrounded
37 this jazz group. Erm, er. It was a little bit, shall we say, racey. It was a little bit
38 too racey for my mother who was rather dis-. Because by that time I was not
39 only playing in the school group with the school friends but there was also a
40 local tearaway guy with quite a high profile sort of guy who ran the local jazz
41 band, not the school one, age 22, much older than me, and he was looking for a
42 bass player so I was playing with his band as well, going out doing gigs 'till 2 in
43 the morning and coming back and trying to finish A levels and this sort of thing.
44 Much to my mother's chagrin. But the music was wonderful, erm, I thought at
45 the time. I think I was a little bit blinkered about music. I just didn't really know
46 much about American jazz which is the great jazz. There's lots of wonderful
47 British jazz but American jazz is the greatest. I didn't really know much about it
48 until I finally eventually went off to college and I was involved in musical things
49 there, playing in groups. I also did quite a bit of conducting at college, conducted
50 the Messiah, at the college, erm choral society, played the bass in orchestras but
51 managed to scrape a degree. I did study music at University but I got a degree in
52 Geography so music was just one of the things. Right. I'm being a bit long but
53 I'm telling you how I eventually arrived at the gates of the (name). Erm. Left
54 college, went off playing again professionally. Did the sort of up and down the
55 motorways, and German jazz clubs and this sort of thing. This is all about the
56 age of 21/22.

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So you had a few years as a gigging musician.

That's right, and then got rather sort of, not so much tired of it but I felt I was in a little bit of a cul de sac. So (2) I think life is full of chance meetings. I happened to meet this guy who I'd been at College with and he said his wife had just joined the BBC as a Studio Manager and why didn't I try that? So I tried that and was turned down at first but eventually managed to get into the BBC as a Studio Manager. On my application form you put down what you've been doing so I told them I was involved in lots of musical things. And then I started playing with the BBC, erm working at the BBC, where I worked, for perhaps erm 6 or 7 years before I eventually heard of and had described to me the (name). Once again a guy that I'd worked with in the BBC had gone there to work, and I didn't know much about it. I met him in the street and he said "You really ought to come on attachment. 'Cause it would really be the sort of thing you'd like to do and be interested in." And so that is how I came to knock on the door of the (name). It was by no means certain that I would work there permanently because you have to wait for jobs to come up, wait for jobs to become vacant. But erm I didn't have to wait long. I was only there for a year or so and I managed to get a permanent post there and then as far as my composing was concerned, well the flood gates opened. I had no idea. I thought I knew. They say that composers are always, they've got 3 basic themes in their head and they sort of improvise on those in everything they do.

Do you believe that?

I don't really believe in it. I think there's erm for some people there's an element of truth in it. Not really serious composers but there are some shall we say songwriters

What's the difference between serious composers and people with 3 ideas in their head then, that they're ploughing over and over.

Well I think there are people who do it. For example (3) songwriters, quite often. You hear a song and say "Oh that's got to be Cole Porter. It can't be anybody else." It's not that they write the same song over and over again, but it's to do with the flavour.

They don't have the stamp of individuality, that particular individual thing?

Yes that's right. I think that's what it is. Yes. And the same can be true of classical concert composers as well. I mean you've only got to hear 3 bars of Malcolm Arnold. You know exactly who it is straight away.

I'm not sure whether you think that's a good thing or a bad thing.

I'm not going to sit in judgement on it really. Erm. I think Malcolm Arnold's music is wonderful and intoxicating and I can quite see why people say

How would you describe your own music in terms of the different elements?

Right. Erm. First of all I'm not a concert composer. I'm a person who composes for the media. And so therefore you have to really react to whatever people say. I mean if they say, they'll show you in a film. And it's no good if the film is very very sparse and quiet and slow acting, slow moving, there's no point in doing

1 something (3) like you did last week, the sort of racy chase sequence or
2 something like that.

3
4 You have to be very flexible, according to the demands of the medium.

5
6 Exactly. As a commercial composer you've got to really erm put your hand to
7 anything. For example, I do

8
9 That's a real challenge, I would think?

10
11 Yes, and it's really rewarding, particularly if you've got a wide knowledge of
12 and respect for the whole world of music. For example I was given. We were
13 planning a programme all about it. It was. There was a psychological element in
14 this programme. They were some, they were planning the opening sequence
15 because quite often opening sequences, signature tunes, title music, erm and
16 there was some wonderful sort of graphics moving from one to the other. These
17 graphics looked to me very like Matisse drawings or paintings. And I said "This,
18 the way you've done it is very Matisse like." And she said, this is the graphics
19 girl. "Oh. I'm glad you said this because that was what I was thinking of." So I
20 immediately thought of somebody from the same era, so I latched onto Eric
21 Satie and I thought this needs a piece of music rather in the same way that Satie
22 would approach it, and I did some, and it was accepted, and it's a very very
23 simple little piece, almost just for solo piano.

24
25 Do you find that because of that, you have to draw on a very wide range of
26 knowledge of different kinds of music, different styles and periods and so on.

27
28 I guess that's right and that's probably where having had a classical music
29 education, not through and through but I did A level music so I knew about Bach
30 and I knew about harmony and counterpoint and I knew about how to write a
31 fugue. Knew all the rules and how to break them, erm and I've got a great
32 respect for a wide range of twentieth century music. I think I probably prefer
33 twentieth century music to earlier stuff, although I mean there's some wonderful
34 music been written in the last 300 years starting with Bach, Beethoven Mozart.
35 There are some wonderful pieces of Mendelssohn which I find thrilling. But
36 having all that knowledge in the background helps you to make decisions and
37 choices and bring out certain aspects in music that is needed for particular areas.

38
39 Can I just ask you about this balance? Because you were talking earlier about
40 people's characteristic stamp, their style, their own individuality. How do you
41 balance that against feeling that a certain mood, a certain style, a certain kind of
42 music is suggested at a certain time. So how do you express yourself through
43 that style?

44
45 Well everybody has got their own path, I suspect, I (3) if we're going back to
46 Malcolm Arnold again, some of his music is very expressive and he is well
47 known for his, well he's a great film music composer. But as well as being a
48 film music composer he has written a lot for the concert platform and a lot of his
49 music reflects his character, or one aspect of his character – his ebullience, and
50 his er lightheartedness. And there's so much of that in the music but quite often
51 there is another side to his character. Well as you probably know he is a manic
52 depressive.

53
54 But what about you though?

1 About me? Well I don't know whether. Well. Um. Maybe I'm not the right
2 person to judge.

3
4 I know it's much harder to say, for oneself.

5
6 Yes exactly. I'm probably the person least able to judge but what I will say is
7 some people say: "Oh I knew that was your music because." Somebody was
8 listening abroad to World Service and they said. "Oh as soon as I heard that it
9 was exactly the same sort of phrase, the same sort of feel as you did for me
10 about 10 years ago or something like that." Erm. Somebody else said. "Oh yes,
11 when you write a lyrical tune you quite often put a little turn, a little figure, a
12 little mordant in," which is a sort of folksy idiom. And they said "You quite
13 often put those in" and I said : "Yes I suppose I do really, I'm not quite sure why
14 I do it. I just like them."

15
16 Is it something that you're not aware of, a lot of your stylistic, the way you do
17 things is beneath the level of awareness in some way?

18
19 I suppose that's right. Yes. I do try to move on a lot. I do sit down and improvise
20 at the piano a lot.

21
22 Is that how you write, a lot of the time, at the piano?

23
24 Mm. Not so much at the piano. If I am writing stuff for films or for TV, I quite
25 often sit at my keyboard in my studio. I know it amounts to the same thing, but I
26 might program in a string sound, or woodwind sound or something like that, or a
27 percussion sound, and let my imagination get hold of that and shake it around a
28 little bit.

29
30 Do you think the imagination is very important in developing ideas musically?

31
32 Yes. Erm. Imagination is good and it's good to have the luxury of time to let
33 your imagination

34
35 Do you find that's rare, it is a luxury for you?

36
37 It is and it always used to be erm difficult for a musician writing for the media,
38 because quite often a television programme has got to go out on a certain day
39 because it's in the schedules. It's going to be filmed then, its going to be edited
40 then and there's two weeks for the music to be written. Quite often the editing
41 takes a bit longer and then instead of being two weeks suddenly it's one week
42 for the music to be done.

43
44 Gosh! So you work under great pressure a lot of the time?

45
46 Exactly, yes, a lot of the time and it does mean that erm from time to time you
47 can't be as, it's not so much thorough, that you can't be as comprehensive as
48 you wanted to be in the way you write. 'Cause you can't write 24 hours a day
49 seven days a week, it just doesn't work like that.

50
51 What do you think the effect of those tight deadlines and that pressure is?

52
53 Well it certainly sharpens your erm perceptions of what's going on. If you can't
54 handle those pressures, you're in the wrong job. And it has to be said that one or
55 two people at the (name) were unable to cope with it in the end. Because when
56 the (name) started, probably before I was there, it was more like, well not

1 exactly a research place but they were, you had time. There was time to think
2 and develop and work things out, particularly in radio, because it was originally
3 a radio department. As time went on, a lot of the radio producers went to TV,
4 schedules tightened up. They were very keen to use the resources of the (name),
5 but we became more of a music factory and, yes quite often

6
7 There was a price to pay for that.

8
9 Yes. That's right. And the price is you're under pressure and it does mean that
10 you have to perhaps make compromises in your music. But on the other hand,

11
12 Like what, can you give me an example?

13
14 Well, erm, for example it would be wonderful if you had a long sequence, to
15 analyse it. Say it fell into say 4 different (2) sections. It would be wonderful to
16 be able to analyse and do 4 different sections, but you might, if you didn't have
17 the time, you might say well, OK, you'll divide it into 3 sections. You've still
18 got to do the same amount of music, but sections 2 and 3 in the middle are going
19 to be more thematically linked or joined or you're going to think of them more
20 as a whole, whereas if you had more time you'd have the chance to develop each
21 section more individually. I think that's what it is.

22
23 So how does it make you feel? Is it frustrating?

24
25 Up to a point but I don't...

26
27 Is it something you accept?

28
29 Oh yes, you have to accept it. There's no doubt. You just have to do it.

30
31 Some people I've come across find that that kind of pressure in some way
32 clarifies the mind, helps them to approach the work in a more focussed way.

33
34 I guess that's right. I'm sure that's right.

35
36 Do you find that?

37
38 Erm. Yes. I'm sure that's right. On the other hand, you see

39
40 That without a deadline things kind of drift.

41
42 They can do. They can do. I never used to let them drift. As soon as I had a
43 commission I always used to say, I'd go and talk to a producer in their office,
44 and they'd talk about what they wanted from the music, and the music can do
45 this and can we do this. And I always used to say by the time I'd left their room
46 and I was walking down the corridor I was already humming a tune.

47
48 That fast?

49
50 Yes, even if it wasn't a tune that I'd use.

51
52 What got you going do you think?

53
54 Excitement really. Yes. It was very exciting to think that er I was going to be
55 present at the birth of a piece of music which nobody had ever heard before. And

1 not only that, but it was going to be appropriate for the film. 'Cause it is all
2 teamwork, isn't it really? When you work in the media.

3
4 How does having to fit in with other team members affect your work?

5
6 Usually it's OK. It depends on the director. Er I can tell you a few stories. I
7 mean for example, a director will come along. You've done some music and he
8 looks at it and says "That's really good, I like that. I'll take it away. Thank you
9 very much. Wonderful." He rings up the next day and says "Mm my film editor
10 doesn't like it." I think "Well so what, you liked it." But I can see what he
11 means, the film editor. That [laughs and sighs] If that's teamwork you can forget
12 it.

13
14 So what do you do then in that kind of situation?

15
16 Well you have to come to some sort of compromise. Usually, and it is frustrating
17 and it is annoying. Quite often you become ammunition in some sort of battle
18 between the erm director and the film editor or the director and his producer and
19 that's a really nasty feeling. And I could name one or two very high up names of
20 people who had terrible squabbles. She liked the music, as director. He didn't, as
21 producer and erm (3) I was just used as ammunition.

22
23 That sounds like a really uncomfortable position to be in, bounced around.

24
25 It does, yes that's right, so eventually he wrote me a very smarmy letter saying
26 that "We liked your music but we didn't like it enough."

27
28 Does that mean you don't get the job, somebody else has to do it or you have to
29 change the music? What is the likely outcome of that kind of situation?

30
31 Well I must say this is rare. I would say it only crops up in 2 or 3 per cent of
32 things that occur but you do remember them. That 2 or 3 per cent.

33
34 How do you remember them?

35
36 I suspect what actually happened was that she wanted me to do the music and he
37 wanted somebody else to do the music and this was part of the quarrel. Quite
38 apart from the fact he wanted to change the shape of the film there and take out
39 that and he didn't like that talking head there and wanted it out and she liked it
40 and wanted it in, and then, so therefore he became spiteful about the music. So I
41 didn't like the music. We're getting another composer in.

42
43 Do you find that people in those situations are more often than not well informed
44 about the music? They know what they are talking about?

45
46 Oh erm yes. Lots of producers are not musicians. They don't really know what
47 music can do. Well they instinctively, you know, it's the old story. "I'll know
48 it's right when I hear it." sort of thing. But I always used to say and still do
49 "Well give me a starting point. You know. What have you heard that made you
50 think of your film or that might work in the film." They might dig out something
51 by Stravinsky or Barber's Adagio or something like that. So I think that's great
52 if you can give me a starting point, that's wonderful, we can work from there. I
53 don't mind that. Erm but it's when they, erm when producers or directors are a
54 bit vague. They say "Well I don't like it, but I'm not quite sure why I don't like
55 it. Could you think again about it?" And I've got wonderful stories of the way,
56 rather some musical, shall we say, illiteracy. For example, a producer said. "Erm

1 I've got this programme that I'm working on. It's. Two people are going to be
2 arguing about something. It's called Cross Question and they're going to be
3 asking each other and arguing. Repartee is going to be flying to and fro so I want
4 music with lots of sharps in it." So I swallowed my smirk and said "I'll put lots
5 of sharps in it." So when he came I showed him the score with lots of sharps in it
6 and he loved it, only because there were sharps in it, I suspect. On another
7 occasion erm I was writing something for rather a poignant scene, I forget what
8 it was. It was somebody saying goodbye to somebody I think, and the producer
9 said. "That's really lovely, but it needs to be in a minor key." I said [whispering]
10 "Well it already is in a minor key". He said "Can you make it more minor? Even
11 more minor. Is there such a thing as double minor?" I said "There isn't but I'll
12 have another look at it." That's where a lot of diplomacy comes in.

13
14 So you have to kind of translate the language, what they mean?

15
16 Yes. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, isn't it? Trouble is that a lot of
17 producers come along and think that they have got a lot of musical knowledge
18 and they are the tricky ones.

19
20 How does it make you feel then, when you feel you've done what was asked of
21 you and produced a good piece of work and somebody says "I don't like that."

22
23 It's not a nice feeling I have to say but it happens all over the ...

24
25 How do you accept that kind of judgement from other people, when you know
26 that your work is good. How do you live with that?

27
28 How do I live with it? Well as far as I'm concerned it's on to the next one, and
29 although it leaves a nasty taste in the mouth for a while and particularly if
30 you've done what you. I thought, going back to this earlier one that I was telling
31 you about, I thought it was one of the best bits I'd done for a long long time. But
32 because it became part of a political argument it was just dumped. [dropping
33 voice to whisper] But I did reuse it in another programme!

34
35 Good.

36
37 So nothing is wasted.

38
39 You said a bit earlier going in and someone describes some work they would
40 like you to do, and you're already humming something. Do you find that that
41 happens to you quite a lot, that you're thinking of ideas, having musical ideas in
42 different places or do you find you have to sit at the keyboard or the desk?

43
44 Well, both really. I do love the keyboard and I do love improvising and I do find
45 it a great tool, but erm something can. I'm a great believer in things coming into
46 your head spontaneously. I always used to say driving to work. There was a
47 certain set of traffic lights in Swiss Cottage where I always used to have my best
48 ideas, waiting at the traffic lights there and though that was a bit of an
49 exaggeration I think it does mean that ideas can start coming to you at any
50 particular point.

51
52 Have you found that there are other particular places like those traffic lights or
53 anything else that makes it easier for you to work at particular times? Are you a
54 person that works in a patterned, structured way?

1 No. I don't need a structure. Although the way that we worked at the (name), it
2 was a sort of Monday to Friday 9 to 5 job, although if a deadline had to be
3 finished you'd have to come in on Saturday and Sunday, or work evenings.
4
5 So you had to fit yourself into that mould when you were there?
6
7 Oh yes. I think the word is self-scheduling.
8
9 And how was that?
10
11 Well it was not a problem. The music and the product has to come first and
12 everything else has to come second. Family life has to come second.
13
14 But you'd prefer a looser way of working, a freer way of working?
15
16 Erm. Well you can't really. If you're working in the media you can't be too free
17 and loose about it. You've got a deadline. You've got to please not just the
18 director but the film editor and producer.
19
20 Within the time that you have for the deadline, say 2 weeks or something, within
21 that, could you say be up at 9 o'clock or something . Is it that kind of day for
22 you?
23
24 Oh yes. Well you know. For example, I used to work on (programme) and I
25 worked on at least 10, 12 stories for (programme). And each story has got 4
26 episodes say. Each episode I might have a week to do the episode. I'd take away
27 the programme on a VHS cassette and analyse it and measure it and then sit
28 down and look at it again and again. I knew exactly where I'd been asked to do
29 music and I would just. Quite often I'd be either by a synthesiser or by the
30 keyboard, and maybe looking for ideas, not working ideas through too greatly
31 because the problem is that the score you have to write for yourself is bit like a
32 sort of (2) well building blocks. You know that you have a block there that has
33 got to be a chase, a block there that's got to be creepy. How do you get from one
34 to the other etc?
35
36 And it's got to be so many seconds and so on?
37
38 Oh yes, and right down to the nearest frame, yes sure. Fortunately the
39 technology will help, particularly these days with computers. It's so wonderful.
40 It makes. It's a great tool, it's a great help. I mean you've still got to come up
41 with the ideas and deliver it. Get the stuff in. But it is what makes writing to the
42 nearest frame a lot easier. Which quite often brings me to another frustration.
43 Quite often work very very carefully and you send it off and they say. "Oh we've
44 re-cut it since you did that." But fortunately, with computers you can do your
45 re-cut easier.
46
47 Yes I would imagine today's technology would make things a lot easier.
48
49 Yes it speeds things up. It certainly does. And if you are a media composer,
50 writing for films, then you get used to that sort of thing. Your music is not your
51 little baby who mustn't be disturbed. The music is just a job and you've got to
52 do it.
53
54 Is that something you had to learn to accept?
55

1 No never, because I never erm had a problem with it, because I was never a
2 composer of concert music. I was never one of those people for whom music is
3 sacrosanct. This is 'my' etc etc and this is the way it came out and you cannot
4 change it. No. I was never one of those composers.

5
6 Apart from music that you are asked to do, do you have your own music that you
7 work on?

8
9 No. I think I probably mentioned to you that until I went to the (name) I did
10 very little composing. I think I must have done a few songs. I remember doing a
11 few but nothing terribly grand.

12
13 What sort of songs?

14
15 Just pop songs really and I got people to sing them, but you know the thing
16 about being a composer is sort of 10 per cent composing and ninety percent of
17 going out to try and sell your work to people. And although I enjoyed doing it
18 the actual act of writing it and the actual act of people singing it for me erm that
19 was wonderful and I'd just take it home and listen to it and enjoy it. But he
20 thought of going out and trying to sell it, and perhaps the thought of having it
21 refused, maybe, kept me at home really. So I didn't really go out and try.

22
23 Which sides of it interest you most? The getting the music together, the seeing it
24 produced and out there in the programme, which aspects of this process draw
25 you most? There's obviously a big step between writing something and actually
26 seeing it as part of the completed programme.

27
28 That's right. But it's not just the writing of it. You have to go to the film dub as
29 well, to make sure that it's put in properly – first of all in the right place,
30 because quite often you can do something to the nearest second or the nearest
31 frame and when you arrive and watch the film they've put it in the wrong place.
32 And it might be a couple of seconds out or something like that, or they might
33 have changed the dialogue. "Oh we've moved that bit of dialogue up" so that
34 wonderful telling phrase that you did on the clarinet, "We've had to dip right out
35 of it because we moved", these sort of frustrations. Erm. But as far as the actual
36 overall process, the more I worked the more I realised that I had to keep control
37 of every process, not just the writing of it, but taking it along to the dub, making
38 sure that at the film dub or the video dub it was at the right level. That doesn't
39 mean I wanted to make sure it was too loud. Quite often I might want to bring it
40 down in level, because I felt it was interfering with the flow of the programme.

41
42 Do you think it is a very personal thing, getting the levels right?

43
44 Oh yes it is. And a lot of sound mixers are very happy to take as much advice
45 and help as you can give them. Erm. There's nothing worse than sitting at home,
46 and this happens to me, and you think "Nice programme, nice music but shame
47 the music's so loud. They don't really know how to handle the music. And quite
48 often, the music is so loud, that it interferes with your perception of what's being
49 said, and, there's letters to the Radio Times all the time.

50
51 So it's very important to you that you have control over that as far as possible?

52
53 Yes indeed. Because if the music is too loud it is therefore bad music. And you
54 know it's not bad music because you did it personally. So if it's not used
55 properly, erm people, they might say. "Well I liked the music you did, but it's
56 too loud, man. Too loud. Can't you write some quiet music?" And I used to say

1 "Well you know, sorry, but it's not." So this is why I really made the effort to go
2 to as many dubs as I could, just to make sure that it was doing the right job.
3
4 Is that something you had to chase up with everybody?
5
6 Yes it is.
7
8 And get involved with that side of it.
9
10 Yes. The problem is that quite often you write something. You send it off and
11 they do the dub and by that time you are already working on something else. So
12 that particular Tuesday that the dub is on, you might desperately need for the
13 next project. For a completely different programme.
14
15 Do you find you get working relationships with particular, who would it be that
16 would say. "Well I know you like to come in so I'll make sure to try and arrange
17 it when you can be there"?

18
19 Oh no, they can't do that. A film dub has to be booked 3 months in advance and
20 they couldn't possibly change it just because I needed that particular day. So
21 I would have to juggle my work around the film dub. Oh yes, there's no doubt
22 about that. And my problem is that I was always excited when a job came in and
23 I rarely turned jobs down because I was busy. And quite often I used to take on
24 too much. Perhaps. Although I never became ill or anything like that. I used to
25 work quite hard but I used to find it exhilarating.
26
27 How did you balance the demands of all these different jobs then?
28
29 Well, with difficulty but it all came out in the end. Yes. You know that you've. I
30 was quite good at keeping in my head a big map of what I was going to do over
31 the next 2 weeks and I knew I had. This was quite a lot of good self discipline.
32 Yes.
33
34 Lots of organisation then?
35
36 Oh Yes. And I'm not one of these -- well I wasn't then, perhaps I am now,
37 perhaps not, one of those people who, "They don't need it till next Friday. I
38 think I'll take today off and have a nice time and think about it tomorrow or
39 perhaps the next day." No, because I was so thrilled to be doing it I would
40 launch into it straight away. Not because I was worried that I wouldn't meet the
41 deadline, but because I couldn't wait to get my teeth into it really.
42
43 So it's always been a source of huge enjoyment?
44
45 Oh Yes. When I was at the (name), and I still to describe it as the best job in the
46 world, for me anyway, and somebody came and erm wrote an article about me.
47 I've got the magazine somewhere and I said "I just can't wait to get into work on
48 Mondays." Erm. And round about the same time there was a song called 'I Hate
49 Mondays', so the article about me was called 'I Love Mondays'. So, oh yes, it
50 was exhilarating and I think most of my colleagues felt the same about it, in their
51 own ways, although as I did mention to you some of the earlier members of the
52 (name) were not able to cope with the demands of becoming a production line
53 really. They had some wonderful ideas.
54
55 Did you have of the difficulties that they obviously found?
56

1 No. They had psychological difficulties.

2
3 What do you think it was about you that made it such a thrill, such a challenge
4 and such an exhilarating journey for you?

5
6 Just before I mention that I'll just talk about these other two people who left the
7 (name) because they couldn't cope with the pressures. They had nothing else in
8 their life apart from their work. They were neither of them married. They didn't
9 have. They had a certain amount of life outside the (name) but the whole of their
10 life was focussed on it. Now I erm had a family life. I had 3 children. I loved to
11 travel. So the work, although I found it wonderful, was only part of my life and
12 probably one of the best parts of my life, but certainly only part of my life. So
13 that, erm it was keeping that sort of thing in proportion.

14
15 So family life has been always very important to you?

16
17 Oh Yes I think so. Sure you have the responsibilities of bringing up children and
18 that sort of thing. Er. It doesn't weigh heavily on me but it just comes naturally
19 to me. For example, I've mentioned to you already that I've just adopted, what,
20 3 years ago, three small children. But I've already got 3 grown up children. So
21 you're talking to a father of 6. And although I don't go on about it too much, I'm
22 seriously aware of the responsibilities of having children around the place

23
24 How has having children around the place affected your working? I get the
25 impression you've always worked a lot from home? Am I right?

26
27 Not an enormous amount. The fact was well I'm talking now about when my..
28 We were talking mostly about the days at the (name), which was 20 years. That
29 was my most busy time.

30
31 Can I ask you if the pattern has changed a lot since then?

32
33 Oh yes because erm there are fewer commissions come in. I suspect that, the
34 music's changed for example, and although I do try and keep abreast of the way
35 music has developed. It doesn't come naturally to me to do some of the sort of
36 commercial music that comes up at the moment. And also there's a whole new
37 generation of wild young talented people coming up and I'm quite aware of the
38 fact and quite accept the fact that at the age of erm 60 I doubt whether I'm
39 going to have another huge career, in the media, which I'm rather relieved about
40 in a way. Because it was wonderful while it lasted, but you can see your life in
41 perspective. This was wonderful while it happened. It was right at the time. I'm
42 now, I can sit back and remember it. I've got various bits and pieces around me
43 I can work with and do and enjoy. And sometimes commissions will come my
44 way, which is great and I can work on them and enjoy myself. Maybe I'm a
45 natural optimist. I'm certainly not a natural pessimist anyway.

46
47 Coming back to the effect of family. When you were at the (name) and you had
48 children growing up then, how did family life affect your work? You said it gave
49 you, you liked having that balance, so it wasn't just work and music.

50
51 Well there was a certain amount of discipline I had to keep with myself. I would
52 be up and about, around at breakfast time. I liked to drop my kids off to school
53 and go straight from school off to the (name). My wife would probably collect
54 them but by the time they were a bit older and could make their own way home,
55 around secondary school age. The good thing about the (name) was that there
56 was this erm self-scheduling element which meant that if there was some sort of

1 school thing or some family emergency that I had to deal with, erm and I had to
2 go home suddenly, I could do it. Providing there wasn't a serious dub or I didn't
3 have a deadline that evening. I could work my life around it. So erm

4
5 And as it always a satisfactory balance?

6
7 Yes it was pretty good and also erm my children were thrilled that I was there.
8 Because they were, the two boys, were (programme) fans and to have their
9 father's name at the end of the (name) show was tremendous kudos and I used to
10 bring the scripts home, to look through the scripts, and they used to pounce on
11 them and hijack them and take them off to their rooms and

12
13 If I was to ask them to describe you, as a musician, working in that world, what
14 would they have said, do you think at that time?

15
16 Oh they used to send me up something cruel! They used to think it was a joke.
17 Obviously they respected what I did and they, as I say a bit of kudos for them.

18
19 How did they use that kudos then?

20
21 Oh well, they'd take these scripts off to school and say. "Guess what's
22 happening next week in (programme)" I've got the script here.

23
24 Were you involved too? Did you have to go to the school and talk about what
25 you did, that kind of thing?

26
27 Erm. (2) No, I don't think, or did I?

28
29 Were you a celebrity in the school?

30
31 Not particularly, no. I don't think so.

32
33 And as they grew up did it remain the same?

34
35 Yes I think so,

36
37 Proud of you and involved with what you were doing?

38
39 Yes I think so because they still, the youngest of the 3 older ones, he's now 31,
40 he's a wonderful musician. He's a concert pianist and he teaches at (name of
41 school) but he also goes out and does concertos with amateur orchestras and
42 things like that. He's a wonderful musician. The older one of the two, who's now

43
44 So you think you've inspired them to be musical? Was music always part of
45 family life too?

46
47 Yes it was. Yes I guess so, and they all, all 3 of my children, the older ones, had
48 piano lessons. They all had the same teacher. The older two – when I say fell by
49 the wayside - they still probably enjoy playing piano a bit, but it's the younger
50 one who took it on. He became very grand and became, as I said, a wonderful
51 pianist, in the concert world, not in the jazz world.

52
53 Do you think that having you doing that kind of work made your family in any
54 sense different from other families?

55

1 I guess so. I mean erm sure. Although in many ways the pattern was the same—
2 Dad's gone off to work at 9, comes back at 5, fairly regularly, would have been
3 the same if I was an accountant or something like that. Although the very fact
4 that I was, quite often if it was a weekend they might come in and watch me
5 working in the studio, or, big treat of all, come to watch (programme) being
6 shot in the studio.

7
8 So what would have been the difference then between other families and your
9 family?

10
11 Hard to say isn't it really. Erm. I suppose we were actually less conventional.

12
13 In what kind of ways?

14
15 (3) I'm just trying to think really. Er. Although. Where we lived, we lived in
16 north London and both my boys went to (name of school) and there was a
17 certain amount of conforming that you had to do both as a pupil and as a parent.
18 But on the other had if you were slightly bohemian it was no big deal, it wasn't a
19 problem.

20
21 Bohemian in the sense of working in the arts?

22
23 Yes. Or turning up without a tie. Or growing your hair a little bit longer. Or
24 occasionally growing a beard. Yes. There was never any problem about it. And
25 everyone knew what I did I suppose, and erm accepted it was erm (2) and some
26 people were quite interested in it. Erm. But it became part of the pattern. It
27 became no big deal really.

28
29 Was there a downside to it? Were there any problems that doing the work that
30 you did and having the life that you had had any impact on your family?

31
32 Erm. (2) No I don't think so no.

33
34 There weren't any rows or difficulties due to your working pattern?

35
36 No I don't think so. I can't remember. Occasionally there might have been a bit
37 of tension where I might have been torn two ways. I might have had a really
38 busy day at work but on the other hand there was a really busy day at school or
39 some erm emergency cropped up. I can remember one quite humorous time. I
40 was very very busy, at work, and I was doing something which had to be
41 finished for the next day. My wife rang up and said "The dog is dead!
42 [consternation]. She's lying on the lawn. She hasn't moved and she's rolled over
43 and she's stiff." I said. "Well, so she's dead. Bury her." "No no no. I want you to
44 come home." So I come home. Go, walk in the front door and the dog bounds up
45 to meet me. The dog is not dead at all. The dog is just having a little sleep or
46 perhaps had a little sort of trauma or something.

47
48 Oh what happened then?

49
50 So I said. "The dog seems to be all right. I'm going to go back to work." I was
51 only you know, 20 minutes drive. There's a humorous side to that. No normally,
52 thank goodness, my wife was able to keep the home going in a satisfactory way
53 that...

54
55 How was it for her, living with somebody working creatively?
56

1 She was – she had no problem with it.
2
3 Did she have work of her own?
4
5 No I think. Yes she was an artist. I am talking now about my first wife. We split
6 up about 10 years ago. Not work related, I don't think, the split up wasn't. She
7 was always been in the artistic world. She is a sculptor and now lives in
8 Scotland, and works steadily as a sculptor and has commissions.
9
10 Did she understand the nature of your work?
11
12 Well I think she did up to a point because she'd come from a musical family,
13 erm although she came from rather a mixed up family they were musical. Her
14 grandfather was Sir Arnold Bax, so all my first 3 children have got Bax genes in
15 them so perhaps that's where the youngest gets his piano playing from. I like to
16 think it's from me a little bit, but its probably from the Bax side. Certainly gets
17 his drinking habits from the Bax side. Erm. So from that point of view, no it
18 wasn't a problem really and
19
20 If it wasn't a problem was it a good thing, did it help?
21
22 I guess so. I never got the impression that she felt I should be doing a serious
23 day job instead of doing. No no.
24
25 So this business with the dog, or anything else that cropped up, there was never a
26 point when if you hadn't been doing what you did, it would have been different?
27
28 No I can't really remember, at that time in my life, when I was at the (name),
29 because things were so flexible, there was never, that I remember any particular
30 pressures between work and home. Perhaps you look back with rose tinted
31 spectacles. perhaps there were and I am deliberately not remembering them but I
32 don't think there were. Obviously we did eventually split up and go our separate
33 ways but it wasn't to do with work, it wasn't the fact that I was away so much.
34 Erm. No, as far as the work is concerned, I was working and making enough to
35 keep the family in bread and butter. It was all right.
36
37 Talking about that, there's a lot of feast and famine in the world of music. Is it
38 something you had experience of as well?
39
40 Not really because I was in this enviable position, as I say it was a great job, that
41 erm I was on a (name) salary with a pension to look forward to, which I'm living
42 on now. And there aren't many composers who are on pension schemes, not
43 with a firm's pension scheme. And at no point ever did I feel to myself I can't
44 hack this music any more perhaps I ought to try something else. No, as far as
45 living was concerned I was able to erm (2) First of all the flow of ideas never
46 dried up, and nor did the salary, until I finally left.
47
48 Was it something that affected you having that security of income while you
49 were bringing up the kids and so on?
50
51 Well I think if you are in a family situation, where you are responsible for kids,
52 you er, it is a sense of relief that you are able to relax erm and know that. Well,
53 as I said it was the best job in the world. Not only was it a wonderful job but it
54 also meant that I had a regular salary coming in.
55

1 Compared to a lot of musicians in that world who don't have that, has it ever
2 been something you discussed with other musicians?

3
4 I think a lot of other musicians have expressed jealousy of the fact that I was
5 lucky enough to be able to do this job and I acknowledge that I was. It was a bit
6 of luck. I happened to be in the (name) at the right time and happened to meet
7 this friend of mine on a pavement outside the (name of pub).

8
9 And when there have been jealous of you, what has been your reaction to it?

10
11 Erm (4) There's never been any bitterness, I don't think, apart from one person
12 who we don't count because he was professionally bitter. Er no, most people,
13 erm that I've talked to about it, have all said "Oh, bully for you! Really glad for
14 you that you can do something." A lot of people, I did meet a lot of concert
15 composers, er who were jealous in a way. Because quite often concert
16 composers are people who are driven to write a certain sort of music, erm their
17 own interior world and they don't have the constraints of writing for the media,
18 and they live in their own world. But it does mean that their, they don't earn
19 regularly, as you say, what was it, feast and famine, something like that. With
20 them it's quite often more famine than feast. So it is difficult. But that is the life
21 they've chosen and I understand how their life works but it's never been like that
22 for me. I think what it is. When I say I don't take it seriously, I don't take
23 anything too seriously. I can see the funny side of everything. As far as the
24 professional side of actually delivering the goods at the right time, I take that
25 seriously, but erm I certainly don't make a big deal about being a musician or
26 being a composer. It's just a job which I had a bit of luck and my mother made
27 sure I did my piano practice. I happened to meet the right people at the right time
28 and happened to serve the long apprenticeship before I got there – various
29 things, in bands playing up and down, driving up and down motorways etc so I
30 think I would describe it as eventually finding my niche.

31
32 After the (name) what happened then?

33
34 Well erm after the (name), well,

35
36 And how did it come to an end?

37
38 Right, well like a lot of institutions within the (name), its profile was higher than
39 its earning power. As you know (name) closed lots and lots of departments down
40 because they weren't making money and the (name) could never make money
41 on the internal market so eventually it had to go. And it wasn't one big chop. It
42 sort of petered out Eventually 2 people left in about '94 then another 2 left in '95
43 – that was me and one of my colleagues, and it was going to be relaunched as a
44 New leaner (name) with only 3 people but that didn't work either. Er, Not in
45 their terms, although they did some wonderful music, but it was never going to
46 earn the money that it should do, so it had to go.

47
48 And what happened to you when you left, 'cause that's what I'm mainly
49 interested in,

50
51 Well it was a wonderful celebratory day. It was exactly, I'd been in the (name)

52
53 Had you seen it coming for some time?

54
55 Oh yes, the writing had been on the wall for at least 2 years
56

1 How did that make you feel?
2
3 Well, when I first went to the (name) 20 years before I thought. "Well this is a
4 wonderful place to be. It's so good, it can't last." So when it finally came that it
5 had come to the end of the (name) for me, I was not surprised, I was. I would
6 have liked to have go on for perhaps another 5 years, but I decided not to fret
7 about that. I decided that I was going to go off and enjoy myself and for a long
8 time I didn't have a set up like this, a studio set up. I went off and enjoyed
9 myself.
10
11 What were you doing to enjoy yourself?
12
13 Well one of my great hobbies is flying. I'm a glider pilot, a gliding instructor.
14
15 Oh really! When did you start that?
16
17 Oh I think I first started flying when I was 17, but before that I had done model
18 aeroplanes. This is a huge streak of my life which is significant that we haven't
19 mentioned before
20
21 I'm glad you mentioned it!
22
23 Well I did mention having a balanced life, didn't I, and I talked about family life
24 and there was this other side of me which loves travel and. For example every
25 Spring I go off to the Pyrenees, hire a glider and go off flying off through the
26 mountains, over there.
27
28 Do you do it on your own or do you go with friends?
29
30 Sometimes I'm in a 2 seater sometimes I'm on my own in single seater.
31
32 Who do you go with?
33
34 Well there's an English guy I know who runs what he calls the European
35 Soaring Club. Sometimes they're in the Pyrenees. Sometimes they're in central
36 Spain, sometimes they're in France. And I go and have a week or a 2 week
37 holiday, which has nothing to do with music although I do take my guitar. He
38 insists that I bring my guitar and sing silly songs, which I do. And it is just
39 completely dedicated to flying and enjoying myself.
40
41 Do you think having that contrast has helped your music?
42
43 I'm sure it has helped my life generally, to be able to get away and I'm sure it
44 has therefore indirectly helped the music I suppose. It just sort of refreshes you
45 in a way.
46
47 Any other erm
48
49 Let me think now. Well I love travel, the places I travel to. Another of my things
50 I've always been interested in is archaeology. Even as a boy I used to go and
51 scrub around the local Roman site and bring home bits of pottery, and tiles and
52 coins and things. So whenever I do travel I quite often go to an archaeological
53 site. I've been all over Italy and places like that, wandered through Pompeii or
54 Herculaneum, and all those places like that. I find that absolutely fascinating as
55 well. So that's another thing I do love travel. And when after being in the (name)
56 for 20 years they said "Well you're entitled to grace leave. What would you like

1 to do, and we might help you pay for it." So I said I would like to go round the
2 world, I want a round the world ticket." Not really to do with archaeology as
3 such. But I did, I got a round the world ticket, flew off to California, then I went
4 to – took a couple of months over it, Hawaii, Australia, Fiji, Indonesia, India,
5 yes had a wonderful trip. So that's part of the travel thing that I like doing.
6

7 Coming back to the (name) during the period in the 90s, when your first
8 marriage came to an end, and you remarried?
9

10 Well eventually yes, that's right.
11

12 How did that affect you?
13

14 Well I think, like a lot of these things, the writing had been on the wall as far as
15 my first marriage was concerned, for perhaps 5 or 10 years, something like that.
16 Although we had a lot of respect for each other, we were doing more and more
17 our own things. I was doing music, coming home, my wife was going out and
18 doing sculpture and getting involved and this sort of thing and eventually she
19 erm (3) expressed an interest in moving to Scotland where there was a group of
20 sculptors. What is it now? I think there is more sponsorship for the Arts up there
21 and so we just went our separate ways really in a sort of amicableish sort of way.
22

23 Your children were grown up by then?
24

25 Oh yes, the youngest was at least 21 by then and they were certainly grown up
26 and I think another thing was that she'd had a (2) session for at least a year or
27 perhaps two years of psychotherapy which. She'd had a lot of psychological
28 problems due to family. I did mention in passing that she came from rather a
29 rocky family as a child. As a child she didn't have a very good upbringing and
30 she had lots of unfinished business that she had to work through, relating to her
31 father who'd disappeared and then reappeared and she had to work through that
32 and with the help of a psychotherapist erm she was able to erm help herself
33 through these traumas, and come out almost with a clean slate on the other side
34 but unfortunately I was part of the clean slate. But because (3) there had been so
35 many difficulties I suppose over the years it was almost like a sense of relief to
36 me. We're on the phone quite regularly now, at least a couple of times a week.
37 In fact I often say we get on better now than we ever did when we were married.
38 I don't think it affected my work at all, I don't think it affected the music at all.
39 It was a source of difficulties from time to time.
40

41 So you were on your own for a while?
42

43 Yes but not for very long because I'd already met (name) who I'm now married
44 to. But she was with another fellow at the time and I though (name) is a lovely
45 girl, but she's with this other fellow. And then suddenly she wasn't with this
46 other fellow so I sort of moved in and then we lived together for years and
47 eventually we got married about 3 or 4 years ago.
48

49 Is (name) in the arts too?
50

51 She was, she's a graphic designer, working on a Macintosh,
52

53 How did you meet her?
54

55 We met through music, because she sings. She sings in a jazz ensemble and they
56 needed a bass player one day and I knew one or two people. In fact the girl who

1 I was talking to on the phone as you arrived, she was the one who roped me in to
2 come and play in this jazz ensemble, singing ensemble.
3
4 Have you always kept your hand in playing bass?
5
6 Oh yes. I'm playing tonight, no tomorrow night.
7
8 Has this always been a regular part of your life?
9
10 Oh yes, and this is terribly important now, because though I don't do so much
11 composing now, I get a lot of musicians here and do a lot of recording here in
12 my little recording booth downstairs. I also go out and do lots of gigs, for
13 example Monday night I was playing at a Christmas party. (name) she's a
14 journalist you may have heard of. Tomorrow night I'm at a pub in Primrose Hill,
15 and Saturday night I'm playing at (name), which is a nice little piano bar come
16 restaurant in Soho.
17
18 Do you sort them out yourself or do people ask you to do them?
19
20 The guy who (2) I've got a wide circle of musical friends and they just ring me
21 up and say "Can you come and do this?"
22
23 And is it something you've always enjoyed?
24
25 I've done it ever since the age of 14 or 15, going out and playing, and so long as
26 I can still do it I shall continue to hope that people will ring up.
27
28 Is it the same pleasure now that you have from it that you've always had or has it
29 changed at all over the years, the way you see it?
30
31 No I think it's the same pleasure although I think I get bored a bit quicker, if I'm
32 playing with some indifferent musicians, erm shall we say, then I really start
33 looking at my watch and hoping the session will finish, I can grab my money
34 and go home. If it's playing with good musicians and it's all very exciting and
35 musically rewarding then I can't get enough of it.
36
37 Do you think that activity feeds back into other things you've done?
38
39 Are you talking about composition now? I guess so, although the sort of music
40 that I play it's still in the fairly light hearted jazz world, doesn't lend itself to
41 serious composition. I have written jazz numbers and I've had them played, erm
42 but it's not an area that I've explored very thoroughly. It's an area that I go and
43 enjoy myself with friends, and I don't sort of foist my compositions on them.
44 "Hello, here's a nice number I wrote yesterday, why don't you try it?" They
45 much prefer to play all the Gershwin and Cole Porter stuff. There's plenty of
46 good numbers there without having to do my stuff. But from time to time erm I
47 get musicians here and I've got lots of CDs of stuff that I've done with, I've
48 written and saxophone players or trumpeters have come along and I've also had
49 singers here, singing.
50
51 Is that important to you, that stuff you've written...
52
53 Well once again, I wrote it and it took quite a lot of writing and it took quite a lot
54 of recording, because I get fascinated by the whole recording process as well as
55 the writing, and then it's finished and I think that's wonderful and I just enjoy

1 listening to it. I should be out trying to sell it really. But I just enjoy it, I enjoy
2 listening to it.

3
4 For the work that you've done, is the audience for it and the reception that
5 audience would give it important to you? When you are writing it I know you
6 are writing it for a job, but in what sense are you aware of an audience?

7
8 Well, as you know I don't do concert music, therefore there's not an audience as
9 such, that is to say a group of people in a hall. Erm I always say that if you write
10 some good incidental music it shouldn't really be noticed too much. It should be
11 accepted at an unconscious level almost, and people should look back and say
12 that was a wonderful programme. "What did you think of the music?" "Oh yes,
13 the music was great. I can't quite remember exactly. I seem to remember. Oh, I
14 saw your name at the end of the programme and I didn't really notice the music
15 at the time." On the other hand the music only gets noticed if it is bad music or it
16 has been mixed in badly.

17
18 Is it important to have your name there at the end of the programme so people
19 know it's your work.

20
21 Give credit where credit's due I always say, yes. It was a source of
22 disappointment when they stopped putting names in the Radio Times for things
23 that you'd worked on.

24
25 When was that then?

26
27 Oh I don't know, not a serious disappointment just sort of a bit of c'est la vie,
28 you know.

29
30 Who would you like to be reading your name in the Radio Times, any particular
31 group or people?

32
33 Erm. Yes but it happened. I look upon my life as a sort of circle like that [draws
34 one in the air] . I'm past my peak, I wouldn't say past my prime, but I'm past my
35 peak, and I'm on a downhill slope but I'm really enjoying myself.

36
37 In terms of what, years?

38
39 Yes, sure, and everything really. I shall continue to play. I shall continue to
40 compose but not with erm such frenetic (3) enjoyment as I did 20 years ago. You
41 can't at the age of 60 you can't continue to live the sort of life you did at the age
42 of 30 or 40.

43
44 How much does the opinion of other musicians matter to you?

45
46 It's nice to erm (2). Yes, when you walk into a place and the musicians are
47 playing and they say "Oh great to see you! Are you going to have a sit in?
48 Because that means they like your playing. And that really is good.

49
50 What about what you've written?

51
52 What I've written. (4) It's funny this, because as I mentioned to you a few
53 moments ago, when you write for the media, it's not, you don't really write it
54 particularly in order to have your name up in lights. It's part of teamwork,
55 basically, and I've always accepted and always said this, that if you (2) are

1 writing music for a television programme, there's a director involved, a
2 cameraman, a lighting man, sound mixer, actors perhaps.

3
4 And they all like recognition for what they've done, don't they?

5
6 Yes sure and yes, that's right, to see their name at the end of the programme it
7 gives you a little bit of a kick. For example, this friend of mine said "Oh I've
8 bought this Tintin collection [reaching over for it on shelf] for my kids and we
9 were looking at it and suddenly he said "I saw your name on the..." It's
10 somewhere here [looking for it] Oh yes, there it is. Music by (own name).

11
12 How does that make you feel when someone says that to you?

13
14 Well it gives a bit of a thrill. Yes, I think, that's nice, It's nice to know it's still
15 remembered, and nice to know that erm people recognise the name. And they
16 said "Oh, we like the music. It's a nice jolly tune" and things like that, so yes,
17 indeed.

18
19 What about the idea that your music will last, things that you've done will last.

20
21 I've got quite firm views on this, that, I think I already used the word ephemeral,
22 used to describe the music. If you write music for the media you have to accept
23 the fact that your music is ephemeral and does a wonderful job for what it has to
24 do at the time, but (2) probably is not grand enough to stand on its own two feet
25 as a piece of music that people listen to. Having said that people they love the

26
27 How do you feel about that?

28
29 I've accepted that right from the very beginning, that it is ephemeral, it is part of
30 a team. But the bonus about that is that people collect CDs of 'Music from
31 (programme) which has got nothing to do with the programme at all. Well you
32 wrote it for the programme but sheer uninterrupted music from (programme) or
33 erm from other programmes as well. I am pleased it happens. It's all to do with
34 the phenomenon of the (programme) fan. Whatever happens in (programme)
35 they worship it. And having said that, they don't mind telling you when they
36 don't think some of your music's very nice, but it is nice to think that there are
37 some people who erm will still sit down and listen to what you did, although you
38 only wrote it to be ephemeral, they will still listen to it and enjoy it because of
39 the associations.

40
41 Do you have a sense of your audience for (programme), say?

42
43 I think I do. If you look on the Internet there are big discussion rooms about who
44 did the best music for (programme), which is the best story and it's generally
45 agreed that I did some quite good ones but I did go through a weak patch at one
46 point in 1984 or something.

47
48 So how do you feel about criticism from that source?

49
50 Well I don't take it too seriously. I feel a bit disappointed when they say, but I
51 know exactly why it was. I was working with, well my excuse anyway, shall we
52 say, some indifferent directors who weren't quite sure what they wanted, and I
53 gave them what I thought would be good, but they sort of said "Oh yes,
54 probably."

55
56 So you were in a sense agreeing with them?

1
2 I agree that I did go through a patch when the music I wrote was not as good as
3 it was at the beginning and I wrote two very good scores at the end but in the
4 middle it was a bit flabby.

5
6 I am interested in how you see the difference between comment and criticism
7 from a group of fans like that, as opposed to critics or musicians.

8
9 Well first of all critics wouldn't get involved in talking. A TV critic would talk
10 about a TV programme. He might talk about a performance of an actor, or the
11 lighting or something but it would be rare enough for a critic to talk about the
12 music. I have had critics talk about the music, and they've usually been a bit
13 ambivalent about it. "Some nice bluesy music from (own name)" or something
14 like that, somebody once wrote. But no, not too much detail, really. So it was
15 bluesy and it was all right. It wasn't really damning with faint praise, either, but
16 critics are far more interested other things to do with the programme rather than
17 music. Very rare to have the music mentioned specifically.

18
19 Does that concern you, would you have liked to...

20
21 No not really, if a programme gets a good review, erm then I feel that a part of
22 that reflects on me, even if I'm not mentioned by name or the music is not
23 mentioned. If it's a good programme, then the music must have helped towards
24 that.

25
26 What about now? You've a new young family...

27
28 Yes, I'm open to offers and I suppose I...

29
30 Are there things you would like to do that you haven't yet done, in music?

31
32 Ah right. Erm. Yes, I erm. No I don't think there are fields that I want to move
33 in that I haven't moved in yet. How shall I say? Not exactly, I know my
34 limitations, I know what I want to do. For example when I left the (name), 7
35 years ago, I didn't fret. I didn't say "I want to compose, I want to do this. I've
36 got all these things coming up." I just wanted to go off and enjoy myself for a
37 while.

38
39 Is that what you did? A period of enjoyment following leaving?

40
41 Yes that's what I did really I suppose. Sure, lots of playing, lots of travelling and
42 gliding in the Pyrenees. Things like that.

43
44 'Cause you were still a relatively young man to be pensioned off?

45
46 Yes that's right, I would be 55. No I didn't look upon it like that. I looked upon
47 it as the (name's) loss. Not just me, but the (name) and the whole of the (name's)
48 ethos was being undermined by this market economy. It wasn't just us.

49
50 So you were part of a larger process.

51
52 Yes that's right, and so I was determined not to be brought down by it and off I
53 went. But I've reached a stage now where I've got some nice equipment, I'm
54 doing some nice stuff. My oldest son designs websites for people. I'm going to
55 have a website. He said "You really ought to have a website". It'll get your name
56 round a little bit, because you'd still get people.

1
2 And what would you like to be doing then when you've got your website in the
3 public domain.
4
5 I've always enjoyed working for children's programmes. I did lots and lots of
6 incidental music and signature tunes for children's programmes. Always used to
7 find that rewarding. I used to try it out on my own children at home used to try
8 out songs on them, and they didn't used to take it too seriously. They'd send me
9 up a little bit. That was always enjoyable.
10
11 Would you do that now?
12
13 No, not the stuff I've written. But that's only because nobody's asking me to
14 write stuff at the moment. I don't write spontaneously. Oh I might do one or two
15 little songs, little improvisatory things spontaneously for the kids. But they're
16 still, how shall we say, even after three years, they are still settling down,
17 settling in. There's this process of adjustment which they go through which
18 means that. Erm. They are doing music, Lord bless them, they're having
19 keyboard lessons and they're having recorder lessons and they are making
20 progress.
21
22 I haven't really asked you about the children, what did made you decide to adopt
23 three?
24
25 Oh well erm (wife) when we got together said "Oh I always wanted a big family,
26 so I hope you are prepared to have some more children. So I said, that's fine. But
27 they never came along, so she said "Well I'm going shopping" so we got
28 involved in the adoption process and that's how it happened. Most people adopt
29 one, some people adopt two, few people adopt three, but we did.
30
31 Are they unrelated children?
32
33 They are half brothers, yes, aged about 10, 8, and 6.
34
35 What's it been like doing it a second time round?
36
37 Well certainly I've learned a lot from the first time round. But these three
38 present a whole range of different problems to the first ones. The first three were
39 relatively civilised, relatively intelligent. It's not that these are unintelligent. It's
40 just they've never really had their intelligence channelled properly. They've got
41 lots and lots of emotional baggage, that they've brought along. But I do do music
42 with them, play piano for them to leap about to and we do singing.
43
44 Is it important for you to be able to do music with them? Because I sense that
45 before it was important for you that the children understood and kind of joined
46 in what you were doing and you wanted them to share it with you?
47
48 Yes that's right because music is, let's face it, as far as I see it, is very
49 therapeutic for a start. There is a subject called Music Therapy although I've not
50 studied it particularly well, but music is also a big social thing. Music is
51 something you do with people, something you do for people. It's not something
52 you sit in your ivory tower and do, so it's something you engage people with,
53 whether it's getting up and singing a silly song or whether it's playing a piano
54 concerto for somebody or just larking about with the kids around the piano. It's
55 certainly a way of engaging with people.
56

1 I get the feeling you see that as one its primary things rather than a solitary
2 pursuit.

3
4 I guess so. Yes sure. That's right and, back to my first wife again. She "learned
5 the cello" and she had lessons for years. And I said, "Well when are you going
6 to go and play in a quartet or an orchestra?" "Oh, I'm not quite ready yet." And
7 she sat at home for years and years and years and played to herself. "Well this is
8 not music, you know." So she said "Oh go away and leave me alone."

9
10 How would you describe that?

11
12 Erm er Well I would say it's not proper music because music is something you
13 do with people or for people, not something you do on your own. It's fine I think
14 if you are using it as a sort of self-therapy or something like that, I'm not quite
15 sure really, if it's just phase you go through

16
17 Is it a form of self-expression?

18
19 Yes I think you could say that.

20
21 Isn't there a self-expressive element for you when you're playing and writing
22 something?

23
24 Oh, I guess so, particularly when I sot down at the piano and start improvising,
25 On the other hand I could sit down and play for 4 hours of an evening at home
26 and providing there's nothing too good on the TV my wife would just sit there
27 and enjoy it, my new wife. On the other hand, people are willing to pay me £60
28 to go out and play in a piano bar, I might as well go out and do it there and earn
29 £60 and as much pizza as I want to eat.

30
31 Do you see it as part of your social life too? Do you like socialising with
32 musicians?

33
34 Oh yes sure. Musicians are great people to socialise with. Because they've got
35 the same outlook on life, the same relaxed attitude, they're not buttoned-up
36 straight laced people, which I found out at a very early age, erm going back to
37 my early days when I was playing with this jazz group, rather tearaway
38 character. No, he certainly, erm going back to when I was telling you how I was
39 studying for A levels, and he was dragging me out. It certainly opened my eyes
40 to the rest of the world. We were in a little provincial town and he decided this
41 band was going to go and play in London. London was 100 miles away. Never
42 mind, (name) and I were going to playing London, do some gigs in London and
43 it opened my eyes up not just to London. but to what you could do. And so

44
45 What did you see then as the prospect ahead?

46
47 Well I don't know what I saw in the long term, but I certainly didn't. It wasn't
48 that I was fed up with life in the provincial town, but I always knew that I would
49 move to London.

50
51 Did you see yourself at any particular point saying, my life's going to be in
52 music? Was it like that?

53
54 No. No I don't think so. I knew that music was always going to be an important
55 part of my life but I'd never thought that I would be a musician. My mother as I

1 said was very keen on me to learn to play the piano but only just as a little hobby
2 really.

3
4 Did you have a very pressurized sort of upbringing?

5
6 Not. I think I had it pressurized from an academic point of view. I wasn't
7 particularly good academically. My sister was the academic one. I was in the
8 shade really a little bit. And in fact the fact that I used to go out and play with
9 these rather disreputable people was a source of disappointment to her.

10
11 Sorry, I wanted to ask you whether there was a point at which you saw yourself
12 having a life in music.

13
14 No I never really thought that. I thought I might work as a musician playing in
15 jazz groups and things like that but I didn't move in the right circles. Although I
16 came to London erm I didn't really get moving in the right circles. Another of
17 my school friends who I played in the school jazz group, he went off and formed
18 the Rolling Stones.

19
20 Which one was that then?

21
22 Brian Jones. And I thought. Well, if I'd gone with him. He used to say "Come
23 and play in my blues group." "No I'm a jazz player not a blues player." In fact I
24 thought blues was a bit boring, the way he played it anyway.

25
26 Do you think you're still like that- I'm a jazz player?

27
28 Well put it this way. No, I think snobbishness is the domain of the very young,
29 teenagers and twenties. You soon grow out of it when you realise it's (2) not
30 really what you should do. No, no. But I never really, didn't think I would earn
31 my living from music in the way that I did. I thought I'd. When I went into the
32 BBC I thought I might be earn my living in broadcasting somehow. I became a
33 newsreader, and I became a continuity announcer, like "Speaking to the nation.
34 You have just missed on BBC2 and here on BBC1 we've got so and so," and I
35 did that and I enjoyed that for a while. And at the time I thought well maybe
36 that's what I'll do for the rest of my working life. The chance to move came, so I
37 moved and it was all just chance really. And if I hadn't gone to the (name) I
38 wouldn't have written the hours and hours and hours and hours of music that I
39 have written. Nobody would have asked me to do it. I might have written a few
40 things, but nothing as voluminous as what I have.

41
42 So there's been a bit of serendipity that has helped things along?

43
44 Yes certainly

45
46 Musically, just to come back to that question again, finally, what would you like
47 to be doing, apart from continuing playing and enjoying life.

48
49 Well I'll certainly always do a lot of playing. Erm I think I would like to get
50 perhaps 2 or 3 commissions a year to do something quite, not too difficult, not
51 too challenging, for TV, either ITV or BBC or whichever.

52
53 What would be ideal?

54
55 Well, a children's story or something like that, six episodes, or a nice wildlife
56 programme, something like that. Maybe when I've got my website and I get a

1 showreel together, I've got so much stuff I could show people, maybe I ought to
2 go out and try and sell myself because as I said earlier on, composing is only 10
3 per cent, going out and selling yourself is 90 per cent.
4

5 How do you feel about that?
6

7 Well it doesn't come naturally to me to go out and sell myself.
8

9 Can you do it if you have to?
10

11 I don't know really. I haven't up to now. The thing about the (name) was that
12 people used to come and bang on our door. We didn't used to have to go out and
13 look for work. We had a great reputation and I myself built up a reputation for
14 doing what I did and doing it well, and people came back to me time after time
15 after time after time to do their programmes.
16

17 So having the reputation that you have now is going to help you.
18

19 Yes I guess so. Yes sure.
20

21 Getting the showreel is less important really than actually saying I'm here and
22 I'm available.
23

24 That's right. Yes sure. The (4) two things I've got to do. I mean if you're going
25 to work on children's programmes these days, all children's programmes. They
26 like this particular sort of music, garage or hip hop or something like that which
27 I've got to, I can do it but it doesn't come naturally to me, shall we say. Having
28 said that, one wonderful group that I'm playing with at the moment, I'm the
29 First of all I'm the only white person, they're all black, black girl singer,
30 guitarist. They are all in their 30s and I'm in my 60s and I'm not quite sure
31 exactly why I'm there really but we have a great time and I really find it
32 challenging and uplifting to go out and play music with these kids because I'm I
33 am able to teach them something about the music, but on the other hand I am
34 carried along by their enthusiasm and will to get across to the audience. It's
35 wonderful to go out and play in a band where you're the oldest person by 20
36 years rather than you're the youngest person by 20 years. I did so much of that
37 over the years playing with good old boys.
38

39 What's nice about it? What do you like about it?
40

41 Well it's just the enthusiasm really.
42

43 How do they treat you?
44

45 Just as one of them really and I treat them as if I'm er just one of the guys and
46 there's never any problem at all. They are all a little spaced out occasionally, too
47 much pot being smoked, but it's not a serious problem.
48

49 Has that ever been part of your life, any of that stuff?
50

51 No no no. I don't drink either. I can't. Funnily enough somebody gave me a
52 bottle of brandy the other day and I have a little nip occasionally. I used to be
53 able to drink 2 or 3 pints in an evening but I just can't do it now. It just zaps me.
54 I get a headache, can't sleep, I feel rotten the next day. No, so I'm not a drug
55 taker or a boozer.
56

1 Have there been any health problems associated with music. I know it's a real
2 problem for some musicians playing the bass, strain and injury and stuff like
3 that.
4
5 No. Occasionally. RSI sometimes comes into it and sometimes my fingers feel a
6 bit stiff and at one point about 6 months ago I could scarcely play the double
7 bass because my fingering... This joint [indicating joint on finger] became very
8 very sore and every time I tried to put that finger down. Oh! [pained] and I didn't
9 know what to do. I hoped that after a while it would just go away and it went
10 away fortunately. I thought my bass playing days were numbered, or over, or
11 both.
12
13 Ok I think we'll stop there.

Transcript 8 :

Dennis

1 Right. When people ask you to describe yourself as a musician, what would you
2 normally say?

3

4 Um. Sort of Jack of all trades. Er I aspire to that, rather than it being a kind of
5 second rate living. I've always liked craft people you know, erm.

6

7 So you pride yourself on being able to cover all those areas to a high standard?

8

9 Yes I think I'm a bit scared of being a one, you know, a one trick writer. I think.
10 Funny I would deny myself such a lot, and if you're taking every influence you
11 can possibly find, then it all comes out in a kind of hybrid form. And er you
12 know it would worry me to be too narrow, to say to myself I am a sort of
13 modernistic classical composer, which I suppose with knowledge I could quite
14 easily be. Erm but I look at it in two different ways. Erm on the one hand, I
15 make a living from it, er, so therefore, in my, to my mind, if you make a living
16 from it, someone's paying you to do something, they want a job from you. I try
17 to give them what they want, like a carpenter might or a plumber or someone
18 who comes and fits something in your house or even something more artistic
19 than that, when you wanted a nice roof, and you wanted it shaped a certain way.
20 You discuss it and try and do it. Er so in my opinion my client, I have to try and
21 give them what they want and the fact that I have done for 43 years and still
22 have people coming back, means I've kind of done a good job. I wouldn't want
23 to inflict my art upon them, unless they wanted it. If they wanted what I can do
24 for myself, then I'd be very happy to supply it. So I have two compartments in
25 my head, one as the working professional and the other one is my secret bit,
26 which nobody should pay for it. I don't think anybody should pay for it. There is
27 erm a thought amongst composers that they are composers and they should
28 write their music and someone should pay them for it but why should anyone
29 else pay them for it? They should pay themselves for it, they should do it for
30 themselves or for God. Er, so, I have that division in my mind, erm.

31

32 So you see writing your own secret music as a kind of pleasure and as a
33 privilege really.

34

35 Well, a privilege

36

37 Don't you think it would be nice to be rewarded for it in some way or other, not
38 necessarily financially but in some way?

39

40 Well I see the financial side as a reward for my commercial work. For the other
41 side of it, I have very specific beliefs which might be of interest to a
42 psychoanalyst or [laughs] what is it, Psychologist?

43

44 Psychologist

45

46 Psychologist is that I don't I sometimes it gets up my nose when I hear
47 composers say; 'This is my music. I've written a new work of mine. My work is
48 this. 'This is the work of Julian Smith who has written it' and I don't see it like
49 that at all. Erm call me religious if you like, but I see the role of the serious
50 composer to be er a voice for God or whatever to speak through, so I would
51 work to become tuned to receive creative input. Erm that doesn't mean to say
52 I'm sitting around waiting for a flash of lightning. It means I'd have to work
53 very hard to be able to receive. In fact I don't think I'd even want to put my
54 name on it. In a way I almost think signing a painting is wrong. Er I mean most
55 of the great works were written for God, right through Bach, Mozart, Vincent
56 Van Gogh and so on. Even Vincent put his name on which to me was slightly
57 wrong but on the other had he was trying to sell paintings, he was trying to work

1 commercially but at the same time he was trying to you know work to his faith
2 as well,

3
4 So you see the highest purpose of music as having a spiritual purpose and feel
5 it's kind of you're kind of tapping into it in a way.

6
7 Yeh. Absolutely, and its taken a long time to realise that, that it does come to
8 you, but it doesn't come to you if you are not ready to receive it. I remember
9 Paul McCartney talking about 'Yesterday'. He wrote Yesterday and he didn't
10 know where it came from. He just woke up and it was whistling in his head and
11 he said "Who wrote this?" And they said "I haven't heard that before." And I've
12 been in that position because you know I used to strive very hard to compose,
13 and I realise now that striving merely sort of sets yourself up as a almost like an
14 electronic device that receives a wavelength erm

15
16 It's narrowing, it's constricting is it, in that sense, it's constricting and
17 narrowing?

18
19 How do you mean by that? Sorry.

20
21 Does it restrict what you are open to, your openness to receive it. When you
22 narrow yourself down, you feel that you're not as inspired as when you are open.

23
24 Well, you know, we were having an argument about this with a painter last
25 week and he is calling it all tosh what I talk about – he says its all a load of
26 rubbish, but [coughs] erm I mean even if I wasn't talking spiritually, you know,
27 God or creation or whatever coming to you. If you weren't talking in those fields
28 I think you could still argue a simpler or more organic argument, in the sense
29 that, you might be able to tell me this, but it has been long considered that there's
30 been two parts of the brain, the conscious and the subconscious. Thought, I don't
31 know whether it's the physical brain or not but there's two levels of thought, the
32 conscious and the subconscious. Erm and this was made into a very good book –
33 which put forward a very good argument, you know, the well-known 'The Inner
34 Game of Tennis' which then went on to become 'The Inner Game of Music' and
35 there were several versions but the principle was all the same, to eliminate that
36 gabbling voice in your head that stands outside you critically and looks at you all
37 the time to see what you're up to, saying "What've you done there? That's not so
38 good is it? Oh you're going to mess that one up," and of course you do. Um, so
39 therefore what I've tried to do and what apparently Mozart did and many other
40 geniuses. I'm not putting myself in that category, I'm merely saying [laughs]
41 that I aspire to try to get into that state of whatever it is that makes oneself. If
42 you don't know what it is you're supposed to be receiving, if you're not prepared
43 for receiving, if your harmonic knowledge is not tuned, if your keyboard skills
44 are not fine, if your, if all these factors are not in place then you're not going to
45 receive the information for which you're looking, so therefore, on a very
46 simplistic level erm if I were to write a tune I would sit at the piano, or just sit
47 without an instrument because I can write from thought anyway, or at the
48 keyboard or the guitar or whatever, er and try physically, in other words using
49 the conscious part of my brain, to assemble something roughly in the way I want
50 it to go... um [phone rings – break] So I'd worked hard at assembling a piece of
51 music into the way I hope it will go and then I have to force myself to switch out
52 of the conscious mode and let the subconscious get go to work. I think that's
53 probably not a great revelation. I mean it's been

54
55 Does this apply? Erm I can see it applies to your own work, does it apply to the
56 work other people ask you to do equally? Or is that different?

1 Er Well I think so yes because because I don't always compose, I'm an arranger
2 as well and er (2). Yes, yes I think it does. I mean one is calling, in that situation
3 not for something totally out of the blue, but you're digging into your deeper
4 memory for your experiences not just as a performer but as a listener too, and
5 all fields of music. If you watch films as I did when I was a kid, you know all the
6 great black and white films. If you've been involved with the dance bands, if
7 you've been involved with rock'n'roll, if you've been involved with this and that
8 , its all kind of lurking in the depth of your mind so when someone wants one of
9 those categories then you kind of search in that area in your head, you're kind of
10 bringing out memories, deeply hidden memories and kind of reproducing them.
11 I'm not sure that's quite the same, but I mean, I'm not sure myself. I'm not
12 saying I ever um I have (2) what's the word like a faith, a creed, erm what do
13 you call it when someone has a religious approach to something, that is my so
14 and so

15
16 Yes that is my credo

17
18 Credo, that's not my credo. These are actually questions I ask myself rather than
19 saying this is what I do, these are the questions I ask myself. Um, Percy Scholes,
20 who writes a very good, er several pages on composition and comes to the
21 conclusion as everyone does that there is no training for composition, there's
22 training for arrangements and there's looking and studying the past you know
23 and analysing and so on. That's a kind of a training to have had a look at what
24 already exists. But there's no real training for original creation.

25
26 Do you agree with that?

27
28 Um, well, I'm not sure, I'm not sure, I, I, Percy Scholes says that when a great
29 piece of music comes out that attracts many people to it, whether it be a pop
30 song or a piece of classical music and so on and so on, you will find that there
31 are elements of it that remind people of something that's gone before, so I think
32 that if I want to grasp something like that, it's got to contact with other people's
33 memories you know as well, erm

34
35 And it has at the same time, people often think, to have that mark of
36 individuality

37
38 Yes

39
40 Can you say a little bit about that as far as your own work is concerned.

41
42 The mark of individuality. Well, could I mention one other point before I talk
43 about that and that is when ones talking about composition one nearly always
44 thinks about melody, because that's the most retainable part, probably the only
45 retainable part of a composition. You can remember having a good time to the
46 salsa band on a Friday night, and dancing and boogying away. You can
47 remember it you can sort of you can vaguely sort of remember the rhythmic
48 pattern that you were dancing to ah but the only thing that really lasts for ever is
49 a melody, so you tend to talk about composition as melody, but in actual fact
50 there are 5 major elements to it: there may be more, but I've kind of pinned it
51 down at 5. One is melody, the other one is harmony. Chords themselves have got
52 different moods: majors, minors and so on and their juxtaposition with its
53 previous one and the incoming one is a kind of a composition because you get
54 real moods from it. The other one is erm rhythm, you know, the kind of rhythm,
55 and then the other one is timbre, you know the actual sound of a trumpet and
56 that's where in the world of synthesisers we're in an entire new world – I know
57 its not new now – its 20, 30 years old, but even from that little thing that we saw

1 upstairs you know it's limitless amount of sound. The other one that I would put
2 was words too, which are normally associated with music. So when I compose I
3 try and discover what, whether it's commercial or even for my own thing, what
4 I'm trying to feature, because I always said if you had a melody by George
5 Gershwin, the rhythm by Mongo Santamaria's Latin band, you had the harmony
6 of erm Schoenberg and you had the lyrics of Bob Dylan, and you put them all
7 together it would be awful, it would be just [both laughing] So therefore, I tend
8 to think of one and a half. One, if it's a rhythmic This is one thing I learned from
9 (name), she was one of my best teachers, because she was really into rhythmic
10 interplay, and knew how to explain it and she was very very good. So, I tend to
11 think: is it a rhythmic piece, is it a melodic piece. If it's a melodic piece, or is it
12 just the sound? If its just the sound of a beautiful synth patch, then you can go
13 easy on the melody. A lot of older people have complained about modern music
14 being tuneless and it is in many respects, um, it largely is, and it has to be
15 because it's subjugated – is that the right word? – to the rhythm, the rhythm's at
16 the front. Anyway, that's my little hobby horse.

17
18 Which modern music are you thinking about? Which modern music are you
19 talking about there – your particular hobby horse?

20
21 Well, (2) I like. I don't know the terms that much, I don't study the classical
22 categorisation that much but I think its called serialism or minimalism – it's that
23 kind of mantra kind of thing, where you have a kind of tapestry of sound that
24 just repeats, almost like a prayer, er and it just repeats and it repeats and its got a
25 kind of hypnotic effect upon which you then kind of build growth over a longer
26 period of time. I mean a lot of the most commonplace music we know is in very
27 short sentences, cadences, just like speech, you say a little bit, you rest, catch
28 your breath and you say the next little bit, whereas these long united pieces I
29 find them very silly. I mean I'm not a person who sits round and chants and
30 lights candles, not at all. I'm a beer drinking pub swilling trombone player, but I
31 find that very attractive, so that's my, I call that sort of fairly modern I suppose,
32 using all these sort of abstract sounds, but to me, to me there has got to be
33 melody at some point, and I think to most people a melody you can sing to
34 yourself. Take it home with you.

35
36 Yeh I agree with you about melody. Just thinking aloud there, I was thinking..
37 Do you write. Do you find yourself writing for particular players? Obviously if
38 you're writing for Miles Davis or somebody timbre is going to be really
39 important

40
41 Oh yeh yeh.

42
43 Do you find that .So which of the five elements is to the fore, apart from your
44 strength in melody is dependent on the setting in which you find yourself
45 working

46
47 It's the same thing. It's just a palate of sounds and effects. If I've got (name)
48 with his baritone sax er he's got a nice deep register and he's got a nice vibrato.
49 I'm not going to clutter him up with busy busy things. On a young Turk like
50 (name) who runs all over the place on alto you can give him a forceful driving
51 rhythm. I would tend to put John again you see there's a danger of pigeonholing
52 someone, which is not a good idea.

53
54 Anyway back to you, really, you were saying that in a sense your inspiration
55 comes from, you are drawing on your unconscious or subconscious, and it's kind
56 of out there, and you're kind of tapping into it and using your craft and your skill
57 to realise what is there.

1
2 Exactly exactly. But the craft to, not to realise it but to put yourself in a position
3 to receive what you want to receive, not quite the same thing as realising it.
4 Because on a very plain simple level, if I was going to write a pop song – well
5 that's what I've been doing these last few weeks, this (name) thing. I've been
6 writing songs for children to sing. I've tried a few little ideas and then forget
7 about it, and you've played a dozen different patterns on the piano and hummed
8 them and then suddenly, if you just give it time, you'll find yourself [hums a
9 tune]. Where did that come from? If it comes back at you and it sticks then it's
10 right. Absolutely right. And that's not just for music, it's a matter of where you
11 left the car keys, you know, sleep on it, it's exactly right, and if you allow it to
12 work, instead of all that grand "I am the composer, and I sit down and I
13 command it" – you don't command it, in my opinion, you set yourself in a
14 position to receive it.

15
16 Does that mean that your interior, your consciousness or whatever we want to
17 call it, there's music coming to you, or you are thinking about it in some way all
18 the time?

19
20 Yes, yes I think so, I think. I've been happy this last couple of years. You know,
21 I've had darkness in my life, when my wife died, then with the kids and then
22 struggling financially and you know like anybody else you get problems in your
23 life. I'm very happy. I don't know whether that's affecting my music. It's
24 certainly affected my output in terms of energy in doing it. So I think because
25 I'm happy at the moment I don't necessarily write happy sounding music. I can
26 draw on an energy to, I think I really like dark music to be honest. You know. I
27 can write a happy tune. Happier music is more difficult to write than dark music,
28 funnily enough. It's quite hard to write a happy song, and it always irks me that
29 avant-garde, the avant-garde, whether it's in jazz or in classical, seem to consider
30 it only only viable if its got er sort of dark sinister complaining whingeing noise
31 in it. Why? Because it's abstract and not traditional in, why can't it be happy as
32 well? I mean, You know. Why shouldn't you write a happy tune that's abstract,
33 but not many people do. Once. It's the same with painters and everyone. Once
34 they go in that mode of being serious, erm they feel it's almost vital to go into
35 the dark area.

36
37 There is a kind of belief isn't there that this suffering or darkness makes you
38 better. Do you feel that's reflected in writing all this dark sombre type of music,
39 that there's a kind of belief that it's better in a sense because it reflects that
40 suffering and pain.

41
42 I dunno. I mean there was no-one much darker in spirit and outlook than Vincent
43 Van Gogh and yet his flowers are beautiful alive and joy – they're not – It was
44 when he was dark and serious in the early days when he was painting the Potato
45 Eaters and those dark browns and he wanted to be serious, somehow down the
46 line his spirit came through and he allowed his joy of looking at those colours in
47 Provence to go onto his canvasses, so. Sorry, what did you say, what was the
48 question? [laughs]

49
50 I was thinking that you know you can be sitting there looking on the most
51 beautiful scene and write unhappy music and vice versa, you can be in the, you
52 know, in torment and write happy music, but there is a belief you were saying
53 that you are only really serious if your music is kind of sombre and on that side,
54 so we were talking about whether you feel there is this kind of belief that you
55 feel that having suffered makes you a better composer, makes your work better
56 in some ways or is it just different I wonder?

57

1 I think it does, you know, I think suffering and hard laborious work makes you a
2 better composer. And not just suffering, but life's experiences in general. But
3 this brings me to a point I'd like to mention because (2) having worked as an
4 arranger, and on occasions as a composer as well, when you've got a long piece
5 of music to do, erm, and some of them are quite long, you know, even a whole
6 album or something like that, but in one piece about 3 or 4 minutes long,
7 particularly if you're writing conventionally, with an orchestra, or even when
8 you are working with keyboards upstairs, sort of thing, erm you can start off in
9 the morning with a happy frame of mind and then the gas bill will come in, or
10 something, or you'll fall down and stub your toe and by 3'oclock in the
11 afternoon, your thumb's bleeding, er, one of your children is not well, or you
12 know, somebody's fallen over or there's been a national disaster, or something,
13 you're feeling blue and miserable, and within the space of having written that
14 piece you've gone through several different moods. And I sometimes look back
15 at my arrangements thinking, I can hear it! It started off nice and joyful and half-
16 way through, so (2) one of my aspirations is continuity, and I think you can only
17 do that really by letting the subconscious get to work. I mean there was a book, I
18 mean that that piano tuner told me about. He told me about it and told me the
19 principle of it, and I'd love to have got it it's called 'Unharness the
20 subconscious.' It was a book that he read and I really do believe in that as I've
21 said before, whether the sub-conscious is a god-like spiritual thing or whether it
22 merely is a computer that..

23
24 So how do you do it? How do you feel you best unharness it?

25
26 I think it comes with practice. I think you get better at it with practice.

27
28 What do you do though?

29
30 Because you're kind of forcing as much as you can. You're forcing the
31 information really where you want it to go er and I have difficulty with keeping
32 the length going. You know, you might have a lovely little phrase at the start of
33 a piece which lasts for 2 or 3 bars which you're very pleased with, because it
34 doesn't remind you of anything else or its something that moves you and touches
35 you, er and then you have to think, and its very easy to muck it up. You know
36 like doing a painting I suppose, when you get a nice line on someone's face and
37 you manage to get the eyes right, which is something difficult in a portrait, and
38 you mess it up by doing the hands badly, erm. So that's a struggle for me and
39 I'm sure for most writers, to try to get that length, you know, when you think of
40 the length of a symphony and to keep that continuity erm

41
42 If you had to advise somebody on how to do it what would you tell them?

43
44 Oh well I er I would say more or less what I've said. I would say make drafts.
45 Now then, again, going back to the Percy Scholes book of music he's got several
46 drafts of Beethoven's um. What's the one? [sings phrase]. He's got several
47 drafts of it and we all know the tune well erm and then they're going to analyse
48 why he rejected this that and the other. Um its really just getting them in place
49 and letting them wash through yourself, not making a conscious decision, just
50 make the conscious decision up to a certain point, put several alternatives and
51 then and then let the answer come to you. That's really what I mean by
52 inspiration, not some lazy bugger sitting on the couch thinking "Oh well I'll sit
53 here and a symphony will come to me or something." You've really really go to
54 work hard, to put in, put in the information. It's like a computer, quite honestly.
55 If you're typing in the information, you go in that thing upstairs to Find. What
56 did I do with that file so and so? You can put it in the Find box and give the

1 computer to go through all its memory to find out what you're looking for and
2 it'll put it forward at you very quickly and I think it's the same sort of principle.

3

4 What kind of things make it easier then for you to work writing music?

5

6 Um. Funnily enough, pressure is quite good for me.

7

8 Having a deadline?

9

10 Yes. I was talking to my painter friend last week. Upstairs in my studio I've got
11 a computer. It's all computerised music. A lot of it's quite free. It's not a lot of
12 tickety-tock at all a lot of it's quite free and abstract but I've got a file in there
13 that says 'My album', right. So I'm busy doing all work for other people I'm
14 writing arrangements, I'm thinking up ideas, I'm thinking up introductions, I'm
15 thinking up bass lines, I'm thinking up er. If I'm working for a film, you've got
16 an image to try and, or someone's speaking so you want to keep the melody out
17 of the way of the speech, you've got all those kind of things to fulfil, erm, But
18 once you have a white canvas and you're sitting there it's another world. I sit
19 there. I've written some quite good stuff now, I have to say, in my little file that
20 says 'My album' but I've. This is widespread knowledge of course, for authors,
21 writers, composers, artists they have all got the same problem: the white canvas,
22 the white sheet of paper. So I put something down that would be perfectly fine
23 for one of my normal jobs, but then I've got that little voice starts coming and
24 says : "Well, you can do better than that." Um I could do better than that. So,
25 I'm struggling now, to try and get over that hurdle and say "Bugger it, it's good
26 enough, what's wrong with it. It's all right. Just let it be. Let it sit there. It hangs
27 together quite nicely so." The only problem is now I've got no time. I've got lots
28 of commercial work and I'm busy. But I will do it, it's a pledge to myself.

29

30 When you write, and I know your writing is very very wide, and we haven't yet
31 said anything about the differences between the types of writing, but when you
32 are writing, do you have a clear er, I know sometimes you are writing for
33 particular people say for film music. Do you have an audience in mind, beyond
34 that? Are you writing for anyone particular? Or any groups in particular? How
35 does an audience, how does a listener or er is it the future, somebody listening to
36 it or what?

37

38 Well the general principle, if you've got some freedom, if you've got some
39 freedom, you're writing to please yourself and you hope that kindred spirits will
40 pick up on it. And that is the case really: if you've got something that satisfies
41 yourself there's always someone somewhere else that will like it.

42

43 How much does it matter to you that other people do like it?

44

45 (2) Not at all. Not at all, Whatsoever. My only criterion on that is commercial. I
46 want the client to like it so they will ask me back again and send me the cheque
47 in the post. And I really do look upon it as cheque in the post. I'll do whatever
48 they want with it, whether it's a symphony orchestra, a piece of punk music,
49 whether it's Arabic music or it's choral music or it's er rock'n'roll or whether it's
50 different kinds of rock'n'roll erm. I really try and give them just what they want
51 and take pride in, well not pride, satisfaction in them saying at the end of the day
52 saying "That's good". But now and again I've looked back at some of these
53 things that I've put forward for their needs and thought : "Christ, that's really
54 nice", which is happening more often than it did, I mean because for the past 40
55 years I've never wanted to listen to anything I've written.

56

1 So it doesn't matter to you whether people come up to you or get in touch with
2 you and say: "I really liked your so and so"?

3
4 It was terribly important when I was about 19 or 20. Um.. You know I've been
5 fortunate as a performer with work in many star-studded situations with crowds
6 coming and fans coming and letters on email and letters coming through the
7 post, you know, people who've liked either what I've been associated with or
8 even what I've done myself, so that that very quickly disappears. In fact that's
9 one difference to me between amateurs and professionals. Professionals are very
10 sort of jaundiced about who likes it or not. You know it's only when, that's
11 when I notice when I come up here, amateur jazz musicians. They are not really
12 bothered about the money, they're not really bothered about the money, they just
13 love being on the stage and being adored and idolised and worshipped. They
14 adore it. They absolutely adore it. The only thing that a professional thinks about
15 it is: how much is it worth. Yeh. Completely hard-nosed.

16
17 So, what about the critics? How well it's received there? Reviewed?

18
19 Not at all, It doesn't matter at all.

20
21 Or the future? Posterity, let's call it.

22
23 Yeh, It doesn't matter at all.

24
25 And what about fellow musicians?

26
27 Ah well, that's different. I worked with the Royal Philharmonic three weeks ago
28 and they stood up and applauded and said er "We want to work, will you work
29 with us again." That does matter. Yeh Yeh. Absolutely. That does matter.

30
31 What would you describe them as -- your peers?

32
33 No, people, erm experts, experts, people whose skill I admire. It's very
34 interesting actually. Slightly sidetracked from composing, but (name) my lady
35 friend, um, came with me when we did some albums with the RPO at the Angel.
36 She came with me to the first recordings at the Angel studios in Islington, we
37 were doing some albums for Sony, film music, and er she was very pleased to
38 see the full 80 piece all there and listening to it and all the expertise and all that
39 glamour and all that wonderful thing, and she was standing in the control room.
40 I said "Just stand back and have a listen. It'll be OK. " "Are you sure?" "Yeh
41 Yeh." And then we did a take and one or two musicians drifted in to hear the
42 playback and the flute player said to her "Was I all right? I wasn't sharp was I?
43 Out of tune?" And one or two people started asking her things like that and she
44 said. "They're asking me what I think!" And I said "Well they will. The reason
45 they are great musicians is because they are insecure within themselves. They
46 want to keep working, they want to be loved. They want to be known for what
47 they do. They are uncertain all the time. So they are striving continuously. All
48 you've got to say to them is 'That was lovely'." And she started doing that and
49 between every take they'd all gather round. Instead of gathering round the
50 producer they were all gathering around (name) "I didn't rush that phrase did I?
51 Was that all right?" "That was lovely. God, that feels fantastic!" And it just
52 shows, you know that

53
54 Reassurance, what that will do.

55
56 Yeh Yeh. Of course it's always nice when people come up and [short pause]
57

1 OK All right, so I was asking you, we were talking about erm, I'll just
2 summarise what we were talking about, some of the things, the way you thought
3 about playing, about inspiration and about the differences between um writing
4 just for money and doing a job as well as you can, and doing it for yourself. And
5 also about the effect of um life events, particularly difficult events, and writing
6 happy music, music that is happy, joyous as opposed to serious, sad type of
7 music. In your work, whatever aspects of it you want to look at, perhaps you
8 could tell me a bit about, because you work in such a wide area, how you
9 balance it all. (3) The different demands. Having to do all these different types
10 of music.

11
12 Balance it in what sense?

13
14 Move from one thing to another, is it quite seamless?

15
16 Oh yes, it is to me, because I've just, I've spent long periods in different kinds of
17 music. I've spent long periods in Dixieland jazz, I've spent, went on to Modern
18 Jazz. I was able to achieve an ambition in that and go to America and work with
19 some of the best, then I was in Rock'n'Roll, (name) and all the big names of the
20 day. I was Musical Director of (name), the show, and then I went into film
21 music.

22
23 You've covered a huge area

24
25 I've got a vast, 43 years it covers the history of all sorts of things.

26
27 Was it something you set out to do?

28
29 Yes, I was just about to say that, I didn't set out to do that, no, I set out to be a
30 member of Stan Kenton's Orchestra and then but along the way things
31 happened. I mean there has been big changes in music and they happened and I
32 just happened to be around at the right time which was absolutely great, you
33 know. There were just seismic changes in music erm (3). Oddly enough, that
34 were concurrent with the development of the recording devices as well. You
35 don't want me to go into all that bit about music styles and everything do you?

36
37 No, I'm really interested in the effect of doing it on you.

38
39 Jumping from one to the other. Well I liked them you see, I loved them, I mean
40 I've been with rock and roll bands. I've been on stage with really heavy big
41 speakers, and the throbbing bass, and you're immediately into it, you're tuned
42 into it and you're playing along with it so and then I could hear some peaceful
43 church-like choral music. I mean you're never in a circumstance where you have
44 to jump from one to the other quickly, you know but er. Oddly enough I don't
45 listen to music any more. I don't listen to it. I love silence when I'm not writing
46 music but, so how do I balance it? I don't know, I can't say, it just happens. I
47 don't have any conscious thoughts about that.

48
49 And your own music, how would you characterise that?

50
51 (3) I would like it to be (2) to have various elements, that have got a kind of erm
52 a sort of organic mood to them, like a storm, like a thunderstorm. I thought I'd
53 have that kind of unity of feeling that you get from erm a natural experience,
54 erm so I would like to have melody, even if its just a fragment, if its a good
55 fragment I'd repeat it probably endlessly. I just love bass sounds, I'm totally
56 deaf in one ear anyway, so that sort of hampers me a bit, but I just love the
57 sound of deep sustained basses. I've just got my own little sort of pet, like

1 anyone has I suppose, erm, I like, I hate poor lyrics, however trite the song, I
2 cannot bear poor lyrics, you know. I love Bob Dylan and I just love music to
3 complement those words and give those words space.

4
5 You were talking earlier about being critical of yourself, tinkering with things,
6 and never being quite satisfied. How does that work with your own music then?

7
8 I think that's pretty common really. I mean er I used to do quite a lot of writing
9 for (name) as an arranger and he would say "There you are". He'd sketch it all
10 out and I'd work as an orchestrator, you know, transcribing it for an orchestra.
11 And he'd say "Take it away from me and write it down and don't let me see it
12 until its finished because I'll change it." You know, its like erm certain people
13 when you're putting furniture in a room..

14
15 So how do you know when it's good enough, when to stop?

16
17 Well thankfully there's the deadline with most of the work, so when I'm doing it
18 for myself then I'm facing that problem. Erm.

19
20 How do you deal with it though, when you don't have that deadline?

21
22 I know now how to deal with it. I mean I deal with it by something balancing
23 within myself. Something balances, and you know it's right, and its going to be
24 right for ever and it just sits there it just sort of feels right. Erm (3) and I'm
25 speaking about melody now and rhythm and counter melody and so on, because
26 sometimes I've taken a either a piece of music by myself or in fact I did it with
27 a piece of er with a Bach quintet, I put it on the computer, I just fed in all the
28 notes and it sounded beautiful. It wasn't played on a piano it was played on a
29 very plinky plonk synth noise. But then with a synthesiser you can allot different
30 sounds to the different lines and however I carved it up, it always came out with
31 that strength and that beauty and that perfectness, even though I'd given the
32 clarinet part to the bass and swopped them around and even given weird noises,
33 the noise of dustbins to the middle part. Whatever it is you put it to, it always
34 came out and it always gave that mood, it always had that feeling of
35 completeness and strength and satisfaction and really that's what Bach said. He
36 said anyone can do what I do but you'll just have to work damn hard to do it,
37 you know, you just have to work and work. Picasso is another one who never
38 stopped work.

39
40 So the structure, the architecture, as it were, was there, and that shone through,
41 whatever you did to it.

42
43 Yeh, and you've go to work very hard at it. I mean as the quote goes, the more
44 practice you do, the luckier you get sort of thing, and I think you just know when
45 it's right. Well I do now. I didn't before. I used to sort of get a really good idea
46 for something and then I'd be so pleased with it I'd tack something on the end,
47 just to make it up to length and looking back, it was a waste of an idea. It was a
48 waste of an idea because if you had a good little melodic motif or even a
49 rhythmic pattern or even a good chord sequence, if you've got a little something
50 different going, erm, one gets excited and thinking. "Oh, that's it, I've got it, that
51 is so lovely, so satisfying and so full, what shall I do next to it" and put this little
52 bit on and then you add a bit more and you add a bit more and of course the
53 whole thing has got to. It will come to you, once you've got the thing the rest
54 will come to you.

55
56 Do you work here in a particular way: at particular times. if you're not
57 constrained, or even if you are constrained. I know when you are working with

1 people it's completely different and you are very constrained but when you do
2 not have to be constrained, do you constrain yourself - get up at a particular
3 time, work in a particular way?
4

5 No, well these days, and I'm 63 now, and I just amble around the house and let it
6 happen! But you see, (name of partner) is always saying to me and she gets
7 terribly cross, 'cause I sit at the piano and be doodling and she says "What was
8 that you just played?". "It's just nothing. I'm just doodling." "Well, remember it
9 because it was really good." Well I'm doing that all the time, just writing and
10 doodling things and really she's right. You should. It's once you sort of start
11 trying that it becomes harder.
12

13 So you kind of use improvisation as a basis for developing ideas?
14

15 Ah yeh, Yeh. Yeh . In fact that's an important point in my opinion because er
16 classical musicians, you know, for a long time now, have worked very formally,
17 er unlike jazz musicians. But classical music started out like jazz, you know. It
18 really started out. I mean there were chord sequences, figured bass, the
19 harpsichord player would have freedom. He didn't have the part written out, he
20 or she would play the part as a background and then things were superimposed
21 on it. Now, you know, cadenzas, virtuoso cadenzas used to be at least a bit of
22 freedom for an instrumentalist. And it transpired that some of the
23 instrumentalists were you know um felt inferior to some of the superb cadenzas
24 that were going on so they said "Write it out" and the writing out and pinning it
25 down in a concrete fashion became so much a tradition, that nowadays the
26 creative classical musician is kind of hamstrung, you know, because they
27 haven't been taught that freedom of thought and they're losing out. So actually
28 the classical musicians of today are really coming from my end of the woods,
29 you know, from jazz, from pop, from so and so, people like myself who start
30 aspiring to classical music but who have got that background of improvisation
31 and erm
32

33 You feel it loosens you up, and it gives you, that coming from that kind of
34 tradition and having that tradition and those constraints, constrain your ideas and
35 stops you from feeling as free?
36

37 Oh yeh. Yeh. Yeh. I mean then you're working purely in the domain of
38 conscious thought.
39

40 And you're working within styles, aren't you really
41

42 Yeh Yeh. I mean the thought process goes on that you start with the basics and
43 go back to Scarlatti or whatever and work your way through Bach, Beethoven,
44 Mozart, into Stravinsky and so on, and choral music and this that and the other
45 and then from that information you write your own pieces but.
46

47 Do you feel that not having had that formal musical education itself is an
48 advantage? How do you think it has affected you?
49

50 Well, I, I, This sounds awful to say, but, a terrible thing to say, but I think I'm
51 gifted.
52

53 Not at all, No. It's wonderful.
54

55 Its a terrible thing to say but I think I'm kind of gifted so I don't think a formal
56 education would have stood in the way of that. I mean it sounds terribly vain,
57 erm (2) but I do remember the school playground, just after the War, when

1 sweets started coming back again, and they brought out a candy called, it was
2 kind of a sugar boiled sweet kind of thing, but it was a kind of sugary boiled
3 sweet in the shape of a whistle and it was called a Toot Sweet. It was the shape
4 of a whistle and it was sugary stuff and you sucked it and blew a whistle at the
5 same time. And we were in the lavatories at the school playground, primary
6 school this was, and we all had these whistles and we were all blowing them
7 randomly and I picked up a twig and said "No, you blow that one when I point
8 my stick at you and you, don't blow that one", and I started pointing the sticks at
9 these people and the thrill of that moment, you know [laughs]. That was the start
10 of it.

11
12 So you've had it with you for the best part of your life?

13
14 Yeh, there's no musical history in my family at all, so, so, it just came, there
15 were little moments, you know. I had to do it and I managed to you know. We
16 were very poor. I'll get the violin out now! But we were very poor, there was no
17 piano in the house and I really wanted to play piano. But the only thing I could
18 do was join a brass band because you got free lessons and for tuppence a week
19 you could have an instrument. And erm I remember getting to a certain standard
20 after being taught by the bandmaster and then sitting in with one of the major
21 bands, at a rehearsal at Brighthouse and Rastrick it was. They were playing Peer
22 Gynt and I remember sitting in that morning [sings melody] and the thrill of
23 being amongst that was just something, you know. You could hardly help but go
24 down the road, you know. There was no openings for me to actually sort
25 of, sensible openings for me to ever go in that direction, but I suppose one's
26 antennae was then tuned for when opportunities might arise.

27
28 Talking about the things that make it hard for you? What makes it difficult for
29 you to work? What kinds of difficulties do you have with work?

30
31 Well, one of the common difficulties and it's not psychological it's just practical
32 and that's background music in shops and stores. Big, big. You know, they're
33 even talking about using it in schools now because people can work be- but I
34 don't agree with that at all. Erm. That makes it difficult for me to work. Erm (3)
35 That that inner voice, that inner voice, critical inner voice is a big debilitating
36 thing. For real creative original work that's very debilitating and hard to shake
37 off. Erm, so as I say I'll sit down and write my own album now and think.
38 "Well, I've got to do something really special here so otherwise it's not worth
39 the effort", and so every little thing you try.

40
41 You're kind of upping the ante on yourself

42
43 Yeh Yeh. So in fact being a commercial, telling yourself that you're a crafts
44 person and not a composer you're just a jack of all trades actually
45 psychologically helps you, because you're not putting yourself on the block, and
46 yet nevertheless and that gives you a kind of relaxed freedom to actually be
47 really creative.

48
49 Some of the fields you work in you're obviously more likely to have your work
50 influenced by other people, particularly film music. Is that a difficulty, has that
51 been a difficulty, other people tinkering around with what you do?

52
53 Erm I think I've got my own style when I get a chance to do it. Erm (2) a lot of
54 the time listening to other people's music tells me what I wouldn't want to do
55 rather than what I would want to do. It's very rarely I would hear something and
56 say "Gosh, I would like to do something like that." Very rarely.

1 People that you're working with on particular films or projects - any personal
2 difficulties that arise, that kind of thing?

3
4 There's a wonderful brotherhood amongst musicians. It's a wonderful society, a
5 perfect utopian society because class, sex, colour, race, creed, whatever, kind of
6 goes by the board. It's a wonderful level society. Erm. You get very little
7 snobbishness. The snobbishness in music exists in the amateur world. The
8 classical amateur world is the worst. The real classical musicians are totally free
9 spirits. You know, they will interested in anything. They don't have that toffee-
10 nosed attitude. Erm.

11
12 What about the vagaries of work coming in and going out, is that a difficulty for
13 you?

14
15 Oh it has always been a problem.

16
17 Feast and famine and all this.

18
19 Oh yeh yeh. I've always got work in funnily enough. I've had long quiet periods
20 and struggles with money here and there, but erm I'm lucky I'm living through
21 a very good period, in British music anyway, to be in the middle of a very active
22 period.

23
24 And when it has gone, you know, when you have had a thinness of work, what
25 has kept you going? How have you coped with it?

26
27 Erm (3) You network, you hustle, phone people up. Er I mean on that level, on a
28 practical level of you know, subsidy, of keeping working, erm, you've got to
29 admire some people. I mean one guy took all the erm half a dozen of the top
30 commercials of the day, took the music off, put his own music back and sent
31 these non-commercials back to the advertising agencies saying "This was what I
32 would have done with that commercial." You know.

33
34 You admire that?

35
36 I do, yes. That's initiative and enterprise.

37
38 OK

39
40 It bothers me, you know, I go to this College, (Name of college) and other
41 colleges full of people imagining that there's a career available, which there's no
42 career at all available. You know, even if there wasn't a college in the land, there
43 would be a certain amount come through anyway, through their own initiatives
44 and endeavours and even that would be too many for the work going.

45
46 If you hadn't had the degree of success that you have had, how do you think it
47 would have affected you? Because you were talking in the car about you know,
48 having moved out and finding that, thinking that it could have had an effect on
49 the amount of work that you got given.

50
51 Yeh, terribly important to me I think.

52
53 And that's speaking after having a huge reputation - is it still a fear?

54
55 I think it is. I mean. That's out of the runs of creative spiritual things, is purely
56 on an activity level. I mean, you know, I've just been reading Ronnie Corbett's
57 life story as a comedian, and he need never work again, but you've got that work

1 ethic ingrained in you. I think our generation had that work ethic anyway, and it
2 goes right through like a stick of rock. You work and it's very satisfying. I could
3 never be a lotus eater. I could never sit and. However much money I made I
4 could never sit on a beach and discuss speedboats. You know, I mean er.

5
6 And is the work er the pleasure of the work an end in itself for you?

7
8 Well, I have a spiritual calling. I mean I don't go around shouting preaching on a
9 soap box about religion but I have a.. I don't even have a name for it really. I
10 have a spiritual calling. I wouldn't die happy if I felt I didn't do my best to try
11 and try and make use of those talents that were given me.

12
13 What do you think is the spiritual effect of music on people? Do you think it can
14 lift you and can take you somewhere.

15
16 Oh absolutely. Oh yeh. That's no secret is it? I mean er. I've been working with
17 little tiny children these last few months and the way they've responded as soon
18 as you play them a bit of music. I mean there's something in the human
19 character that er that rises to it and in fact I doubt that there's, if civilisation
20 would have got through without music. I mean great writers, great authors too
21 and great paintings and sculptors and so on. But er, music is something slightly
22 different, isn't it? It's it's you don't have to represent anything specific like a
23 painter does. You're not expected to represent something else. People are happy
24 to merely to accept it as something that just floats in the air.

25
26 Do you think different people are hearing different things in the music? That it
27 signifies different things to them?

28
29 (4) Yes. Yes. I think it does. I mean one can very quickly hear the difference
30 between a major chord and a minor chord. Erm, you know, forgetting melody
31 for the minute, but harmony as it moves around can really play on the feelings
32 and no question about that.

33
34 So it's very important to you that you communicate in that way, to people?

35
36 I've no thought of communicating at all. No thought of communicating
37 whatsoever. It never occurs to me.

38
39 Is it mainly self-expression for you then? I'm trying to understand the spiritual,
40 how the spirituality in the music works, how you see it.

41
42 Yes it's a kind of a satisfying, erm it's a kind of satisfying kind of pulling
43 together of random elements in your nature that sort of er that gives it a kind of a
44 form. You know, like you might take a piece of clay and knead it around into a
45 certain shape that somehow at the end of it kind of . I can understand potters.
46 You know there's a sort of satisfaction when a thing falls into place and kind of
47 balances. With what devices you're using to balance the thing it's not quite
48 known. It's kind of deep and you know I suppose it's harnessing all those fears
49 and thoughts and hopes of the caveman, you know, that's been handed down in
50 the genes.

51
52 So it appeals to something very fundamental in people's nature?

53
54 Um. Oh yes. Yes. Absolutely. Yeh.

55
56 But it's not communicating?

1 I think it's very nice when people come up and say they like it. Er but the
2 pleasure, the actual thought I get when people say that to me, is er "Oh good,
3 well perhaps they'll ask me back to do another job" or something like that, or if
4 3 people like that perhaps put on a show and show it to someone else 'cause they
5 might like it. I don't have that kind of ego. Just as people have said. When
6 people come and say to me. "That was wonderful." I don't know what to say to
7 them. It doesn't. You needed that when you were young but that wasn't artistic
8 need, that was social need.

9
10 Yeh. So for you it's entirely feeling that there is an artistic fulfilment in the
11 work, the spiritual.

12
13 Yeh. It's just something very er that nags away at you when it's not right, yeh,
14 and when it's right. You know, I can understand furniture makers or even
15 carpenters, you know, when, when something doesn't sit quite right.

16
17 So it's a creative process that has reached its you know fulfil, it's
18

19 I don't know really, I can't put a name to it. It satisfies, it satisfies certain things.
20 (2) I. It's not just the music itself, but the performance of the music is also a big
21 part of it. I mean I've been watching these Bach piano recitals they have on late
22 at night on BBC 2, and there's a chap there with a pony tail, and he sits there.
23 It's all close-up filming, and as his fingers are moving over, eventually
24 something special will happen and he just gives a little smile to himself and its
25 oh [draws in breath] it's absolutely breathtaking and you are drawn into that, you
26 know. (4) but but you know Bach Bach used to (2) have the job of every
27 Monday morning writing a piece for the following service and he'd sit and have
28 the task of writing all these beautiful pieces and he'd have a new one every day,
29 I mean

30
31 Have you always had your own music file, as it were, all the time. Has that
32 always been with you since you started working?

33
34 Yes, it has. I've never done it. I've never done it. I mean I started a piece, and I
35 played it the other day and it's very good. Kind of a blues thing I did in 1963 I
36 think I did it, and I thought that was going to be a. It was about the time when
37 Mike Oldfield was doing um Tubular Bells, that's 1967 I think it was and he was
38 doing Tubular B and I was doing something not dissimilar but down the same
39 avenue. We'd both been listening to Terry Riley and Curved Air and those kind
40 of serialist composers and we were both trying to do that with rock'n'roll things
41 and he did it.. Er and I was always very busy, I was always very busy.

42
43 So have you destroyed them or have you kept them all? Have you got all these
44 bits of tape and bits of stuff with ideas on, lots of them, around?

45
46 Well that was the part of the plan of moving up here, was to free up some money
47 and take off the commercial pressure from having to keep working- and what am
48 I doing? I'm still chasing jobs. I'm I'm taking, and coming in and saying: "Did
49 the phone ring today? Who rang?" You know, as though I've still got

50
51 If you've got all this clear space, you know, you've got some clear days, and you
52 open that file of My Music. Um. What then?

53
54 I've never finished one. I've got little bits of pieces, which I've said one day I
55 will finish off and develop. Erm. I think the most

56

1 Would you like to bring it out under your own steam, as it were?
2
3 Yeh. I mean the nearest thing I did was (name), which was a 24 part television
4 series, one hour long, so there was 12 hours of music, and that was all my music
5 and that was in the early days when I aspired to do something different. And
6 that's still got a following on the Internet and that's, it's badly played now, and I
7 can hear all the faults with it, but it is probably the best thing I've done that I can
8 say was mine. And I want to pick up that where I left off, and people are asking
9 me to, and er so that's the plan now really.
10
11 Reading a lot of studies about particularly classical musicians because nearly all
12 the work has been done on them, a lot of them go on and on about how social
13 difficulties have affected them and yet for you it doesn't seem to have been a
14 problem. Or is it that you have been able to cope with it?
15
16 I quite honestly think that a lot of classical composers who get pleasure out of
17 calling themselves composers and classical composers, because their music is so
18 – it sounds a bit catty of me to say this - because their music is not that tenable,
19 you can't actually get hold of it and recognise it for what it is, a bit like abstract
20 painters, you know
21
22 It's a bit insubstantial.
23
24 Yeh. You know. We were at a concert, no names, no pack drill, but at a sort of
25 classical thing the other week with someone who is known in heady society as a
26 the revered classic. And it was absolute crap, it really was. It had no form, it
27 wasn't even a good piece of abstract er (2) modern John Cagey kind of thing. It
28 wasn't even textural, the texture wasn't sustained. It was merely ungraspable er
29 and because no-one can argue against it. It's the Emperor's New Clothes, you
30 know, and that's why I would never call myself a classical composer. And yet
31 I'm sure I could turn my hand at what people might recognise as classical music
32 quite efficiently
33
34 Is that also, coming back to what you were saying about erm not caring about
35 posterity, not caring a lot about whether things are there
36
37 I think that's a terribly vain thing to consider one might be, might have
38 posthumous
39
40 Is it that you don't feel that you'd like to care about posterity. I mean because a
41 lot of people feel, particularly those many who have been unrecognised in their
42 lifetime, for their work, that er if they know their work has value, then it is a
43 consolation to think that perhaps after they've gone, that all this wishy washy
44 you know, this sort of stuff you've just been telling me about, will vanish but
45 quality music will stay?
46
47 It doesn't matter to me at all. I mean meeting my Maker is quite important.
48 Quentin Crisp said "If I get to God or St Peter or Whoever and he says to me you
49 didn't, you made a bit of a hash of it didn't you? I'll be able to say, and look
50 him right in the eye and say 'Well you can't say I didn't try.'" [laughs]
51
52 That's good. Any other difficulties with your work that haven't come up, any
53 other things that have made it harder for you and how you have dealt with them?
54
55 Er. Spiritually or practical or either?
56
57 Either

1
2 Well on the practical level. I mean the way music is now. I mean if one has to
3 work and earn a living from it, then you've got to stay up with the latest gear.
4 You've got to keep decent computing gear and that is being upgraded all the
5 time and you buy one piece of equipment and it's redundant a fortnight later, and
6 the companies, You might want a piece of equipment and it's not speaking to the
7 other, because they are all trying to get money out of you. They upgrade it all the
8 time, so I feel sorry for young kids today because you see in my day, on the pop
9 and jazz front, there was lots of live music on so many different levels. There
10 were church hall dances, there was the club scene, there was the big club scene,
11 there was the recording scene, the broadcasting scene, all live music so you
12 could learn your craft. So anyone today starting out would have to, just have to
13 have equipment, er if you're gonna be a writer, you know it's very – even
14

15 So you've had to see a lot of changes in technology and you've been obliged to
16 keep up with them really, particularly for the film and also for other areas.
17

18 Yes that's another practical difficulty. The other practical difficulty is of actually
19 getting the job, you know. They asked Sammy Cahn, the composer, which is the
20 hardest, the words or the music and he said the phone call, you've got to get the
21 phone call, and one of my blessings, and it's what I would suggest to people, is
22 to, you don't necessarily have to have an agent, as such, but get in with
23 somebody who's gabby. You know I mean I
24

25 So you think having, being able to market yourself, promote yourself is
26 important.
27

28 Yeh Yeh. I would say showreels are a complete waste of time. A complete waste
29 of time. Erm. I did a period in the 70s when I was doing a lot of commercials
30 that were prominent on television and then I got involved with other kinds of
31 music, film music and so on, and I didn't chase up my contacts. And I'd go back
32 to (name of a major advertising agency) and find I didn't know anybody there,
33 and they didn't know who I was, even though I'd worked through that agency
34 quite a lot. So you've got to keep it up, and one of my most happy situations
35 here is I've got this guy in London who calls himself a musician, you know, and
36 he has got very limited capability and so I have to sort of translate what he
37 wants to do into real music. But he's got the chat, the gift of the gab and he is
38 really in tune with the clients who don't know how to express what they want,
39 so he can express it and he has got a great knowledge of musical history in every
40 sense of the word, classical...
41

42 Don't you think you were gabby enough?
43

44 Oh no I was terribly shy for many years. I used to hide behind a fringe and
45 would never speak to anybody and I think I went on a jazz tour for the Union,
46 called The Jazz Workshop, and I was one of the er um I wasn't, (name) was the
47 spokesman and I just used to join in when asked, and I started getting because I
48 enthusiastic on my subject, I started speaking enthusiastically on the stage and
49 then the Union asked me 'cause I was very prominent in rock and roll at the time
50 and they said: "What about doing something?" And I said "Why? Do we have a
51 rock'n'roll workshop." And they let me do it. They'd sent me out with 4 or 5
52 musicians to various parts of the country and we'd let the band play and then I'd
53 describe to the members, all the people sitting round in the hall, what they were
54 doing, how we got that effect and why he turned that knob on the speaker. It
55 became a thing that went onto television in the end and in the process of doing
56 that, I liberated myself from. I always believed I always believed also to a
57 certain extent, as Duke Ellington said 'Talk kind of screws things up.' You're

1 having to put in, to sort of box something that was very loose. [bell rings] It kind
2 of screws things up and I did always believe that once you start putting a name
3 to it then you've got to act upon it. Erm and every bit of practical thought, and I
4 still believe that to a certain extent today, you know, that practical planning,
5 actually sort of, the more you do, the more your creative spark is being buried in
6 infomation.

7
8 Have you had particular examples? Is there a particular example you can think
9 of where that happened?

10
11 Well I can certainly think of a couple of artists that have talked themselves out
12 of being creative

13
14 How about you though?

15
16 Me. I'm talking now because I'm relaxed. I'm not a very talkative person. I like
17 silence. I'm not gabbing away like this all the time.

18
19 I know.

20
21 I get nervous energy when I'm in the spotlight. Yeh But normally I'm, you know
22 (name of partner) has to sort of drag words out of me. And she often says
23 "Come on, say something". [laughs]. "So what do you want me to say?" "Well,
24 what you're thinking, you know." And, er, I've got a couple of friends, (name of
25 partner) is pretty much the same now, she's creative too, but a couple of friends
26 that come, and we like them, they are our friends, but my God! For a couple of
27 days. And they start at breakfast time and never stop talking, verbal diarrhoea.
28 Not just rubbish, these are very clever people, one of them's a kind of scientist
29 and the one's a kind of a er top painter and mind you he's screwed himself into
30 the ground. He can't paint now. He builds a studio. He's built himself a most
31 beautiful studio in Norfolk but he can't paint, he cannot do it. His block is
32 completely total.

33
34 And yet quite a lot of the work I imagine you do, arranging and so on you have
35 to be clear about what you're doing, don't you, so you have to explain to people
36 what's going on, so articulating the music is one thing What I'm trying to do is
37 pin you down and say which aspects of the – articulating what seems
38 particularly harmful.

39
40 Oh yes right I see. (Name) the guy I work for. When I say he can talk, he can
41 talk in erm (2) social bullshit really. He can also make the right kind of noises
42 and say a piece of music is going to be, have an edge to it. It's 'cause he's got all
43 this jargon which he uses, which they pick up on and are very happy with. I
44 could never get myself, the only work I've got is on merit. I've never talked my
45 way into a job, ever. If I went to an interview I'd be the last person to get the
46 job, in circumstances where I'd probably be the best person for it. Erm

47
48 Have you – Has that led to disappointments in the past?

49
50 Oh, many, yeh. Yeh. Yeh Also I've shied away from success. Success
51 immediately pins you down for what you're known as, and that I run away from.
52 I run away from that. I've been in those circumstances where I could have been
53 a big name, er (2) and yet

54
55 What was it about being known for something, a particular thing, that you didn't
56 like?

57

1 (3) It means I would have sort of to give up all the others, I suppose.

2

3 Is that the way you saw it?

4

5 Yeh, I suppose so, I mean they do say that the true nature of art only reveals
6 itself at the very highest level, er (3)

7

8 What does that mean to you, that statement?

9

10 Well it means that you don't discover why you are doing it or what it's for, until
11 you've really worked hard to create, to achieve the skills required to release it.

12

13 Some people's talent is multifaceted isn't it? That's the nature of their talent.

14

15 Well me too, I'm an artist, I write lyrics.

16

17 While some people can only do one thing. Is it the fear that if you are known for
18 doing one thing people won't see that, won't offer you the opportunity to, or you
19 don't have those opportunities so easily to develop those other aspects

20

21 Well, the question I've asked myself is whether it would have been better just to
22 sort of, um, hone in on what you do and that's what some people do, very
23 successfully, make a name for it. And then you can say "Oh that", as soon as
24 you hear that sound, you'll say "That's so and so", George Smith or somebody,
25 kind of ploughing your own furrow. Erm (2) but, but (2) you know I've never,
26 I've always wanted to make money, and earn a living out of it, so there's been
27 those needs.

28

29 Have you felt under pressure, have you been under pressure at periods to make
30 money.

31

32 Oh constantly, yes.

33

34 I mean, from other people as well as yourself. Family pressure?

35

36 Well family, oh yes, very much so, very much so Yeh Yeh.

37

38 What influence do think having family responsibilities had on the course of your
39 work?

40

41 Erm (4) I think if left on my own I might have just disappeared up my own arse,
42 you know what I mean. I might have just er gone into vanity and er that bit about
43 this is me and my music and er I think you stay grounded when you've got
44 commitments, er commitments.

45

46 Did that lead you into taking a lot of commercial work at that stage rather than
47 say concentrating on,

48

49 Well I'd a desire to do it. I've never said (3) I don't think I've ever sort of said
50 I'll do that because it's. Well, if I had a choice I would choose the one that paid
51 more. Erm, but funnily enough they are all fun. Yeh Yeh You know, if someone
52 comes along and says, like this (name) thing I've just done. "Can you give the
53 children a song about putting litter in a bin?" Right. If I was "The Classical
54 Composer" [intoned] I would say that's beneath me, or doing a thing for
55 hamburgers was beneath me

56

57 You see these classical composers as real snobs, don't you?

1
2 Beg pardon?
3
4 You see them as real snobs?
5
6 Snobs? Yeh. Yeh I think I do. Yeh.Yeh. Yeh.
7
8 So has, coming back to this family business, um, have there been musical
9 decisions you've had to make that have been affected by having family
10 responsibilities or any other way in which, you know, the work has affected your
11 family life?
12
13 Er (4)
14
15 Some people talk about the hours, you know being away from home a lot, a lot
16 of musicians have that. Has that affected you family life?
17
18 Well usually, you're around the house too much, you know, [laughs] quite the
19 reverse. You're away from home as a musician, as a performer, but as a writer,
20 you're spare round the house, and the thing is of course
21
22 Has that affected you?
23
24 Not my lovely partner downstairs, but, er I've often been said, especially when
25 the kids were around, that you're around the house, and you're seen to be doing
26 nothing, that, er, you are free and everyone you've obviously gone with it
27
28 So you're fair game for something else?
29
30 Absolutely. Yes that's absolutely true.
31
32 So having that lifestyle, the musician's lifestyle has affected you in that way?
33
34 Yeh. I mean (name of his partner) is very good that way because she's a creative
35 artist herself and she knows when I'm sitting downstairs smoking my pipe
36
37 That you are working.
38
39 She disappears. Yes that I am working. That's the most creative time of all,
40 when you're in a relaxed state, sitting on the loo or whatever. There's some parts
41 of your life, or in the freezer section at Sainsbury's. It's a kind of creativity,
42 there's a kind of creativity that doesn't strike at the period when you sit at the
43 piano and say "Well I'm going to write." It has a rhythm of its own, it's like the
44 flow of life and the universe and the stars, it's got its own flow and you've got to
45 be there to find it when it comes really.
46
47 During, were there particular family moments which affected your work a lot,
48 for instance, having children, or any particular periods
49
50 Oh yes, It was a very bad time when I was writing (name). That was a real
51 pressurised job and it was a very creative job and (name) kindly said to me – I
52 said to him, "Well what kind of music will they want?" and he said "I heard you
53 was a creative writer – Now you do what you think." I said, "Well what music
54 would they listen to in 40 year's time?" He said. "Well, think of it this way," he
55 said, "The people who are going to be watching the television series now. So it
56 ought to relate, they ought to be able to associate with it" He gave me a budget
57 and a great creative time at a time when I had two young children in a smaller

1 house screaming and crying and that was almost impossible. You know it was
2 almost impossible

3
4 What happened when they were screaming and crying, how did it affect you?

5
6 I just had to get it done as quickly as possible, it wasn't a bad thing. I mean I get
7 these fans

8
9 Could you successfully cope at that time?

10
11 Well it led to big rows and terrible (2) terrible rows and I wasn't very
12 accommodating person, I suppose my wife was too.

13
14 What sort of thing were the rows about, if you don't mind my asking?

15
16 Well, you get a terrible anxiety when you've got a deadline to meet and your
17 whole commercial financial future hangs on it and you've got to do it right, you
18 know, you're (2) I was trying to sit in the car and write, you know, and er (3) but
19 there were such pressures...

20
21 How did you deal with it? You said you tried to do it quicker, any other things,
22 any other ways of handling it that made it easier for you?

23
24 (3) Well, I was a youngster then, and I think it's true of all youngsters, that you
25 strive very hard to be good at doing something and I would say now if I were to
26 go back in that position now, er (3) I wouldn't have tried, I tried too hard, I tried
27 too hard. I gave the musicians a terrible hard time, so the recordings were not
28 terribly good because because they had very little time in which to play it, er and
29 I'd written some terribly hard things, which they struggled to keep in time,
30 which. To do that job again now, I would have striven to be abstract and to be
31 spacey and to be original but I would have been more practical about it in terms
32 of what you can achieve

33
34 The technical demands on the musicians were too much given the limited
35 rehearsal time that you had.

36
37 Yeh. So when you get older and your wisdom is there in these matters, you're.
38 Perhaps, your opportunities to do it. It's one of the conundrums of life, isn't it,
39 you know, when you can do it you're too old, sort of thing.

40
41 What about interests and activities outside music? Have you had many of those
42 or have most of your friends and your social life been in the musical world?

43
44 It's would say it is terribly important to have something to take you completely
45 away from it. Unfortunately my interests have been of a similar ilk, erm, which
46 again now I'm wiser, I would recommend not to do. I mean my two interests –
47 when my boy was growing up, he was very keen on golf so I joined him and got
48 interested in golf. I was never any good at it, but golf was just like playing the
49 trombone. It's never any pleasure unless you're any good at it and to be good at
50 it you've got to practice hard, like you've got to practice the trombone very hard
51 to get any enjoyment out of it. So what I do now, I walk. I've been doing the
52 coast to coast and put the boots on

53
54 Really?

55
56 Yeh. I think walking is absolutely excellent. But I would say to any young
57 person to actually get a, whatever it is, like stamp collecting or something that

1 really really takes you away from the creative process. If you've been a creative
2 writer, then do something that's not creative. I mean most things they are
3 creative in one way or another but, you know, something like canoeing – or
4 something physical. Because apart from anything else one of the hazards of
5 composing is you sit in the same position for hour after hour, it's terribly bad for
6 the body.

7
8 Do you always write sitting down, because you were saying, I was wondering
9 whether you are, because you were talking about being distracted in the
10 supermarket by music, so you might, it's going on then, isn't it inside ..

11
12 Yes yes I can, but a lot of the time I spend, either with a piece of paper or at the
13 piano which is a very ergonomically awful position to be sitting in, and I get
14 these terrible shoulder pains, now from being. I've got a kind of a curved spine
15 anyway, that's partly from sitting for hours on end. So you get these physical
16 problems which. Yeh if I were to write up um a career plan for a young writer, I
17 would certainly include that on the agenda. Physical movement, not just an
18 exercise bike but to get out there and get interested in birds and bees and
19 aeroplanes or canoes or waterfalls or something that's totally different. Get, go
20 freestyle parachuting or something, you know. I see that as terribly important.

21
22 Do you think that kind of thing, doing golf and so on has obviously helped to de-
23 stress you when you've had period that wind you up

24
25 Golf winds me up

26
27 Winds you up? Only winds you up?

28
29 Yes I don't do it any more.

30
31 Only winds you up? How did you unwind yourself when you got wound up,
32 before, and how do you do it now?

33
34 Er, well I unwind now, by having, I've got a very settled relationship,
35 comfortable lifestyle, peaceful home. I love peace and quiet. But I love the buzz
36 of the city. I love going walking round London. I think I like picking up on
37 atmospheres, whether it's deep in the country or it's. I sometimes tell (partner) I
38 revel in being in markets, not being part of it, not being, having any contact with
39 it, not having to speak to anybody, not having to make any effort myself, but just
40 being in person in places, where there's a happy atmosphere, you know. I've
41 been working at City Hall, on this last project. I get off at Marylebone and I
42 walk give myself time to walk all the way through London and pick up on the
43 vibe of the place. I was walking down Whitehall and seeing these important
44 politicians dashing from one meeting to another, watching people taking a
45 picture, people in a holiday atmosphere. They give off a kind of an aura and I
46 kind of soak this up like a sponge so that to me is

47
48 Any other things? Do you do relaxation or anything like that?

49
50 No, I've tried to do that, I've tried yoga and sit down and contemplate my own
51 navel, I can't do it. I'm er, it seems so self-indulgent. It seems, to find the Inner
52 Me. It doesn't exist, there isn't an inner me, er

53
54 Any other things? Sometimes people get aggressive and discharge – anything
55 like that? Any other ways of coping with the stresses?

56

1 I suppose if I had a good punch-up I'd probably feel better for it, [laughs] every
2 now and again
3
4 That's not part of your pattern, is it? [laughs]
5
6 I have got deep inside me an aggressive side, so I never drink whisky. On
7 whisky I can, I don't say "I want to punch your nose in, Jimmy" but I'll sort of
8 say "What are you wearing that tie for, it doesn't go with that shirt." And I'll feel
9 it my duty to tell him, so I'm in a deep a deep, very very deep aggressive person
10 inside me. Other people would think of me as a gentle
11
12 But it's suppressed. It's not given its head really. Or am I wrong?
13
14 No, it's lying fallow
15
16 It has never appeared?
17
18 It has appeared very much in the playground in primary school, er but that was
19 the jungle, wasn't it, I mean,
20
21 But since you've been working in music
22
23 It was very satisfying actually to sort of punch the nose of little Jimmy, who'd
24 been taking the piss out of you for 3 days, so that was wonderful [laughs]. And
25 there was a great calmness came and satisfaction over that.
26
27 And have you had that since, that experience?
28
29 Well it stopped instantly at grammar school, and I was one of the biggest lads
30 there and if there was any kind of trouble I would be straight in there, like a shot.
31 And there was a little scientific lad called (name) who said something
32 derogatory in the school cloakrooms, and of course I went for him and he just
33 went like that [punches air] and broke my nose in one single blow and he didn't
34 even move, he didn't flinch, he just went [KKE, sound of punch] and I reeled
35 and dazed and I was a bit dizzy, and that shattered my whole confidence. – er.
36 Good for him, you know, good for him. But um after that, I think that was the
37 last sort of physical, although somebody came rattling the bins outside our house
38 in the middle of the night, I went chasing him round the streets. So there is a
39 deep subconscious beast lying there.
40
41 But it has not come out in work or anything like that?
42
43 Yeh, well I think it probably does, I think.
44
45 How would people see you then as
46
47 I think that can be satisfied with a you know, a good heavy rock'n'roll rhythm
48 or, you know, 20 double basses and 3 tympanies. You can really. Yes I suppose
49 that does, you're digging very deep now but I suppose that can be er satiated in
50 that way. You're being very clever saying these things. You are. It's true
51
52 So it has a musical expression, you wouldn't be sort of shouting at the people in
53 the orchestra or the band or whatever? I'd be er How would they see you as a
54 leader?
55
56 I'd be urging them, I'd be urging them, but not, I would never criticise them.
57

1 Have you ever suffered, and I haven't asked you this, as a composer really, but
2 do you have performance anxiety when you're in front of other players.

3
4 No. none at all. No None at all. I would if I was a classical musician, but what I
5 do er, conducting is er (4)

6
7 It doesn't bother you what people think of you?

8
9 No no no not at all. Not whatsoever. It doesn't even bother me what the
10 musicians think except I would know if I wasn't supplying what they needed,
11 and I've been at the other side long enough to know what you're supposed to
12 give them. So the psychology of conducting is a very interesting er aspect.
13 There's a damn good book about that called er The Maestro Myth which talks
14 about the psychology of conducting. As a little example, it was quite a best-
15 seller about a couple of years ago. It's either The Maestro Myth or the Myth of
16 the Maestro. And there's um. Von Karajan used to come to Abbey Road studios
17 and he'd arrive in a limousine and as he walked in, he would give his coat to the
18 producer to put away, which is a great psychological ploy, and then he would
19 ask musical questions of the engineer, the recording engineer, would ask them
20 musical points, which they weren't quite qualified to answer. And then he would
21 ask technical questions of the musicians. "Do you think this microphone is right
22 for." "Oh I don't know", and immediately make themselves, well, control freak,
23 you know. Er I try and control a situation erm by being as efficient as possible.
24 Er (3) I've always been too nice, I've tried to be too nice, to want everybody
25 love me. erm I've always wanted to be loved, you know, so I've been nice nice
26 Mr Nice all the time er (1) now I can I can

27
28 Do you feel you've paid a price for that in some way? That there have been costs
29 for that –

30
31 For being too nice? Yes

32
33 Oh, yes yes definitely, definitely. So you come across as ineffective.

34
35 What's been the effect on your work, do you think of being seen as Mr Nice
36 Guy?

37
38 I've been over passed over by younger or less qual- , not necessarily younger,
39 it's not quite a youth culture, by less qualified people have passed over me
40 because I haven't been er you know, forcef-

41
42 They had that ruthless streak, is it a ruthless streak?

43
44 Well I don't think it's ruthless, it's self-assurance. Self-assurance. I mean I was
45 groomed to have no success, literally groomed to it. My mother's idea of
46 aspirations was for me to be a painter and decorator because I could draw. She
47 wanted me to have a trade, she didn't want me to be er disappointed. So she
48 wanted me to be a painter and decorator, so you know, and I had a step-father
49 who I hated, and he said "You can't do music, you'll never do music, you've got
50 to go to college for music, forget it", you know, so actually it

51
52 How did they feel about you having huge success in music?

53
54 Surprised I suppose but er

55
56 Pleased for you?

1 (2) Surprised, um, but it gave me one blessing in the sense that I had no
2 expectations. I had no expectations of me. Expectations of you can be a cross to
3 bear for many middle class wealthy young children whose parents expect them
4 to do well, and then don't do it. I wasn't expected to do anything at all, so that
5 was actually a blessing.

6
7 What about later in life, as you got married and bringing up the kids, were there
8 expectations on you then?

9
10 Er. No, no, not artistically, purely fiscal and also (4)

11
12 What about in terms of status and recognition, that sort of stuff.

13
14 Well, I don't know. It's a bit of a balancing act. I've seen kids of famous
15 successful people and so I think I had a natural desire, when I was associated
16 with anything that was well known, to kind of constantly play it down,
17 constantly play it down, because I didn't want them to be affected. I never
18 wanted a child to be the daughter, the son of so and so.

19
20 And how did they feel, how did that affect them do you think?

21
22 I think it's affected them very well. I think they're well adjusted because er (4)
23 because. I don't know, something must have worked anyway. They are self-
24 confident and er good communicators and er

25
26 How would they see you? If I asked them to describe their Dad as a musician,
27 how would they do it, would you think?

28
29 I don't know. I think they just see me as Dad really.

30
31 Just as Dad fine. So it's not my dad the so and so, it's just my dad.

32
33 I used to try and show off to my daughter now and again. You know, I did that,
34 you know, now and again. They never looked upon me as someone who was
35 famous, who fell from grace or did anything like that, you know. (Name)'s
36 daughter, I remember, when he was really top, she used to go and open garden
37 fetes and they were guests of honour here and there and now she's not, and she's
38 terribly sort of bitter and disappointed about it. So that was a kind of a, I think I
39 sort of sensed that that was possible. And if I'd done anything that was really
40 good, I would always play it down and if I'd done anything that was really poor
41 or mediocre I would try and make them think I'd done all right. I don't know
42 what it was

43
44 Did that feel OK for you – so you didn't feel you needed the recognition from
45 your family?

46
47 No. I think I'd ruled them to believe that showbiz and all that weren't of any
48 merit whatsoever, that the biggest thing you could possibly have, the most
49 important thing you could possibly have to, get you through life, was a sense of
50 humour. So all our stuff was based around laughing really, which is about crying
51 [laughs] but we all tried to see the fun of it. But I mean my talents manifested
52 themselves in story writing. I wrote stories for them and put music to the stories
53 and drew the pictures. (Partner) and I have done a series of six books now,
54 which we are going to start marketing. But the psychology, the starting point for
55 a creative person is very important. I know, I could pinpoint, apart from the little
56 school playground, with the tin whistles, there was a. We only had two school
57 teachers, one was a very ugly woman, we used to call her Miss Ballot face. Miss

1 (name) she had glasses like that, thick like bottle tops and she had a very strong
2 moustache and she had mottled pock-marked skin and a very sort of ugly and
3 she was ribbed mercilessly. But she gave us a nature project, drawing some
4 birds and we all did it and she took mine and said. "You didn't do this, (name),
5 did you. Did you do that?" And I said, "Yes". "Just look! Look what (name)
6 did!" That little moment. [clicks fingers together]. I can draw! A little thing now
7 is so important. I mean I discovered that with the children, I'm using that ploy
8 now with the children and

9
10 Did you have a moment like that with music? I can play, or I can write, or

11
12 Erm. No, no. One of the biggest things with music was I just fell in love with the
13 thing and I got a cornet and I very laboriously learned how to play it with
14 lessons once a week

15
16 When did you start? How old were you when you started?

17
18 Eleven. I would have started earlier, given the opportunity, but erm, (2) I know
19 what carried me forward, and this was terribly important, was a peer group. In
20 that brass band was half a dozen others, and of course that was a very tough part
21 of Yorkshire you know, where it wasn't done to be seen to be arty, a nancy boy.

22
23 But the brass band was OK?

24
25 Yes, the brass band was associated with colliers and working men. Erm. Once I
26 more into sort of art and painting, I became a textile designer, having got an
27 apprenticeship, and all the culture at the time, round the pub, was tough guy,
28 rugby, beer, women, you know, let's shag em and let's booze and get pissed and
29 all that you know, there was all that culture and you had to keep up your front.
30 And I met my friend (name) who is now in Tasmania, and he used to talk about
31 art in the same way that another bloke would talk about a rugby game, Erm. That
32 was a great thing for me, never be covert about sensitive issues, you could
33 actually sort of er, if you were confident enough you could talk about these
34 issues openly in a manly sort of way.

35
36 When did it gell for you that you were going to spend your life in music?

37
38 Erm. Never realised it at all really, it just sort of happened. The opportunity
39 arose and er

40
41 You were playing, weren't you, orginally, to start with,

42
43 Yeh Yeh I was playing in public and. That was. Talking about wanting
44 appreciation, when you go on stage and people want to come and get your
45 autograph and want to talk to you afterwards, that in the early days was the thrill
46 of it. "I like this. I want to do more of it", you know. But that dies off after a year
47 or two.

48
49 So when did the music start

50
51 Taking over? Oh it was always there. Always there. Enthusiasm, absolutely
52 terribly enthusiastic, never dreaming that some of these people I used to idolise,
53 I'd be working and playing with them in years to come.

54
55 Are there any things that you feel you would like to do that you haven't done,
56 apart from that My Music file we keep coming back to. Is that high on the
57 agenda of things you'd like to do.

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57

Oh travel, I want to travel.

In music.

In music

What would you still like to do in music?

In music? Er Oh lots, lots. I'm very ambitious, extremely ambitious. I mean I want to do my own album [laughs]. I don't care if I don't sell one, but I'll know if I'm satisfied doing what I want to do, Er. I vaguely toyed with the idea of giving up playing, because I had a couple of bad years with health, and gallstones, and I lost my lip, and it's not terribly good at the moment, and I've been a good player, um, but I miss the social side of it. The social side is absolutely wonderful and I think, I think it's very helpful to have been a composer, to directing other musicians. If you keep in touch with where they're at, you know. It's terribly wonderful if you go on a jazz gig and somebody pats you on the shoulder and says that was great. That is terribly important, not the audience. It's terribly nice and I do like it when they're pleased but it's more that 'Oh great'.

When people can really hear what you're doing?

It is nice. It is nice but it doesn't, you are not inspiring in the same way. Because they come and tell you it was good when you know it wasn't good, and they come and tell you it wasn't so good when you know it's been marvellous.

That's right, yeh

I've been on a jazz gig when I know the band have played great and you hear somebody say "Oh I didn't reckon much of that. Was that a row." That doesn't matter.

I'm working with musicians who have problems. Do you think there is anything I should be aware of as a therapist in my work that I wouldn't necessarily know that would make it easier for me? Any problems that musicians have.

[tape paused] Composing musicians or players?

Both really, but mainly at the moment composers. Any things in your experience that you think that musicians need help with? Or anything I should know.

Yes I mean. (3) Certainly my big point was what I've already mentioned, the physical aspect of it. Erm of course there's all the legal and copyright side of it as well, which is a big big thing. I would advise any performer or composer to get into the copyright world and understand it. We are totally ripped off at the moment, absolutely totally controlled. But the only freeing agent now, perhaps is the Internet. Erm, when one can get up a good website and sell your own stuff. You can actually produce CDs very cheaply now and I would say very much, get wised up about copyright. It's a very very tangled web, the world of mechanical copyright. I still don't fully understand it. Erm, The Union have got a service where they will look over a contract for free I would tell them to get into that aspect of it. I would very much if you were discussing, with say for instance a composer who'd got a mental block, erm (2) to look at one or two of those books, maybe like The Inner Game of Music or..

1
2 You think self-help material is important,

3
4 (3) Yeh Yeh I do

5
6 As opposed to coming to see a therapist or something [interruption]
7 Any other things you think I should be aware of?

8
9 I did try to talk about this at College when I had to give a brief talk and I said to
10 myself the famous question, what would you do now if you were that younger
11 and you knew what you knew now. Roger McGough said "Well I'd definitely
12 know would be to put the central heating boiler on the right hand side of the wall
13 instead of the left because we keep bumping into it when we go in". [laughs] But
14 the big thing for me would be to harness the subconscious. To give the
15 subconscious, to study that, Whether one would go down one's own road in
16 music, or accept the fact you're a wide open free spirit. There's two choices to
17 make, erm. I wouldn't try and do both of them I don't think. I'd either do one or
18 the other. I mean, being your own person, your own man, can actually be very
19 rewarding financially if you make the break. I mean look at (name). I mean he
20 did that one record and he's had a lifetime of free creativity and wealth and
21 position and status and stardom, from that one thing. I actually don't think he
22 quite knew what to do from that moment on. I think he's floundered ever since. I
23 mean he has done similar kind of things and all very skilful but, er. So he kind
24 of, that was a kind of a trap.

25
26 You were talking about that earlier, being good, recognised and you've got that
27 standard to live up to, People are always looking for, trying to catch you out.

28
29 And I'm not sure I would have liked (name)'s success. I mean he was similar to
30 me in the sense that he was an all-rounder, and he had this vision of the kind of
31 music that I liked, and he actually did it and he got commercial success with it.
32 I'm not sure that I envy him his commercial success, because I've had a kind of
33 a (2) Still now, no-one expects anything of me. I've had a lifetime of no-one
34 expecting anything of me and that's been a wonderful wonderful freedom.

35
36 It can be a burden, then, other people's expectations?

37
38 It can, it can. So if, people will suffer from that burden.

39
40 Performers certainly do, equally, don't they, when they're under scrutiny, or
41 they're not good enough.

42
43 I would tell a performer you know, an instrumentalist, and I did say this to (name
44 of friend). If you're gonna do it, he was going to leave the Army band and go
45 Pro Mu, full-time music, and I said, if you're going to do it, you are going to
46 have to do it. Set your sights with the very very best. You've got to really do 6
47 hours a day every day for about 4 years, otherwise forget it. Forget it! There's
48 hardly any work. You'll only get work if you take the place by storm. Just forget
49 it. There's no point unless you are going to be really really shit hot. All right,
50 you may get hotels, a gig here and there, a cruise, you know, a fortnight's cruise
51 with a band or you might sit in a back row of one of the lesser symphony
52 orchestras, you know but why, unless you do it well. You know I haven't lived
53 by my own creed, that's the word I was searching for earlier. You know, I've let
54 myself down in that sense, because I haven't. But, I've aspired to it and aspiring
55 to it is the thing. Aspiring for mediocrity or aspiring for the middle ground is a
56 waste of time, complete waste of time. You're never going to achieve what you

1 aspire to, but it's important to keep aspiring to it. Never sort of saying oh this is a
2 nice little number, I'll settle on this level, and people do.

3

4 You're still aspiring, you've got that file developing in there.

5

6 Oh my God yes! I'm still going to be one of the best trombone players in the
7 world. No doubt about it. No doubt about it.

8

9 OK. Any huge gaps that you're aware of, any things we haven't talked about as
10 far as you work in music is concerned?

11

12 I think, well, the thing is I've never stopped working. You know, I've never
13 stopped working. If I had stopped working seriously enough to make me
14 consider giving up, then I wouldn't have given up, I would have got on my bike
15 and really chased up jobs a lot more. I've never understood the psychology of
16 promoting oneself well. There, you could help me. Now there's something you
17 could really be able to help because I've never understood what's motivated a
18 client, a customer, to choose one person over another and I've seen time and
19 time again they've chosen the wrong person. Erm so now I don't need the job,
20 financially, as I did, I've become terribly desirable. Weird. When I really needed
21 a job, I would have willingly worked 24 hours, I would have done them just
22 what they wanted, I would have cut the budget down to the limit, I would have
23 lowered my profit, I would have taken my name off, put their name on, done
24 anything for it, they wouldn't have me, not at all, how do you explain that?

25

26 It's kind of freed you up, hasn't it?

27

28 How do you explain that as a psychologist? What is it that that one person can
29 radiate and another person can't, even if they are of equal merit. I want to know
30 the answer to that. So you'll have to tell me that. I'll put the microphone on you,
31 and [laughs].

32

33

Transcript 9 :

Linda

1 When people ask you to describe yourself as a musician, what would you say?
2
3 I don't know. I always, I am obviously a singer-songwriter in a traditional sense.
4 I like what would be probably classed as a bit more intelligent pop music rather
5 than just out and out pop, but I like the idea, I don't know. Is that enough?
6
7 Of course. That's fine. Can you say a bit more about your song-writing, how
8 you would describe that?
9
10 It's quite, the music I write I think does come from experiences that I have. It is
11 about the way I feel. When I first started writing I didn't realise that, I would just
12 write and then after having made an album and people started to analyse it I
13 started to look into where it was coming from and what it was about and it is
14 very much things that I feel.
15
16 Has it always been like that, since you started?
17
18 Yes, I think so. I don't think I ever wanted to just do music for beingI think
19 maybe when I was a little girl I probably dreamed about being famous but I
20 think as I started to develop and get a bit more experience I realised that it meant
21 more to me than that. It was about actually giving something, getting something
22 out rather than just parading myself about.
23
24 So it is about communication as well as expressing things inside yourself?
25
26 Yes, most definitely.
27
28 What areas of yourself do you feel come out in your music, what aspects of your
29 nature?
30
31 I think the humanitarian aspect which I didn't, I have always, when I was at
32 school I always, looking back I now realise that I was always crusading and
33 trying to protect people that were weaker than myself. And I think in my music
34 that is what I have seen, that I do actually care about other people and situations
35 and I like, if I have had an experience I like to try and pass it on in that way.
36
37 So that protective side of you comes out in you, the kind of lyrics in your music.
38 Can you give me an example?
39
40 Well, (title), was the first song on my album which I always thought would be
41 the first song I released, and it was.
42
43 Why was that, just to ask you that?
44
45 I don't know, I think because I really loved the melody and the minute it came
46 out, or the minute I had written it, I thought to myself, this is going to be my first
47 single. It was and it didn't do very well, but I still really love it and it's about, the
48 lyrics are we were put upon this planet to love and help each other, at least I
49 think that's the way God planned it so why then hurt each other, so I think that's
50 quite a good example and I do actually, I mean, it seems quite, I don't know,
51 people sometimes say it's hippy-dippy or sentimental but it's the way I feel, so.
52
53 It doesn't sound hippy-dippy to me, it sounds like a strong sense of justice and
54 seeing things that are wrong put right, that's what I hear in those words. Was
55 that something that was in your mind, were there any particular things that you
56 were thinking about when you wrote it?
57

1 No when I wrote it I was actually watching a sci-fi documentary and then it
2 came out, and it does, because there is a part of it which says, if you were to
3 meet an alien all that he would know is that you come from earth, you know so
4 that I think, I don't know what it was about the space programme, but yeah you
5 come from earth obviously. When you said justice that made me laugh because I
6 have got to get it right and the lyric is "I believe there will come when justice
7 will be done" so yeah it is very much from that aspect. I don't believe in, I can't
8 understand how one man would want to hurt another man because of a
9 difference between them, or even if somebody is black or fat or gay. I just can't
10 understand how somebody would want to hurt you because of that, because
11 that's an aspect of your character but basically we are all the same.

12
13 Those strong convictions, those beliefs that inform your lyrics and your songs,
14 do those feelings, those beliefs come out in other aspects of you life or is it
15 mainly in music?

16
17 No, I try to live my life in an, I don't want to say exemplary, I try to be the
18 person that I would like to think I am.

19
20 Does it come out in any other creative area in your work?

21
22 No because I am mainly, what do you mean?

23
24 I mean, do you write or paint or any other artistic forms of expression?

25
26 I have always written poetry but that is just like a side thing for myself.

27
28 Do you relate the poetry to the music? Do you ever set your poems?

29
30 No, they are a separate thing.

31
32 Right, is the content, the areas that you write about in your poetry, is that very
33 different too?

34
35 I tend to have thoughts and then I will put them down as a poem or something.
36 A thought will come and then I will put it into poetry, so it is all different things
37 and one day I wrote a poem about, I was wondering about an igloo, and whether
38 they had, when they were, whether igloos, I can't remember it, but I was
39 wondering about igloos and then I started thinking about whether an igloo would
40 do certain things and whether it would think certain things and it was just a very
41 small thing and then I came to the conclusion that the only person who could
42 answer that question for me would be an igloo. And if anybody knew they had to
43 be an igloo as well, so there is nonsensical things because I really like that sort
44 of stuff and then there is some stuff that can be a bit like my lyrics.

45
46 So there is a playful element, imaginative elements.

47
48
49 Yes.

50
51
52 When you start, can you tell me how you came to start writing songs?

53
54 Well, I was, I think I always knew I wanted to do something within entertainment
55 so I was always singing, I think. And then I bumped into a guy one day that I
56 hadn't seen, from school, quite a few years down the line and I had started to
57 pursue singing and he said to me, "Oh are you still singing?" and I said "Yeah,

1 how do you know?" and he said "You were always singing in the classroom and
2 the playground". And then I remembered that I used to make up songs and some
3 of the older girls would actually pay me sometimes to sing, and they'd say oh,
4 (name) has done this brilliant song, but I didn't realise that, I just started to
5 pursue wanting a singing career and then there was a point where I was, I had
6 found this studio where I used to hang out and I was working with a band and I
7 wasn't happy because it felt like there seemed to be something more that was
8 missing, I couldn't expr-, I felt like I wasn't. I knew I was a good singer, but I
9 wasn't coming across as a good singer and then I was talking to the studio
10 manager and he said "Maybe you need to write your own songs". And I said
11 "How do I write?" and he said, actually it was, and then I spoke about the same
12 thing to a manager, called Tony Hall, who is quite well known in the music
13 industry and he said "I don't know, just write kid". And so I did, and I wrote this
14 song but it was obviously more in poetry form because I didn't know how to
15 stop it because it just kept going on and on and on and then I was told, well you
16 need to condense the whole thing down.

17
18 Did you write the words, you wrote the words?

19
20 Yes, I was writing and it just wouldn't stop, I didn't know where to stop it and
21 you know, I was told you need to condense it down and tell the story within that
22 amount of time and have the, and de de de, and so I just started doing it.

23
24 And how did you get the music in there?

25
26 Melodies and lyrics always came out together and then I had a friend actually
27 who I had met through the first band I had joined and she was a keyboard player
28 and she first person to put, well I always knew what chords I wanted but I didn't
29 attempt or think I could play them.

30
31 So you could hear them?

32
33 Yes, and I would say no, not that one, and they would have to go through each
34 chord, I always, apart from Steve, most of the time I have written like that.

35
36 Yes.

37
38 So I just put the chords down and then I recorded it with a guitarist who had an
39 eight track set up and that was my first song.

40
41 Did you hear it in terms of the instruments as well as the harmony?

42
43 No, I just heard the chords, I didn't really think of it to that extent, just the
44 melody. I never really thought about it because it was like an instinctive thing I
45 think, but when people would say, oh I'll put some chords there, I would let
46 them, and then I would think, oh, that is not what it is supposed to sound like at
47 all.

48
49 You had a pretty clear idea of what you wanted although you couldn't
50 necessarily say do this.

51
52 I couldn't articulate it one hundred percent but yes I knew exactly what I
53 wanted.

54
55 Just briefly, when you wanted to move into entertainment and so on, what was it
56 that appealed to you about it?

57

1 I don't know. Whenever I watched a musical, and my mother, you know,
2 introduced me to things like Hello Dolly and stuff like that and I just, I never
3 ever wanted the film to
4
5 Sorry, was this on TV, live or
6
7 Videos, and cinema and stuff like that, and my mum had, she always had all the
8 records to go with it. And whenever I watched a film I just didn't want it to ever
9 end, you know, and when it ended and I'd be in the kitchen washing the dishes
10 and if it had been an Elvis Presley film and I'd still sing and I'd actually cry. I
11 don't know what it was.
12
13 Was it crying because it had finished or crying because of what was in it?
14
15 I don't know what it was, I just loved everything.
16
17 Did you cry during the film?
18
19 Depending on the film. The Sound of Music, that to this day is my favourite film
20 and if I put it on, recently I watched it and I was thinking, I'm not going to cry.
21 But it's exactly the same spot every single time I watch it, without me having to
22 do, it just comes out and it's where the little girl, you know when they are all
23 saying goodbye at the party, and the little girl sings and I always burst out
24 crying. I don't know, I suppose I loved, there are lots of different aspects to it.
25 The obvious things I suppose are the glamour. I don't know because I am
26 actually, I am actually quite confident, but also I have been in the past a lot more
27 shy than I am now, but I can be very shy. And I was painfully shy so I don't
28 know why I would, I don't even know why I would contemplate it. Because
29 when we used to go to a disco or club it would take me, everyone could get up
30 and dance but it would take me ages. I would have to think about it for ages
31 before I could actually muster up the courage to expose myself in that way.
32
33 Was that true of you getting up on stage to sing?
34
35 I loved getting up on stage to sing. I would always be nervous to begin with but
36 afterwards I would feel embarrassed and feel like, if anybody came up to me and
37 said "Oh I saw your gig" I would think, "Just go away", I didn't want to
38 remember it afterwards.
39
40 Why was that do you think?
41
42 Because I find it quite a bit embarrassing getting up and making a spectacle of
43 yourself.
44
45 Was it the same if you thought it had gone very well, or if it had gone not so
46 well, did it make any difference?
47
48 I can tell when it has gone well, but I also. I know it has gone well because of
49 the response but it is never well enough for me, if you can understand that and I
50 would always... The band used to get quite confused because they would think,
51 yeah we got an encore and it was great. I was still always ready to start telling
52 them what had gone wrong and then they would get really upset and I would get
53 into a bit like, I didn't really want to see anyone afterwards anyway.
54
55 How were you feeling afterwards?
56
57 Like it was shit!

1
2 You are very critical of things, however they are received.
3
4 Yes.
5
6 I am going to ask you a bit more about that in a moment. When it comes to
7 song-writing now, or over recent times, what kind of thing makes it easier for
8 you? I mean would you, for instance, approach it in a particular way, or a
9 particular place, particular time, things like that?
10
11 I mean, I recognise that it's a skill that I have developed. I recognise that some
12 of it does happen like a kind of channel thing and I can recognise those
13 moments, I know when to pick it up, you know, I know when to pick up a pen.
14
15 Can it happen anywhere then?
16
17 Yes, I do prefer to be, if I was in somebody's house and something came
18 through I would, if I had a Dictaphone or a piece of paper, I would go into their
19 toilet, I wouldn't tell anyone, and I would come back, so I always like to be by
20 myself, except for
21
22 What difference does that make, not having anyone to share in it. What would
23 happen.
24
25 Nothing would happen, it's just I don't want to stop the flow if there is
26 something flowing. I don't want interruption, that's all.
27
28 And does it start with the lyric or start with a
29
30 Sometimes I must just hear one word or a sentence or something and that will
31 trigger it, but if I have to write deliberately, like if somebody asked me to write
32 deliberately, I'll start it, I'll leave myself space to let something come in and
33 then move from that. It's normally, I don't plan it that way but I normally do get
34 the first line of the chorus, the main theme comes through and then I'll work it
35 around that but I've learnt, before I always wrote just off the cuff, but now I'll
36 leave it and I'll cogitate and go back and you know.
37
38 What difference do you think that space, giving yourself that space to cogitate
39 makes?
40
41 It means I don't get blocks, because if I try and force myself to do something,
42 then sometimes you find you might come up against a block because you are
43 trying too hard, that if I leave myself a space it just, it actually just comes
44 naturally, very naturally. If I do a verse and then it gets to a point where I can't
45 do the next verse, then I just leave it. In earlier days I would be thinking I have
46 got to finish that verse. Also in earlier days I didn't even have to think because
47 a lot of the time, within in a couple of minutes the whole thing would just come
48 out.
49
50 So, you trust the process?
51
52 I trust the process.
53
54 What effect does having a deadline have on you?
55
56 A positive one, because I can be a bit lazy so if I have got a deadline I like to
57 meet it, so I will. It doesn't faze me. I actually work better with a bit of pressure.

1
2 So that's one of the things, pressure is good. OK. Any other things that help?
3
4 No, I'm not really very precious about writing to tell the truth. I recognise that
5 it's something I like. I love words, I love language so it's more of a pleasure,
6 than, I don't like to feel like, oh, give me room. It's just something that I do.
7
8 Just part of the rest of life.
9
10 I need pink walls!
11
12 So it is something that is there in the background, so it could be set off, am I
13 right, by anything, like TV, something someone says or insight too?
14
15 Or just from probably, I don't know. There's two sides to it, there's that side
16 where it can be set off or there's the side where it's a skill and I have to apply it
17 and I will.
18
19 Yes.
20
21 But, I am aware of the two, the differences.
22
23 How does it work with the other side, the skill side of the playing?
24
25 Well, Steve has just sent me something and we had a bit of chaos here because
26 (partner's) brother came down for what was meant to be one night, but he has
27 been here for. He's just gone, so I would have started on that yesterday but it
28 was a bit too chaotic here for me so, I am leaving it until. I know I have set
29 myself that, as soon as this or this bit is over then I am going to do it. So I just, I
30 am quite practical about it I think. I know that I have got to do it, I am saying to
31 my, I know when I want to start something basically.
32
33 So you are saying that you now write with the keyboard, do you use the
34 computer or anything like that?
35
36 No, I mean, I never write with the keyboard, I always write melody and lyrics
37 first. Now and then if I need to I confine all the root mix onto a Dictaphone.
38 But now that I am concentrating on practicing the guitar, the other day, a few
39 months ago, a song came to me and then. I have always had a fear of
40 instruments, I think because I love them so much and I wanted to write this song
41 but I wanted to do it with the guitar as well, and it is very simple, very basic but
42 I did it so I know that a new thing is opening up for me.
43
44 Yes. When it comes to going on from there then, so you have got something
45 down on the Dictaphone, what is the next stage?
46
47 Well the next stage is to get the chords, the basic chords and then once you have
48 got the chords then the thing is to get the rhythm, or decide what....
49
50 Does that, I'm sorry. Does that involve getting someone to play them?
51
52 Well, (name), my boyfriend, now I have, now that we're together, he is very
53 well versed with all this stuff, so it is very much easier, I can get, I can just ask
54 him to do things.
55
56 And before, in the past?
57

1 I was mainly, I tried it a little bit on my own but I didn't really like it, trying to
2 get, you know I had a four track but it was just a bit limiting because I did not
3 know how to do certain things so maybe I'll. It has been a long time since I have
4 been in a situation where I have had to think, how can I get this put together?
5 Prior to that, working with (name), you know, we had the studio time, I have
6 always been with people who have studio or studio equipment so it hasn't been
7 too much of a trial.

8
9 So you book the studio and you work with people.

10
11 Well normally people have stuff in their homes and say oh listen I need to put
12 something down, could we work like that.

13
14 Have you developed relationships with particular people over the years that you
15 like working with.

16
17 Yes. There's the two main people that I like. I mean there are musicians that I
18 love and I try to keep in touch with all of them, but a lot of them have changed
19 and they're moving on to different things and they are so into the industry that
20 you are not doing anything so you are not that important, you know. My
21 percussionist from the band, (name), I always keep in touch with, he is such a
22 wonderful spirit, and also without me knowing, we went to the same school.

23
24 At the same time?

25
26 No. Because he was taken out because he was getting a bit naughty and then he
27 was sent to Africa to finish his schooling and I left that school as well, but it is
28 still my school, that's the place where I made most of my bonds so, but yeah and
29 then there is. And then I wrote with (name) from (name of band), you remember
30 (band), and funnily enough I spoke to him yesterday. We haven't spoken for
31 ages but he is somebody that I really like and I think him and (name) are the two
32 main people that I feel connected with in a certain way.

33
34 Any particular things that make it easier or harder for you to work with them?

35
36 It's harder to work with (name) because he is always busy.

37
38 So practical things like that, just being able to find the time can have an effect?

39
40 And with (name), I stopped writing with (name) because I felt like, he made a
41 comment, I really like him and I still want to see him but he was kind of aware
42 of the fact that there was a kind of flow from me and so every time I said "I'll
43 come round", he said "Yeah, and we'll write some songs". And it was kind of a
44 little bit mercenary, because it was always about the song, do you know what I
45 mean. And then I when I went to India and I came back. He said, my manager,
46 because the manager I had at the time also managed (name), and he said "Oh
47 yeah, (name) is really excited that you're back, you will be bursting with stuff to
48 come out and I just didn't like that."

49
50 So he was more concerned with exploiting you making something of it rather
51 than making it.

52
53 Yeah, I just didn't, I didn't like to be thought of or seen as a kind of like sponge
54 which you drain.

55
56 Like a commodity in a sense?

57

1 Yes, I found that a bit odd. So whenever I said "Oh I'll come and see you", then
2 he'd say "Oh we can write a song" and I thought "no, I don't really want it to
3 be", you know. That's the only time that I have ever felt that. But I spoke to him
4 yesterday, and I have said I will go. He has gotten a lot busier himself because
5 of all this 80s revival stuff so I think I'm going to go and visit him. In the back
6 of my mind I know he'll probably engineer, but I'm actually more open to that
7 than I was then.

8
9 How did you deal with it then, the difficulty with him?

10
11 Well I just kept away from him.

12
13 You wouldn't say anything?

14
15 No I wouldn't say anything.

16
17 Any other difficulties, apart from these personal, occasional personal...

18 What do you mean when you say difficulties?

19
20 It's very open really.

21
22 Any things that make it harder for you. It could be anything, practical things,
23 things to do with the music itself, difficulties in the process, anything at all?

24
25 Not that I can think of because actually when I want to write, I write and when I
26 don't I don't. I mean I always, I get to a point where, if I am working with
27 somebody I know when OK we have done this up to this point and now I'd like
28 to maybe go out and do a gig or something or I want to stop writing, I always
29 know when to put a lid on it.

30
31 What about the process of getting the songs that you have written out, played,
32 recorded, that sort of thing?

33
34 That is difficult. The difficulty I have, and that is why I have started to learn to
35 play the guitar properly is that unless you are actually doing something or you
36 are signed it is very difficult to get musicians to work with you, especially the
37 standard of musician that I require or like to be around and it is a bit
38 disheartening.

39
40 So there is a lot of commercial pressure on people which dictates whether or no
41 they are available?

42
43 Well, it's down to them, it's down to them, but I have found with a lot of
44 musicians they are more interested if you have got the backing or not, it's
45 difficult. As I said, you can find musicians, but are they the right musicians, so?

46 ...

47
48 How do you know when they are the right musicians?

49
50 Because of the standard of their playing and their attitude.

51
52 Do you think it is simpler to get on with them as people or would it be enough to
53 get on with them musically?

54
55 I'd have to get on with them as people as well because it is too intimate. When
56 you are playing together you kind of have an invisible link and if there is bad,
57 you know, energy between you, it won't necessarily affect the music but it will

1 affect your performance or the way you are feeling, its just not nice, it needs to
2 be nice, it needs to feel nice, everything.

3
4 Have you found any differences working with men and women, or both?

5
6 Yeah, I think that if I were a man it would be easier to get a band to back me
7 without me having a deal. I think there is more, that boys take each other
8 seriously, more seriously in the music industry. And then there is the other thing,
9 even if they do take you seriously, that they feel that you, that they do not want
10 to be controlled, that's the way they'll see it, that they will be controlled by you,
11 or you leading.

12
13 Have you had, can you give me an example of those sorts of experiences?

14
15 Have you got enough tape?

16
17 Yeah.

18
19 Well, for instance, sorry what, I have lost the kind of ...

20
21 How many difficulties have you had with men over you being a woman, having
22 to work with them, cases of you know ...

23
24 Yes, the guy I wrote the majority of my album with, and as I said, apart from the
25 tracks that I did with (name), the chords were dictated by me so in actual fact his
26 role was more of an arranger than a co-writer, but he got the co-writing credits.
27 But between the two of us he knew exactly what the process had been that we
28 had gone through to get to the other end, but I found that when we had the deal
29 and everything, I didn't mind because I know what my capabilities are and I
30 don't want to take credit for anything that somebody else has done, but I found
31 that he was, "Oh yeah, I'm the producer, I'm this, I'm that", which I didn't mind
32 at all.

33
34 So it was really true the other way on, he was quite prepared to take

35
36 Yeah, and then we were on tour and we were rehearsing and things, (name) the
37 percussionist, the drummer, we all respected each other highly because they
38 were brilliant, the drummer is (name), he is now with the (band), he did their last
39 tour, a fantastic drummer, everyone really talented. (name) was really talented in
40 some ways, but not as fully as the other guys because he was classically trained
41 but very stunted in. He had been limited I think in.

42
43 Very narrow.

44
45 Yeah. So they started telling me that he was saying things when I wasn't there
46 "Oh don't take any notice of her and you know"

47
48 Oh really.

49
50 You know, trying to, but they were actually coming back and telling me.

51
52 Trying to undermine you.

53
54 And then we had a really bad argument, it was in the corridor in the hotel in
55 Japan, no we were out and in a restaurant and it was somebody's birthday and
56 they asked him to play Happy Birthday, and even though he is classically
57 trained, he can't write and he couldn't quite get it together to get there and he got

1 the Happy Birthday out and then somebody said "Oh please play (title) one of
2 the songs from the album. And it became then, because if you have dictated the
3 chords to somebody and they haven't really, because that wasn't one of the
4 songs we did in our set, and they haven't really practiced it. Say, if I had sat at
5 that piano and I knew I how to just, I would know it because I knew what the
6 song is supposed to be, but he didn't so he got really embarrassed and everyone
7 was saying, "Oh, come on, (name) play it", and I said "Come on (name) you've
8 got it" because even though I knew things about him, I was quite astounded that
9 he couldn't even remember it, you know. And he said "Just fuck the ..." the
10 venom that came out, and he said to me "Just fuck off you fucking bitch!" or
11 something like that and I thought "Oh God, this is somebody I looked on as a
12 brother." Then in the hotel later on that night it all came out, and all the rumours
13 were there and he was shouting at me "Your biggest talent is pissing people off"
14 and that, you , "I wrote that, you" and he started getting really, and all I said to
15 him the whole time was "(name), you know and I know." I didn't need to shout
16 for anyone to hear or anything and then after that I couldn't really be. I knew
17 that he had. He waited for me the next night, the next day he sort of waited until
18 I came round to the lift, he had been waiting, and then he ran to me and said
19 "I'm really sorry" and I said "That's fine", you know. That again is like, from
20 the beginning he knew what he was going to get out of me, there was no
21 friendship there and that's what I realise. He never ever called me when it sort of
22 broke up or, just really

23
24 Hurtful stuff!

25
26 Yes, really hurtful. And even to this day, he still is, trying and create the
27 impression that he, which I don't care because I know what it is, but just things
28 like that. And then you will get somebody like (name), like I am speaking to
29 another musician, and he'll say "Oh I met (name) the guy who did your album"
30 and I'll say "Oh yeah , how is he, what did he say", he said "Oh he said you are
31 difficult!" So they are sticking the spoke in everywhere you go. So you get
32 things like that . Lots of things ...

33
34 Do you think being a woman makes it a lot harder?

35
36 I think being a talented woman makes it hard! Because it's all right when you
37 present yourself on a stereotypical level but if you try to exceed that, that's when
38 the barriers come down, they try to put you back into your place, you know.

39
40 Can you say some more about it?

41
42 Yes. Even in the record companies and things like that if you... as long as
43 you're, you need to make people feel like they're doing it and it's not you, and
44 then everything's OK, like.

45
46 How do you do that?

47
48 Well I didn't, because I didn't know that's why I'm obviously not in it now.

49
50 Something you had to learn?

51
52 Yes. Just, you know, even though the boss of the company I was with, he was
53 always trying to undermine me and he would say like, when I have finished that
54 album then obviously I wasn't going to write the next album with (name) and I
55 didn't feel I needed to because I'd written those songs from top to bottom, as I
56 said doing all the lyrics. And then after that, I got my own piano and I knew the
57 chords and then it would just be a matter of the production, then to develop it

1 and he was adamant with you know "I think (name's) really good" you know
2 and he would say things like, he would insinuate things like, you have to know
3 your limitations and stuff just so that I wouldn't. I left the record company
4 because I couldn't take it. and even if I had ideas and things he would say "You
5 can't have an idea like that" he actually said that to me. And behind my back
6 though, to my manager, he would say "She's far too bright, she's too bright".
7

8 That's a very threatening attitude. Did it make any difference you being black as
9 well as a woman?
10

11 Yes, I mean one of the times when we were in a meeting and I had this idea for
12 an editorial shoot, which was like a product being made in a factory so you
13 would like see the boxes and there would be lots of rejects and then there would
14 be one that had gotten through and then I would pop out as this, like this jack-in-
15 the-box and then be hung up like a rag doll and then from the rag doll then
16 becoming the more developed product. And he said to me, "You can't have an
17 idea like that!" and I said "Why not" and he said that's the sort of thing a white
18 indie band, a college band would have. And I said "Yeah but it's an idea I have
19 had". Yes, you get things like that. You know the head of Polygram, when I
20 first did (title of song), the people in the marketing loved the lyrics so they put it
21 on the poster and my manager told me in a meeting he'd said, "Who does she
22 think she is, a poet" and things like that. And when I was on television, as if
23 being black I shouldn't be, they were quite surprised and in a meeting later
24 "God, she's really articulate isn't she", which I'm not as articulate as I'd like to
25 be but, you know, as if it was a surprise you know.
26

27 How have those terrible put-downs affected you?
28

29 They just made me feel sad I suppose, not angry, not angry, just "God, this is the
30 kind of uninformed persons that are running quite an important structure", you
31 know and they are not even aware of the fact that some of the time, they are not
32 even aware of the fact that they are like that, its just the way they are. And when
33 I was in my first, I always knew or thought there would be a difference, about
34 me being black, and the first incidence, even though I don't see that as a barrier
35 or a threat, I have always had that confidence that if I want to do something I
36 can do it, and the first meeting I had with the woman in charge of TV and radio
37 production, I was sitting opposite her and she said, she was talking about the
38 kind of plan we were going to use for and then she said "And then we would
39 have to go black, I mean back", and it just came out because she was obviously
40 at the forefront of her. I pretended I hadn't heard it because I didn't want to
41 embarrass her any further but it was obviously a major thing that they had all
42 had to discuss because I was black but I didn't fit into the black genre, so they
43 had to sort of think of other things but they couldn't because it was what I was,
44 you know..
45

46 There have really been masses of very successful black artists, why do you think
47 they are still like that?
48

49 There haven't really been masses of successful black artists in England, there's
50 been Joan Armatrading, Tina Turner is not really English, um, there have been
51 more male. Jimmy Hendrix was in Britain but he's not British, um, Terence
52 Trent Darby wasn't British and then Seal, I mean you can count them on your
53 hand, Laby Siffre, there haven't really been many successful black artists.
54

55 Even fewer successful black women?
56

1 Even fewer, and who are being allowed to step up. Because at the first when I
2 was going into record companies on my own with my tape and it wasn't black
3 music, as such, they'd say, "What can we do with this, what are we going to
4 do?" It wasn't "I don't like it, or it's not good enough", it was where would we
5 put it, that's what I would get and I would always just say "Can I have my tape
6 back please?" And it has always been an upward struggle and then when I got in
7 I was still really naïve as to how regimental and biased the whole thing was and
8 I just went in as this naïve but still with my crusading, yes you know, I can make
9 changes and I just did. I completely faltered because I just rubbed everyone I
10 suppose up the wrong way but I was honest.

11
12 Is that what rubbed them up the wrong way?

13
14 Yes he actually, my head of my company one day he said to me, I played this
15 song, it was about racial tensions, it wasn't something that I released and then he
16 listened to it really intensely and then he said to me "You can't say that!" and I
17 said "Why not?" and he said "People don't wear their hearts on their sleeve like
18 that, it's just too honest", he actually said that. And then I realised that honesty
19 was a problem and when I was being interviewed, I felt like a specimen because
20 they were saying, "Well you went to a comprehensive and you know you have
21 had quite a normal upbringing, why aren't you like all those other kids, you
22 know, why have you become like this, why haven't you toed the line?"

23
24 My jaw is dropping in astonishment!

25
26 No literally we have all that stuff going on. I suppose in some ways it does have
27 an effect. When I left the record company I was actually, I have never ever
28 suffered from depression and I am basically a happy person, but when I was
29 deciding to remove myself from that situation, I actually for a week, there was a
30 week when I was just very still and then I came out with it and I had made my
31 decision and I thought, "God I think I was depresso" and I shook it off and I
32 thought "No, I don't like that feeling", and I just carried on, but it was really
33 disheartening, I felt really, because my life had always been fine, I was always
34 happy and I thought that was going to be the icing on the cake. And what I
35 realised about it wasn't, it was actually bringing out so many insecurities and
36 actually putting me back so I had to decide whether it was really so important for
37 me to be in that situation and I decided it wasn't. But I thought I could turn it
38 round and, you know, start again, but it wasn't that easy because once, being
39 everything went quite smoothly, getting in getting out, but everything always
40 seemed to work in my favour. But then that works against you as well because if
41 you make them look a bit silly in any way they are more determined, and I
42 know, I know that, I can't prove it, but I knew about the racial thing and I
43 couldn't prove it but then I had proof in a sense.

44
45 Yes. But it hasn't shaken your faith in yourself?

46
47 No, I did have to re-, I had to re-build it for quite a while, it took a while. I went
48 through all the kind of like self-help things, you know. I started being, because I
49 was, a lot of times when I came up against the things which I couldn't
50 understand with guys, musicians being funny towards you. And I just thought,
51 all I ever want to do is work and not make any problems for anybody. And I
52 think I am quite open, and I think I am quite an OK person. But there always
53 seems to be problems and I really don't think, there was a point where I had
54 been working with this musician, and I thought everything was going really
55 well, it was about him, not about me but I had booked to go into the studio,
56 because I had signed to (name of label) and so we were going to do some
57 recording of a track and then he didn't turn up. And then the next time I spoke to

1 him, and then I had booked a drummer so I had to pay the drummer too, and the
2 next time I spoke to him he started, all of it out of the blue, he started saying
3 "You're really difficult and this and that and the thing that they use to sort of..".
4 And I said, look where is this coming from, you didn't turn up but I'm not
5 saying anything's wrong, I'm just, you know asking what happened", but he was
6 obviously trying to wriggle out and I found out, a few days later because he was
7 at the same publishing company, that he had gone up for, at the time when
8 Robbie Williams was auditioning people for the song-writing job that has led to
9 this point, he had gone up for it. And I think he thought he was really going to
10 get it and he didn't and I think it, it wasn't the day when we were going in, but
11 he was so sure that he had it that and he was like, "Oh fuck that," you know and
12 when he didn't get it that's why he turned. And then I thought "God", and that's
13 why at that time I was shaken, because I had really been nice to him, I thought,
14 all the time, so I was crying for quite a few days and then my friend brought me
15 this book, Paolo Coelho, you know, do you know the?

16
17 Which one?

18
19 The most famous one, what's it called again?

20
21 Can't remember.

22
23 Anyways she brought me that and I read, The Alchemist.

24
25 Oh yes that's right.

26
27 And then I read it and it actually did bring a little bit of light in. So then I did
28 start reading a few things and I was just starting to rebuild myself because after
29 that and it was always coming up. And it was always these men that were
30 creating these problems and then I started, you know, looking into different
31 things, literally, listening to things that I was reading, you know, saying that you
32 have to stand up and do it, literally look in the mirror and like yourself and, you
33 know. So I went through quite a lot of that and I have to say it does work,
34 because when things are happening to you, not when people are doing things to
35 you, when you are going through situations and experiences that you don't fully
36 understand, they do have an effect without you knowing and you are not able to,
37 you can't pinpoint what's actually happening to you. So I probably did feel that
38 there was something wrong with me without knowing it, you know. So I went
39 through all that stuff, saying to yourself, and it was really hard because then I
40 realised at the beginning that I didn't actually, I always wanted it but I didn't
41 actually believe it, so I was going through – I don't know what was pulling me
42 through. (Name) actually pulled me through, the guy that I did the album with,
43 quite a lot because he obviously saw it all, because I wouldn't always think, "Oh
44 I won't get a deal" and he would say "Yes" you would and he was very
45 supportive, but he obviously saw and knew and he knew the industry quite well
46 so he knew which

47
48 Which route to take

49
50 Yeah, and to him it was inevitable. So I suppose a lot of that got me there as
51 well, but when I got in there I did always think that it wasn't. First of all, when I
52 wanted to sing, when I was younger and all the time I would sing in the mirror
53 and stuff, I would always think to myself, God I knew I could sing but the other
54 bit was I thought I was really ugly. So, seriously, and I would cry because I
55 would think I will never be able to do it, because once they see how ugly I am
56 I'll never be able to do it. And when I did, so all the time I had that, but then I
57 started obviously the voice thing carrying me through more and I'd eliminated a

1 lot of that stuff, but not totally, because when I got my deal I remember having
2 to stand in the mirror and I'd look at myself and it was such a pressure. And I'd
3 think "Oh well they are just going to have to accept me the way I am", and I had
4 to try and get that confidence, that it would be all right. And when I did my first
5 video, my lip was trembling and luckily I had a woman director and she was
6 quite a deep person, she was from Iran, and the first cut of the video before she
7 let anyone else in, she said to me "Come in", she obviously understood what I
8 was going through, and she put me to sit down in front of it, the screen, and she
9 left the room or stood back and when she put it on, literally the tension, my heart
10 was beating. All I knew was I was going to see this ugliness, you know and
11 when it came on and I saw it and it opened up, because we had gone to Seville
12 and it was in a really beautiful setting and I was in this field of flowers and it
13 came up and I saw myself, and because I looked all right it was such a relief that
14 I was crying for about, hysterically for about 20 minutes. So it was kind of an
15 exorcism, so having to get, I am almost nearly crying, sorry. I thought, you know
16 I have been through this so many times, I don't know why.

17
18 Did things change after that?

19
20 Yeah, but then it was all the other things like, you know, having to deal with all
21 the guys and stuff like that and the Record Company and all the, not pressure,
22 but all the kind of rules that you weren't allowed to break. And just you know,
23 you are not allowed to be yourself basically, I was not allowed to be myself, But
24 there were so many things you know, like you would go on a programme and for
25 no reason at all they would be saying, "You can't wear that, because this is this
26 programme" you know, just silly things.

27
28 So being ordered around.

29
30 Well I wasn't ordered around, because there was a point where I thought "Well
31 I'm singing about all these things about injustices so no, I'm not going to do
32 that", so I wouldn't but then that means you're difficult.

33
34 So it has been very difficult for you to express your individuality to do what you
35 want to do with all these things being laid on you all the time.

36
37 It wasn't like things were put on me, it was just that I didn't understand the
38 whole goddamn thing. I was just out to make some music, I didn't know all that
39 all that stuff went with it so

40
41 You see yourself as being naïve?

42
43 Yes, because I didn't have that level of focus and determination that some
44 people have, and they know, I didn't have that kind of tunnel vision, I had had it
45 up to a point, but then the rest of it

46
47 It kind of got you into it but then it didn't push you?

48
49 Carry me through it, no. Because I just didn't know what it was, I had wanted it
50 but I didn't sort of

51
52 Was it a surprise to you that there would be those constraints, those pressures?

53
54 Surprise, it was a bloody shock, I wish it was a surprise, it was a shock!

55
56 Do you think things like ambition carry people through?

57

1 Yes, I am ambitious because I still haven't given up, but I am not prepared to,
2 not at the cost of my integrity. So therefore its going to be a much longer road
3 for me, but I prefer that, because if you get there and you have given up most of,
4 yourself all you have got, and if you have given up most of yourself, it won't
5 mean a thing. Like I can see with somebody like Robbie Williams, he has got
6 supposedly everything, but nothing, because he still doesn't feel fulfilled
7 because he would really love to be a great musician. He has a level of talent, I
8 think his lyrics are brilliant, but he is not fulfilled and it does not, no amount of
9 money or fame can make you feel fulfilled, if you have not realised yourself in a
10 way that you see fit, if you have thought "Oh, I will just go and take it" you
11 know. It doesn't work and I am just not prepared to do all that work and still feel
12 empty, I want to feel full and enjoy it to the full.

13
14 And you are developing all the time musically, which would help you to do that?

15
16 Yes. It feels to me, what I am doing now, which has taken me so long to get to,
17 because I don't think I think things out a lot, but I am learning but I think this is
18 the last piece of the jigsaw for me so I feel I do believe in myself now and I do
19 feel confident and I don't care about the external things. I don't care about the
20 things they try and make you care about. I don't think they can stop me because
21 of age, I don't think they can stop me because of the way I look, you know. So a
22 lot of things have been eliminated and if, I am confident enough to say when it
23 comes into fruition, it would have been worth it and you I won't, I can't
24 remember what I was going to say now, but it would have been worth it.

25
26 Can I ask you about your awareness of who you are writing for, do you have an
27 audience or particular groups of people?

28
29 Well, we say that if a hundred people don't like it and one person does, that one
30 person is the person I am writing for.

31
32 So communication is important to you but not a particular group?

33
34 No, I am writing, yes obviously I would like it to be a widespread group and
35 when I did it, I think I did achieve that, because of a lot of people. And I had
36 black people and white people, you know walking down Portobello Road,
37 there'd be like really sort of hip hop and regga girls going, "Yeah that was
38 wicked man, that's lovely", in as much as my mum liking it and older people,
39 younger people, Americans. I did manage that and that felt good. I kept that with
40 me that even though it didn't go to the level that it could have done, the small
41 foundation that was set was set in the right way and I feel good about that.

42
43 What about the critics, the press, that sort of thing, how does that affect you?

44
45 To tell the truth I didn't have a chance to be affected by any of it because they
46 were all really good to me.

47
48 And did you take notice, how did it affect you, the fact that they were being
49 good to you, do you think?

50
51 Well I was expecting the worst, I tend not to expect things in my life, I kind of
52 just go into situations but with the press, because you hear so much about them, I
53 was expecting, I was sort of, I suppose, braced.

54
55 Braced for?

56

1 The worst, but I didn't seem to come across, they seemed to genuinely like what
2 I was doing, which was really nice. There was the odd thing. I did a thing when
3 Kurt Cobain died, because I am always slow with, I love certain things but I
4 think "Oh, I will get to that concert later", or "I will buy that album" five years
5 later, after it has been released..
6

7 In your own good time, sure.
8

9 And with Kurt Cobain I had always been meaning to go and see him because I
10 had been aware of him but I wasn't focussing with him but a few things had
11 struck me. And I was in Ireland, about five o'clock in the morning, because I
12 never really sleep, and the telly was on. And I was in the hotel room, and I saw
13 the news that he had died and all on my way home, when I got home I was
14 thinking about it. And I was quite sad because I knew, I didn't really know him
15 in depth but I knew that something good had been lost and I got home and I was
16 in the bath and a song came, and I kept thinking, it was called Mr Cobain, and I
17 really wanted to write a bit. Again I thought it was a personal thing so I wanted
18 to write it myself and I knew some chords on the guitar but I hadn't really
19 played the guitar, anyway eventually I got out of the bath and I got the guitar and
20 I wrote it, and I don't know how. It was like a miracle but I got it and then that
21 next day, I played it to my manager that day and he said "This is great" and then
22 I was doing a Capital Radio Live thing so I did it on there and then in the Time
23 Out one of the critics wrote that again because I was black, what did I know
24 about Kurt Cobain and that. He didn't say that in so many words and that I was
25 cashing in on the fact that. So I did reply to them, and I said "You know, it's
26 your job to anticipate what people are thinking and its my job", I feel, I can't
27 remember what I said anyway, but that did affect me because I thought that was
28 really nasty. How could he know what I was thinking at the time?
29

30 So criticism that he misunderstood you is particularly, did you write to them or
31 phone them?
32

33 I wrote to the Time Out, I wrote a letter, they printed it. Yes, if people
34 misunderstand you it's not good at the best of times, but when they are
35 misunderstanding you in front of millions of other people, then its even. I don't
36 know because I never really got that much, I didn't get big to the point of it
37 becoming, but I'm the sort of person that the work is the first thing anyway so I
38 doubt I would have been. Like the other day my mother said to me, "Here's a
39 clip I kept for you from". I really was never interested. I was interested in just
40 getting on with it. That worked against me as well because they were always
41 saying to me, "Oh aren't you really happy you are at number one" and I'd say
42 "Yeah". And one day my manager said to me "Don't you ever get excited about
43 anything?" I'd think "I suppose so but not things that I - I always thought I
44 would be doing that and I always wanted to do it so now I am doing it, its not a
45 matter of being excited". Or, because there was another singer who got signed
46 just after me, she's somebody that I knew through other people, (name) and
47 when she was signed she came up to me in Portobello Road and she said "Oh,
48 you've been signed haven't you and I've been signed" and I said "Um, um" and
49 she said to me "Oh its weird isn't it, its all going to change" and I said "No"
50 because I just don't relate to that sort of thing. And another friend of mine who
51 was in an Indie band, when he got his deal was like, "Yeah I'm a pop star now",
52 but that kind of thing makes me really cringe, I find it really repulsive and
53 vulgar.
54

55 What have been the rewards then for you?
56

1 Because, you know what, I always saw it as a stepping stone because I always
2 wanted it to – the only time I get slightly envious is when I see Gerry Halliwell
3 and Robbie Williams working for UNESCO, you know, because I always
4 thought that was going to be my, at that point I would use it in that way and
5 because it was taking a while and stuff, I thought to myself, "You have always
6 seen it as this grand thing where you are going to be saving the world in that
7 way" and so then I took on different bits of voluntary work in a more, you know,
8 incognito in that and I still do it and that would be the reward if I could use it in
9 another way, I mean.

10
11 And what were the rewards that you had, what did mean something to you, was
12 it financial rewards or was it?

13
14 Because I haven't really achieved anything. When I got the money, which was
15 quite a substantial amount I didn't even think, I didn't go out and buy anything
16 new. I was still working. And then one day when I was in my flat, it was tiny and
17 I thought, I could actually move and then it was quite a few months or more
18 down the line that it even crossed my mind that I could move. I didn't really go
19 mad. What were the rewards: that I could live on my own, and stay up all night
20 if I wanted to, writing and doing. I don't know, I suppose a sense of
21 independence. I think about it now, I didn't go shopping. Of course I bought
22 things when I needed them but I didn't do any of that stuff, I didn't go out and
23 buying big tellies or

24
25 So rather than material things it is more

26
27 Never, I would have fought harder to stay in if it had been I think.

28
29 Recognition is part of it?

30
31 Definitely, not just recognition, I suppose when you do music you can either do
32 it and just do it in bars or do it for yourself in a very low key way. There's, if
33 you want to have success, then you have to go through that whole thing but it's
34 not necessarily wanting to be a part of that thing, you just, I suppose yeah the
35 recognition, I suppose.

36
37 So in your kind of music, the rewards are very large, compared to certain types
38 of music, say classical music or jazz or whatever.

39
40 Yeah, I think there was a point where

41
42 I'm talking about mass audiences and a lot of press and media coverage.

43
44 Yeah but that's not the bit that I liked. I'm not just saying that to sound. I really
45 like it. I had things from like once when I was on Surprise, Surprise with Cilla
46 Black or something. I liked doing it because it was to take this little girl into the
47 studio because her father had cancer, so from that aspect it was nice doing it but
48 I did it and that was it. And then I was lying in bed, lying on the sofa under my
49 quilt, and then my brother phoned up and he said to me "Oh yeah I saw that
50 Surprise Surprise", "Oh really, was it good?", he said "Yeah, yeah it was good."
51 He said "You love it, don't you?" and I said "Pardon", I said "What?" and he
52 said "You love it don't you,?" I said "Love what?" and he said "All the attention,
53 you know." and he was really kind of, and I was like, I don't know what. I was
54 so upset I didn't speak to him for quite a while and I said "I don't know what
55 you are talking about." you know, "Surprise, Surprise is not the pinnacle of my
56 career, it might have gone out to quite a lot of people but it's not something that I
57 actually really wanted to do". And that was quite shocking and I think it just

1 doesn't mean that to me, it's not about that to me, it's never been about the
2 material. I don't know, I like it and I have realised that I like it enough, I like
3 music enough and I actually want to study it and when I gave up at that time I
4 actually contemplated going into music college or something if I could. There
5 were so many thoughts were going through my head.

6
7 What led you to give up at that time?

8
9 Because I didn't want to make my, I didn't give up, I didn't want to make my
10 second album within that same record company, and so I left and then it was
11 very hard to get another deal.

12
13 Was that because of the way the business was running, that company?

14
15 It was him and the way

16
17 All of that, OK. Any other effects of your work on your personal and social life,
18 what do think having a life in music, as you have had, how do you think that has
19 affected your family, boyfriends and such like? Other than what you have told
20 me, as you say, the friends that you have worked with in music.

21
22 The friends that, I have said had, now, because I have kind of just gone,
23 eliminated a lot of people from my

24
25 You have. Why?

26
27 When I got into music I had a bunch of friends that I really loved, like I said to
28 you everything was fine, I just did the music.

29
30 Kind of old friends?

31
32 Yes, they were and they were the kind of people that I wouldn't want new
33 friends, you know. So when I did the music it was straight back to them. So it
34 didn't make any differences in that way at all. Now. But music has always been
35 the first thing in my life, it has always been the most important thing and nothing
36 has come before it. What do you mean? I have always been quite, when I shared
37 flats and things everyone was always saying "Aren't you going out, it's Friday,
38 its Saturday" I would always be in my room, I wasn't really interested. I've
39 never been like that so, I don't know.

40
41 What happened about the eliminated friends, would you like to talk about that?

42
43 I've just found that recently I've realised, well it's just things that happen within
44 relationships and I've realised that a lot of the people that I really love and have
45 loved and thought of as friends, and this is absolutely fine, because of some of
46 the things that have happened within those relationships I realise that maybe, the
47 kind of, the way in which I see them as friends is not the same ideas that they
48 have. So its OK, you can like somebody in a certain way but it's not necessarily,
49 or they have got traits that you are either willing to put up with or you're not and
50 I just think I've known certain people for so long and if they are still coming at
51 you with the same old things, and its kind of an insult to your intelligence in a
52 way so I'd rather not have the hassle.

53
54 Yes, so you have changed and you re-evaluate a lot of those things in terms of
55 how you have moved on and if they haven't changed with you, those
56 friendships.

1 They don't have to change with me. It's just don't, look I have got, I see you, if I
2 say that you're my friend, you're my friend. I'm not going to be having any
3 agendas within that friendship. We're just friends, you know, and I wish you
4 well and I wish to see you progress, but you often find, well I often find, that it's
5 not the same for me. I think they want to see you down, and they want to see,
6 you know.

7

8 Do you think that the success and the attention that you have had has affected
9 your relationships?

10

11 I think people are aware of the fact that this, I think they are aware that there is a
12 certain potential and they can feel threatened by it, but not because of me.

13

14 Can you say what you mean, I'm not sure I understand you?

15

16 No, I'm not sure I understand me! It's just like constantly, I just feel that, I don't
17 know how to explain it because it has come from lots of different angles but I
18 just feel that sometimes that people don't wish me well, basically.

19

20 What gives you that feeling?

21

22 Just the way, just certain things, I can't, I don't want to sort of go into this.
23 Because, OK, what I feel could be completely wrong but is because I haven't
24 lost the ambition and I haven't lost, I haven't given up on my dream, a lot of
25 people as they get older do and I think there can be resentment because, you
26 know, I haven't started having cares and I haven't settled down and I still feel
27 that there is something out there for me and I just feel that people sometimes try
28 to, will try to take away or... I don't know.

29

30 Do people find it hard to understand that you are like that?

31

32 Also they know that the potential is there for me to realise those dreams and that
33 is a threat as well.

34

35 How does that affect it?

36

37 I think that they just don't really, they like you and they don't, I don't know,
38 because it makes them realise, I don't know, I don't know what it is a hundred
39 percent.

40

41 Do you think there is jealousy?

42

43 There can be, because I don't look at it as something, obviously I am not stupid,
44 I know that. I saw something on the Net the other day, I am always going into
45 the Royal Society of Science, because I am really interested in, I have no
46 knowledge of physics but I have that romantic ideal and I would love to be going
47 to lectures about the universe and stuff like that and I saw this thing...

48

49 The Royal Institution, they have lectures and things don't they?

50

51 And I saw this thing, it was on their home page, and it said genius without
52 education is like something, something, I can't remember, and I just thought,
53 because I didn't finish my education and I just feel like...

54

55 When did you leave school, 16, 17?

56

1 No, I sort of changed schools when I was 14 and then, or 14, 15 and then I had a
2 year out because I didn't want to go to the school that I was going to go to and
3 then I went to college for a while and then I didn't, so I haven't fully, because I
4 have got lots of things that I am capable of but I haven't developed

5

6 Formally, the formal stuff?

7

8 Yes, and I don't know why I went into that. I think I have a large potential and I
9 think a lot of people do. When they are around me, I think they do recognise it
10 and it brings out resentment.

11

12 So you are very threatening to people.

13

14 Because I don't think of it in that way but when things happen you do have to
15 start thinking about why.

16

17 So not only are you clever and sensitive but you are also black and a woman and
18 that is a devastating mix for some people, is that fair?

19

20 And also I am honest as well, I'm not saying I'm an angel, but you know.

21

22 There is an openness about you.

23

24 There is no agenda and I feel that, I have begun to realise that people feel like,
25 well are looking where the bits are, whereas you are ...

26

27 And you are very unconventional in that sense.

28

29 And confident and secure as well.

30

31 That's right, so deeply difficult for people to deal with?

32

33 Yes. A friend of mine, (name), once, when I was, I had isolated myself quite a
34 lot and I was writing and I made a decision that OK I was going to try and make
35 something happen and she would come round and try to distract me and stuff
36 like that

37

38 I get the feeling, just as a comment and that, that has been a pattern for you, this
39 kind of retreat on your own, sorry, anyway (name).

40

41 Yeah. She would come round and then it got to the point, we were walking past
42 a shop, this shoemaker and there was a pair of boots in the window and I said,
43 "Oh they're nice" but that was not the, I didn't feel like, "Oh I have to have
44 them", I just said "They're nice." Her father is quite rich, so she ran off and she
45 obviously got them made and she came round and she said "I've got those boots,
46 do you like them" and I said "Oh, they're lovely, they're really lovely on you."
47 and at that point she said "Don't you ever get jealous?" and she screamed and
48 then after that I cut her out of my life for a while. But we had really been best
49 friends and recently she did something very terrible to me and I have tried to
50 forgive her and she has tried to come back because I have always been a good
51 friend to her, a hundred percent and she has been in my life again. And I then I
52 just thought, "No I can't do this, because she never apologised for her bad
53 behaviour and she is capable of doing it again too because she is always looking
54 to be, you know, I want what you have got and I want to be seen to be as on the
55 same level as you", which I do see her as anyway but it is obviously something
56 within her. So like that, if she calls I don't want to know, and there's been quite

1 a few people that I've thought, this has just gone on for too long, I've got
2 nothing.

3
4 In a sense, that people find it very hard to understand you, very hard.

5
6 Well why. Because I'm, I mean I don't, I think I'm content and the thing I've
7 boiled down because even though with all those insecurities of feeling ugly, I
8 was always being loved and I always had unconditional love from my mother,
9 no matter what I did she was always there and I think I have realised that that is
10 the most important thing for a human being.

11
12 Is she alive?

13
14 Oh yeah, the most important thing for a human being because it doesn't matter
15 whether there is a divorce or, the stability comes from having familiarity.

16
17 What about your close relationships?

18
19 (boyfriend). I've had a pattern where people have lasted up to like a year and a
20 half and then I have not wanted to go any further. When I was younger it was
21 because probably maybe I was a bit bored, so slightly older I think it's because
22 they might want the commitment and I'm not prepared to commit to that extent.
23 So I thought it would be nicer to let them develop that with somebody else. I
24 have found that, prior to this relationship I had a four year relationship and I did
25 exactly, I tried to stay within it to prove to myself that I could, I did love him
26 and could commit and I could be a part of that. I didn't live with him and then in
27 the end obviously he wanted other things and I still wasn't ready for that

28
29 Children?

30
31 Marriage, I still wasn't ready for that and I wasn't sure if that was the right thing
32 or time and I said to myself, when I finished, that I am going to dedicate myself
33 now to music and not get involved with anybody, but somebody always comes
34 along, I can never be alone. I didn't think it was right to be that rigid, if
35 somebody came along and it actually worked.

36
37 Can I just ask whether those relationships have been generally with people in
38 music?

39
40 No. Sort of.

41
42 Because I know (boyfriend) is a musician.

43
44 (Former boyfriend), he was a brilliant at everything. He did a little bit of music
45 journalism but he did graphic design and he did DJ-ing.

46
47 So a creative person?

48
49 My boyfriend before that was a guitarist and looked a bit like Keith Richards
50 and I used to say that to everyone, because that's like my favourite hero.
51 Doesn't he look like Keith Richards and he said to me, "If you say that once
52 more we are finished." So I had to stop saying it.

53
54 Has it been important for you to be understood for your work, those partners?

55
56 Most definitely. Most of them, not most, they have or I wouldn't be in a
57 relationship. With (boyfriend) now, I felt like the thing I was desperately

1 hanging on to that individuality, like I am alone, I'm not part of a unit and he
2 kind of put up a bit more of a fight and just by, he's quite a wise soul and he tells
3 me, he says certain things, he says "Ring home", you know. So I have tried to be
4 less selfish and I have given in a little bit, not to the point of losing myself but he
5 has the same

6
7 How would that manifest itself that giving in?

8
9 I am accepting the fact that I am in a relationship and there is a possibility that it
10 might go on. Because before that, I am always like, I am here now but I won't be
11 for ever, right. I am expecting that I could spend my life with somebody but the
12 fact is, he is exactly like me because he has certain things that he wants to
13 achieve. That's not his main focus, so we can be in it and along side together.

14
15 And he is supportive of the things you want to pursue and the fact that you want
16 them?

17
18 Yeah, and he wants them anyway as well, so that's quite nice.

19
20 Do you have friends and interests outside music. I think you have answered me
21 already that you do other things?

22
23 I have got one friend, who, I met her when she did some work for me in music,
24 she is a stylist and she has been a very, very good friend and that is one person
25 I'll say is my friend. I always make sure I call her and she calls me, I don't see
26 her that often. The other people that I think are still my friends, that I don't see,
27 they are all musicians, they are all in music. I don't really. Most of the people I
28 know are creative and artistic.

29
30 Yes, is that because that's what draws them to you or you to them, you have that
31 in common?

32
33 Yes, I like my people. But sometimes they can be too bad. Yes, I think that's,
34 but I also like academic people as well, I love that because that's something that,
35 you know, I aspire to, so those are the people that I like.(Name), he was my
36 boyfriend before, he was like an encyclopaedia. He had studied history of art and
37 there wasn't a question you couldn't ask him that he wouldn't know. It was like
38 if you needed to know the meaning of any word in the dictionary he would know
39 it and I love that, but it was really good because when it came to music, there
40 were certain things he didn't know and I was studying a bit of classical piano,
41 and he once said, he tried to guess the century of the piece, and I said no, no its
42 this and he was really angry that he didn't know something.

43
44 But he didn't mind the fact that you knew?

45
46 No, but he introduced me to a lot of things, like architecture which was really
47 nice. Things that I love. I always used to feel like I have got lots of romantic
48 ideals, like archaeology and I love things like that and I think had I grown up
49 under different circumstances a lot of other things would have come to the fore,
50 but music. When I was born my mother wanted to call me Jan or some French
51 thing and then my dad announced when they were toasting the baby, no she is
52 going to be called (name) after (name), she is going to be a singer.

53
54 Oh really, you're named after (name)?

55
56 Yes. He said she is going to be a singer.

57

1 So he was into jazz and popular song, that kind of thing?

2

3 Yeah. I think he was more into (name of singer). And then he bought me the first
4 piano and he had my name embossed on it in gold and then he said, she's going
5 to be the next Winifred Atwell, so in a way he kind of, you know, like in where
6 they say if you kind of focus on what you want and maybe he set that into play.
7 Because I read this other thing about Anna Wintour, have you heard of her, she
8 said she was doing, they had to fill in a questionnaire at school and there was a
9 bit there that said what do you want to be when you grow up, and her father was
10 a journalist and he was in politics or something and when she said, "What shall I
11 put?", he said "Oh just put Editor of Vogue" and she did and she is. So I think
12 sometimes that you can probably start the ball rolling.

13

14 As far as the future, what would you like to achieve, what would please to do?

15

16 World domination!

17

18 World domination!

19

20 I would like to be

21

22 So your music everywhere, yes?

23

24 Everywhere, number one in thirty territories consecutively. Total vindication and
25 recognition.

26

27 And what about the future, what would you like to leave behind?

28

29 My music, I'd like to compose something really lovely outside of pop music
30 even. I'd also, there's another side of me that would just like to walk into a
31 convent and become a nun and just give it all up but I'm always, in my head
32 there's always two things, I'm always thinking I've got to do that or do that.

33

34 When's the other side, that walking away from it all, when does that show itself?

35

36 Every day.

37

38 Can you say how, how the two sides affect each other?

39

40 It's a battle isn't it because I'm quite a spiritual, in learning to believe in myself
41 and recondition myself in certain ways, it has led me to developing very strong
42 faith and in developing that faith there are things that come up where, well if you
43 are that way inclined and you do have this really strong belief, why do you need
44 these other things, fulfilment, why not just have that complete fulfilment from
45 your belief in God. It's becoming stronger, I went to see my old piano teacher,
46 she like a very old lady, she's from the Royal Academy and she's of Irish origin
47 and there's seven of them in the family, I hadn't seen her for a while, and we got
48 in contact and when she told me that one of her sisters was a nun, I was like, I
49 am always fascinated by that kind of stuff and I went to India, I spent some time
50 in an Ashram and it felt completely right.

51

52 So you have been on a kind of journey in that way?

53

54 Yeah.

55

56 Are you a Christian, what do you describe your spiritual beliefs? Sorry, it's a
57 terribly difficult question. Do you follow a particular church?

1
2 No I don't. I was christened Anglican but I don't. I don't know if I'm a
3 Christian because I don't know what the whole Christian thing entails but I
4 know that I have some Christian beliefs and I know that I am a very spiritual
5 person. I don't believe in the kind of segregation that religion brings so I don't
6 like to put myself under that banner of being Christian or

7
8 Being chosen or not, that kind of thing?

9
10 Yes, so I like to just keep it a personal thing.

11
12 Do those beliefs help you?

13
14 Oh yeah. They definitely give me a lot of strength because I don't, I don't feel
15 alone ever, that's why I think I find it easy to be on my own, because I never
16 feel alone, I know that sounds really like

17
18 No, not at all. Is the convent option, that side of things, moving away from it,
19 would that be something you would consider equally if you achieved everything
20 you wanted to achieve in music?

21
22 Sometimes now what I am seeing is that that might come at the end. It just
23 won't go away, it is in my mind's eye and I am torn but now sometimes I think
24 that that will be the end, I might just go in, if they will have me, if I can find the
25 right one in a hot country.

26
27 Because that's rather having a big effect on anything you might chose to do in
28 the rest of your life, family, people, partners and so on.

29
30 I know, but these are all the things, you know, that

31
32 That's something you're wrestling with?

33
34 Yes.

35
36 As you know, I work with musicians who are having difficulties in their work.
37 Is there anything you think from your own experience that I should know about
38 that would help me to understand and help them?

39
40 Can you explain that a little bit?

41
42 Yes, I mean some people, for instance, feel that others are unaware of the fact
43 that talent has got one element in having a life in music, success is something
44 different and obviously a lot of people who don't have the talent have the
45 success, or do have the talent don't have the success, you know from your own
46 experience. Self promotion is something else that and all that. Is there
47 anything we haven't talked about, you think would be... Obviously you have
48 mentioned a number of things already, like the politics and the whole, all those
49 beliefs that support the music industry and the affect that it has had on you
50 making your way in it. You talked about relationships with particular people. I
51 mean do you have people, do you have an agent or a manager?

52
53 I don't have anything. I gave it all up. There was one point where I just had these
54 things but they weren't doing anything for me. So I decided it was better for me
55 to be on my own and know that I had nothing and if I needed to do something, it
56 would have to be from my own effort rather than thinking I had these crutches
57 that weren't actually holding me up, they were just something that you could say

1 to people like, "Oh yeah I've got a manager", because it made you feel like you
2 were a part of it, but I didn't need that.

3
4 And did it help you having those crutches, did they hold you up or support you?
5

6 No because most of the time you make your own things start happening and then
7 they can be of more help. But for them to actually get it going, they can't really,
8 so I thought it was better to just be on my own and if and when. It has been a
9 really long journey, a really long winded journey but as I say, when I have
10 finished this bit, I will be totally free because I have got material, I will be able
11 to just go and if I want to, get on a plane and go and play in a club in America, I
12 can. You know it has been, that's held me back. If you're talking to people I
13 think, I'd say that they should learn to play an instrument definitely.

14
15 A couple of things. One is do you ever think that the supply is ever going to dry
16 up or is it something you have confidence in?
17

18 No, I have got confidence in it because I don't, like I said, I don't exhaust it.

19
20 It's replenishing itself.
21

22 Yeah, when I did my album, my brother said to me, which I didn't even know
23 that's how people saw it, he said to me, well he knows me in a different way, he
24 said "You've written about everything in your life up to now, what are you
25 going to write about next?" and I said, "I don't know." But other things come
26 into, that's what makes it difficult because if you are somebody that writes from
27 experience, you can't just write album after album like that. I mean you can, but
28 if you want it to be a proper piece of work then you need to wait until there is a
29 refill.
30

31 Yes. When you get stressed, wound up, as you have a lot, what helps you,
32 you've mentioned your beliefs, your spiritual side, any other things, more
33 mundane things that help you? Do you meditate, go to yoga, sport, anything
34 like that, relaxation?
35

36 I do meditation and yoga and I am learning more about meditation and I would
37 like to get more. I want to go onto a retreat but I haven't had the space to do it
38 yet but it is a silent retreat, a ten day thing. They teach you how to meditate
39 properly. Yes, that definitely helps.
40

41 Any other things?
42

43 I go to the gym, I love it at the gym, I love it in the sauna. What else?
44

45 Any other things, when you want to sort of chill or unwind?
46

47 No, I mean I don't drink, I don't smoke. I have taken drugs but I don't take
48 drugs. I used to do a lot, I haven't for about a year and a half, I haven't been
49 doing any voluntary work but I have always tried to do that and I have always
50 loved that side of my life as well.
51

52 What sort of things were you doing?
53

54 First of all I worked at the Lighthouse for the Aids thing and then I did Sane for
55 the mentally ill, and I loved that. That's my niche because of the psychological
56 aspect of it, you know and we had to go through a training and when I give my
57 time that is what I am always going to give my time to, I think that it is such a

1 taboo subject and the human mind, those people, just so many people out there,
2 searching and having lost a sense of clarity and if you can be of some assistance
3 to, you know they are just a lot of lost ... I'm not saying that I'm you know
4 completely ... but there are a lot of people that need, even just talking to.

5
6 And your music helps people too?

7
8 I like to think so. A girl told me that when her brother died of Aids, the last week
9 in his life he only listened to my album and there was one song in particular that
10 he listened to all the time and it was called (title) and it was very nice to hear
11 that. Because I wrote that song because one of my ex boyfriends was quite
12 damaged, because he had been to public school and he was half Egyptian, he had
13 lived in Amsterdam so he spoke Dutch and when they came and put him into
14 public school here and he had a really hard time and he used to get really beaten
15 and it left him really scarred and I remember just lying down one day and
16 looking at him and thought "God, you are really beautiful" and then I thought,
17 "What's it like to be beautiful?" and I scurried off to the bathroom and then I
18 wrote it. And all the sort of people that I knew, the people on heroin and stuff, it
19 was all about that, and how people don't see themselves in a certain way but you
20 can see it. And then two people who were heroin addicts asked me why I had
21 written that song and when I told them, it was exactly what they had picked up
22 on which was really satisfying and nice.

23
24 What about music in your own life, apart from your own music is it something
25 that has a part, other people's music?

26
27 Yes, I love it.

28
29 Do you listen to other people's music?

30
31 Yes, I listen to, not much, I go through phases. Sometimes I don't listen to
32 music, I cannot listen to it for like a year or something. But when I do I love
33 Stevie Wonder, I love Sly Stone. What else do I, Fiona Appleton, have you
34 heard of her, I love that album. I thought it is one of the best things and my
35 favourite album of all times is Tapestry by Carole King, so I always listen to
36 that. And the other day, I hadn't been singing very much, am I talking too much?

37
38 No, no.

39
40 I hadn't been singing very much and I thought to myself, you are practicing all
41 the time but say you had to go out and sing, you need to exercise your voice, so
42 I was singing and I had been going through one of my maybe little just woe is
43 me sessions and I put on Carole King and You've Got a Friend and I was
44 singing along to it and then it just went into another dimension because I heard it
45 for the first time, in a completely different way and it was almost like
46 communication like "when you are down and troubled ... call on me" and the
47 friend was. And it just seemed like, I was on my own and the room was dark as
48 well and it just felt really and I always loved that song to death but I never heard
49 it like that before, it just took on another, and it was a really good experience.

50
51 Any big areas that you think we haven't spoken about that occur to you?

52
53 I don't know, because I do just, I think my life is mainly about music. When I
54 went to India I tried to prove to myself that for once I never, I had always just
55 pursued music and I didn't know whether it was out of fear or just because that's
56 what I'd always done.

1 Out of fear, fear of what?
2
3 Not having anything to pursue, I suppose, or because that's all I'd ever...
4
5 Because we didn't quite follow up (singer) did we and her, that affect on you.
6
7 I don't know I couldn't even...
8
9 Were you kind of frightened into
10
11 No.
12
13 I didn't get that impression from what you said earlier, but were there
14 expectations on you from your parents to go into music, despite (singer).
15
16 No because my mother and father divorced. He left when I was three and they
17 divorced when I was five and then when I was about 14 he went back to Africa
18 so I didn't really see him...
19
20 Where was he from?
21
22 Ghana. My mother is from (country), his dad, my father, he died just before I
23 got my deal as well which was really sad. There was no, the only ... this is one
24 thing, I had always, I had had the piano and my mother was a bit I suppose
25 fraught because of all the break up and everything. I was a bit like, a bit
26 wayward in my own way, I was a really quiet, lovely child until I got into
27 comprehensive and then I just went way!! and so that's when I gave up playing
28 the piano, because my mum was always going on, you've stopped going, do
29 your piano!
30
31 When did you start, were you quite young?
32
33 Seven and it was when I was 11, she was always and it was like, no I don't want
34 to, leave me alone. I used to pretend I was going to lessons and I never was, and
35 I stopped practicing and then obviously, and then there was a point where I
36 didn't even. I went to a drama college, a college to do a drama course and I
37 hated it because I just hated it and then when we were doing ballet, we had to do
38 the theory in French and at school everyone always said I was good at French
39 but I hated doing it. And when they presented that in the concert and I just
40 thought "No I can't do it", so the piano. Then after that I just drifted for a while
41 and then there was a point where I was living with a friend, because I had left
42 home at 17, and then when I was about 18 my mum said "Look, if you don't
43 want to come back home", my sister is much older than me she had her own flat
44 in Hampstead, my mum said.
45
46 One sister?
47
48 One sister, one brother. Mum said "Go and live", "Your sister has said you can
49 go and live with her", so I didn't take it up straight away, but there was one
50 point, something just clicked and I think I must have thought, "I want to do
51 something" so I rang my sister and I said, "Oh Mummy said I could come and
52 stay with you". And she said "Yes, when do you want to come?" and I said "In
53 an hour." It was after like two years of hating my family and not seeing them
54 and so then I started then, you know, trying to think about how I could do music,
55 and you know, you make calls to record companies, no I think I had started
56 before that and then I had stopped, I can't actually remember because I
57 remember phoning from home, getting the book and looking up record

1 companies and saying, "I want to be a singer", and they'd say "Well sing into a
2 tape" and I thought, that can't be right. But when I went to live with my sister
3 the journey started in full. Aand there was a point, obviously I had been through
4 loads of different things but I think I have always been meant to play an
5 instrument and it has always been a deep yearning, but I have been too
6 distracted and not disciplined enough to do it. And (name) and I, my ex
7 boyfriend, we went to see the film, the one with that Geoffrey Davies, the one
8 about the piano player, the concert pianist, Shine that's it, we went to see Shine
9 and sat there and watched it and at some point, I don't know what happened but
10 I just burst out crying and I was crying quietly to myself and when we got out of
11 the cinema, we were in Mayfair and we were walking along and I was really
12 sobbing hysterically and (name) hadn't said a word. He was just really quiet and
13 baffled, but like I was nearly having a breakdown and he said after about ten
14 minutes, he said, "That really got to you, didn't it?", and it did. But I think that
15 even though I hadn't been going down such an intense classical line, it just kind
16 of brought up all these things and then it brought up a resentment towards my
17 mother because in her, I obviously felt that in her pressurising me that I had
18 given up something that I actually wanted to do. But then I resented her for not
19 making me do it at the same time, so I had to go through that for quite a while.
20 I am now.

21
22 You have worked through a lot of things on your own, did you ever think of
23 going for therapy? I am saying this as a therapist.

24
25 No.

26
27 And you have used quite a lot of self help books too.

28
29 Not loads and loads but there have been a few things. I read some of The Road
30 Less Travelled, I didn't read the whole thing, but I have just been introduced to
31 certain things and it has reaffirmed things that I have actually thought so it has
32 been really good in that way. I haven't, I have come to lots of conclusions and
33 then I have looked at something or seen something. (Boyfriend) is going to come
34 through.

35
36 I know, we have virtually finished.

37
38 I have looked at something or seen something and I have actually thought great
39 somebody else sees it that way as well so it is quite, you know.

Transcript 10 :

Robert

1 When people ask you to describe yourself as a musician, what do you say?

2

3 I usually say, musicians and myself as someone who, you know you always have
4 your certain insecurities, I was saying to someone else the other day that
5 musicians are usually, including myself, are usually very insecure in certain
6 ways and perhaps you feel not, you know, you want to be accepted as a
7 performer, as a musician, I am perhaps more sensitive or perhaps some more
8 open minded than others depending, so that's what I usually say if someone asks
9 me you know that, I say perhaps more open-minded, I have more experiences in
10 certain ways in life, more insecure in some ways, perhaps more secure in others.

11

12 Would you refer to yourself as a guitarist or a composer or just a musician, do
13 you use a particular word to?

14

15 Yeah, I use musician, for me musician is someone who performs, who plays
16 whatever instrument, whether it is a guitar or whatever, I mean of course I am a
17 guitarist, but musician for me encompasses everything, performing, teaching,
18 composing, anything to do with an to do with an instrument, so that's how I
19 prefer to call myself.

20

21 How do people react when you say you are a musician?

22

23 It depends who asks me really, but they usually react by saying, oh wow,
24 fantastic, I would love to be a musician or I would love to lead your life or
25 whatever, so that's the general thing but some people, if they have had some
26 musical experience before, they kind of say oh yes, that must be hard this that
27 and the other but usually they are intrigued and interested in knowing how a
28 musician lives or is or feels.

29

30 The ones who sort of gasp and say, wow, how wonderful, what is that you that
31 they are thinking about when they react like that?

32

33 I think that they are thinking, the first thing is no nine to five! [laughs]

34

35 Is that one of the sort of wow pluses for you?

36

37 No, because I've never had a nine to five so I don't know but that doesn't really
38 enter, because you know if you are doing a lot of work you do your nine to five
39 plus another five as well, so being a musician doesn't mean you're necessarily
40 not working, but anyway it's

41

42 I am going to ask you about your working patterns a bit later on.

43

44 Yes, but anyway, so saying what people find attractive about it in a sense, from
45 what they tell me is OK the nine to five, then I think there's a kind of bohemian,
46 are you OK there, the bohemian kind of aspect to it, you know us going up on a
47 stage, which for us is normal but they see going up onto a stage, like its kind of
48 one of those things it must be wonderful and spectacular and whatever exciting,
49 I don't know what people see in that sense. So they see someone who is
50 bohemian, who doesn't have to work nine to five, who doesn't have to get up in
51 the morning, all those things that in a dream world you wouldn't want to do,
52 what you don't have to do really.

53

54 When they know you, do you think they see you in that particular way as being a
55 musician?

56

1 Yes, I think so, yes. I mean even if they know me, I mean I think people have a
2 very defined idea of what a musician is, generally speaking and regardless of
3 whether they are friends or not, they still even, even people I have know for
4 years, still think Oh yeah, he's the guy who kind of gets up at 12 has a few
5 spliffs or whatever and plays the guitar a bit, you know, of course they forget I
6 have got two kids, you have got to live, you have got to pay your rent, all the rest
7 of it. But I mean it's strange how people have that idea that, it's a conversation
8 that comes up of course a lot, because I'm a musician, but even though they have
9 known you for years and years, and people who don't obviously, but they still
10 kind of have that very structured mentality of what a musician is.

11
12 And about the other side of it you mentioned earlier, oh, standing up on stage
13 and this kind of thing.

14
15 Yes, even so, I mean again they still have that kind of mentality, it's strange, I
16 don't understand it obviously because I'm on the other side, but.

17
18 Do you think having those views about musicians and having those views about
19 you as a musician affects the way they treat you?

20
21 You mean friends or people that I don't know, who just come to me?

22
23 Well, let's take both really, what about friends?

24
25 Friends, no because now they have got to know me, I think they know me in a
26 sense, but they still have, I mean we can go out for drinks and all the rest of it
27 and it's just another friend, but

28
29 Are your friends inside music or do you have friends that aren't musicians too?

30
31 I'd say about fifty-fifty, I'd have to think, but no they are not mostly musicians
32 or mostly others, I have a good mix in other words. I think it's important as well.

33
34 Why?

35
36 Because I think its important to learn from everything. If you stick within your
37 own group, then OK you can learn from different styles of music and all the rest
38 of it, but if you speak to, you have friends who are physicists, you have friends
39 who are bricklayers, you have friends who are, you have to learn from
40 everything in life in my opinion, so

41
42 Do you think that learning comes out in the music?

43
44 Yes, again it depends on your personality, if you have that type of personality, if
45 you don't then it's just going to hit you like a brick wall and it's going to bounce
46 off, so it depends if you are receptive in that way or not.

47
48 And you think you are?

49
50 Yes, I know I am, I know I am. The way I learn is from meeting people like
51 yourself or having a student who is a bricklayer, or who is a NASA engineer
52 which I have had as well, so you learn from everything, and it doesn't
53 necessarily need to be music related for you to learn something that you can
54 incorporate into your music It's all about, I think you learn from life in general
55 and those experiences, you can then hopefully put into your music, in my case
56 which is what I do in my work.

1 What about the non-musical friends?

2

3 Well the non-musical friends are those ones I have just been talking about.

4

5 So you are also including people who come learn to play, who you are teaching?

6

7 Yes, people who I teach as well, but OK some of them are friends some of them
8 are teachers but a lot of the people who are friends also are from, what I was
9 saying, from NASA or whatever so those are the kind of non-musical ones as it
10 were, but the musical ones are certainly professional musicians, again you learn
11 a lot from, I mean, the thing that perhaps you can relate to more is the fact that
12 you know you are talking about a gig or something or a piece you have just
13 written or an exercise or whatever, of course you relate to them on those terms
14 so you won't have that kind of conversation with someone who is a doctor or
15 whatever.

16

17 Does that mean you feel you are more better understood by those people because
18 of it?

19

20 No. It's more of a work thing. If you mean better understood within your music,
21 then within

22

23 Yes, I do.

24

25 Not, I've got to be careful what I say here, not within my music but within
26 talking about certain exercises if you like, I mean I'm taking it not as in music as
27 in a composition or as a piece or whatever but just as, oh, you could be talking if
28 you were, for example if you were studying psychology or as a psychologist,
29 you could talk about certain terminology that you were studying on your thesis
30 with whoever then they will know exactly what you are talking about, whereas
31

32

33 So you have got a common language?

34

35 Yes, you have a common language, it doesn't mean to say that you understand
36 them better or worse or whatever, it just means that you can speak to them about
37 something that you have studied.

38

39 That you know they will know about?

40

41 Exactly, whereas with a person who is non-musical in that sense or who is not a
42 musician, a professional musician, they will listen to it in a different way, so it is
43 just an interpretation in that sense, that a non musical person will, non musician,
44 sorry would listen to a composition, or example and say, "Oh I like that". And
45 it's just as valid as my friend, Joe or whoever it is, the musician, saying "Oh
46 yeah, that's really nice because of such and such and such and such", They are
47 both equally valid, its just different points of view.

48

49 OK. Turning to the things that make it easier and harder, in particularly your
50 writing because that's mainly what I'm focused on here, can you tell me which
51 things you think make it easier for you to write music? Things that help, any
52 kinds of things.

53

54 Things that help me write? Well it's interesting, I suppose throughout the years,
55 periods of composing and writing music, you kind of think. I suppose it might
56 be the same as most people say, again referring back to the way life experiences
57 affect me in particular: it's either periods of extreme strain or stress if you like,

1 either in a relationship or whether you are single, I am talking about years ago.
2 But you know, for example, your girlfriend left you or whatever or you had an
3 argument with her, or you know a friend was run over or whatever, you know
4 something dramatic, it usually has an effect on my state of mind and
5
6 How does that affect the music then?
7
8 I don't know what it does but it makes, perhaps it is the suffering as it were,
9 maybe its because I'm half Spanish, all the rest of it and I grew up there, there's
10 that kind of suffering pain thing which you have to have, you know and
11
12 And you think that helps?
13
14 It certainly helps, I don't know if it helps but it certainly makes something
15 happen.
16
17 I wonder what that is?
18
19 I don't know but it's something to do with a kind of extreme situations that make
20 you really, kind of, wake up your senses in a sense, in a way and
21
22 Is it the sense of feeling more alive at the times when you are suffering, when
23 you are in pain?
24
25 Perhaps, yes, it could be.
26
27 Have you found that during those periods you have done more compositions, or
28 what you have done is different in some way?
29
30 It is certainly different, I think, in a sense that when you are going through the
31 dark blues era, not in music, I mean in feeling
32
33 In life.
34
35 In life, a lot of the things are either really, really kind of dramatic and tense and
36 sad, in compositions I mean, or at the same time they could be really wildly
37 exciting and happy but there is no sort of middle ground, just extremes.
38
39 So you are not necessarily writing sad music when you are feeling sad, or angry
40 when you are angry and so on but there is a relationship in some way.
41
42 And equally in periods of my life when I have been extremely happy, things
43 flow as well. I think for a musician, or certainly for me anyway, I think if you
44 have a routine, it's just kind of stereotyped rubbish in a sense, but it works for
45 me. I think when you are getting stuck into a routine where you have to do
46 certain things because when you get older certain things in life you just have to
47 do. And I think those things are the things, in my case, get you down and things
48 that you really don't care about. You know like whether, the establishment, in a
49 sense where you have to go and do this or you have to do your whatever, you
50 have to sign a piece of paper, you have got to go there, you have got to do this,
51 you are tied down in that sense. And I think that's one of the things that really
52 affects my stability in that sense is I prefer to have nothing, it's a bit being kind
53 of, not revolutionary, or a rebel or whatever but just not having to respond to
54 anyone, wanting to do exactly what you want.
55
56 So freedom to do and the space to do what you want to do helps?
57

1 Absolutely, yes.

2

3 Just going back to this question of pattern, routine and so on, do you have a
4 pattern routine in the way that you work, or is that something that you resist as
5 well and find unhelpful?

6

7 No, I do have a pattern, at least when I can, but I think you have to be incredibly
8 disciplined as well at the same time, it's a bit of a kind of a paradox in a sense
9 because even though you have, you want absolute freedom, you have to have a
10 routine in a sense but it has to be your own routine on your own terms.

11

12 Have you developed a routine that you have evolved to suit you?

13

14 Yeah, unfortunately, because I have got two young kids, it is very difficult at the
15 moment, but otherwise, I mean

16

17 So you are going through one of these big life changing periods at the moment?

18

19 But routine otherwise would be between say, ideally. What I used to do for
20 example, and what my ideal situation as a musician would be, for composing
21 and for practicing and all the rest of it, would be to get up at you know, 10, 11
22 whenever you get up, grab your breakfast and at the same time you have
23 breakfast, grab your guitar. And then so while you are having your breakfast,
24 you might have the TV on or whatever but you are just chilling out a bit. So you
25 start just warming up while you have your tea or toast or whatever it is and just
26 warming up your fingers, no noise, no interference, no worries, nothing in fact...

27

28 No phone, no post.

29

30 No nothing, no post. Just you, your guitar and your cup of tea or whatever it is.
31 You kind of veg on the sofa or on the chair or whatever it is, just warming up for
32 a couple of hours. Well maybe not for a couple of hours, maybe for an hour. You
33 get a nice, you go and have a nice hot shower, sort yourself out, again no
34 problems, then you sit down for practice.

35

36 So you have a place as well as a time where you like to work.

37

38 Yes.

39

40 What about your composing, then how does it work with that?

41

42 So, what would happen is, after you have sorted yourself out as it were, after
43 your morning thing

44

45 So you have loosened up

46

47 Loosened up, you sit down after you have showered and dressed and the rest of
48 it, then comes your work. So you'd sit down, have a disciplined kind of one to
49 three or whatever it is.

50

51 Are you working at the keyboard, guitar, computer?

52

53 No guitar, guitar. I mean the guitar is the one. The keyboard, because I am not a
54 keyboard player, the computer sometimes can be an excuse for doing nothing
55 [laughs], and I love computers, but you have to be careful with that, depending
56 on what you want to do. Composing, for example, the computer I have used a lot
57 and some things are really useful but again you have to be really sure of what

1 you are doing and really measure your time. If not, the amount of rubbish there
2 is on computers you can get, you can go off on a tangent very quickly, so it is
3 very difficult with that. Anyway, so you sit down one to three for example, then
4 have a late lunch, which is not a problem for me. Then, you know, kind of hop
5 around the house a bit, then another couple of hours and by the time that you
6 have warmed up doing all your exercise, run over your repertoire, then it is the
7 time for me to start composing, if you think of it in that way. Again as I was
8 saying before, you could be walking down the street or driving or whatever it is
9 and something comes into your brain but that is as a result of everything you
10 have done before. But if you are forcing yourself to compose in a way, which I
11 don't particularly like doing, but it is good to set yourself certain goals, even if
12 nothing comes out, something, you will have some - it might be even one chord
13 or something or one very short phrase, but some

14
15 What sort of goal would you have?

16
17 I don't have goals in that sort of sense for composing, because if you set yourself
18 a goal you have already put yourself under pressure and for me that is not the
19 way that the best things are going to come out, I feel, usually, anyway. Having
20 said that, actually I remember the last time I did a series of compositions, I had a
21 deadline to record a CD

22
23 I was going to ask you about those.

24
25 So, when the shit hits the fan it does happen actually.

26
27 So what effect does having a deadline have on you?

28
29 In composing you mean? Well again, even though I just said I don't like to be
30 put under pressure in that sense, as a general thing, putting a deadline on, which
31 I have had done several times, will really make me work at it.

32
33 Is it easier or difficult for you to get a piece or whatever it is finished at a
34 particular time, for a particular time?

35
36 I don't think it is difficult to get it finished for a particular time but the problem
37 that many composers may have, is that by doing that you kind of feel, "Oh I
38 could have done it much better if I had left it", but then again I think that is an
39 excuse that a lot of musicians and composers have. Say "Oh I could have done,
40 well", maybe you couldn't in fact, and maybe a year later you would still be
41 working on the same piece. In a sense I think it is good to have deadlines to
42 actually stop you going on and on and on and not getting anywhere at all.

43
44 So you find you can tinker around with it and not necessarily have much effect
45 on improving it?

46
47 Yes, I think that is a big problem that we all have as well. So in a sense the
48 deadlines in that way are good, but mean I try not to force myself to

49
50 Do, if you do not have an external deadline you wouldn't give yourself your
51 own?

52
53 Well, funnily enough I am at that point right at the moment again, and I have to
54 give myself a deadline because otherwise you know I keep saying to myself
55 "Oh, I have got to do this", and it never happens in a sense. In a way it does but
56 its kind of up here {points to head}.

57

1 In your head.

2

3 Yes, but you never actually get to write it down or record it or whatever because
4 you think, "Oh I'll do that next week", or whatever, and something crops up
5 and, so even though it's there, it's not actually produced physically, as it were
6 and so by having a deadline it all sort of spurts out in one go.

7

8 So it clarifies and focuses you?

9

10 Yes. So I have got one for the end of May actually, so that will happen, it has
11 got to happen. I think it is the best way in the end, because you will look back
12 on it and of course you will criticise it and say "Oh I could have done this, I
13 could have done", but actually

14

15 Do you always criticise it, or are there times when you think you know you are
16 really finished with a piece?

17

18 Well, actually maybe criticise is not the right word, and finish a piece?

19

20 It's as good as you can get it, or it's good enough, let's put it that way.

21

22 If it wasn't good enough I wouldn't put it out. I mean, I think you have to be a
23 bit of a kind of harsh critic in a certain sense.

24

25 So it could be better, it could be improved?

26

27 Some yes, some no, I mean, it depends. There is certainly, I mean there are
28 pieces that you think I would do it differently now. I would put this in there, that
29 in there or whatever.

30

31 Has that affected, does that occur at different stages in the process, in other
32 words, obviously we're talking about you creating the piece of music but
33 presumably it also happens later on when it is being played or recorded or
34 whatever, in your experience?

35

36 You mean wanting to change it?

37

38 Yes.

39

40 Yes, but again it does depend on the piece. I mean there are some pieces that I
41 would actually say "Well no, I am quite happy with them as they are," you
42 know. You have to be really convinced and it is rare that you get that. For me
43 that means that you have made a really good piece and having said that, usually
44 when you feel that, most people tend to agree and in fact through experience of
45 my particular genre of playing and composing everyone has agreed the same
46 track.

47

48 When you write a piece then, who would you play it to, show it to?

49

50 First or in general?

51

52 In general. When you say people agree I am wondering which people you are
53 talking about.

54

55 I mean, anyone from a professional critic, to my friends, to my wife to anyone
56 really.

57

1 When something is in process as it were, being written and worked out, is there
2 anyone in particular or a number of people that you would play it through to, let
3 them look at it, hear it for their comments?

4
5 Yeah.

6
7 Or is it generally when it is finished?

8
9 Usually when it is finished, but I mean obviously the people who are nearest to
10 me physically, living with me, my wife and all the rest of it, they will hear it and
11 say "Oh yeah, I like this, I like that", but what I usually do though

12
13 How much attention do you pay to those sort of comments?

14
15 Well, I pay a lot of attention to it, because I think it is important, because she is
16 not from a musical background anyway. And I think it is very important to hear
17 what they have to say, and more often than not people are right.

18
19 So you are prepared to listen and change?

20
21 Absolutely yes. I think you have to listen to absolutely every single different
22 point of view and then make up your own mind as to whether you want to
23 change it or not. You might say, actually they are right but damn it, I want it like
24 this, but you know it is very important to, equally I am prepared to change it, but
25 it is important to

26
27 But your own judgement is the final judgement primarily?

28
29 Yes, it has to be because it is my own. But having said that, mostly when I do
30 listen to people's opinion, I do change it a little bit because I think they are right
31 in something and it's getting those kind of say five, ten, fifteen, twenty people,
32 whoever it is, mixing up all of their opinions and making something in between.
33 Again, it's what I said right at the beginning. In a sense performing as a
34 musician and composing in a way is about pleasing other people as well. Of
35 course it is about pleasing myself, because I love playing music and composing
36 but it is about also performance and I love performing as well and it's about
37 pleasing your audience too.

38
39 So communicating to an audience is very important?

40
41 Absolutely. It's the most important thing I think in any style of music, you
42 know if you can't communicate with your music then, you're not doing

43
44 Do you have a sense of who your audience is when you are writing, who you are
45 writing for?

46
47 No, it's nobody in particular, I mean I write for myself, but I just hope that the
48 audience enjoy it. And they do, but I mean, I don't, how can I say this, I don't
49 write my music in a certain way for people, unless there's a commission but I
50 write for myself in the hope that they like it. And as we just said before, if I
51 play it to some people first, not if, but they give me their opinion and if there is
52 something that's valid and I think is worth changing, then I will change. I don't
53 write it for people, I write it for myself and with luck they enjoy it.

54
55 How do you feel when people enjoy your music, have you had the experience of
56 people yes, being there when people are listening to your music, you're playing
57 it or people are playing it?

1

2 I love it. I come to life as soon as I step on stage. Like last weekend, we had
3 about a thousand one hundred people in the place, you step on stage and you
4 know it is instant, it is instant gratification for the twenty-five years or whatever
5 it is you have been doing it before, so that is great. Can I just say it's a bit of an
6 ego thing in a sense but I am not that, there are huge egos in all sorts of things
7 but in a sense it is not really that.

8

9 Being pleased by people that are enjoying your music.

10

11 It's just happy that you have done a good job basically. And I think its one of the
12 nicest ways to be rewarded is by people liking what you do, I think it's fantastic.

13

14 If you listen to people within and outside music and their comments on your
15 pieces, how do you feel about the critics, the press, media?

16

17 Well, I mean I think if I were in a situation like you know, Potter and Beckham
18 or whatever it is, a huge superstar, I would be really pissed off, because there is
19 a lot of rubbish. But thankfully as I am not in that situation. The critics, well I
20 think, you know, you have to think of course you not going to please everyone.
21 Not only that, you know some critics are going to be better than others the same
22 as some musicians are better than other musicians.

23

24 Better informed?

25

26 Yes. So to be honest with you, I think it is very important to listen and to read
27 all your critics, you know, even if you don't particularly like it sometimes, but I
28 think it is very difficult

29

30 How does it affect you if you get criticisms that you don't like?

31

32 Well I think you have to make sure that you are dealing with someone who is
33 professional or at least sensible. I think that is the same in any job I think,
34 because if someone comes along who is just being an idiot for being an idiot
35 there is no point even listening to it or reading it because it is just ..

36

37 Ill-informed?

38

39 Ill-informed, yes. I think it is the same in everything, if someone tries to write an
40 article about psychology who has never studied anything and then it looks
41 complete rubbish, again say and what's the point? Just chuck it in the bin, and so
42 it's the same kind of idea. But because music is, everyone can listen to music,
43 because they think, well we know about music, but. So you have to be careful,
44 but having said that, I do read all of them, as many as I can and I take it on the
45 chin as it were. I think you need to hear the worst, you need to hear the best and
46 you have to make sure that you learn from all of them. You know, if someone
47 slates you for whatever it is, you have got to think, well why is he doing this,
48 you know. If you don't get to the root of that, maybe it is because he is just an
49 idiot or maybe because in fact he is an idiot but he has got a point, you know. So
50 you have to be, or the guy is very professional or was very professional or
51 whatever and actually, you know they really do know what they are talking
52 about, and they are right on this, this or this or they are wrong, wrong, or you
53 know. You have just got to balance it up and you have got to listen to absolutely
54 every opinion, and you know think of it within your music and, you know, if
55 necessary maybe not change it but at least take it on board and accept it.

56

57 How important is it to you to leave a body of compositions behind?

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You mean after I pass away?

Yes, when you pass away.

Touch wood, how important is it? It's not a goal as such of mine. I mean when I started performing, or playing or composing it is not kind of, I'm trying to think back actually, but I don't think it was a goal to leave something behind.

Is it now?

Well, I'm just trying to think back over the question, that's why I was hesitating. What I did remember though, when I made my first recording was that I wanted to, it was like in a sense that was a goal to say "Right I want to have this recorded just so that in future someone can at least say, you know", so in that sense yeah. I mean it's not now in a way, it would be nice for my kids and all the rest of it, but it's not kind of the main reason for me to compose or to record whatever. It's not because I want something left from before, but I think any writer or artist or composer or whatever would love to have their work there in 100, 200, 300 or for eternity or whatever. So it is an important part but not something you necessarily do because of that, well in fact it's not that at all. Maybe the first time, when you are a lot younger, you think "Oh I want something there, so that later" but it's not something that really enters after.

How about public recognition?

You mean fame or?

Fame, yes.

Well I am not particularly bothered about a claim or fame in that sense. I mean thankfully at this moment in time, things are getting better for me in my small world, I mean not as in, but things are getting better for me in that sense and it is nice. People say, "Oh yeah that guy, I know, oh yeah that guitarist, or concert" or whatever, so it is very important to be, I think, to be recognised in your own field. Again I think that's the same in every field. You know, if you want to be a distinguished lecturer or a distinguished this or that, I think it is very important as a personal achievement in a sense, and it is something to be proud of I think. I am not looking for fame but just recognition of the fact that hey he's done a good job, you know. Of course there are better, there are worse, you know at least you've got a professional level and you do a good job.

Amongst the composers that I am talking to, some and you are among them, are playing your own compositions, primarily compositions for you and others to play. Does that make a difference to you whether you are recognised for what you have written or what you are playing, you as a player as against you as a composer?

The thing is with me it is kind of all in one I think, so I think it is recognised as both. I mean again. you will always get the kind of technique freaks or whatever you want to call them who will go like, "Oh he is missing that" or "Oh God, look at that!" but that's a different thing. But I think for the general public in a sense it is just all in one. So, for me, the kind of the happiest thing for me in a sense would be to be recognised as both a good guitarist, but nice tunes or whatever, you know, so it's a complete thing in a sense.

1 Yes. Coming back to, we were talking a while ago about things that made it
2 easier for you, we were talking about pattern and a number of different. Any
3 other things?

4
5 What was that?

6
7 Pattern that kind of stuff, any other things that haven't come up yet you would
8 include that make it easier for you to compose?

9
10 Yes, it's having space. I mean your own space. As you can see from here. I
11 mean it's just impossible with kids I mean. But it's kind of a very selfish thing in
12 a way at the same time. I mean you know, you can love your kids to bits and you
13 know you can love your wife to bits or whatever and you want to be with them
14 all day. And whenever I travel in fact, the last few years, I have always taken
15 them. I mean she's two and she has been to the Persian Gulf, she has been to
16 Belgium, she has been to, she's been all over the world because I love them so
17 much that I want them to go with me, you know. So I take them with me. But at
18 the same time you want to be completely away from that, if you see what I
19 mean. It's very bizarre because, and also you know I find a place that I
20 occasionally I go to and I go there and after a couple of hours, "Oh God, I need
21 to speak to the kids", so its kind of a weird thing but really space.

22
23 It seems to be a mixture of psychological space and empty space as well as
24 physical space.

25
26 Yes, absolutely. It is definitely psychological because you need your own just,
27 you know. For example, a lot of people say to me, "Go and compose". And I
28 say well you can't just go and compose. You need to sit down, even if it's just
29 without your instrument, and you are just sat down there in complete silence
30 with the lights out, just sat there with your eyes closed. I mean, I know it sounds
31 to people who are not musicians or composers, that sounds kind of you know
32 this guy, he just wants to have a sleep. It's not that, you know. It is really having
33 that kind of complete, that's why I usually stay up until 4.00 in the morning or
34 whatever because that is the only time when I am not bothered by noise, light,
35 you know, dustbin guys outside or whatever, it's just nothing, it is just you and
36 space.

37
38 It won't surprise you, you are not the only composer I have spoken to who likes
39 working during the night for that very reason. It helps you to have that peace and
40 calm.

41
42 Again, a lot of people think it is just doing, you know you play your guitar, la,
43 la, la, la, it's not, you need absolute concentration. And by that I mean no
44 disturbance. It really is a rigid thing you know, and if you don't have that. It is
45 difficult to get that as well, you have to be very disciplined to be able to sit down
46 and do that on a regular basis. I'm not saying that I do do that on a regular basis,
47 because it is difficult, but ideally that is the thing you need. And if you have a
48 room that you can always go to, that is completely dead silent, that is away from
49 everything, that will encourage you to be able to compose, to be able to perform,
50 to be able to relax to get out of whatever stress you have etc, I mean it's the
51 same with everything I suppose, everyone needs their own space.

52
53 So time and space and keeping the world at bay for that period so that you can
54 concentrate on what you are doing. Anything else?

55
56 Well, in an ideal world financial freedom.

57

1 If you had that kind of financial freedom what would it help you to do that you
2 can't do at the moment without that sort of freedom?

3
4 Well, the only thing that financial freedom would bring would be obviously less
5 stress, which is a huge amount of, a huge thing, but also just having if I could,
6 that room I was just describing, at the end of my garden so that I could be near to
7 my family.

8
9 So an improved set up in which to work?

10
11 Absolutely, which would be everything, I mean so that I would have my room
12 down the garden near to my family when I need them, or when they need me but
13 you can just walk into your own world and "Bang, that is it", you know close the
14 door. You are soundproofed, that's it, you are in your own world and here we
15 go. I think also helping composing is having your own home, as it were. I think
16 that is very important to a lot of musicians is to have your own place, not rented
17 but actually bought and have your own secure house. I think that is very
18 important to musicians. Then you go out and travel but you always come back to
19 your safe kind of

20
21 So having a base, a secure base.

22
23 Yes it's like a safe secure base, where you have all your, I don't have anything at
24 the moment, but you have your souvenirs, your photos, your whatever, your
25 music.

26
27 And it's that familiarity too then that's important.

28
29 Yes, absolutely. I mean there is nothing worse than going to a hotel night after
30 night, I mean years ago, well even recently but not so much, and going from
31 hotel to hotel to hotel for three months on end, and people say that must be
32 fantastic. Well actually no, its pretty awful.

33
34 So being on the road travelling makes it harder too, you're away from the
35 familiar and that's kind of

36
37 In a sense yes, well actually no, yes it does yes. I mean at the same time you
38 really enjoy it because it is exciting and you have got the buzz you know, and
39 you are going from one place to the another, "Hey wow look at that!", you're in
40 Egypt and such and such you know

41
42 And that feeds in to the writing?

43
44 Yes, of course, that all feeds in, but at the same time you have that "Oh God, I
45 wish I was at home, I wish I could get to my house and just veg or whatever."
46 Yes, so there is that.

47
48 OK. Any other things that make it easier or harder, we have been talking about
49 the downside or the upside as well?

50
51 Making it easier. It just really goes down to having your own set up is easier,
52 once you have that it is easy.

53
54 And being able to manage the pressures in the way in the way that.

55
56 Yes, I can cope with pressures. Again it's having so much work to be able to do
57 it, but once you have that, coping with pressures in that sense and deadlines.

1 Deadlines and those sort of pressures, pressures of finances and having to pay
2 the bills and having to, you know, get the kids fed and all the rest of it. It really
3 is that kind of having your office as it were.
4

5 All right. Moving on then to the impact of being a composer on the rest of life,
6 OK. In view of what you have been saying and everything, how do you think it
7 has affected your personal and social life?
8

9 Well I have always been very outwardly going anyway, an extrovert and to use a
10 Spanish word, *simpatico*, so to be honest I have never had a problem in that
11 sense. I am trying to think over a period of 25 years for example, yes I have
12 always been pretty extrovert, even the family have said I am extrovert but I
13 mean, I am just trying to think here, but of course I have never been anything but
14 being a musician.
15

16 So being that kind of person, I'm not quite clear what you are saying, sorry.
17

18 Well because you asked me if being a composer stroke musician has helped me
19 find more friends, be more sociable.
20

21 Ah right.
22

23 Was that the question?
24

25 It was more sort of, it's more general than that really, what effect being a
26 composer has had on your personal social life?
27

28 On my personal social, as I say I don't know, because I have done nothing else I
29 don't know.
30

31 OK. If you were a bank manager or something else I was wondering if it would
32 be different for you, but having that particular way of life that particular
33 occupation.
34

35 It is difficult for me to say obviously, because I haven't done it, but as I say I am
36 pretty much open. Before I was a professional musician as a youngster I was still
37 very open, I was still much the same as I am now really to be honest. I mean it's
38 just that I think you know, obviously being a composer musician and the more
39 that you get kind of known, well I suppose it is easier in a sense to have a social
40 life because you are always meeting people from different places you know but
41

42 Perhaps the effect of being known, what about the effect of being known on your
43 personal and social life?
44

45 Well it's getting to a point which is kind of weird with me, even though it is not
46 kind of international stardom or the rest of it by a long way. But certainly within
47 your own field I am getting more known and it is kind of weird that sometimes
48 you meet people and they say, "Oh I know you", and I always find that a bit
49 weird.
50

51 How do you react when they say that, how do you feel?
52

53 Oh, I say, "I am pleased to meet you", what else can I do, but it is getting a bit
54 more and more like that and it is kind of weird, especially even on a local area
55 basis, actually even more than slightly more local. But you do meet people, they
56 come up to you and they say, "Hi, I went to your gig", "Oh right, great" and it is
57 nice.

1
2 And what do you think the effect of that is on you and the way you behave?
3
4 It is work really. It is not your life, it is work in that sense. I think that is.
5
6 So you separate it off.
7
8 Yes, I think that is very much a perception of, you know. It is a very different
9 thing that people see you at work, as it were, and of course that is a very
10 important part of my life, but I am totally different at home in a sense.
11
12 So in a sense you have a kind of, let's call it, professional role you can call it
13 something else, but when you are recognised
14
15 You can call it a double personality, which is in a sense
16
17 Is it very different?
18
19 No, it's not, it's just that they don't see me walking round in my underwear.
20
21 OK. Sure.
22
23 What I mean to say is that, no I am pretty much the same on stage or whatever
24 and again I am outwardly going, but the thing is it's the way they see you, not
25 the way you see them, they see you as this kind of thing
26
27 So the way they see you will have an effect on the way they treat you and that
28 will have an impact on
29
30 No, the way I treat them is exactly the same. But what I mean to say is that
31 because they see you in a different way, of you know, "Oh, you're this guy
32 who", and the stage is kind of wonderful, and all this kind of thing as we were
33 saying before. Then if they see you changing nappies or whatever at home or
34 washing the dishes, they think, "Oh, that's not the guy", or you haven't combed
35 your hair, "That's not the guy I saw", it's kind of weird, and I have had that a lot
36 and it is kind of weird.
37
38 How do you respond to it? Can you give me an example, one example of that?
39
40 Well basically what I just said. Just a kind long, long time ago an ex-girlfriend,
41 sort of saying things like, that she very much like wanted to be with the person
42 who was on stage.
43
44 Right, so it would draw certain people towards you?
45
46 That's right, a lot of people. Now I am getting older and not so handsome, no I
47 was joking! But before when I was in my late teens or early twenties, this was in
48 Spain with a group we had there, there would be a queue of girls after theatre.
49
50 So there would be groupies and stuff, your entourage as it was.
51
52 Yes, why do these people do it, they don't know me, they don't know anything
53 about me at all?
54
55 And how did that thought that they don't know you and they are reacting to this
56 person on stage that they imagine they know, how did that affect the way you
57 were towards them?

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Well, I'm a fairly straight forward guy and decent guy so I'm not going to be rude to them or whatever, I was very nice to them, but it was not really what we were looking for in fact.

OK, so you couldn't behave in a more authentically you kind of way?

Oh I do yeah, but, well after a gig you are joking, this that and the other. But it's just that I am not really interested in that. As a youngster OK, go for this and that, and its nice good fun and all the rest of it. But it's not really what I am looking for. It's going back to what I was saying before about what makes life easier is having your security. It is that what you are looking for generally as a musician. It is not, you know, as a youngster you have fun and all the rest of it but it is not really what you are looking for. I think for me certainly.

Any other things, ways it has affected your personal and social life as a composer? I mean, you were telling me earlier, for instance, I am just wondering, you were telling me earlier that you like to be up at night, has this, do these kind of patterns affected life at home? Has it been the cause of difficulties or does it not have any effect on family life?

Well I have been doing it for 20 years almost, or however long it is, more than that probably, 20 years, but of course it can cause difficulties especially when you have kids, but you have to give and take.

How do you manage that?

With difficulty! No, you manage, it's just part of the way it is. When you get into a relationship you know more or less what's involved, so it just the way it goes, it's not sometimes ideal. I mean sometimes I think perhaps I would be better in a 9 to 5 job.

What would be the kind of thing that would make you think that, what sort of thing happening would provoke that thought?

Just your own self. You go through different phases where you get tired with what you are doing as well. I mean being a musician doesn't mean to say that you are always in love with your music.

Do you find that those moments of self doubt become more acute when you have got family?

Not necessarily no, I don't think so. I think it is more to do with the way that you feel. I mean there's so many pressures from different places these days, you just don't know which one is responsible. But no I think you just go through phases anyway, it might be a cyclical thing or whatever, I don't know. But you just go through periods where really you just think, "Oh fuck this I don't want to play the guitar, I don't want to compose or whatever I'd prefer to be a bus driver" or whatever. No disrespect to bus drivers, but just do something where you don't have to use your brain, you don't have to, forget it. Because again another perception people have of musicians, as I'm saying, is that it's not something that requires much thinking, well actually it's a hell of a lot of thinking, you mean a lot of, for example with students and composing as well, you sit

Do they think it's intuitive or it's lacking in effort, I wonder what you think they mean when they say it doesn't require thinking?

1 Yeah they just think it's kind of, "Oh this is nice, you just sit down and have a
2 beer and play the guitar" and that's how the music comes, but it's not. You do
3 actually physically sweat even though you're not moving, you know, and it's an
4 enormous amount of brain power used as well. Well I mean according to how
5 much you have got of course, but in other words it is a very difficult, it's not
6 very difficult, it's a very

7
8 Challenging?

9
10 Yes, challenging and energy using process, I mean composing is not just sitting
11 down doing la, la, la, la, la. I am speaking, I know you know that, but anyway.
12 But that can happen for no reason at all.

13
14 When you get under stress, OK, first of all what kind of thing is likely to stress
15 you out and secondly, how do you deal with it, what has kind of worked for
16 you?

17
18 Well, in the last few days, giving up smoking is pretty stressful.

19
20 Oh yes.

21
22 So, but what kind of things stress me, again it's kind of weird because I'm the
23 type of person who takes things in his stride who is pretty laid back.

24
25 Any particular difficulties which emerge out of the work say, that stress you?

26
27 Perhaps things that stress me in work is arriving at a kind of gig that is really not
28 well prepared, you know. The lighting is crap, the sound is crap, the theatre or
29 venue manager is a real pain in the arse to deal with, that stresses you out,. You
30 still do your job but that stresses you out. And I mean you might even still do
31 your job better than any other day, but it stresses you out. It's just that you could
32 do without it.

33
34 So how do you cope with it when you get stressed out by all that stuff?

35
36 Well, I think that's where, what they call in Spanish, [inaud], which means
37 planks of wood, in other words experience. I think that's what experience does,
38 is you are kind of prepared to play in any situation. You just get on with it.
39 There gets a point in your life where you start thinking, I could really do without
40 this. Just, what's the point of being like that, just let me get on with my work
41 kind of thing but unfortunately, that's the way it is. A lot of gigs are really just a
42 pain.

43
44 In that kind of situation would you actually confront them, would you have an
45 argument, would you just stay silent and carry on, how do you?

46
47 No I don't stay silent and carry on. It depends what it is. If the PA is crap and the
48 lighting is crap and it is general disorganisation then I will tell them. And I will
49 say, "Look guys we need to get this straight now, I mean we have got a sound
50 check at 4.00, the gig is at such and such, lets get this sorted this out." It has
51 happened quite a lot, invariably it does and they usually don't get it completely
52 sorted, but they at least try and do something. So no you can't just say nothing.

53
54 And does this affect the performance and your work?

55
56 No, I mean obviously you go on stage, well I presume it will, for example last
57 week this happened actually. One of the musicians appeared two hours before

1 the gig and the person disappeared out the country until two hours before. So not
2 good, so seriously stressed out, and we went on stage and the audience loved it.
3 But I know deep down that it wasn't the best performance we have ever done
4 and that was partly because of that, but actually more than anything because of
5 lack of rehearsal, because she wasn't in this country.

6
7 Is the relationship with people you play with, do they loom large in the stress
8 area?

9
10 Thankfully every single musician, apart from this one we had last week are
11 fantastic. And the reason I am with them is because after years and years of
12 playing with certain people, these guys are not only totally reliable which is the
13 first and most important thing, is they are good friends, nice people. We can go
14 out and have a laugh, you know, and all the rest of it.

15
16 Do you think it is important to get on with people that you play with or is it
17 enough for them to be musically what you are looking for?

18
19 I think it is important if you want to progress, I don't think it is essential. I mean,
20 I played with a guy not so long ago, he was a brilliant musician, a bit of a pain,
21 but the gig was great. But you know, that is a work relationship, it really is. But
22 if I wanted to create a project with him I don't know how easy it would be. You
23 know if I wanted an on-going project with him maybe it wouldn't be
24 worthwhile.

25
26 Because?

27
28 Because he is just so much hard work on a personal basis, but I don't know, we
29 would have to see. Maybe the kind of quality of music as it were would be
30 worthwhile having, despite him being a total pain. I don't know with him
31 particularly. I try and find people who are good musicians anyway who I can get
32 on with, which is the best way to progress I think. I mean I don't think, again
33 regardless of whatever field you are in, if you are working under stress in that
34 kind of situation, no-one is really creative, no-one is going to progress because
35 they just don't want to. They are more interested in knifing you in the back than
36 going forward, I think the same goes

37
38 Have you had that experience then?

39
40 Oh, God yeah! For years.

41
42 How did you cope then, when you were being, you know, knifed? What was
43 your reaction?

44
45 Well also the thing, being on tour for years and years, this was years ago, with
46 people like that and also cohabiting in the same house with them for years on
47 end. You end up in quite a bad way to be honest, you don't realise until it's
48 almost too late.

49
50 How did that affect you?

51
52 Well you get really seriously, you doubt about yourself. It's the same with
53 everyone, if you are getting knocked down by someone all the time,
54 psychologically you are going to feel it in the end, however strong you are. But
55 you know, I'm the kind of person who likes to try anyway, see myself from
56 outside and say "Well, hang on, what is going on here?", try and work things
57 out.

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So that's the way that you cope really, by standing back from the situation.

Yes, you have to.

And what?

Well, think, "Hang on, what's this guy telling me about? What's he doing? Is he behaving like this, why is he behaving like this?, Is it because he is really"

Trying to understand?

Yes, and then you make up your own conclusions, and hopefully you have got the right judgement, which is part of the reason I came to this country in many ways.

To avoid all that?

Partly, we had reached the end of the road really, the whole group,

And has it been better?

Yes, it has and certainly musically because in Spain things in those days: now it is changing, but in those days you only played with the type of musician of your same genre. So you wouldn't really get much experience out of that, which is, because you know people say, its got to be like that you learn, but I mean.

It is very tradition-bound?

Yes, whereas coming here, meeting so many different types of musicians from so many different fields actually opens your ears a lot more. And in fact I have learnt more about that here than I have in my entire upbringing there, so yeah I think it is very important, and again

So feeling in the right cultural sort of ambience has been important, somebody that is cultured?

Yes, I wasn't really looking for it, it just happened and again not only the musical thing, when living here for example, the first few years I was here, meeting different people from so many different cultures and going to dinner with them and learning about their certain ways of life, and you know, going to a Chinese person's house and taking your shoes off. When you go to Spain it is the opposite for example, where if you go to Spain you are the guest and it means that you do anything you like in that house, you do what you want. Whereas, for example, in the Chinese culture in a sense you adhere to their culture and that, I was saying this to someone else the other day, that has kind of marked me in a sense that, as a youngster I used to think "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah", and then you can meet another culture there is so much to learn out there, it was kind of like a knock on the head to open up your brain slightly.

Have you found that playing with musicians from different musical cultures has affected you in this kind of way? Can you say some more about that?

Yeah, yeah, yes I mean, also what I was saying before about the cultures reflects my music as well, but with musicians, yeah, of course. I mean, playing with Chinese pipa players, which is like a guitar, a looped guitar. Playing something like that. Playing again with a flautist, with bass players with guitarists from all

1 different things, balalaika players, all sorts of different stuff, of course you learn,
2 you learn different scales and different ways of interpreting, different rhythms
3 and with that you learn all the culture that comes with it, if you look into it of
4 course. But I mean I listen to tango and piazzola, and whatever, even though it is
5 not my field, but there is so much you can learn from that.

6
7 Does it influence your own writing?

8
9 Yes, absolutely, yes.

10
11 Enlarged your vocabulary, that sort of thing?

12
13 Yes definitely. And that is the challenging thing from my point of view, is
14 because in my particular field of music, you have very strict rhythms, and very
15 strict kind of limits in a sense, that is the interesting thing is how to progress and
16 how to make something melodically and rhythmically interesting within your
17 limit. And of course if you listen to other types of culture, music and all the rest
18 of it, how to incorporate that, but at the same time not losing the identity of what
19 you are using is extremely difficult but it's a challenge. You know people say
20 sometimes, "Oh, I don't know how you can always keep this constrained to
21 twelve beats or whatever it is" and I say "Well actually, I don't feel constrained
22 at all". That's the biggest challenge there is, if you have a blank piece of paper,
23 in a sense where you don't have to go anywhere, I find that is kind of more
24 difficult in a sense.

25
26 So having that structure really helps you?

27
28 It is fantastic. But at the same time it is much more difficult, for me anyway, I
29 mean, you have to find something interesting, you have to find a way to make
30 that musically interesting rhythmically without at the same time losing its
31 identity.

32
33 Is there any particular place that you start, do you start with a rhythmic pattern,
34 do you start with a melody or melodic idea or what, or does that vary too?

35
36 It varies really. It usually starts with a melody to be honest, but a very rhythmic
37 melody and because of what I was saying before, you have certain identities you
38 have to adhere to. It is just so difficult to make something sound interesting and
39 also at the same time trying to achieve simplicity. You know, every composer
40 thinks in a different way. I don't mean simplicity in a sense of technique or
41 whatever, it's just simplicity in a way of composing and

42
43 Clarity.

44
45 Yes clarity and listening, yes. It might be very, extremely difficult to play but it
46 might be so simple in the melody and that's what is so difficult to achieve, I
47 think, for a great composer, regardless of whatever field they come from is that
48 simplicity and space.

49
50 What about technically, have the technical demands of your music changed
51 since you have been writing?

52
53 Well they change a bit because you give yourself more difficult things to do,
54 which is stupid really but there you go. No, I mean you always want to, Well
55 you don't always want to

56
57 You are challenging yourself?

1
2 Yes. Yes you are challenging yourself, yes, but again there is a cyclical thing as
3 well because when you are 17 to 25 you think, "Right I am going to show the
4 world, you know, I am going to change it, I'm going to do this that and the
5 other" and you know, you play scales faster than anyone else, you just want to
6 go out there and beat everyone up, on your guitar or whatever. And then you
7 kind of reach your 30s and you start thinking, "Oh hang on, that's not really
8 important", I mean it's important that you have done it, but it's not important
9 now.

10
11 What's important now then, or then rather?

12
13 Then, was proving yourself to be, you know, you are going out hunting, you have
14 got three rabbits instead of, it's that thing. It's that basic instinct thing where you
15 have got to show that you are the best and you know, I can play faster than him.
16 I can duff him or whatever, it's that kind of stupid thing but its true. It's that
17 natural instinct thing and you know as youngsters, you don't realise that at the
18 time.

19
20 How does this manifest itself in composition, I can see how it manifests itself in
21 being on stage and technique?

22
23 You see that's the thing. I think you lose out in composition because you,

24
25 OK. So it wouldn't be that you are writing the fastest, most complex, most er

26
27 Well you probably are, but to be honest you listen back to it years later and
28 think, oh, it is a lot of cack, But I think you are misled, you mislead yourself
29 through technique when you are a youngster, and that is why it is very rare, I
30 think, to find really good composers who are very young. You know, I mean
31 OK, Mozart, but I mean generally speaking in my field in my generation.

32
33 What changes then, once you get older?

34
35 I think experience.

36
37 And what does it do to you?

38
39 I think it calms you down. I think you start to see things in a different way.

40
41 OK.

42
43 You know, I think certain things like, I am a believer in there is no substitute for
44 experience, whether that is in your music or in your life. And I think that's what
45 affects your composing as in life as well. So I think when you reach your, well
46 I'm now in my mid 30s you think, "Oh hang on, all this showing off, you need to
47 be able to do it, but not constantly", and so I think that experience is absolutely
48 essential, And I think that you, going back to what I was saying about
49 composing, is that you see certain values in certain ways, and certain things are
50 more important now, like actually putting across a simple melody, putting
51 across something that means something, at least to yourself,. And you know, less
52 flowers and more substance, you know.

53
54 Just winding up that question about impact of being a composer on the rest of
55 your life. What about on your family life, your wider family? Are you from a
56 musical family, were you brought up in a musical world? I'm trying to think

1 where it came from and whether you saw yourself, when you were younger,
2 becoming, following the path that you have.

3

4 No, it's kind of weird, I'm just weird. My father, is not, well he is musical, he
5 used to listen to music, he has got loads of records and loves music but I mean
6 he is not someone who has ever played an instrument for a start, you know, he
7 likes the odd kind of singing in the shower type thing but he is not musically
8 trained. Having said that, he has got very good rhythm and he has got a good ear.
9 My mother the same, she was always into music and dance and stuff, an
10 aficionado, as an amateur listening so she used to sing, she could do all the
11 rhythm and the dance and stuff, I mean just as a hobby, not as a career. None of
12 my brothers and sisters, well they all played music, you know as kids, picked up
13 a guitar and played three chords or whatever, so yeah there's no obvious reason
14 where that has come from.

15

16 When did you become, see that as your career?

17

18 I think as a career, around 17, 16 or 17, you start to think, Oh this might be what
19 I have found.

20

21 Did it arise from your own listening and things, or had you started to play by
22 then?

23

24 Oh no, I was playing, I mean I started when I was 9.

25

26 Was that because you were attracted to the music or whatever?

27

28 To be honest I can't remember. I mean I remember my first guitar teacher and
29 all the rest of it. He had very good psychology.

30

31 So you had lessons?

32

33 Yes when I was 9 I remember the story of when this guy came to my house, this
34 was 1975, and in Spain, and Franco was still in power, not for much longer. But
35 anyway, the guitar teacher was then a kind of a gypsy in his 70s, I mean in 1975
36 a gypsy in the 70s playing the guitar was pretty poor, but he would come to my
37 house every week or it might be two, I can't remember how many times a week
38 he came to my house. But anyway he would come to my house and he saw that
39 obviously at the age of 9 I was more interested in playing with my friends than
40 playing guitar but he obviously thought I had some talent. So I remember at
41 Christmas he came and he said "OK now you play one hour guitar", and he came
42 with a present, and it was a, what they call a *footballene*, which is one of those
43 football things that you [gesticulating]

44

45 Table football?

46

47 Table football, yes. And for a guy of that age, and those times in Spain was an
48 absolute fortune, and he bought one for me and he said "Right. One hour of that,
49 one hour of guitar and something", it was very good psychology for a kid, and it
50 worked and so that's how I started. Then throughout my teens I picked up an
51 electric guitar and used to blow up amplifiers as often as I could. And then I got
52 into Black Sabbath and that phase, and back out again and thought "Hang on,
53 what's all this?". I love heavy metal, and rock and pop and everything and
54 techno and whatever you want, but it wasn't really my thing, in a sense of
55 performing. So I picked up the Spanish guitar again, "Oh, I remember this" and
56 off it went. So that was how it roughly happened.

57

1 Are there things you still like to be doing? You know, you have got a long way
2 ahead of you, what would you like to achieve?

3
4 In my music?

5
6 In your writing particularly.

7
8 In my writing, yeah, something that I have thought about doing for a long time,
9 and again that goes back to the needing space, but something I would love to do
10 is a flamenco guitar concerto or symphony or something like that.

11
12 A very large scale work.

13
14 It would be very interesting and also an extreme challenge. Because I am not
15 really classically trained. I mean I had some from a Russian teacher when I was
16 a kid, and actually it was fantastic, but only as a kid. But, I hope to think I have
17 a very good ear and so by using computers, if you use them in the right way, you
18 can actually orchestrate. I mean of course it would have to be properly written
19 out eventually, but the stuff that I have done so far, in the smaller scale, with
20 arrangements that I have done for different instruments, has worked. So that's
21 something that I would love to do, but time will tell.

22
23 I have just got one more question really, but just mopping up on the question of
24 the stresses, a lot of musicians that I speak to use some kind of yoga, meditation,
25 relaxation and that sort of thing to counteract not only the performance pressures
26 but other life pressures too. Is there anything, any sport or anything like that that
27 you do?

28
29 To be honest I think the thing that relieves my pressure by just sitting down in a
30 quiet room and playing. That's the kind of thing where you are at one with your
31 guitar as it were, or your instrument, that takes away pressure. Yes, things like
32 yoga, meditation I have never been that much into, yeah travelling abroad and
33 just going on holiday seems to cure, but

34
35 Any hobbies or interests outside music that are important to you?

36
37 Oh God, I suppose so yeah, I mean things like Formula One. I love cars, I am
38 crazy about cars.

39
40 Because you said you had friends in music and outside music, is that important
41 to you?

42
43 I don't know if it's important to me but it happens that way. I don't go looking
44 for one or the other, it just happens. Hobbies, yeah, definitely Formula One,
45 rugby, travelling, languages, I love languages. Travelling, food, yeah, lots of
46 things that I am interested in.

47
48 Do you cook as well as eat?

49
50 Yes, I am the only one who cooks, but anyway. Yes lots of things, learning
51 basically, just learning about life, I love getting new experiences and things like
52 that. I am not so much of a great reader in a sense. I will read books about music
53 and all the rest of it but I am not a great reader. One of my sisters for example
54 will sit down and read three or four books at the same time and I think, "Oh
55 God", I'm not that kind of person, I'm much more perhaps, I don't know, just
56 different. I learn in a different way. I can learn more from speaking to you or
57 travelling abroad or travelling anywhere for that matter than sitting down in a

1 pub and listening to some story of some guy. Of course I have to read a bit, but I
2 am not a great reader.

3
4 As you know, I am a psychologist working in music. Is there anything that you
5 think I ought to know that you have learned yourself that you think would be
6 useful to pass on to me in my work, that would help me in my work with
7 musicians? Or anything that I should know that you think is important that you
8 have found, it could be anything at all.

9
10 I am trying to think of anything that would help you in your work. I think it is
11 important portraying, I mean I know this again, a lot of people would say this, it
12 might be a cliché, but portraying how musicians are understood by other people
13 I think is an important thing. I think in a sense what we are going back to before
14 is, I think in a sense we are misunderstood as a general kind of thing, I think it is
15 important to put that across, or to try and put that across to people from a non-
16 music, non professional music background.

17
18 Can you say more about that misunderstanding?

19
20 It's a kind of, it's almost a dirty word sometimes I experience with people saying
21 you are a musician.

22
23 Yes, that's what I was trying to get at at the beginning really.

24
25 That's the kind of thing that irritates me.

26
27 What is dirty about the word, can you kind of unpack it a bit?

28
29 I'm trying, it's difficult. For example, just simple things like insurance. You're a
30 musician, Oh God! OK.

31
32 So that means?

33
34 It's a negative term. It just means that you're going to have an accident, you're
35 unreliable, you don't shave.

36
37 You're an artistic type so you're

38
39 You're unreliable basically.

40
41 You are eccentric?

42
43 Perhaps, not that I, I don't know if I am but yes, their portrayal is you're
44 eccentric perhaps. I don't really care if they think that anyway but I think,
45 because eccentric could be positive as well.

46
47 Yes, absolutely. Could give you licence!

48
49 Yes. I think the unreliability in the negative part of saying you are a musician is
50 definitely bad news.

51
52 So financially it could affect you, in terms of insurance and stuff. Anything
53 else, misunderstood?

54
55 Misunderstood. I'm just trying to think who and, I think also certainly the way
56 you are treated from people who are not in a musical background as well.

57

1 Like?
2
3 Well, like for example someone who might phone up off the street or whatever
4 and says can you do a concert, or can you commission a piece and I will give
5 you a free meal, which I have had.
6
7 How would you describe that, appalling treatment?
8
9 Bloody rude. If I had them in front of me I'd
10
11 Lack of respect.
12
13 Exactly. Lack of respect. It is lack of respect and just negativity.
14
15 And also lack of status really, that you are not worth being paid properly.
16
17 Absolutely. Again you can flip it and say OK, you do get paid a lot sometimes. I
18 mean there are of course two sides of it. The financial aspect is absolutely
19 ridiculous where some people say, ah well, I mean, I wouldn't phone someone
20 up and say, look, you can get a free pint and you can have a meal at my place,
21 you know, but will you actually come and do your thesis for me. Well hang on,
22 if someone phones you up you would say, what a bloody, and that you get a lot.
23
24 So being undervalued?
25
26 You get that a lot. Thankfully it is happening a bit less now, but it did happen a
27 lot.
28
29 How do you react to it when it happens?
30
31 Well you just, you build yourself up and say, "Look I'm sorry, but I can cook for
32 myself and I have got my own food, and you know, bye, thanks".
33
34 And when they say can you come and do it for a pint of beer or something, do
35 you say no?
36
37 Absolutely!
38
39 Would you say any more than that though?
40
41 Yeah, I would say "Look", I wouldn't be rude to them because I don't think
42 there is any point in being angry back at people if they are ignorant for some
43 reason or another. I am not going to be angry back to them. I mean they need to
44 know why, if they don't know they need to know why. So I would say to them,
45 "Look I am sure that you know if you run your own business you are not going
46 to expect something for nothing, so I'm certainly not going to do it either." I am
47 not going to be rude to them, because I don't think you will gain anything by it
48 anyway. If you try to tell them why you are saying no, then hopefully they will
49 learn next time not to do it, which they probably don't, but anyway. Because I
50 think there's a type of person, but you get that in everything, but
51
52 So that's very hurtful, that lack of respect?
53
54 Well it is hurtful, but I mean with things like that you just think, "Oh God!" It's
55 just kind of, you get used to it after a while, you think oh, it doesn't hit you
56 anywhere, because, the first few times it does, because you think, "What the

1 hell", but when you get used to it and you think "Oh, not another one". Like
2 that chap who has just phoned, but anyway

3
4 So any other lack of understanding of musicians?

5
6 Erm. I am trying to think. I mean, if you kind of prompt me I will think of
7 something, but I am just trying to think.

8
9 I mean one thing that people have mentioned to me occasionally is about
10 promotion, that it is one thing being able to play, being able to write but another
11 thing being able to get the work and knowing how to do that.

12
13 God yes. It is a big problem.

14
15 Recognising that it has to be down to you to do it.

16
17 Yes, well.

18
19 Has that been a one of the things?

20
21 It's a huge issue, even now. I think it always is unless you're a big star, the
22 promotion aspect. And I think, you know, it is kind of getting so much into a
23 business world these kind of days that you have to have a product and a
24 marketable product, which is sad in a way but

25
26 So do you see your work as a marketable product? What is your product?

27
28 You have to play their game in a sense, these days, if you want to work. You
29 can't be that kind of traditional long-haired gypsy guy who lives under the
30 bridge and, even though if you are lucky you will, but for the majority of us I
31 think you have to have something that, I hate to say this, that you can sell, you
32 have to have a product. I am sounding like a manager more than a musician, but
33 that is the experience I have had so far in the last few years, is that I approach an
34 agent or approach a promoter or approach a record company and they say "How
35 do we sell you?", that's the first thing they say.

36
37 So you have to learn how to present yourself? Do you have an agent and a
38 manager?

39
40 Yes, they don't say I want to listen to your music, they say "How can I sell
41 you?" That's the way that the music business has gone, which is diabolical. But I
42 have a couple of agents who are not fantastically brilliant and right at the
43 moment I am in negotiation with a company as a manager and also a new agent.

44
45 Because we haven't talked about recording. How important is recording your,
46 you know, apart from performing, we talked about that, but having your
47 compositions on CD?

48
49 Yes, it is very important. I mean, as I was saying before it's not that I have a
50 goal to, that when I pass away I want something left, which is nice anyway but...

51
52 Is the CD the product or is the product the gig, the performance, whatever, the
53 concert?

54
55 For them the product means first something they can sell, in other words
56 something tangible in a sense that, a CD for example. I am talking about them as
57 in agents, promoters, managers etc, and then also an even wider marketable

1 product is having the CD backed up by the tour of the show, where you have
2 everything set up, so it is one whole big plastic thing, wrapped in plastic.
3
4 Wrapped around you really.
5
6 Or whoever it is, but in this case me.
7
8 You are in a sense the product aren't you?
9
10 In this sense at the moment, yes, me personally I am, but they want it wrapped
11 up in plastic and they can sell it with a price tag on. Then they can do business
12 and get a lot of money.
13
14 So you have to develop a sense of your place in the market or what you are,
15 against stepping outside yourself.
16
17 Yes, you have to know very clearly.
18
19 How have you negotiated that, within yourself, how have you travelled that
20 road?
21
22 Well, to be honest, I have always been fairly clear in that sense who I am or
23 what I am within my field, because it is kind of a stereotypical thing, the music I
24 play anyway. It is quite easy to define even though within my field I am not a
25 traditional kind of person and this has been the problem for me, is convincing
26 them of what exactly I am within that and the problem there is presenting
27 something that is still identifiable from their point of view, as flamenco in this
28 case, but something that is also, I don't know what words to use!
29
30 Unique, individualistic?
31
32 Yes, exactly, unique, individualistic, progressive, everything in a sense that what
33 I have studied before is not. I am not refusing
34
35 Coming from a tradition, being of a tradition but offering something different.
36
37 Different, exactly, but without disrespecting what came before. I love what came
38 before but it's just that I am not from that generation, so why should I have to do
39 that. But of course that is the problem they have with identifying you.
40
41 So establishing a musical identity in the marketplace is what this is about?
42
43 Yeah, and they are now identifying it as kind of the world music thing. So what
44 they are saying now is keeping it a kind of modern traditional, if you see what I
45 mean. It is all rubbish really, you know.
46
47 So something that you have had to create and be part of in order to get your
48 work out there?
49
50 Yeah, in a sense that I have been like that in my music but it is just convincing
51 them of what I am, so that is the way I compose and I play anyway, it's just
52 making sure that they know where I am within that and it is kind of having to
53 convince them.
54
55 So having to see yourself as a product, or whatever you want to call it, a
56 commodity.
57

1 I mean I am fairly, well I'm not business minded, but I am clear minded in the
2 sense that if I can, you know some people say, "Oh you should do a hit". Well I
3 say, "I would love to do a hit, if I could sell one song and then do the rest of my
4 life what I want, fantastic". I mean compose all of that stuff, but I am open to
5 people saying, oh, you know, if a company comes up to me and says "Oh, we
6 want to do a commercial pop flamenco thing", I will do it. You know, where do
7 I sign? So I am quite open in that sense.

8
9 So that is I suppose is an upside of having a presence in the marketplace, people
10 come to you because they know that you are there. So is that one of the reasons
11 why you are willing to go along with it?

12
13 Yes. And in fact I have got something, I am not allowed by the record company
14 to say, but I have got a session coming up in London in the next few weeks with
15 a big pop star which is great, and hopefully that will open more doors for me as
16 well.

17
18 So the whole business side is something that. So where a musician is is not
19 understood very well.

20
21 Correct.

22
23 So it's a problem to be dealt with. Any other things I should be aware of?

24
25 Yes, I just think that being misunderstood and undervalued basically, perhaps
26 even by some of our own societies in a sense, musical societies or whatever, like
27 The Musicians' Union, or whatever, you speak to people there, I mean I don't
28 want to slam them but to be honest with you they are hopeless.

29
30 You can, yeah!

31
32 I don't want to slam them, but they are hopeless!

33
34 In what way particularly?

35
36 Well in every way you want. I am sure they are nice people and all the rest of it
37 and I am sure there are some of them that are professional, but you phone up for
38 advice and they kind of say, Uh, and they don't know where to. They just say
39 "Why don't you phone up PRS or why don't you do just for example legal or?".
40 I don't think people, and I think it's not only music these days as well, people
41 are not prepared professionally whether it is to give psychological advice, you
42 know counselling or whatever or legal advice or how to follow your career in a
43 certain way. I don't think they are professionally prepared to give that advice
44 and I think that is what we need a lot more of in the music business, is stuff like
45 that, real professionals, not people who, "Oh, don't worry, sit down and have a
46 cup of tea", it's not that.

47
48 Yes I can see that. Because we talked about, what we haven't actually said,
49 although it is implied obviously throughout, is that a musician like yourself you
50 are not employed by anybody, you have the insecurities of all that and you have
51 to create your own work and without that support there, professional support, it
52 makes it that much more

53
54 More difficult, absolutely. In that sense that's why you have to discover your
55 own self and discover your own ways and go up and down and that is perhaps
56 where the inspiration as you say, comes from for composing but it would be nice

1 to have some more support, for everything and I mean also from the government
2 in a sense, or from the country, whichever one it is, you know.

3
4 In the form of what?

5
6 In the form of more subsidies, investing more money in the music business, I
7 don't mean pop, but to create these kind of professional places to train people,
8 the whole thing. I think music is as important as maths and English at school for
9 example. I think it is disgusting that people come out of school, certainly in this
10 country well in a lot of countries in fact, they come out of school and they have
11 played the recorder for a couple of hours and that's it. I mean that's disgusting.
12 As a musician, because I have done English and maths and I have done all the
13 rest of it as well but you know that it makes you think in a different way and the
14 amount of students and people who come to me in their 30s and 40s and say, I
15 never played at school, do you think it can do it, and they get on with it and it is
16 a revelation to them and their life just suddenly opens up, and they think,
17 "Wow." And they are not looking to play professionally, they just want to enjoy
18 something. It's great. I've got people from all ages who just get that enjoyment
19 and that's the thing that really pisses me off, is that there is none of that
20 generally speaking in the schools, there is no investment, there is no nurturing of
21 that way of thinking, of that mind.

22
23 Yes, I agree completely on that, and that's one of the things that you are doing
24 with your music, isn't it, providing that enrichment, for yourself and a lot of
25 other people?

26
27 Absolutely I mean the thing that I, apart from composing and performing, the
28 thing that I most enjoy is actually teaching because I think I am fortunate enough
29 to have had my lifestyle, not lifestyle but my music, so I like to give that across
30 to other people and I think that is essential to get that across. That's a problem
31 with a lot of musicians as well, is that they don't like teaching or they don't like
32 putting things across. It's strange but every musician is different. I know a lot of
33 people who love music or love their own music or their own style of music and
34 they absolutely tremble when they go up on stage, you know, they just hate
35 performing.

36
37 We haven't mentioned performance anxieties and stuff like that. Do you suffer
38 from that, nerves on stage?

39
40 Not at all. No, I mean, at first certainly when you are a kid and the first few gigs
41 you do go uh, uh, uh and then you get up on stage and you get through it. No, I
42 think with performing I don't get nervous. I think what you do do is ten minutes
43 before the gig, you want to get on, because you want to get on and do it, but I
44 don't get nervous.

45
46 So it is more excitement and anticipation and is a good thing really?

47
48 Absolutely, it's a good thing. Yeah. I am not a person who gets nervous for
49 going on stage, in fact I love it. My first step on the stage and that is it, I come
50 alive, it's my home in a sense. It's a bit like that identifying thing you were
51 saying about having your space, that's definitely my space and it's not about
52 control in a sense, oh yeah I control and all the rest of it. It's not that, it's just
53 that's the thing that you have worked towards and as soon as I step on there, I'm
54 going to do what I absolutely love doing, which is performing and playing my
55 compositions.

56
57 Just for, have you had any stresses, strains, injuries, those sort of problems?

1
2 Yes, you know about that anyway, but that was the most frightening thing. It is
3 kind of recurring but I am still seeing someone every week and it is getting
4 better but injury can be the worst thing that can happen to a musician, and that's
5 what I meant about having professional back up, partly is, you know, I
6 remember going to see

7
8 Are performing arts medical specialists ready to help?

9
10 PAMRA you mean. They are not bad, actually of the people that I saw they were
11 the best ones, very nice people actually, but they are one and the thing is to get
12 to see them and also the thing is with PAMRA that they don't have any authority
13 so far as actually getting back to your GP and specialist, they take it as an
14 opinion only, the GPs. So the system is crap basically because you have no
15 support as a professional musician and no understanding from general
16 practitioners and specialists etc. So for example in my case, I have a problem, I
17 still have a problem slight with my ring finger, which is actually getting better
18 because I am having treatment to my neck and all the rest of it, but the problem
19 happened. I couldn't move my fingers for six months. Of course no back up, all
20 the rest of it. Yes it is awful, of course the psychological effect that has on you
21 and all the rest of it. Thankfully I didn't have kids and I was single at the time
22 and so had no pressures in that sense. But you know, because you have never
23 had anything, you have been a fit young man all your life and something
24 happens to you, you think, "Why the hell has this happened?" You go into
25 depression, you get this that and the other and you start to wonder about
26 yourself. Why is this going wrong? Is it technique, is it this, is it that? And you
27 drive yourself nuts for a while. So you go and see your GP.

28
29 How did you get through all that?

30
31 You just live, you just go through it. Friends were very good to me and you just
32 go through hell basically, but you just go through it. But anyway, and I went to
33 see GPs and they sent me to here, they sent me to there. I managed to ask for my
34 notes at the end and they said, "Oh they would have to refer me to the
35 psychologist because there is nothing there", it is just all in his brain type thing,
36 Well exactly. Which of course I gave up on them. And I went to see PAMRA.

37
38 How did you cope? How did you get what you needed?

39
40 You just psycho-analyse yourself.

41
42 You helped yourself?

43
44 Yeah, you have to.

45
46 How did you manage that then?

47
48 Well, as I say, I had a couple of very good friends who kind of maintained me in
49 a sense of, on a day to day basis, of feeding me, well not financially, which was
50 also a problem, but just generally making sure that they were around so that I
51 was OK and cheerful and "Hey, lets go out for a drink" and just general
52 friendship, which was great, and then otherwise you just have to think for
53 yourself.

54
55 Did you feel that you would be able to get through it and play again?

56

1 It's a long time ago now, but not really no, You think that is the end, and now I
2 have got to make a decision in my life, well not now but before. I have got to
3 make a decision in my life to actually change my career completely, which is
4 kind of a knock after 15 years of touring.
5
6 So what did you see at that point the direction you were going to?
7
8 Well for me, because I speak several languages, I though maybe I ought to go
9 and do some languages, apply to the university here and all the rest of it.
10
11 Something completely different?
12
13 It would have to be. I am that kind of person where it is either this or it is not.
14 The last thing I would want to be is be a
15
16 There's no half-way house?
17
18 No I mean I wouldn't be able to stick being the manager of another guitarist
19 because I would want to be there, and so it would have to be away from it.
20
21 I wonder how far it affected your writing, because you started to write more.
22
23 Well I did and because I couldn't really play I actually used the computer and I
24 did a lot of composition during that time and in that sense I learnt more in that
25 period of time composing. Of course I couldn't play, but composing-wise I
26 learnt a lot and arrangements, listening to things and how to compose for
27 different instruments. Because if you only compose for your guitar, when it
28 comes to doing arrangements for a flute or a wind instrument, wind instruments
29 have to breathe. It sounds silly but one of the first things you do, and also other
30 musicians the first time they do this thing, long scales or whatever it is for a
31 flautist or whatever and I well said "Hang on de, de, de, de, de. Where's he
32 going to breathe?", so stupid things like that you have to think of, well its not
33 stupid things but
34
35 Basic things.
36
37 Basic things that you don't think of normally.
38
39 So it was a real education for you in there.
40
41 Of course it was absolutely and that's why computers are good but you have to
42 be careful with them. But, you know and how violins work and whatever, you
43 have just got to think of how to orchestrate, how to write for that instrument.
44
45 Have you done it all yourself, you have done really well.
46
47 Well you have to, because no-one is going to help you unless you are lucky
48 enough.
49
50 And gradually it came back?
51
52 Yeah, yeah, not gradually. I was fortunate enough to meet some person that the
53 doctors called a quack, who thought that she was just some kind of weird,
54 eccentric, odd woman, should have been a musician! Who everyone swore by,
55 you know, a guy who was paralysed now walks and you know and I thought,
56 bloody hell I will try this woman and tried her, and she said, you haven't got a

1 problem with your back, she went crick on my neck and doing stuff, and the
2 fingers within a couple of minutes came back.

3

4 Extraordinary, totally extraordinary!

5

6 The doctors swore that she was a just loony, but she was a loony that works.
7 She is not a loony in fact she is a very intelligent woman, a very interesting
8 woman as well actually, but nothing abnormal about her. It's just that the
9 doctors just don't understand her way of work, which is just hands on basically.
10 So yeah, I think that's the thing as a musician, you have to learn for yourself. It
11 shouldn't really be that way in a sense, you should have some support.

12

13 You are forced to be self reliant, which isn't a bad thing, but through lack of
14 support which is a bad thing.

15

16 Yes, exactly.

17

18 OK. I think that's probably it.

19

20 That's my life story.

21

22 Thank you.

23

24 That's OK.

1 When people ask you to describe yourself as a musician, what would you
2 normally say?

3

4 I'd say that I am a classically trained musician with a real interest, erm, a real
5 interest in music as a whole, so I don't like to pigeonhole myself in one area
6 because if I was to be pigeonholed or just to only do one area I'd find myself
7 very stifled, so I like basically crossing over from a lot of different styles
8 basically and, do you want me to name the styles?

9

10 If you like, yes.

11

12 OK. Well, I'm classically trained so I am very, I enjoy erm listening to classical
13 music. By that I mean right through from early medieval through to
14 contemporary composers, contemporary classical music composers today erm.
15 And at the same time I am very, really interested in club dance music, that could
16 be something from House to Techno to Garage, etc, Drum and Bass, erm.

17

18 Is this diversity reflected in your own music, the music that you write, yourself?

19

20 Yes, definitely, I mean. I wouldn't like to say that I am an accomplished writer
21 in all of these mediums but I'm interested in them all and, and therefore I like
22 experimenting and that's one of the reasons why I have got the studio set up at
23 home, because it allows me to experiment with a lot of different styles of music
24 and yes, basically.

25

26 When you are working in your studio, are you working with from a computer,
27 with a keyboard or what?

28

29 I am working with a computer and keyboard, erm, and lots of different plug ins
30 which will allow me to explore practically any sound that I want.

31

32 Yes, so you have got a bank of samples, sort of thing?

33

34 I've got a bank of samples and I also record instrumentalists and singers at the
35 same time in order to extend my bank of samples. I also create different sounds,
36 I have got particular technology or plug-ins which will allow me to literally
37 create sound so they're not, not necessarily all pre-recorded samples. So I find
38 that also interesting as well, just even that process, never mind the music itself,
39 just the process of actually creating a sound that you can hear in your head, I
40 find that really stimulating cause it is almost like what an artist is doing when an
41 artist explores different colours. It's not about picking up a pastel and saying,
42 OK I want that yellow there, but it's actually finding the colour, so I find that
43 really, really stimulating.

44

45 So one of the things that helps you in your work is discovering erm sound
46 colours if you like?

47

48 Yes absolutely,

49

50 And adding to your palate and making use of them in that way?

51

52 Yes.

53

54 Coming back to what you said about working with particular players, do they
55 also stimulate you, people's particular playing styles or approaches? Do you find
56 you build up a relationship with individuals?

57

1 Yes, definitely, I've always tended to build up a relationship with individuals or
2 admire particular performers, etc, etc, or see particular performers as an informal
3 mentor in a sense, where I'll, through my relationship, and also through listening
4 repeatedly to their performances, I'll built up a very acute awareness of how
5 they are actually, for example, projecting their sound or performing in a way
6 which I find stimulating.

7
8 Can you give me an example?

9
10 OK, so a prime example is, what, is a man who I studied the saxophone with at
11 the Guildhall, and his name is (name) and the reason why I chose to study with
12 him was because of previously recordings I'd heard of him playing, and it was
13 interesting because - I know this is sort of diversifying from composition - but I
14 would regularly play a particular piece of music that actually crossed over
15 between classical and jazz music.

16
17 Which one?

18
19 It was a sonata for alto saxophone and piano by a composer called Phil Woods
20 who was a best friend of Charlie Parker and he, sort of coming from a jazz
21 background he wrote a classical piece, obviously with his jazz background in
22 classical form and it was for his best friend Vic Moroso. And (name) recorded
23 this piece and I had basically a recording of this piece, and I was regularly
24 playing it and actually visualising in my head playing that piece of music in that
25 way, so it actually built up a very, very visual side of erm the experience etc so
26 in that sense he was already a mentor, and so it was natural for me to then go and
27 study with him and then the rest is history really [laughing].

28
29 OK, as far as your composition is concerned, do you describe yourself as a
30 composer to friends and people you meet?

31
32 I wouldn't say, I am a composer, I'd say that I compose music.

33
34 What's the difference for you then?

35
36 Erm (2) Because I don't, I really don't like pigeonholes and its not that I don't
37 respect the word composer at all, it's the fact that I wouldn't say, I wouldn't
38 naturally say in conversation, oh I am a composer, because what I'd say is I am a
39 musician who likes experimenting with a lot of different ways of repeating
40 music. So I am a performer, I play, I am a soloist, I have been a trained and I am
41 an experienced soloist and at the same time, yeah I am a composer or I compose
42 music in a lot of different styles, etc. So really I am really just someone who
43 really enjoys music as a whole or sound, in some ways, a sound painting and it
44 might be composing or it might be playing. But at the same time, for example,
45 on my biog it does say that I'm a composer so I do at times refer to myself as a
46 composer.

47
48 Right.

49
50 I'm sorry, I know that sounds confusing.

51
52 No, not at all. When you're working in some way in you work, on your
53 compositions, what kind of thing makes it easier for you?

54
55 OK, I'll give you an example. Let's say I'm commissioned, or I say to myself
56 one morning, I'm going to write this sort of music today. So I get either a, I sit at

1 the piano with an empty manuscript or I get onto the computer and load up
2 whatever, and I attempt to write that piece of music.
3
4 What do you use, do you use Cubase or...
5
6 Logic and also Protools.
7
8 Protools, yes.
9
10 Protools and Logic. And let's say I load up all that software and start
11 experimenting with plug ins or whatever and I just start sequencing music etc,
12 etc. I may or may not start the, (2) what would you call, what do you call, the
13 inspiration or the inspired process, i.e. I could very easily continue to work hard
14 and try and make something work, in that instance it's not easy. What is
15
16 Could you start from a particular place, sorry to interrupt you there, I'm just
17 curious, could you start from a melodic idea or something like that, or you
18 know?
19
20 There isn't any one particular way that I'd start to be honest with you, but what
21 I'd say is what makes it easier is being inspired, because if you are inspired, and
22 you can hear something in your head, then it acts as a catalyst and everything, to
23 be honest with you, you could write something in fifteen minutes which might
24 take you five hours if you are not in the mood, so to speak, to write it and I mean
25 it could either be for example me walking around and having this idea in my
26 head, it might be a melody, it might be a bit of rhythm as well, it could be sound
27 and that would start things. But it might come before me actually sitting down
28 and writing or it might be, five minutes after me writing it and suddenly it kicks
29 in.
30
31 Could it happen anywhere?
32
33 Yes, absolutely anywhere. It could be on the Tube.
34
35 So you could be walking down the road?
36
37 Yes absolutely anywhere.
38
39 Or queuing up at the check out?
40
41 Absolutely, absolutely, it just happens anywhere.
42
43 And what do you do? You hold it?
44
45 I try and hold it and sometimes I fail or what I do if I've got a pen and paper, I
46 draw out a manuscript, I draw out the stave, as long as possible and I try and
47 dictate the notes and if possible I will dictate the rhythm as well. But what I do is
48 I try and dictate as much as possible in order for it to jog my memory once I am
49 at a place where I can properly write it.
50
51 What kind of thing is likely to inspire you, are there any particular things that
52 that er get you going?
53
54 Absolutely, it can be anything. I don't feel that there is a erm (3) distinct, distinct
55 thing in a sense, I don't. There isn't ever a perception of – "Oh that stimulated
56 me, or that stimulated me", it never works like that really. It's more, erm (3) just
57 suddenly appreciating whether it is your consciousness or er just the way you

1 feel, and a level where suddenly, wow, and you know, it's more... Or you just
2 suddenly get a tune in your head, a rhythm and you go "Yeah", and you're
3 working it. You just start working it and it suddenly becomes a bit more, and
4 you think, "Yeah, that's really excellent", so

5
6 So there is not a particular place or a particular time?

7
8 No, I could be making a cup of tea and it could start. Or I could be walking
9 down the street, I could be in the Tube, I could be anywhere.

10
11 So does that mean that when it comes to you sitting down at the keyboard or at
12 the computer, the keyboard or whatever, there isn't a particular pattern to it, or
13 would you find yourself sitting down at the same sort of time, do you have a
14 working regime?

15
16 OK, OK. basically because I have been, I basically developed a much more of a
17 natural relationship with the piano for example, I mean I am working it to a
18 point where the whole, in terms of the software and the technology, it's at a
19 point where there is no block, so to speak, there is no technological block where
20 it will prevent, it will inhibit

21
22 If you are comfortable?

23
24 Yes, you can actually channel it much much quicker. Sorry what was your
25 question again?

26
27 It was about whether you have a routine then, if you can be inspired at any place
28 at any time.

29
30 Yes. Yes. Erm I'd say that also in terms of how you start the process and
31 everything, I'd say that I can much more quickly get the whole idea down on the
32 piano than I can on the computer, and I think probably the software dictates to
33 some extent how you get the information down, i.e. because for example in
34 Logic, I mean, yes you could play something on the keyboard. One, you are not
35 going to get the same response as what you are going to get on the piano, and
36 also, in terms of writing other parts, because of quantising and working the
37 sequencer it is much more difficult to get all these parts down, as for example
38 with the piano where it doesn't have these things that inhibit you.

39
40 Yes. So, grappling with the technology, the actual process of transforming it
41 from

42
43 I think it dictates to some extent how you actually begin the process, definitely.

44
45 Yes, but as far as times, places do you have a particular time of day or place that
46 you would do it?

47
48 No.

49
50 So you would do it whenever?

51
52 Yes, whenever. That's what I mean literally erm, if I have got something in my
53 head at 8 o'clock then I've got to get up and do it, at the same time, if its 11
54 o'clock and I'm really...

55
56 In the morning?

57

1 Or 11 at night or something, if the ideas are flowing, then I really chose not to
2 stop until I have actually gone through the whole process and that might be 3
3 o'clock in the morning.

4
5 So you just go with the flow.

6
7 Completely.

8
9 There aren't any particular times of day when you feel more inspired?

10
11 I think it's not really about the time of day, I think it's what's going on around
12 you and things like that.

13
14 OK. What kind of thing would make a difference to you then?

15
16 I erm don't like distractions, I don't like people walking around, I mean,
17 although because I have done a lot of work with headphones on, people could be
18 doing some stuff around you, but I don't really enjoy other sounds. I don't like
19 hearing anything around me while I am writing because it is all about sounds. It
20 is not about style, it's about sound, it is literally about sound.

21
22 So having peace and quiet and no distractions is very important?

23
24 Yes, definitely, definitely, I could get irritated with distractions to be honest with
25 you.

26
27 Erm. Turning the phone off, that sort of thing, not having visitors.

28
29 Yes, I don't like people around me at all. I don't like, if someone starts a
30 conversation and tries to have a conversation with me, I'll be annoyed, I'll get
31 irritated and it can also erm suddenly, not just distract, but turn the mood off or
32 whatever, and it can take ages to get back into that, so I really don't like being
33 disturbed at all.

34
35 So if you, if ideas come to you when you are talking to somebody, how does it
36 work then, kind of in reverse, when you want to, kind of, get out of a situation?

37
38 Right, OK, erm, to be honest with you, while I am talking to someone, I
39 wouldn't tend to suddenly get an idea because I am more consciously in the
40 conversation. So not unless the person, not unless the conversation is going
41 nowhere, you know, that wouldn't tend to happen erm and there is also, to be
42 honest with you, it might be bad, but I d probably end up trying to steer the
43 conversation so that the other person actually got into the idea with me so they'd
44 then start cycling up the idea and stuff like that, I'd say, "Look, lets get into this,
45 let's go for it" and I would try I would actually steer the environment round me
46 so that it would actually work to my favour, in a sense to the music's favour.

47
48 And how do people respond when you do that?

49
50 I think they respond well, because, I mean, its not manipulation. This is all about
51 actually the idea happening. I think that I project, I can project a lot of
52 enthusiasm which can get other people into the same environment. I don't know
53 whether that's been altered, developed because of performing and things, where
54 you actually practice the idea of projecting yourself, so it could be all to do with
55 that.

56

1 So that's something else that helps, being able to project that enthusiasm onto
2 other people.

3
4 Yes, definitely.

5
6 When you've put your compositions, when they are somewhere as it were, how
7 important is it for you to have them performed and recorded?

8
9 That is not important. I mean it is important to have them recorded if I have not
10 been able to notate them well enough for them to actually be logged and say
11 right OK I'm going to pick up that manuscript and I'm going to be able to re-
12 create exactly that world. If I can't do that, then I'd like it somehow recorded
13 basically and that's why I have got this set-up. I've got a system where, where,
14 an environment where both things can happen, either record it or it gets notated.

15
16 Right, we'll come back to that in a moment. Any other things that help you in
17 your writing, that make it easier for you? What about having a deadline, you
18 mentioned very, very briefly earlier being under pressure to produce something,
19 either a commission, or a deadline coming up or something else?

20
21 Yes, I think deadlines are good because erm (3) it forces you not to be distracted
22 by other things so there's a hierarchy of what things are important to you
23 because you could easily (4). Let's say you're not inspired, too inspired that
24 morning, and then you've got other things to do. Unless you've got a deadline
25 you'd probably end up doing these other things. But if you've got a deadline, by
26 the end of that day you would put off those things because it would be a case of,
27 look I'm gonna have to do this, so you then focus your mind into a level where
28 you would then be inspired and you'd get the thing done.

29
30 Are you always able to meet the deadlines that you have had? Has it ever been
31 difficult for you?

32
33 No I've met deadlines, definitely.

34
35 OK. And as far as, coming out of that, having to do other things that you do, I
36 know you do teaching. Other things?

37
38 I have done other things but right now I'm not, I'm not doing anything outside
39 of composing and producing and teaching.

40
41 How about blending the teaching with the composing, how does that work? Are
42 you able to go seamlessly from one to the other? Do they help each other, do
43 they not?

44
45 I have not really used teaching, I have not really seen the relationship that far,
46 but I don't think that I, it's not to say that I'm not going to develop that
47 relationship, but I've not found, because I have only started rebuilding up my
48 pupils etc.

49
50 Are you teaching saxophone.

51
52 Saxophone and piano and also Logic. What's good for example if I teach Logic,
53 then that's good because it's further back. Just by teaching what you are doing is
54 you are reassessing and re-analysing what your knowledge is on the system,
55 which is so good because it just really, erm it makes everything very, very fluid,
56 which is great, so in that sense, yes it helps my process.

1 So you're continually re-examining it, analysing it and testing yourself?

2

3 Yes and also teaching playing, because I don't tend to compose on the
4 saxophone, I tend to compose on an instrument where I'm able to erm
5 experiment with many different lines at the same time. You know, otherwise
6 with the saxophone you're trying to imagine another line where you would play
7 a single line. That's fine in a limited amount of music, but a lot of the time,
8 because I am very inspired by Debussy for example and Debussy's music is
9 completely about colour, just sound paintings and things like that. So the piano
10 is a great way of exploring that and a lot of the lessons that, for example
11 different people that I have taught, because I have taught right through from, I
12 taught a 4 year old child right through to quite a mature adult and a lot of the
13 time, well, all the time I talk about music in terms of sound. It's not about a
14 particular instrument but it's all about the sound and how well you discover and
15 communicate the sound. It's all about being open and blah, blah, blah blah blah.
16 And erm a lot of the time I say, "OK let's forget about for example, these dots
17 on the page, but just let's explore this instrument just in terms of colour, just to
18 discover what this thing is all about". And for example with younger children,
19 that's what I'll do for quite a few weeks before we even go onto any reading of
20 music or anything. So you just build up a natural relationship with this thing
21 where they can actually play and just toy around and experiment. Which is great
22 for me because I am also then re-evaluating my own perception of colour and
23 stuff like that.

24

25 Is that the way you work yourself, that play element, improvisatory element or
26 whatever you want to call it, in the way that you approach your own work?

27

28 Yes, to a large extent, because whilst you are in the mood so to speak, you are
29 coming up with different ideas and so you'll be playing around with these ideas
30 and see how they all fit. And what's good is when you are in that (1) plane or
31 whatever a lot of these things actually tend to actually work together, so that's
32 good.

33

34 When you are doing that, and you're producing, creating something, how do you
35 know when you've finished? How do you know when it's good enough? How
36 do you know when to stop?

37

38 Because you feel mentally exhausted, you feel mentally and emotionally, well
39 not exhausted but you feel tired, because you've actually given out so much
40 stuff, you actually feel quite tired. And during that time you just feel (2) quite
41 tired, it tends to feel, everything starts to feel quite hard work, and you know at
42 that point it's like maybe you could go on for a little longer but then its really
43 time to end that session. And also to give your ears a rest, because you are
44 probably even listening, especially your (inaud) you tend to listen to the first
45 section over and over again and its by rehearsing that and hearing it as a whole
46 you then see, OK this bit's going to work more after it, because you're able to
47 appreciate the whole thing, panoramic vision, so there is a constant play between
48 the single moments and the idea within a single moment and then re-listening to
49 the whole thing because then you get a sense of perspective and structure and
50 hierarchy. In the same way a painter, for example, would constantly stand way
51 back from the painting to get a larger perspective.

52

53 So you are continually focusing and refocusing from different angles, from
54 different distances as it were to to have a look at it and decide whether it is OK?

55

56 Definitely, it is working, it is working within the perspective, definitely.

57

Definitely.

1
2 What kind of criteria would you use to tell you whether it is working or not?
3 Are they intuitive criteria, technical criteria?
4

5 A lot of it is intuitive, a lot of it is ear, but I think as my (1) compositional skills
6 develop and awareness develops, a lot of it's going to be to do with balance.
7 It's not to say that my writing is not balanced, it is balanced but I think the more
8 that I, for example, erm study extreme classical structures and things like that, I
9 think that I will integrate a lot more of that structure and things like that. So in
10 other words, erm, right now there's a lot more intuitive aural, dictated purely by
11 my ear a lot of the time. If it doesn't sound balanced as far as me hearing it is
12 concerned, then I know there is something wrong, so I need to have to go back
13 into it.
14

15 When you erm reach the end of that process, is there anybody else that you play
16 your music through to?
17

18 I play a lot of stuff to (partner).
19

20 Right. What effect does what she says have? Is there anybody else that you
21 play it to?
22

23 Well because she's actually physically in terms of environment, she's closer to
24 me, erm, she'd be someone I would play it to. Outside of that, for example, I
25 may play it to a friend, if a friend comes round I'd say, hear this and tell me
26 what you think. And things like that.
27

28 And do you take notice of what they say?
29

30 Yes definitely.
31

32 How would it affect you?
33

34 Well if they said, no, they really think that bit's like terrible, then I'd have to, I
35 would definitely re-think. But usually when someone says that, it's actually
36 something that I've not been very confident with as well.
37

38 OK So we're talking about people whose informed musical judgement you trust.
39

40 Yeah. That's not to say I don't ask people who are not informed musicians. I
41 would ask someone, I'd say well, it's not so much, yeah I'd ask them what they
42 think, because, more so in more popular music. I wouldn't ask them in terms of
43 classical music because erm I'd only ask them in a very, very light level. "Oh
44 do you like this, or do you not like it?" but as far as them actually being able to
45 give me like an informed answer or saying actually that's, I wouldn't expect
46 them to understand the music in a clear way on that level, so it really wouldn't
47 affect necessarily how I would finish the piece.
48

49 Talking about finished pieces, are you aware when you're writing of any kind of
50 audience, future, possible audience, actual audience?
51

52 No, not when I am actually writing, no. Because everyone is, I'm completely
53 oblivious. I completely shut out everything. There's nothing. I'm not thinking
54 about anything, all I am thinking about is what's going on, that painting, that's
55 it.
56

1 Afterwards, when you have got the piece there, what then, are you aware of any
2 particular

3
4 Yes, definitely. I am aware of the people it'll be played to and how they will
5 respond to it, and so for that reason I'll probably end up playing it to people
6 similar to the people who'll listen to it in order for them...

7
8 And how do you know what kind of people would listen to it?

9
10 For example, if I am playing a dance track, then I'd probably play it to other
11 people, either DJs or people who go to clubs, and say, "What do you think of
12 that?" In other words, can they imagine dancing to that or not.

13
14 And what notice do you take of their comments?

15
16 I do take a lot of notice of their comments because if they say, "Well that's way
17 out", then I'd probably not end up putting it out. Or I'd probably not end up
18 putting it onto a record or whatever. Well not for one person, that would depend,
19 if there were quite a few people then I would seriously rethink about what the
20 piece is doing.

21
22 So audience is very important to you, why is that?

23
24 It is only more important to me on a more popular level because erm (4) Also, I
25 mean obviously I'm not talking about one person's response, I'm talking about
26 quite a few people. If quite a few people who went to clubs said "No I really
27 don't like it", and it was a broad spectrum of people, then it would affect me
28 because there is a very, very good chance that 99% of other people who are like
29 them would also not like it. Whereas a classical music piece is entirely different
30 because it is not always about the audience, it's actually about the art, you know
31 it is a completely different thing, you know it is purely about, because a lot of
32 the time newly written pieces are not necessarily that well endorsed by an
33 audience, because the audience doesn't understand it. A lot of music isn't really
34 enjoyed the first time, it's only when you start unravelling what is actually going
35 on, you suddenly, it unlocks your appreciation and everything and you then
36 build up an experience. It's a completely different thing.

37
38 So something you are aware of, working, writing, the effect of what you have
39 written on those different audiences and the ways that it works in different ways
40 on the audiences. What about critics are you concerned about their views on
41 what you write? Do you take notice?

42
43 What, in other words paper critics or magazine critics and things like that?

44
45 Yes.

46
47 I wouldn't take notice, to be honest with you I am not really that bothered, the
48 only reason why I'd be bothered about what a critic says is because I'd like to
49 use their quote in my biog for future stuff, for PR work, but I am not necessarily
50 that bothered about erm what a critic says. In the same way there have been
51 two competitions.....

52
53 Good or bad? So if they are lavishing praise on you?

54
55 That's great. I really like, what I like is a really good appraisal or a really bad
56 one. I wouldn't want one that just said...

57

1 Is that in terms of liking it or

2

3 Reaction. Extreme, it's got to be extreme. You know. The worst thing would be
4 a dull reaction.

5

6 Yes. So you want an impact either way, preferably positive?

7

8 Yes, but at the same time, for example, there have been two competitions where,
9 erm, or there was one it was a TV, BBC competition and, I mean there was a
10 whole load of political stuff that also steered me wide. I was going out of the
11 competition but the Director...

12

13 Can you tell me something about that, I'm not sure what you mean, what
14 political stuff?

15

16 Well, it was to do with, it was the BBC TV, it wasn't the Radio one, the TV
17 Young Musician of the Year and I got onto the semi-finals, where it was
18 obviously televised etc And there was another guy in the same group, so to
19 speak, that I was competing against, and his teacher and his teacher's husband
20 was on the panel, and so he was a favourite to win, and he did win, yeah, but...

21

22 How did that make you feel?

23

24 Well the thing I, obviously I was disappointed. But the Director of the
25 programme came up to me and said, "I don't know what's going on, it's
26 absolutely ridiculous". Right. And about six months later the BBC wanted to do a
27 feature, a whole feature programme on me, because of how they had heard me,
28 talent and all that sort of stuff, and erm there was a whole lot of reasons why
29 they didn't do the programme. There's no point in me putting it in but erm they
30 did a feature on me in one of the master-classes and got someone in who I asked
31 to etc, etc. So I was a real favourite and they liked me erm but I didn't go any
32 further in the competition because of politics.

33

34 How did that make you feel? I just asked you to clarify certain things.

35

36 Yes. How did it make me feel? As I say, I don't like, it's about having a grey
37 response, the fact that there was a strong reaction against what decision was
38 made, made me feel good and made me feel erm positive and confident. No it
39 wasn't about confidence it was just about the acknowledgement that actually I
40 was about something. I wasn't dull and had nothing to say, because I feel that I
41 am a person who has got a huge amount to say, and that's why I have chosen art
42 to say it because...

43

44 So communication is very important to you?

45

46 Yes, yes, being able to speak, definitely.

47

48 Is that true of a wider audience. I mean how do you feel about having mass, a
49 large popular appeal?

50

51 Erm. I am not actually that bothered about it. Although I would enjoy it in a
52 sense that it's happening but it is not really what I'm about. I don't necessarily
53 do it because I'd then have millions of people listening to me. I've had that
54 though, I have had like World Service broadcasts and stuff like that, I have had
55 like a quarter of the world's population being able to hear the programme and
56 stuff like that. So that's fine, but it didn't make me feel any better than doing a
57 national broadcast and things like that. What's important to me obviously is

1 having a comfortable lifestyle and not having erm a situation where I can't
2 afford to get things that I need in order to further my art. As long as I have these
3 availabilities I'm not really concerned about the number of people I play to, that
4 doesn't really bother me.

5
6 And what about, before we move on from this audience thing, what about
7 posterity, how important is it to you to think that you are leaving works behind
8 that will remain when you are gone?

9
10 That's really important. It's really important that my music's not ... I'd rather
11 have, put it this way, I'd rather write a great piece of music, a really great piece
12 of music than write a rubbish piece of music that becomes like a big seller and
13 stuff like that. Wait a minute, hold it - I'd like to write a piece of music, not
14 necessarily rubbish, but I'd obviously like a big seller because suddenly it opens
15 up a big platform, but just the act of writing a good piece of music or a bad piece
16 of music. Of course a good piece of music, because it's about what relationship
17 you have to the world and to life around you and things like that. I feel that I
18 want to actually communicate meaning, I want to feel that I'm actually about
19 something and I've not just lived my life and that's it, like it's no big deal.

20
21 Would you like people to say about you?

22
23 (3) There isn't a particular thing that I've thought about, wanting people to say.

24
25 What kind of thing, any particular kind of thing?

26
27 He was a great man, he was a great man and he had vision, he had a lot of vision
28 and he was, yeah he had a lot of vision and he really, you know, he invested in
29 the world and he was able to leave behind really quite magnificent things.

30
31 Erm .When your music is communicating, what would you like it to
32 communicate, any particular things?

33
34 (4) There isn't a particular thing because it completely depends on the music I
35 am writing and the environment I am writing it for.

36
37 OK, just give me an example.

38
39 Erm (3). OK, so there was a piece for an animation that as I say was in the
40 Barbican Hall. It was for a big conference and things, so there were 5000 people
41 watching this animation. It was part of this whole, of a programme or speech or
42 whatever. But anyway so there was like this big animation that was of erm the
43 company's logo which was a lion with wings. And the whole sequence was of
44 some molten lava which was splashing across the screen and stuff and gradually
45 through time it formed this three-dimensional statue of the lion with wings. OK,
46 and ended with it covered in light. OK, so this sequence lasted just over a
47 minute and I was asked to write music that was sort of Blade Runner-ish erm for
48 this sequence, so the whole thing was about the drama of the music and how the
49 music obviously fitted the picture in real time etc, and just the whole world of
50 division of the two things happening. So the music was about that, it was about
51 the whole vision of what the music was about, it wasn't about a particular
52 element, it was about the whole thing and its strength and stuff like that.

53
54 OK. Earlier we were talking about what makes it easier for you, how about the
55 rewards? You touched on briefly, a few minutes ago, you said that being well
56 known for something you are not especially pleased with or don't think is
57 especially good is not particularly important to you, as opposed to leaving

1 something, producing something that you do think very highly of. What about
2 the rewards of working in music?

3
4 What do you mean by rewards?

5
6 It might be financial rewards, it might be recognition, that kind of thing.

7
8 OK. Excuse me, I wasn't listening properly. Yes, I want to be rewarded for
9 what I do of course. I mean right throughout college and just after college I
10 didn't care about not earning any money and the idea of my music not
11 necessarily being fully appreciated until after I was dead. But I think as you
12 experience life, and experience lifestyles in some ways, and experience the
13 ability to buy certain things which are going to make you feel good and
14 whatever, and things, you get a taste for having a better lifestyle and stuff like
15 that, so of course money becomes more important to you, you know. I don't
16 want to live in like a hut. In this country, I mean if it was on a beach somewhere
17 it would be fine, but you know, I don't want to live a very grey life with just
18 like, old manuscript trying to write music.

19
20 You are in a unique position in that you operate in different fields of music and
21 some of them have vast financial rewards. Others of them don't, and in terms of
22 recognition too the picture is very different, how do you think about all that?

23
24 Erm, I enjoy it because it's something that I've built. In other words I like the
25 ability to be able to diversify and not necessarily be lost. I like the idea of having
26 spent a focus time in one area, and a focus time in another area because if I tried
27 to do the two things at once then I think it would be a much more blurred
28 distinction, but I actually enjoy having these different palates.

29
30 In terms of the financial rewards and the recognition that you have, they are
31 very, very different aren't they?

32
33 Yes.

34
35 How do you reconcile that, I mean if you are looking to increase your financial
36 recognition, OK, you can do it by making a career choice, put it that way, can't
37 you, by going for something. How does that inform the way you decide what
38 you are going to do?

39
40 Well yeah, the thing is what you try and do is, even though you like your
41 distinctions and things you want to build your career towards an environment
42 where you can bring these things together. Like for example I think er one
43 major way where I would be able to bring these things together would be in film,
44 but very visionary films, not your, visionary films and not your typical
45 Hollywood blockbuster but something like an extreme sci-fi movie or something
46 where you really were able to explore sound worlds in such an intense way that
47 the music was as intense as the film. It was, you know, it was like that. So film
48 would be a major way of exploring that and also. So what I am doing is trying to
49 steer through doing work for animation or adverts and stuff like that, I am
50 obviously trying to build up a reputation where I can head towards that, and
51 obviously it would be financially rewarding as well, but it would make use of
52 my different backgrounds.

53
54 So how do you balance out these differing demands on you, because clearly if
55 you have ideas for classical pieces and you are also having ideas for more
56 commercially successful pieces, how do you make the decision about what you
57 what to do next?

1
2 It depends. It would depend, if I've not got any commissions at the time, it
3 would depend on what my mood was or depend on where I felt inspired. In
4 other words I need to rush to the piano because I have got some stuff which I
5 need to get out, and at the same time there might be another time when I just
6 want to get right into that. So it's about how you feel inspired at the time. But
7 obviously if you're being commissioned to do certain things then obviously that
8 takes a precedence over what your inspiration is, but obviously if you have a like
9 ten minutes of flash of being inspired or whatever, and it is something purely to
10 do with the piano, then obviously during that time I wouldn't be being inspired
11 to work through the commission, so I'd quickly get that down and then go back
12 to what I'm doing.

13
14 Talking about, any other things that haven't come up about things that make it
15 easier for you, things that help?

16
17 (3) Space, definitely space, no other demands round you. Freedom, as much
18 freedom as possible.

19
20 What about the downside, I mean by implication we've covered a lot of them
21 already like lack of freedom, distractions, interruptions, that sort of thing, any
22 others?

23
24 Distractions can mean so many things can't it, right through from financial
25 distractions, through to people, through to things outside.

26
27 OK, can you say more about those?

28
29 Well obviously if you've, if you've got bills to pay and you can't pay them, then
30 obviously that's going to be nagging at your mind. You're going to think how
31 can I pay that bill and stuff like that, so that's going to be irritating and distort
32 your mood, and also...

33
34 Do you find that your income level fluctuates?

35
36 It can fluctuate, yeah.

37
38 How do you cope?

39
40 That's also something, I've got to work through that because it is obviously a
41 career that I'm trying to build.

42
43 How do you cope with that, the feast and famine side?

44
45 Erm .Well you just have to, you don't enjoy it but you just do it?

46
47 How, how do you do it?

48
49 Well, you have to think round the clock about how you're actually going to get
50 over that distraction, that financial distraction. You have to work out a way of
51 actually making everything work.

52
53 So you are kind of planning at it?

54
55 Planning, constantly planning.

56
57 How are your finances are and work? OK and are there other aspects of it?

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Er, well obviously if my brother comes to stay then he's going to take up my time, and then it is going to be difficult to say, "Look sorry, I can't be with you this morning because I have got to do this". It is quite difficult but it also depends on the people around you, because different people demand your time in different ways. Like I think if someone is actually quite balanced within themselves, and have actually got erm a level of independence where they don't necessarily need to demand things of people, then they will not demand your time all the time if you have actually got something to do. Like if I was visiting someone or staying with someone or something like that, and even if they didn't have like the big plasma screen or loads of computers or whatever for me to go and see, at the end of the day if they were busy and had to get on with some things, that's fine I'd just like sit wherever, it wouldn't really matter where, and I'd just like think, or go for a walk or write down some ideas, write down some poetry or something like that, so I wouldn't need to demand anything from that person. So, yes, basically distractions work differently, don't they?

You mentioned writing poetry, which is something you haven't brought up before. Do you set your own poems?

Poems could also turn into songs, poems could also remain, poems could remain poems and they could suddenly inspire me to a piece of music or erm I could end up writing a piece of music to that poem, etc, etc.

Being interested, as you are, in visual media and also words, do you see creative problems, creative issues, as being the same in each of those fields, or are there differences?

The thing is, because I am not a practicing poet or an artist, I've not really thought about necessarily deadlines or whatever where I then think, oh I'm being really distracted. I think that generally speaking, yes, yes, it does work in the same way because, like for example I do a lot of doodling and drawing and things like that, and that always comes with a free mind doesn't it?

Yes.

Again it is interesting to also work in reaction. I think a lot of good music actually works in reaction, you know, in some things very light reaction, also dark reaction in terms of, "Ah, that was", you end up saying (2) you know, so inspiration works in a free mind, it also works in reaction or you might end up doing a really harsh doodle which would be reacting to a moment, like a minute ago.

And do the moments, are they very congruent in the sense that if you are feeling happy or up, you know, what you're producing may be not necessarily be, is it reflected in that, or do they work separately?

I would imagine it would be reflected in that yes definitely, yes because your inner energy that you're communicating would be up.

I am just interested in how, in the fluidity of it. So if for instance if you are writing something, a piece of music, where the mood is very up say, one's own moods fluctuate sometimes, moment by moment, hour by hour, and within those, how does that relate to the on-going...

Erm It would depend on how long I'm being inspired and things like that.

1 OK. Because you're holding onto that mood then aren't you in the..
2
3 But also the thing is the mood is re-cultivating itself, because what you have
4 done, is you have made an imprint of that mood, whether its on the computer or
5 there. And that's the whole thing of playing it back, the flush of [intake of
6 breath] the source of what that mood is and then it inspires you to do a bit more
7 so that it's constantly feeding itself. You feed it, it feeds you, you feed it, it feeds
8 you, so it is a constant cycle.
9
10 OK, right.
11
12 So it actually prompts, it's self-, what's the word, self- ...
13
14 Renewing?
15
16 Renewing itself, building, self-rejuvenating. And I think the trained, and I think
17 what's interesting as well is that through experience you learn the ability to
18 actually be able to steer that self-rejuvenating, whereas before it could be so
19 reactory and you could so easily come out of it or be very erratic in terms of how
20 it flows, but you can train that.
21
22 So you have more control over the process as your experience builds, and the
23 direction?
24
25 Yeah, because you know how to click [clicks fingers together] and lock in stuff
26 like that, and you know how to get back in and stuff, yes.
27
28 Any other things that make it harder, that haven't come up? We talked about
29 practical pressures including financial pressures, other things, distractions.
30
31 Just demands, if someone is demanding something else from you that is not
32 related to the deadline or not related to the work.
33
34 Like, for instance. Time, you mentioned earlier.
35
36 Yes, but time is not necessarily an issue here because... Time would only come
37 into my mind when it's to do with a deadline, erm. but other distractions would
38 be, for example, let's say a deadline for something else, which is non-music
39 related, yes then that could, that could be an issue, then that's other deadlines.
40
41 So pressures and responsibilities and that kind of thing. Turning now to the
42 effect of working in music as you do on the rest of life, how do you think it
43 affects your day to day life, your close relationships?
44
45 It affects me quite a lot, because I'm not very controlled, Basically I'm not
46 necessarily the most controlled person. Emotionally I'm very, quite easily
47 distracted and things like that.
48
49 Are you very volatile, very up and down?
50
51 Yes, I can be very volatile. I can be very high sometimes, yes.
52
53 Do you think that comes with the territory?
54
55 It can come with the territory, because I suppose some people would call it an
56 artistic temperament.
57

1 What do you think, would you describe yourself as having one?

2

3 I think that it's important to be volatile, maybe not volatile but be sensitive,
4 because if you're not necessarily sensitive then everything becomes controlled,
5 and if you try and control everything ...

6

7 So you think there is an openness with it?

8

9 Then it becomes lifeless and it doesn't have the same life about it and then it's
10 just talentless and talent is also about erm having the sensitivity to react to
11 environments and react to whether it's the music that you are playing or the
12 mood that you are in, in order to capture the mood, you know. A lot of the time
13 the writing process is about being able to capture it, you can only capture the
14 mood unless you are open enough to actually be able to react to it and stuff like
15 that.

16

17 So that's sensitivity and that responsiveness has its downside in that it can make
18 you a bit difficult to live with, don't you think so?

19

20 Yes, probably. Probably, yes.

21

22 In what way?

23

24 Just, well for example in the sense (2) that if I had a very, what's the word,
25 demanding partner, in terms of, look we want to go out quite often and stuff like
26 that. And the thing is if I've a lot of music to write, I don't want to go out, so
27 that might be days and days and days. The fact is, sorry but that's got to take
28 priority, so.

29

30 You think it's important to have somebody that understands that?

31

32 Yes probably, or otherwise it could be a nightmare, it would be a nightmare.

33

34 Does that mean that a lot of your friends are in music?

35

36 Yes a lot of my friends are in music, but also I've got friends outside of music as
37 well. I don't necessarily get on with, maybe I get on with a particular sort of
38 person, but it wouldn't be immediately visible if you were to look at the people
39 who I get on with. Like I have got a lot of different friends. One of my best
40 friends comes from a science background, UCL and computer programming,
41 and stuff like that. Then I've got another really good friend, and a couple friends
42 who were at Guildhall, musicians, and things, so...

43

44 How do they see you as a musician?

45

46 Who?

47

48 Those friends that aren't in music?

49

50 Aren't in music?

51

52 Is there a difference between the way the non-musical friends would see you?
53 If I asked them about you, do you think they would give a different answer from
54 the ones in music?

55

56 (8) I think that a lot of people who have got talent and stuff, there's a bit of
57 madness in them, you know, so. (2) Like a friend who went to UCL would say

1 I'm quite mad but that is a likeable part of my character. He is quite mad, he is
2 quite off the wall and stuff.

3

4 It gives you a kind of licence does it, that kind of madness? To do or be what?

5

6 Yes, it's a positive madness, it's a creative madness. Definitely a creative
7 madness.

8

9 OK so it opens up the creative side, a licence to be creative.

10

11 Yes.

12

13 How does that manifest itself then in the friendship?

14

15 Well it gives a lot of freedom in the friendship because it allows them to act in a
16 similar way. It gives them the freedom to act as freely as well, in a sense it
17 allows them to free up their character, rather than having such strict expectations
18 of another person. So if someone has a lot of strict expectations of you, unless
19 you didn't want to get on with that person, you'd probably end up adhering to
20 some of those expectations. And by that you're automatically going to be
21 sending out some similar signals to some extent, not unless you gradually
22 educate them to be more flexible and then you can develop much more of a
23 flexible relationship.

24

25 Do you think having a more flexible, what shall we call it, temperament,
26 personality, character, outlook, I don't know, some of those, goes with the
27 territory of being a creative person?

28

29 I think that in general yes, but then you've probably got exceptions to the rule.

30

31 That's certainly true of you?

32

33 Sorry?

34

35 It's true of you anyway?

36

37 What do you mean?

38

39 It's true of you that as a creative person you feel this openness and sensitivity is
40 adding to it and also frees you up in your relationships with your friends?

41

42 Yes definitely, definitely, absolutely, it's really important to feel that you can act
43 quite larger than life and things like that, just go vroom right into something, you
44 know. In other words, if you are just like dictating everything, its like, you're
45 immediately just completely sobering up your brain and that's, that's not for me.

46

47 OK. On the other side of that, the side that does go over into instability and
48 madness, what are your thoughts on that? It brings these risks with it.

49

50 Yes, it does bring risks with it definitely.

51

52 How do you see those risks, in relation to your own life?

53

54 I think the risks are very difficult and they can make you quite unstable at times
55 and like for example, during college, there is a time when, you don't lose it, but
56 you can erm (2) feel quite insecure with yourself, or insecure with your ideas.

57

1 Why at college?

2

3 Because it is such an intense, to some extent life-changing environment, where
4 you're exposed to so much more than what you were before. You are provoked
5 to, and you also self provoke, just concepts and philosophical concepts and
6 things like that.

7

8 So you are re-examining yourself?

9

10 You are re-examining everything, yes definitely. You're also exposed to
11 completely different ways of thinking and things like that. Also, I mean, I think
12 I was prone to it quite a lot because of my much, very, very strict background.
13 So, just the way I was taught to view life and the fact that if I didn't think of life
14 like that, then in fact I was heading for disaster, you know. And so it's just
15 coming to terms with the fact that I am not necessarily heading for disaster.
16 Everything, and that's really not an easy thing, it seems so easy, but it takes
17 years and years and years to get out of that way of thinking.

18

19 So it has been a difficult and lengthy learning process for you, learning to accept
20 the fact that er there isn't one way of doing things, and that you have to listen to
21 your own inner voice?

22

23 Yes. But then your own inner voice can also be a make up of er regular and
24 constant teachings which you've been exposed to as kids. Like my dad was an
25 Elder of a Church and just the whole process of me

26

27 Which sort of church?

28

29 Christian. A born-again Christian Church Fellowship, so it didn't have a strict
30 routine in terms of how the meeting would go, but instead what you'd have
31 would be a very heavy meeting where people would be speaking in tongues,
32 people were being prayed for, etc, etc. And so there was a very distinct way in
33 which you were shown that you would appreciate life in terms of God, all of
34 that, and how you should behave and how you should be thinking, in order for
35 you to be OK, for want of a better word. So just the whole thing of being
36 exposed to very, very different ways of thinking and appreciating life and things
37 is a really difficult thing for you to feel comfortable with the fact that that's OK,
38 bits of that are OK. Just integrating that with how you've been taught, you know
39 so these things are all difficult.

40

41 How did you manage that integration yourself, how did you reach your own life?

42

43 Well it's very upsetting because you can (4), you can, it takes a whole lifetime to
44 feel...

45

46 You are still on the path, struggling with it?

47

48 Yeah, to some extent. But at the same time you feel OK.

49

50 Do you share that religious belief, is it something you carry with you, your
51 parents' belief, that born-again faith?

52

53 Not completely. No, but I still feel a strong sense of God and Good and Bad and
54 things.

55

56 Do you believe there is a spiritual aspect to your music?

57

1 Yes.

2

3 Can you say a bit about that, how it informs your music?

4

5 (6) It's (10) not always necessary, I'm not always thinking OK this is going to
6 be about this sort of spiritual experience and things like that. I don't, erm, I feel
7 a bit paranoid in some ways about the idea of channelling it as a whole spiritual
8 experience, but I have a strong sense of God in the whole process.

9

10 What do you mean paranoid, I'm not sure I understand?

11

12 Well, just in the sense that this whole (5) in the sense of it being a pagan or
13 whatever, this idea of channelling it as a spiritual energy through your music,
14 and things like that. I find it very difficult to feel comfortable with the whole
15 process, unless I've been very meditating beforehand, to feel that its all of that.

16

17 So the process of composition you don't feel is necessarily informed in that
18 way?

19

20 No, it's not always about me channelling through a spiritual medium and stuff
21 like that. I wouldn't go that, I don't tend to go that far right now.

22

23 But it's informed in other ways?

24

25 But it's informed. Yes, it's informed spiritually, it's informed.

26

27 Do you believe people listening to your music will, it will have an effect on
28 them spiritually, if you like?

29

30 (3) Yeah, positive, spiritual effect.

31

32 Is that something you aspire towards in your music?

33

34 Yeah. Definitely.

35

36 Can you say a bit more about it?

37

38 (6) I think it's a very difficult, it's a different thing from performing because for
39 example, when I won that Radio 2, I know that the major reason why I won it
40 was because of the middle movement where I felt that I was speaking the music
41 at a very much more deep level, where I was really channelling in real meaning
42 and you could say that that was a spiritual experience, where I was actually
43 making contact with people in a much more real way, rather than me playing
44 music well and emotionally well and other things like that, but there was a real,
45 real speaking.

46

47 Yes. Behind it.

48

49 Real speaking, and I don't tend to always think like that when I'm composing. I
50 tend to think more erm as though I am an artist and think of this great work, and
51 creating something very beautiful, or creating something that could be dark, but
52 there is a positive creation or sculpture, like a sound sculpture and things like
53 that, something much more visual and something to appreciate. I don't tend to
54 think of me like, this is really channelling this in, I don't think like that.

55

56 So you don't see it as an energy flow thing necessarily, but it informs your work
57 in other ways?

1
2 Yeah, which is spiritually revealing, but it's not a channelling.
3
4 For you or for other people?
5
6 (2) I've not always thought about it in terms of, for it to be a vision, other
7 people. I've not thought of that before, really. (3) I think of it more as an
8 atmosphere that people would, but not in terms of oh, that's a nice atmosphere,
9 but more in terms of atmospheric, in terms of the Earth and as an atmosphere
10 and things like that. More of a thing like that.
11
12 You said that you have, you didn't tell me whether you family were musical
13 apart from being religious?
14
15 Yes, musical.
16
17 Was there music at home?
18
19 Yes, quite a lot of music, I mean obviously a lot of singing in church and things
20 like that. I played in the church, choruses and things. My sister learned piano
21 and I learned piano just by little bits, not necessarily directly from her but there
22 was a piece and I learned how to play it by ear and stuff like that, and you know
23 all of that sort of stuff, so I was exposed to music.
24
25 How do the family feel about having a composer in it?
26
27 I don't think they necessarily think of me as a composer, because I was always
28 seen as someone who went to college as a saxophonist, so a musician but I write
29 as well.
30
31 So you're a musician who writes. How do they feel about that?
32
33 Fine.
34
35 You say you have friends outside music, do you have other interests beyond
36 music too?
37
38 (3) I like to know what is going on politically, to some extent in politics. Erm, I
39 like media in general, I love animals, a real love for animals. I love watching
40 nature programmes and stuff like that. I used to do some bird watching as a kid,
41 so I love that. I'd love to go on some safaris and go scuba-diving, or just diving
42 and seeing, you know, the Barrier Reef and all of that, I'd love to discover the
43 natural world, I love the natural world basically. I don't particularly like people.
44
45 Does that inspire you in your work?
46
47 (3) Not looking at animals necessarily, but maybe looking at particular images.
48
49 Faces?
50
51 Like for example, I have got books down here, I'm trying to build it, of
52 incredible images, can I show you very quickly.
53
54 Yes. [gets book out] Wow.
55

1 That is amazing, you know and that can just inspire. That can inspire, its just
2 about being fed. So if I feel exhausted I look at some really amazing images
3 which just feed me, fill me up.

4
5 Incredible.

6
7 So I bought that, and then Antarctic and Tibet so I love looking at images. To
8 see it, it's just like food basically. Basically it's a sort of food looking at stuff
9 like that or looking for example at the Earth from the Moon's horizon or
10 something so I like looking at really panoramic or moving or visionary images,
11 because it stimulates that connection, the visionary connection. It trains your
12 mind or it triggers your mind into that awareness or that level of being or
13 whatever.

14
15 Yes. OK. I'll have to put this down now. OK.

16
17 But that's much more for the classical music. It's not necessarily, for example
18 dance music is very different. It's a different level of, sort of stimulation I would
19 use. So basically I have got different areas of stimulation which will help for
20 example me, help trigger me into different states or whatever.

21
22 Any other areas that you feel we haven't covered so far, hat are very important
23 to you in your attitude towards writing music. Things that help or make it harder
24 for you? Have we covered most of the ground?

25
26 Yes.

27
28 As you know, I work with musicians as a counselling psychologist. Do you
29 think there are any things that haven't come up yet that I should know about
30 from your own experience that would inform me in my work. I haven't really
31 asked you about you as a performer I know, but perhaps you could tell me things
32 that you've found helpful when you've been stressed out and things that you do,
33 for instance.

34
35 I basically, if I get stressed out sometimes I will go to a piano and completely
36 immerse myself in sound, and allow me to dissolve the stress and that could
37 mean that I will, not batter, but I may use it as a means of releasing stress, which
38 also could end up transforming into a great piece of music.

39
40 So you just play, whatever.

41
42 Yes, I'll just experiment but I'll use the energy of my stress on that rather than
43 just letting it build up or whatever but I'll actually release it by reacting, and
44 then ten minutes later you'll just start playing it again, and you'll think wow
45 that's really just amazing energy, and suddenly it stimulates you into erm
46 creating.

47
48 So it is making, turning something negative into something very positive?

49
50 Yes. Any other things that you do, do you do meditation, yoga, relaxation,
51 anything like that, Alexander technique?

52
53 I don't tend to. I have been doing some yoga, I teach this girl, I do some
54 Alexander technique, I teach this girl some Logic and in return she is a
55 practicing yoga teacher so I do some yoga.

56
57 And does that help?

1
2 Yes, but I don't really get off on it too much. I like stretching, but I don't feel
3 necessarily me sitting in a way, or going through that routine actually relaxes my
4 mind.
5
6 Any other things you do though, when you get wound up that do relax you?
7
8 (6) Piano is a big resource.
9
10 And do you do any sport, fitness, any physical, go for walks, cycle, anything like
11 that.
12
13 I don't really. There's nothing really around here that would be great to go for a
14 walk.
15
16 So how do you sort of chill when you want to, kind of chill out, what would you
17 do?
18
19 I may go out.
20
21 Drink, smoke, anything?
22
23 I don't drink, I don't smoke. I mean the thing is I'm not able to take any alcohol
24 right now, because I am suffering from the aftermath of a serious head injury so
25 that's affected me quite a bit basically so I'm not.
26
27 Oh gosh.
28
29 I have had some seizures. I am on some medication for seizures so obviously
30 while that's happening. Alcohol can stimulate seizures so I'm not doing
31 anything like that basically.
32
33 Yes. Any other things that you have done or you do now?
34
35 Yes, I mean I'd normally go out or go to the piano, or use one of these books as
36 a window into a completely different world, and I might sit with a cup of tea or
37 something and just look at that and just be completely refreshed. It is a form of
38 escapism. So I've got quite a few books that are like that and are completely
39 different worlds and really ...
40
41 So they do both really, because they both inspire you and take away the stress?
42
43 Yes, just the same as the instrument.
44
45 Yes, any other things that you'd like to mention? What about the more practical
46 side of it, how you cope with being under financial pressure, all those things,
47 pressure of work, too little or too much?
48
49 I don't find this work, I don't find work, music or any form of work musically
50 related like this, creating, as feeling like work, I never get annoyed with it.
51
52 So it's endlessly renewing?
53
54 Absolutely, absolutely, it is never, it's been self-discovery, constant self-
55 discovery.
56

1 Any things you particularly want to do that lie ahead of you, you talked about
2 moving into media?

3
4 Yes, film, I think film would be great and also working much more with dance.
5 I wrote a show which I want, I'd like to be performed, which erm uses film with
6 contemporary dance and all of that. Right now I'm not financially in a position
7 to be able to, or I've not developed all facets which would allow this show to
8 move forwards, so I'm doing a round-about routine, a route, in order to get
9 there, so other different things like that. Large-scale things basically, I'm really
10 interested in doing large-scale works like for example, some, not, a show I think
11 lightens the idea of it, but erm for example there are different locations in the
12 Earth which were geographically oriented to map, to relate to star formations
13 and things like that, and it would be interesting to do some work, some audio-
14 visual work, but not a light, not rubbish, in these locations and things. So I'd
15 like to do that sort of thing. I'd also like to do, basically very large, erm again I
16 don't want to use the word spectacular, but you know, serious. I'm not talking
17 about light, a light show with some really dancey music or you know semi-
18 classical music to get a bigger audience but actually a serious experience, like a
19 serious film, sci-fi film but it actually being in a live three-dimensional space
20 where there might be erm images that were created in holograms that would be
21 also be visualised by mist, so you can actually see the hologram in mist.
22 Imagine that on a large scale, with loads of things like that flying around with
23 the sound actually connecting you with the visuals, for it to be a complete
24 experience. I'd love to go into that.

25
26 How do you get started on that? Do you start with your conception. Do you
27 have to get funding for that kind of thing?

28
29 You have to get obviously large funding, but I'm not, I don't feel that I've
30 developed the right relationships yet, in order for that to happen. But I think as
31 my reputation grows in different areas I will be able to draw those relationships
32 together to make it happen. But that's not something I'm going to be able to do
33 next year. It would be something which ...

34
35 That's a wonderful vision for the future. You mentioned earlier having that
36 political business about the Competition. When you have difficulties with
37 people, when there are sort of problems with people how do you cope with
38 those? Do you get angry, do you shout and rant and...

39
40 What problems with people in terms of them

41
42 Yes frustrations with people.

43
44 What sort of people? Anyone?

45
46 Yes, anyone professionally, sort of thing.

47
48 Professionally, I just cut them off.

49
50 Do you? You don't respond?

51
52 I don't confront a lot of people. Maybe it's a problem which I need to or
53 something I need to learn to do, but I think it is very difficult to confront people.

54
55 What would you tend to do?

56
57 Just cut them out of the equation.

1
2 Withdraw from the situation?
3
4 No I would get them to withdraw from the situation.
5
6 Get them to withdraw, yes, can you give me an example?
7
8 I'd just get rid of them.
9
10 Yes. So get out of those situations so that you are surrounded by and working
11 with people you can get on with?
12
13 Yes.
14
15 Is it important to you to be surrounded by people that you find congenial?
16
17 Yes. And also, I mean I've learned from someone else's project that unless it is
18 going to be rewarding, unless I'm going to get something from it properly and
19 it's all agreed properly ...
20
21 Rewarding in what sense?
22
23 Well, OK for example, let's say someone's got a project and they want me to
24 help make that project work. OK there's got to be something, there's got to be
25 some form of, legally I have got to be protected to make sure that I get what we
26 have agreed, in other words.
27
28 Contractually?
29
30 Yes, in other words it's financial or me being actually being featured in it or
31 something, the point is that's got to work. But I will tend to if possible not work
32 in other people's projects, because I don't see myself as someone who helps
33 make other people's projects work.
34
35 So you like to have overall control over the work that you do?
36
37 Yes, they have got to be my visions. Yes. I don't like helping other people's
38 visions work, I think it's a waste of my time.
39
40 Right. How about people helping you?
41
42 Well that's fine. It's terrible, but
43
44 No, not at all. Are you a good team worker when it comes to realising your own
45 vision, your own ideas? How do you cope with disagreements that arise during
46 that process?
47
48 I'd like the idea that everything would be set up. It's not that I would want to, is
49 not a matter of manipulation or taking advantage of people, but it would be a
50 case of if people wanted to be part of it, that's great. But I'd like to think that
51 I'm fair and I'd stick to what I said would happen, yes, and I'd like to think that
52 I would be able to set up a system where people were clear about not only what
53 was expected of them, but also what they would expect from each other, so also
54 roles would be much more clarified.
55
56 So you like things to be as clear as possible from the outset?
57

1 Certainly from now on. Yes.

2

3 Are you speaking from experience about situations like that?

4

5 Yes. Well, I think when you are younger and less experienced things can be
6 messier, and you don't necessarily outline roles properly and then suddenly
7 people get the wrong end of things and then it's all really messy.

8

9 What has been the outcome in those situations in the past?

10

11 Relationships can be damaged.

12

13 Right. Has that happened to you?

14

15 Yes.

16

17 And can you say a bit more about it?

18

19 There's a relationship with a man who was a teacher at (a London Music
20 College), a visiting professor at (name of College) and he admired me as a
21 player. So we did quite a bit of playing together. And then he couldn't do
22 something, this work, and it was actually a very technically demanding work for
23 piano, and I ended up having to get someone else, book someone else, that's all.
24 I said forget it, you know and so I go with this other person. But then I am also
25 friends with this guy anyway, and he understood. Because the thing is, as soon
26 I'd started this other guy, who was actually better for what I wanted to do, you
27 know. In these situations, it's not as if we're contracted, it's like OK, so if I'm
28 going to go with the person that's going to be a better pianist, as a duo, I mean
29 that's quite a normal thing to do. Erm But I have obviously still retained
30 friendship with this other guy. There are still things that we end up doing
31 together, but I don't, I never re-stimulate it in a way. OK we are a duo and we
32 are going to be doing these things but we then... I am then in a situation much
33 later on, where (3) the person I'm going out, someone, the lady I am going out
34 with is a singer, and she is doing something at Ronnie Scott's and she wants me
35 to do, as well as playing in her band or whatever, she wants me to also do a spot
36 before it, and it will obviously be my group or whatever. He also gets in the
37 process, and makes it very difficult for me not to include him. So I then have to
38 reintegrate him into a band which I have developed, etc, etc, which is fine. I
39 accept that. But then there is one gig where he gets quite drunk and he ends up
40 playing way out of order, and it's the last straw and I then after the gig say, and I
41 just don't hold anything back. I am just furious, and I say look blah, blah, blah,
42 blah blah and that's it, then the relationship is finished, the relationship was
43 never able to get over that at all. We never spoke again and that has been about
44 (2) six years and I'm only trying to now regain some of the friendship.

45

46 Do you find that you want to be friends with the people that you play with and
47 work with?

48

49 Yes, you have got to be friends, because you have got to respect them.

50

51 You can't have people that you don't particularly like that you work with
52 musically?

53

54 No, definitely not. No because I wouldn't want them to (2) benefit from the
55 work that I'm putting in and which would be benefiting everyone around me as
56 well as me. I wouldn't want that person to be in that situation, in the same way.

57

1 Why?
2
3 Because (5), erm well it is like if someone you dislike, you know, are not going
4 to give them your best china.
5
6 Yes, OK, so you don't feel they deserve it?
7
8 I don't know, you don't, it's not about deserving. It's just a case of, and
9 especially if they have done something wrong to me, or done something
10 harmful, I don't feel, I wouldn't feel good about, because when you're playing
11 with people there's a bond between you and things like that and I wouldn't be
12 able to have a bond with someone I didn't like. It would be fine with people I
13 didn't know, because there wouldn't be any blocks immediately there, so you'd
14 just respect them as another musician, so that's fine but if there's someone I
15 distinctly disliked, and it was up to me to book players, I wouldn't book them.
16
17 Because, you mentioned earlier about performing long term, these kind of
18 relationships with people that you feel comfortable with and who contribute.
19
20 Yes, definitely because in the same way that erm I benefit from them, they
21 benefit from me. Like, for example, I am organising a festival in Mexico next
22 year and I've booked people I respected and also like and they are going to
23 benefit well from that, etc, etc, so in the same way I benefit from them, they
24 benefit from me, so that's fine.
25
26 OK, I think we're nearly there. Any other things you think, coming back to my
27 question of a few minutes ago that would inform me in my work with musicians,
28 any other things that have occurred to you?
29
30 Can you just explain exactly?
31
32 That from your own experience you have learned about that you think I might
33 not know about that would help me, that would be important for me to know?
34
35 About musicians? (5) Just the fact that music is food, it is actually food for
36 people and things like that and in as much as music is about practicing to get
37 something right, it's also about feeding and also being fed and stuff like that. It's
38 always about being open enough to feel that, so it's not a difficult thing at all.
39 And also the greatest things that you can write or play or whatever always come
40 at the point when you can be naked, you can't do it with any masks on, you can
41 work to a certain extent with a mask, but then there has got to be a point where
42 you actually completely expose yourself and even if it is bad, good or whatever
43 you have got to expose it to, to be able to communicate anything and stuff like
44 that.
45
46 It is a very exposing process isn't it, writing music?
47
48 Writing music, yes. I wouldn't necessarily say that you'd have to do that on such
49 a profound level when you're writing dance music or some house music and
50 things like that, because it's not as profound, a lot of popular music isn't as
51 profound as that, so you can get away. But if you're writing some serious music
52 or music that is quite intense, and deeper you need, it takes much more, you
53 have to take more layers off, so to speak, to get there.
54
55 And how do you protect yourself from that vulnerability that is exposed?
56

- 1 I think that as you come to terms and expose to yourself your own vulnerability,
- 2 you actually become stronger.
- 3
- 4 So the process is a process of growth?
- 5
- 6 Strengthening, yes, the more you can expose of yourself the stronger you
- 7 become.
- 8
- 9 OK. I think that's a good note to end on there.
- 10
- 11 Yes, great.

Transcript 12 :

Ben

1 When people ask you to describe yourself as a musician, what would you say?

2

3 I'd probably say I was a guitarist and I'm really interested in arranging and
4 composing original material and adapting other stuff. Particularly focussed on
5 brass section at the moment, but interested in general, across the whole range of
6 composing, including classical.

7

8 You've got very wide interests in composing. Do you tell people you are
9 composing different kinds of music?

10

11 No not really. Only if they really want that information. Otherwise I'd just say,
12 "Well I play a bit of guitar."

13

14 Any particular reason for not telling them?

15

16 Well that's usually enough information that anyone would [laughs] wants to
17 know and I've met so many good guitarists and everything I don't really
18 consider it anything that special. It's not like I've got any great claim to be, I'm
19 not even a professional. It's purely done part time although I'm trying to take it
20 on more of a professional level.

21

22 Is that true of your composing as well?

23

24 Yes.

25

26 OK. Would you call yourself a composer to friends and family? Would they see
27 you as somebody who writes music?

28

29 Well, I think they are all aware of how interested in music I am, and what I do in
30 music because as far as friends are concerned, they are all interested in music. I
31 haven't got, I don't think I've got any friends who aren't interested in music
32 because why would I even bother talking to them, sort of thing! [laughs]. We
33 just wouldn't get on. And I would be really. I do get fed up with people who
34 don't respond in a sort of quite strong emotional way to music.

35

36 Was that interest in music something that led you to your friends?

37

38 Definitely. Definitely. Yes.

39

40 What do you think makes it different for people who are into music and people
41 who aren't?

42

43 Different? I don't know if it is different in any sense other than people who have
44 shared interests they always do stick together, don't they?

45

46 Yes

47

48 And in the case of why musicians stick together that's a bit different. There's
49 definitely more to it.

50

51 What do you think it is?

52

53 It's more than just the normal relationship with somebody, a friendship. Because
54 you might not even get on that well, particularly, but you can still build up a
55 very strong bond.

56

57 Is this through playing together?

1
2 Yes.
3
4 So you can find yourself playing with, working with people in music that you
5 wouldn't necessarily get on with particularly the rest of the time.
6
7 Um. Um.
8
9 So most of your friends are in music?
10
11 Yes in one way or another.
12
13 Are your interests primarily in music too?
14
15 Yes.
16
17 Do you have any interests outside music?
18
19 Erm. Well, I used to like football a lot but I seem to have really got fed up with
20 that ever since I stopped being, I'm too old to play football now.
21
22 You used to play then?
23
24 Yes. and maybe that's why I've lost a lot of interest. Like watching it very
25 rarely.
26
27 It was mainly playing.
28
29 I liked a lot of activities and stuff. Some rock climbing and hill walking and stuff
30 like that and cycling. I like that kind of thing. On the one hand I've got very
31 healthy active pursuits and on the other other hand I've got to beat the bad
32 habits.[laughs]
33
34 A bit of both! So one counterbalances the other!
35
36 Well hopefully!
37
38 I noticed the bike down there. That brings me on to an area I'm particularly
39 interested in. Thinking about your writing, mainly, all your activities connected
40 to writing. What kind of things make it easier for you to do? And the reason it
41 follows on for me is some people for instance find that having that physical
42 outlet, having some kind of fitness thing makes it easier to work. Is that true for
43 you?
44
45 Erm, well I think it does actually, help you stay alert. It does help. It's an old
46 adage, isn't it, about a healthy mind and that. But I think it does.
47
48 Is that something you hold to, or you actually do? 'Cause sometimes [laughing]
49 we can all believe in it but not necessarily do it! Are there periods when you
50 keep very fit?
51
52 Yes, it's not so much over the last couple of months, because its winter,
53 basically. I don't go to gyms and things like that. I'm not interested in keep fit.
54 It's got to be involved in, doing something but it's usually a lot to do with, it's a
55 nice feeling if I'm doing things but there's got to be something involved in it as
56 well. Like in mountain climbing or hill walking. It's the visual scenery that's
57 really inspiring and so on.

1
2 So sitting in a room pedalling has nothing on actually being out there in the
3 countryside?
4
5 No. Or even cycling round the town. Up and down the river. 'Cause it's
6 stimulating.
7
8 And does that feed back onto the writing in any way?
9
10 Well I think it must do, because as I say it's stimulating and it's emotionally as
11 well I think.
12
13 Any other things that you do that you think help the writing?
14
15 What, outside the music?
16
17 Anything at all.
18
19 Going to see, watch and listen to music obviously. Hearing other people's music
20 is an absolute must.
21
22 Right. What kind of thing do you get out of that?
23
24 Well it could be a sort of emotional high of feeling, or whatever, in response to
25 the music, or an intellectual kind of buzz, if you know what I mean?
26
27 Yes.
28
29 An appreciation of something that's really clever, or it could be just the
30 opportunity to steal a good idea! Something like that.
31
32 Right! So it stimulates you generally and it can also feed directly into your own
33 ideas and can give you things to use as a basis.
34
35 Oh definitely. Definitely.
36
37 Any other things?
38
39 Well, yes I think having a lot of time. You need time and peace and quiet, and
40 the sort of situation like I am in, where I've got quite a large flat for a single
41 person. I can give up this whole room that we're in, just for music, like a study.
42
43 So having a dedicated space. Are you a person that likes to have a pattern of
44 working or do you work when you feel like it?
45
46 Well I always think I should, but I never do!
47
48 Why do you think you should then?
49
50 Because nothing ever seems to be done until the last minute [laughs].
51
52 Oh right! So would you find that if you've got a deadline that that would help
53 you?
54
55 Oh it is a must, but I'm good at actually getting there on the deadline, and
56 getting it done, but quite often it means the last few days are, you know, I end up

1 doing things and working too hard when I should be asleep, way past the (inaud)
2 and I think, "Oh God, why couldn't I have managed this a bit more sensibly!"
3
4 So you can tend to leave things till the last minute?
5
6 Yes definitely.
7
8 And having a deadline helps.
9
10 Yes.
11
12 And not having a deadline would make it harder? Or not having a pressing
13 deadline. What about a working pattern? I mean are you somebody who will get
14 up and come in here and start doing it, or is it variable?
15
16 It varies all the time.
17
18 Can you give me an idea how it varies?
19
20 Well, it could vary simply according to what I want to watch on telly.
21
22 Sure, so you fit it in around other things you're doing?
23
24 Yes, or shopping. One of the, I'm really into cooking [laughs] so one of the
25 things about being unemployed, one of the good things about it, is that I've got
26 the time to always go and buy good food. Every other day. I don't have to do it
27 all at once, and spend time doing that kind of thing and I like to spend a bit of
28 time cooking the food.
29
30 Do you think that doing things you like, like cooking, helps you work? So if you
31 cook something nice it's the pleasure of doing the cooking and eating it adds to
32 what you're doing?
33
34 I don't know but I suspect that a good diet again is good for you and good for
35 your concentration and everything.
36
37 Have you noticed times when that's been true of you?
38
39 Well it's hard to tell because as I say I'm like that all the time.
40
41 OK So you're pretty, you're a healthy eater.
42
43 But a guy on telly the other day on a documentary reckoned that crime had
44 increased by quite a significant percentage since beefburgers and fast food were
45 introduced. That could be the overlooked factor that's driving people nuts, is
46 eating all this crappy food!! [laughing]
47
48 Do you think that eating good food helps?
49
50 Yes. I think it probably does, but that's just purely an anecdotal thing, but I
51 suspect there's good reasons for thinking that's probably true.
52
53 So you don't say I'm feeling down today, I'll have a so and so and it'll make me
54 feel better. some whatever it is, food or drink?
55

1 Erm. No, to be honest, no. If I'm really fed up about something the chances are
2 I'll end up not spending time on it. I'll eat something that's just a load of
3 rubbish, something very basic, like a kebab.
4
5 Easy
6
7 Yes
8
9 Quick and easy. Yes. OK. So you work when you feel the time's right.
10
11 Yes. Several hours a day.
12
13 Are you a day or night person?
14
15 Night.
16
17 When do you prefer to work, all other things being equal? If you've got free
18 time when would you find it easiest and nicest to be working?
19
20 Later in the day I think usually.
21
22 Evening
23
24 No. This room that I'm working in here, you get a lot of sun in the afternoon, so
25 that's nice. I don't know. It varies really. But I'm probably not that good in the
26 morning.
27
28 Does it vary, whether you want to be working, as well, how much time you want
29 to spend on it?
30
31 Well I think what I find is, on the mental side of it, thinking about the stuff that
32 we've got to write, our next assignments, that's not a problem at all, and I tend
33 to think about that all the time, even when I'm out shopping and stuff, usually
34 that's what I'm thinking about. It's the sitting down and writing out on
35 manuscript, the finished work that we have to hand in. Once you have
36 composed, thought through something, you know what it is, then you have to go
37 through the process of writing it out, that's the bit where you've got to force
38 yourself to put it on paper.
39
40 What's so hard about that for you then, that you have to force yourself to do it?
41
42 'Cause this is just, what would they, I don't know what, is it calligraphy or
43 something?
44
45 The actual writing?
46
47 Yes, or whatever, but writing this out, that's not a musical activity, its purely a
48 physical activity. Transferring something from brain to paper. You've already
49 done all the work. Not all of it, but you've done most, say 80% of it.
50
51 Where does that take place then?
52
53 Anywhere.
54
55 You could be queueing up in the shop and you're getting ideas....
56
57 Yes. But also, when, at the instrument, playing or practising.

1
2 Guitar, keyboard?
3
4 Both.
5
6 So you get your ideas anywhere and they go down on the guitar or keyboard and
7 they end up on paper. So it's quite a complex series of processes really. I know
8 you're at college and you have to do different sorts of assignments, do you
9 approach them in the same way the different kinds of thing you have to do?
10
11 The process can differ. It can all depend on the kind of work that we are set to
12 do.
13
14 Can you give me an example?
15
16 So for example, if we are asked to write a song with lyrics, I might tend to think
17 first of all, what is the point of this song? What is the message of this song
18 going to be? And it will invariably have a political message. I don't really write
19 about er love songs and stuff like that, which is great but I'm not really int-
20 Everybody does that and I don't see why you need someone else to write the
21 same old stuff. So there might be another kind of agenda. Or on the same sort of
22 level but slightly different, it might be an emotional thing that you want to
23 express in music.
24
25 You're referring to something different, not the song,
26
27 Yes but it could overlap.
28
29 Or it might be what? Hate, fear, love, pride, anger whatever...
30
31 Yes, anything really. And certainly if I'm depressed about something, I don't
32 want to stay depressed. Well, I don't really get depressed. Fed up,
33
34 It comes out in the music?
35
36 Then that is likely to, that is going to come out. Yes.
37
38 It comes out in the playing too presumably.
39
40 Yes. Usually it works quite well! [laughing]
41
42 Do you find you can make good use of your feelings in your composition..
43
44 Oh definitely.
45
46 You are aware of using them?
47
48 Yes. People inspire you.
49
50 Do you have your own kind of language for expressing those feelings in music,
51 that you are developing?
52
53 Well, it's more to do with, especially on that side of things, to do with tone,
54 timbre and if something is particularly problematic or you are facing a problem,
55 with a relationship or with someone or something, it could come out in very
56 obvious ways, dissonant sounds and stuff like that.
57

1 As well as the instrumentation and things like that.
2
3 Yes. That's definitely one of the basic functions of music, anyway, and that's
4 what has driven it along since its inception.
5
6 Do you find that since you have been at college the way you have approached
7 writing music has changed at all?
8
9 Yes definitely. There's a lot more information behind it. Technical information.
10
11 And does that make it easier?
12
13 Oh definitely, yes. Sometimes when we are given something to do I just do it. I
14 just look on it initially as a technical problem and then in the process of just
15 working it out, how to do something from a technical point of view, then other
16 things come into play that make it into proper music.
17
18 Yes. Before you had all that, what was the difference?
19
20 Well a less well developed sort of vocabulary really through which to express an
21 idea. You don't know how. You can write something and it can be very difficult
22 to get beyond a certain stage. I suppose if you're writing a book or something, if
23 you don't know how to end it. It's all very well writing a page or something that
24 looks good, but then what? And it's the same with music. If you want to make it
25 into a complete idea you're going to probably need. The more you know about,
26 for example, modulating between keys, and how to do it. For example it might
27 be one way of tying up. For example this happened with something that I've just
28 done for College. I got to the end of it, it modulated into different keys and I had
29 to get back to the start,
30
31 How do I get there, yes?
32
33 Without it sounding false. So simply just using a bit of that theory knowledge it
34 wasn't difficult.
35
36 So that can help change the shape, and the whole pattern of a piece really and
37 help move it on, if you get a good idea which can help you to develop it.
38
39 You get through points where otherwise you would get stuck.
40
41 Do you think that overcoming the stuck bits is important in learning something?
42
43 Yes definitely.
44
45 You learn particularly from what you can't do so well as much as from...
46
47 Oh yes. Yes. Well. Mistakes. Musicians always love mistakes because in fact
48 they get some of their best ideas.
49
50 And just following things through really.
51
52 I mean that always comes into it. Good mistakes.
53
54 Can you give me an example from your own experience?
55
56 I can't think of one specifically now, but it does happen, it happens all the time.
57 I'm only really thinking about this latest thing I've just done.

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56

And that happened with that piece?

No not really. Not on that one, otherwise it would come to mind immediately...

We were talking about things that made it easier for you to work – are there any other things that we haven't mentioned?

Erm. (10) Well, no, not really. General environmental situation, and a bit of support. I get help as well from people. Financial help. Just enough, because you need a little bit extra to pay the bills. What you get from the dole isn't really enough.

So it would make it a lot easier for you to have more financial help, so you would have that cushion. If you had more money to spend on your music what would you do with it?

I'd improve my little studio here. I'd buy another electric guitar, I'd buy a classical guitar, a violin probably, because the only reason I don't take that up again, or try it at least, is because I can't afford to buy one, and I'd probably want to get some kind of brass or reed instrument or wind instrument or something in that area so I can just get a bit of an idea of, just to learn to play a few scales on it really, to know what it's like. Ideally I'd like a real piano. So there's loads of things, other things, as well that would be useful. Samplers. There's all kinds of things.

All that would feed into it.

Yes.

When you are through all the college stuff, what would you like to do, as far as writing music is concerned. Any ideas, hopes and dreams about what you'd like?

I want to be a music teacher in schools.

What sort of age group?

All age groups really. You probably need a bit of each of them, otherwise I think you'd get fed up with them. And also what I'd like to do is to try and, I'm trying to get a band started at the moment and it is quite difficult but I'd like to do that as a vehicle for playing the stuff that I write.

How far have you got with it, getting a band together?

Well, it's early days really.

Have you got the people in it that you want?

Well I did do. I've got some of them.

What would you like to do with the music? Is it playing or recording or what?

Well mainly play, play gigs and maybe do some recording.

Would you do that under your own steam?

1 Yes. Some of it is commercially viable. The sort of stuff that I write some of it
2 may be, may be I guess, but

3
4 How would you describe it?

5
6 It does vary a lot really. It varies a hell of a lot. Some of it is quite spiky

7
8 Spiky as in?

9
10 Not the kind of thing that I think the general public is going to

11
12 It would appeal to a specialist audience?

13
14 Yes.

15
16 When you write your music are you thinking about a particular audience? Have
17 you got an idea who you are writing for, who is going to hear it?

18
19 Well, when I did the, I mentioned the amateur, the Community Theatre stuff
20 before, I don't think we recorded that bit.

21
22 No we haven't got that on tape, have we?

23
24 I mean the idea was very much specifically to recreate a particular kind of
25 music, and it was for a regular crowd of people who come every year to watch
26 this alternative pantomime and it runs for like a week, in Glastonbury. So the
27 music had a very specific purpose, but it also happened to be music that I really
28 liked so I really enjoyed doing it and playing it. Most of the stuff that I'm trying
29 to write for the band, this band that I mentioned, is based upon things that I've
30 done in College, and has grown out of ideas that have been extended into more
31 complicated instrumentation.

32
33 And your choice of people for the group, what is it based on?

34
35 Ability to play, not necessarily to be a good theoretician, or to read music either.
36 It's sound, sound and good quality of playing. Individuality.

37
38 Is interpretation of what you write important?

39
40 Individuality, because I'm trying to write stuff that has a lot of options for
41 improvising.

42
43 So you are choosing people who you know have got something to contribute as
44 well. Would you choose people because you know what kind of thing they can
45 do, and you want that in your music?

46
47 Yes. Yes. But on the other hand, it's reliability and personality and stuff as well.
48 That's really important.

49
50 When it comes to interpreting what you write, what kind of things do you think
51 are important?

52
53 Well, good control of the instrument really, and ideas, originality. Certain parts
54 of the stuff I'm writing at the moment for them, certain parts, need to be played
55 as written but then there are open, usually in choruses. Then it opens out and
56 gives them the chance for soloing and I want, I guess really also, putting it quite
57 simply. It's the people I want to play with are the people I want to listen to, that I

1 enjoy listening to, because in a way part of it is to lay the foundations so that I
2 can get my own enjoyment out of just listening to them, you see.

3
4 How much does it matter to you what those people think about your music? Is it
5 important?

6
7 Yes. They've got to like it. Yes. No point otherwise.

8
9 And beyond that. What about other musicians that you don't play with – how
10 important is it that they like your music?

11
12 Well in the context of the material that I've just been talking about, not a lot. In
13 the context of doing something like the community theatre, the public attitude is
14 very important, because it's a show for their benefit. And also we are trying to
15 do something, but ultimately it is entertainment. And we are also doing stuff, we
16 are also doing some covers as well, with a singer, standards and things, that
17 might develop hopefully into a different repertoire for us to do that's more about
18 pleasing the public.

19
20 Is it important to you to please the wider public?

21
22 Yes I think it depends in what context for those kinds of material you're playing
23 really.

24
25 What about music critics and the music press?

26
27 Well, if someone gives you a good review, you're not going to say that it's not
28 important.

29
30 How does it make you feel, a good review?

31
32 Oh. Yes. Quite happy. When I did that Community Theatre thing we went and
33 read the reviews in the papers even though they were quite insignificant.

34
35 How do you mean?

36
37 The local papers, Glastonbury and Wells, and Somerset Review. We did get
38 good reviews actually and the music got very good reviews so, we were happy
39 about that.

40
41 What about bad reviews?

42
43 I've never really had any yet. I'm not enough exposed to

44
45 How do you think you would react if people didn't like the music?

46
47 I think it all depends really. I don't know if I'd be that bothered.

48
49 What I'm getting at is how important it is to you how well your music is
50 received, and understood too, because obviously some of the reviewers won't
51 have a clue about the music and others will understand but don't like it. So a
52 good review may be based on something you may or may not be doing.

53
54 Definitely, I think the more the material is geared towards the audience, the
55 more I want to get a good response, but most of the stuff that you do you are
56 going to want to get a good response from the audience or anyone who's
57 listening.

1
2 If it is not geared towards the audience who will be geared towards?
3
4 It could be just for your own interest or for a more select specific targeted
5 audience as it were.
6
7 And is that specific audience of people who are really into the music, can you
8 identify them as a group?
9
10 No not really.
11
12 Have you had feedback from people on your music?
13
14 Yes.
15
16 What has that been like?
17
18 Pretty good. Pretty good.
19
20 How has that made you feel?
21
22 Well, yes, I feel quite good about that if they like it. Yes.
23
24 Is it important to you to leave music behind when you die? That you leave a
25 body of work, or some kind of mark....
26
27 No. No. Not at all really.
28
29 It's mainly all about doing it now.
30
31 Yes. You know I wouldn't say that anything I'm writing is that, going to make
32 that much of an impression in the overall world, the music that is going to really
33 matter one way or the other really. That's not why I do it.
34
35 Would it be nice if it did though?
36
37 It would be but I don't think that's going to happen.
38
39 It's not why you do it.
40
41 Because your music has got an improvised element in it, can you say a little bit
42 about the relationship between the structures that you write that people play on,
43 and the contribution of the individuals that you get to the way the music ends up
44 sounding and how you feel about the way that people can change it, alter it,
45 develop it. Can I have your views on that?
46
47 Well there are certain things that I think once I've written I want played, that
48 have to be played and as far as I am concerned that's the idea, and its an idea
49 that has been written, it's been created, and that's what I want to hear.
50
51 So if that's altered it's just wrong.
52
53 Yes. But there's always a lot of room for improvisation or just changes that er.
54 You wouldn't want to write it all down. You'd end up with it all over the place,
55 all these black notes. Even back in classical music and the Baroque era,
56 composers didn't write down exactly what you were supposed to play. You

1 probably know that anyway, but it's not the way it's done. And it's not
2 something new even, it's always been like that.

3
4 Is that something you like about the process, the fact that you can think of ideas
5 to work on.

6
7 Yes. I think so yes.

8
9 What I'm getting at here is when you start off with an idea, and it becomes
10 transformed when people work with it and add their own contribution, how does
11 that make you feel?

12
13 Oh. That's great. Yes.

14
15 Do you get surprised or?

16
17 Yes. You're always going to be surprised because people always think of stuff
18 that you never expect, their own musical ideas, their own musical identity, their
19 own musicality is different. It's coming from different places, different
20 influences and they've got ideas that you would never think of. So that's great
21 when that

22
23 So don't have this kind of ownership of what you are writing in the same way.
24 It's partly a joint collaborative thing isn't it?

25
26 Exactly. There are certain things that are written down that if they are not done
27 the way they are written down they are not going to work. But then again there's
28 a whole large area that. What you want to put down is to some extent it can just
29 be a skeleton, what you want finished.. And if you just played it as written or in
30 a very mechanical way it wouldn't work at all, so, yeah.

31
32 Any other things that make it harder for you, writing this music? Financial
33 pressure is obviously one thing Any other pressures?

34
35 Well I'd like more equipment. It's very useful having all these technical aids. If
36 you haven't got all the musicians at your, available, you've got sequencers and
37 stuff.

38
39 Any problems associated with the musicians that you work with?

40
41 Well, the ones who don't turn up. I've had one or two.

42
43 OK yes!

44
45 Otherwise no.

46
47 Any others?

48
49 Well I had a guy here. He was very lacking in self-confidence and he thought he
50 wasn't good enough and he actually was good enough. It was just because he
51 can't read music very well that he's worried constantly about it but in actual fact
52 he was very good. The problem in that case was to persuade him that he's good
53 enough.

54
55 You have to be able to get on with the people you're working with so you can
56 get the best out of them. Lack of confidence can be one thing. Have you ever
57 suffered from that in your own work?

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Yes. Oh yes. On and off. Not all the time but on and off. Well, it's a bit of a downer isn't it, but and I think it applies in anything that you do, you're constantly questioning it. But I think if you really want to do something, you are totally into it, you just carry on doing it anyway and then something good comes along or you get an idea that you like, and then you're off again.

Questioning how good it is, that kind of questioning, not why you are doing it, is it?

Yes I mean questioning yes whether something that you've written, you just think it wasn't that good. Or whatever.

When you get those feelings thinking maybe it wasn't that good, how do you deal with them?

Well I don't really. It just deals with itself.

How? In what sort of way?

It's not sort of some, you can't just throw the towel in, can you?

It's very uncomfortable though. You look at something and you say, well,

Well, living in London especially. If you ever think that you're getting any good at anything in music, you soon get put in your place.

How? By what?

Well, you can go out and see a guy busking in the Tube in London who is much better on his instrument than you are, and he might look like a complete tramp [laughing] and you just think. "Well that's put you in your place!" There's so many good musicians, in London especially.

Do you see it as a very competitive field?

Oh it is on the professional level. Oh very much. That's not really how I think about it though.

How do you think about it?

There's a competitive element in it, I think

Around what sort of thing?

Um. Well it all depends. Let's say there's someone at College I'm not very keen on. Then I wouldn't want to put in a bit of work, that, I'd always want to do a bit of work that was better than theirs, do you see what I mean?

Yes OK!

Then it would bother me. But with people who I like, it wouldn't bother me at all. It's just that I wouldn't want to. that side of things tends to work like that anyway. You don't mind people you know being really good. You want to be with them 'cause they're really good.

You don't feel threatened by them? If you think they are better than you?

1
2 No. But I don't like it either, if I really dislike them. Then I wouldn't like it
3 [laughs]
4
5 You said much earlier there are people you can work with musically but don't
6 get on with?
7
8 Yes I think that's true.
9
10 So the music's there, but not the personal side.
11
12 When I say that, I mean, that's different from disliking someone...
13
14 How?
15
16 When I said that I meant more specifically people who, when I say you don't get
17 on with them, I don't mean in a sort of negative way, I just meant that you're not
18 particularly, you might not socialise in any other respect. You might only see
19 each other when you are doing music.
20
21 Do you socialise with friends in music that you play with quite a lot?
22
23 Yes. Yes. It again depends. It depends. Some of the people at College are a lot
24 younger than me. So, they have their different friends in College, younger. I feel
25 a little bit
26
27 Are there other people of your sort of age there ?
28
29 There are. Yes.
30
31 You find yourself with them, meeting them?
32
33 No. Not necessarily. But it's just like, that's maybe one reason why. Maybe
34 some of them I play music with I wouldn't necessarily socialise with so much.
35
36 What effect do you think being the same sort of age has, how does it make it
37 easier to get on?
38
39 I don't think it affects you when you are working together and you can probably
40 get on well after and have a drink and things as well, but they've got a different
41 sort of social set, so
42
43 [phone interruption] We were talking about socialising with people that you are
44 playing with. Do you socialise with people in your band as well?
45
46 Yes a little bit. Occasionally we go to parties and stuff. But not on a sort of every
47 week or every, same way that I do with my other friends. Generally a bit less.
48
49 I am interested in the effects of your work writing and playing music on your
50 social life, friends and personal life. Have you usually lived alone?
51
52 Well, most of the time. When you didn't, did you find your work affected
53 relationships with people in the same house?
54
55 Not really 'cause I've only really been spent this much time on it in the last few
56 years.
57

1 Oh right. What led you to decide to do it then? Make the change from what you
2 did before.
3
4 Because it's been an ongoing interest for so long, as I say it just seems to sort of
5 dominate everything else that I'm interested in, friendships and so on. I was fed
6 up with what I was doing, so it seemed a good, you know, why not? To spend
7 some time on something you really want to do. Otherwise you just waste your
8 life.
9
10 Has it lived up to your expectations?
11
12 Oh definitely.
13
14 What is the difference in actually doing something as the main focus of your life
15 that you are really into as opposed to other things that you weren't, presumably,
16 before?
17
18 What's the main difference?
19
20 Yes.
21
22 I don't know. I think I'm probably a lot happier than I was, doing this. It's more
23 fulfilling.
24
25 What's the most fulfilling aspect?
26
27 Well, all of it really. I wouldn't pinpoint anything as more important. I'd
28 certainly say as well, another thing, another factor is, getting over 40 and you
29 don't want to. Obviously you're more aware that you've only got a certain
30 amount of time to do what you want to do. You see a lot more happen. You see a
31 lot more people dying for various reasons. You seem more aware of what you
32 want to do and the importance of doing it, and you've done a lot of things
33 already, hopefully, or I certainly have, and so in a way you've already achieved
34 various things you want to do, so there's less in the way, if you know what I
35 mean.
36
37 What form of achievement is this for you?
38
39 What form of achievement?
40
41 For some people it's a kind of way of finding a voice, sometimes literally a
42 voice, or a means of self-expression.
43
44 Oh yes, that's definitely true. Yes.
45
46 People in the creative worlds very often give that as a reason for wanting to be in
47 those worlds, 'cause they can be tough in other ways. Is that true for you?
48
49 I think that's probably the main reason why I played.
50
51 Do you feel you are getting there?
52
53 Yes. I definitely feel that I'm getting somewhere, and do put into the music, I'm
54 always trying to put into the music something that is coming out of me. Feelings
55 or views.. Otherwise I wouldn't. There's got to be that in it otherwise to me
56 there's no point.
57

1 When you are writing something are you somebody that knows when it is good
2 enough, do you know when to stop or are you someone who keeps on tinkering
3 with it?
4
5 No I think I usually know when I've done as much as I can. Whether that's good
6 enough I don't know.
7
8 If it's good enough for you, it's good.
9
10 Yes. Well maybe it's not really quite good enough but, maybe it is.
11
12 You settle for it, OK.
13
14 Yes I think that sometimes.
15
16 How do you know when you have reached that point?
17
18 I don't know.
19
20 But you do?
21
22 Yes.
23
24 OK. It's a kind of intuitive thing.
25
26 Yes and partly through listening to it, which is where things like having an 8
27 track or recording stuff helps you.
28
29 So you could listen back.
30
31 Yes. And also it's very useful in helping you realise when you're starting to put
32 too much into something: it's losing its dynamics and tension and becomes
33 muddled.
34
35 You're making it worse not better. Earlier on in life, before you moved into this
36 direction, did you have any idea that you would become a musician? Was it
37 something that you thought you wanted to do, or planned to do when you started
38 out?
39
40 Yes I think I always wanted to spend time on it.
41
42 Was it always part of your life?
43
44 Oh Yes. Always. Yes.
45
46 As what, a player, listener?
47
48 Well, a sort of rudimentary guitar playing, but listening to music always. From
49 the minute I could afford it I used to go to gigs all the time and that is what I
50 used to do, as many gigs as I could go to. That was back in the 70s.
51
52 So it is something that does go back a very long way?
53
54 And then you find out there's a lot more to this and you start to get into classical
55 music, which I did more recently, and stuff, jazz, and you know.
56

1 If you were looking back over the whole of your life, and projecting yourself
2 into the future. What would you like to achieve that you haven't yet achieved?
3
4 I'd definitely like to, as I was saying before, go into teaching and then also try
5 and get a reasonably successful band off the ground, by which I mean – a viable
6 band, which is what I just mean by successful, that is also playing what I think is
7 good music. It might not make any money, that's not necessarily the case, but.
8
9 That would be a bonus, whether it did or didn't.
10
11 Yes. If it paid for itself.
12
13 And what about about other things – recordings?
14
15 To be able to play, to maybe write something that is released on a commercial
16 level would be nice. That'd be great. I'd look upon that as a great achievement,
17 even if it never got anywhere, because it's very unlikely. It doesn't happen to
18 very, very few people get into that ...
19
20 Mainstream success
21
22 Yes. And it's usually young people.
23
24 Any other effects that what you are doing has had on your personal life or your
25 family life, social life?
26
27 It's well
28
29 I wondered how the change of direction had affected you?
30
31 It's. Well, apart from, I've got musical colleagues stroke friends now that I meet.
32 Some more than others, some are more friends than others. But there are no
33 work colleagues, so that's a bit weird. Because that's like a little social world in
34 its own right, isn't it?
35
36 Yes.
37
38 But it's very important and it's a bit,
39
40 Missing
41
42 And it's a lot more hours than what you spend with musicians, a lot more, and I
43 spend a lot more time on my own now.
44
45 How do you find it?
46
47 Well it does drive me up the wall sometimes, and when I go out sometimes I
48 don't stop talking.
49
50 Not having someone to talk to during the day, not having that kind of
51 companionship that you had at work....
52
53 When it does drive you mad, how do you cope?
54
55 Well I have to ring people up on the phone, bother them, for a couple of hours or
56 something.
57

1 Does that work?
2
3 Yes.
4
5 Anything else you do?
6
7 There's, well, no. There's not much you can do really.
8
9 Go for a walk, get out, something like that?
10
11 Well I go out cycling. Yes. Yes.
12
13 Any other things you do when you're climbing up the wall, if you spend long
14 hours here alone.
15
16 Well. There, let's see. I haven't got many people I can visit during the day, erm.
17 I've got one old friend who's a mum now, who also has the same problem
18 obviously as what I do, [laughs] so we just go and take her kid out for a walk or
19 something. That's someone I've known for ages. In fact it's the daughter of a
20 friend of mine so that's someone I've known since she was born, and now she's
21 got her own kid. So, yes, generally speaking. There's not much else you can do
22 really, because that's just the nature of doing, learning instruments or anything
23 like that. You've got to be the kind of person who can go into their own world,
24 in their own little world and look inside all the time. And you've also got to be
25 the kind of person who can do something repetitively, over and over and over.
26 So it's almost like it's having something wrong with you in some way that you
27 can do it. That's why most people don't learn instruments, they can't get over
28 the fact. They don't see that 99% of people who learn instruments aren't the kind
29 of people who pick up an instrument and they're great, they're so talented. It's
30 not like that.
31
32 Yes, it involves a lot of graft and so on, practising.
33
34 Yes.
35
36 So what keeps you going during those hours of work?
37
38 It's just cause I love music so. And you just feel that that's what you've gotta do.
39
40 And you've got an idea where you're going with it, getting better.
41
42 The alternative, I've done that as well. And I prefer doing this, what I'm doing
43 now, spending more.
44
45 What is the alternative?
46
47 Oh just spending most of my time at work and maybe having a drink or
48 whatever and less time, it's sort of reducing music to, even though it might still
49 be a big part of your life, the actual playing and involvement from a practical
50 point of view, is reduced, to the sidelines.
51
52 So it brings with it a lot of effort and focus and sheer hard work. What about
53 writing? Do you find there are times when things aren't coming easily to you –
54 you find yourself struggling with it?
55

1 At certain points, are more difficult to overcome I guess and then you can't
2 really predict where that's going to be, when you've been progressing an idea
3 from like maybe a few chords that you like, for a song or whatever.
4
5 How do you get through those difficulties?
6
7 Just keep trying things out. Usually whichever instrument it is you're writing it
8 on, or whether you're just sitting in the bath thinking it through.
9
10 Just keep on at it.
11
12 So it'll be a process that's partly mental, The more you're working on something
13 the more formed it is in your mind as well, as you get to know it, you can tinker
14 with it in your imagination without even having an instrument.
15
16 Do you find you generally get there in the end?
17
18 Yes. Yes. I usually think that I'm not going to get an idea but I always do.
19
20 So it's having trust that you can do it?
21
22 Yes. Something always turns up. Some idea, something that you can work on,
23 flesh out in some way. The end result is going to vary, in terms of how you like
24 it. It's never going to be just what you want, but.
25
26 Never?
27
28 No I don't think so.
29
30 It could always be better.
31
32 Well, I don't know, Maybe not necessarily that it could always be better, but.
33 Very rarely something won't go off in a bit of a direction that you hadn't
34 initially thought of, and sometimes it'll go off in a completely different
35 direction.
36
37 Is that good?
38
39 It has to be good, really.
40
41 So an important part of this is going with the flow really?
42
43 Oh yes, yes definitely.
44
45 That seems in a way to stop you being critical of yourself. You were saying
46 earlier that it's never quite good enough. On the other hand it's good in the sense
47 that it leads somewhere else.
48
49 Yes. I mean you're always going to be. I think if you're really into music, as
50 well, you're going to listen to – you're always going to, your heroes are going to
51 be, generally. If you're into composing, I think you've got to look to people like
52 Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn in one field, or Bach, and you know you're
53 never going to be as good as they are (laugh), because those guys were geniuses,
54 but you've got to become. They're the things about them that inspire you
55 because it's the best.
56
57 And you feel that there is progress going on?

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In the stuff I do? Oh definitely, yes. Definitely. It's practice, if nothing else.

Any other things we haven't talked about about the effect of being in music on your social life, friends, family? Do you come from a musical family?

No, well not in the recent family but I think my grandfather was, piano, a bit of a concert pianist or something.

Really

My uncle used to sing country and western.

Right. So you do, there is some.

Yes my dad was a pretty good singer, but he'd only sing in church. He had a pretty good baritone kind of voice. Music was always a. I'm still just about old enough to be from the generation when, if you came from a large family, or an extended family like I did, immigrants, Anglo-Indians, but still very British but also Indian. In those days, when I was young, in the 60s, there was still community, there was still family music. People still used to sit around and people in the family used to entertain each other. I don't think anyone does that now, hardly now, there's a bit maybe occasionally but it's different. We do entertain ourselves I guess. I guess we still do but it's different.

You had fond memories of that?

Yes. It's why when I was young, the first thing. That's why I still love country and western music, because it's the first thing I used to hear all the time. A lot of people hate it and don't understand it and regard it as just rubbish but – well you could say that but.

Any other things we haven't brought up – about what makes it easier and harder?

No. Well generally I'd say, a lot of it's to do with the environment. Even with having (name of college) just round the corner from where I live, that in itself a big plus. My friends who don't live in London. I know some of them could exploit their music a lot more if they had better facilities nearby. Certainly my friends down in (place). There's some terrific guitar players down there.

As you know I work with musicians are there any things that, from your own experience you think I should be aware of that would help me help them with their problems?

I don't know really, 'cause although musicians do tend to stick together, you've probably noticed in professional music some people who really are suspect characters. Like Frank Sinatra for example. Wouldn't be looked on very well except but musicians, all the people in the musical world they all loved him, because of what he could do. They just wanted to hear him sing. So they kind of judge each other on a different level and they have a different sort of relationship.

What about the lifestyle?

The lifestyle. I think they probably relate to each other on that level as well. Musicians, I would say, the vast majority that I've met are more left wing in

1 their opinions. You do meet some sort of capitalistically minded laissez faire
2 kind of musicians, but even those ones, but they tend to be on the libertarian
3 side.

4
5 Do you think that's because they are into music that they're like that, or are they
6 like that and they go into music? Which is the chicken and which the egg in that
7 situation?

8
9 I've no idea.

10
11 Same as the drugs and sex and rock'n'roll stuff. Do people who go into music
12 become like it because it's part of some cultures, or is it the other way round? Is
13 it that doing the creative work that brings you to situations where

14
15 I certainly don't find that. I find that with respect to drugs and all that kind of
16 thing that it's not necessarily the case, I don't think that correlates so strongly to
17 people in music, but they are more likely to be tolerant, much more tolerant
18 towards people taking drugs even if they don't. They'll turn a blind eye to it.

19
20 Why do you think that is?

21
22 'Cause they're gonna see a lot of it.

23
24 Like Frank Sinatra and the connections with organised crime. Do you think
25 musicians are more tolerant people, do you think they are similar to other
26 creative groups in that way?

27
28 Well it may be because of the process of, its a very co-operative thing, but it's
29 not just that co-operating, it's at a very intense level, because music soaks in, all
30 your concentration is involved. It's like 11 guys who play for a football team, I
31 mean a meaningful team, that is trying to achieve something,

32
33 You get this intensity with it, which is different from other groups, other
34 occupations, it's not just a job.

35
36 No. As I say, if you was to take a poll of musicians, how many people think
37 there should be a war in Iraq I think you'd struggle to find any, even the
38 conservative ones.

39
40 That's because they are more peace-loving, humanitarian, what do you put it
41 down to?

42
43 I don't know. Its probably as you say, it's hard to say, chicken and egg, bit of
44 both.

45
46 Some of the popular conception in the media is that there is a link between
47 people who are creative and instability. What are your views on this? The mad
48 genius view?

49
50 That's rubbish I think. I think what it might be to do with. Maybe, if you want
51 music, because it's creative, because it's expressive, you're trying to, you've
52 got to be, think about feelings, if you haven't you've got to be able to get up and
53 express yourself, ready to open up to criticism, you put yourself up in front of
54 people.

55
56 You lay yourself on the line

57

1 Yes. And therefore I think you're probably more, in a general sense, you're
2 probably a bit more sensitive, to being a person,

3
4 'Cause you're more exposed.

5
6 And less likely to be hiding behind, a front of some kind, a macho front. I'm
7 sure that a lot of the reasons that people, say if you say men tend to be more, say
8 that they are more in favour of war in any circumstances, even with an
9 unpopular war like this, because they think they should, and they are afraid of
10 being looked on as if it might not be quite the manly thing to do, to say

11
12 So there's convention as well, fitting in, and also some people might argue it is
13 very macho to be a sort of beer swilling, pub

14
15 Yes.

16
17 There's that side of it, and of course, something we haven't really mentioned,
18 there aren't very many women particularly in popular fields, apart from singers,
19 people who have their own bands. There is that side of it too. I am curious to see
20 why you think there are so few women.

21
22 Well if you are going to say there are right wing opinions in music, you are
23 going to find it on that side, where the more aggressive posturing is part of the
24 image of the music. The heavy metal guitar hero in leotards and hairy chest kind
25 of thing. [laughs] Ted Nugent, you know!

26
27 Yes there aren't many women heavy metal guitarists!

28
29 Ted Nugent is a great pro gun supporter, for example. And in the executives, the
30 business side, that's completely different.

31
32 What about other areas of music?

33
34 Well I don't know why. In the commercial world, why women aren't as visible
35 in commercial music, is to do with the same reason that women have less
36 opportunities in general. I don't think there's any difference, it's just part of the
37 capitalist structure, the way society works in general, and it's still got that bias.
38 It's getting maybe a bit less but it's still there. But at grass roots level I meet just
39 as many women..

40
41 There are many many more girls that go into playing an instrument than there
42 are boys and they are not working as musicians.

43
44 Exactly. Certainly if you look at a modern orchestra you'll find a big percentage
45 of women in there and in a lot of bands you'll still see a lot of women playing,
46 but maybe not as many as there should. I don't know why that is, to be honest.

47
48 Any other things you think I should be aware of. There's this question of laying
49 yourself on the line, that sets you apart being in music compared to other jobs,
50 and is more of a fun job, more a way of life.

51
52 You've got to be able to deal with those kind of nerves, to do any kind of
53 performance.

54
55 Do you suffer from nerves when you perform?

56
57 Well I do but not to any extent that I can't handle it

1
2 How do you handle it?
3
4 I don't know really. There's no particular means.
5
6 Do you take anything, or do relaxation, anything like that?
7
8 No. If anything I wouldn't touch anything. Then I would get nervous. If I've got
9 to play to an audience I'm always dead straight. Well no that's not entirely true.
10 I have occasionally had a few beers. But it's not.
11
12 You accept the nerves and just go on and play.
13
14 Yes, it's part of the enjoyment of it, I think, in the end. In the long run.
15
16 How so? Part of the excitement, being nervous?
17
18 Yes. Oh yes, it's very exciting.
19
20 So you put it to good use.
21
22 Yes. If you do, perform anything before an audience, the adrenalin is flowing for
23 ages afterwards. Even if you've controlled the nerves, it's still there once
24 you've finished playing, and it sort of comes up to the surface, after, when it's
25 not being eaten up by concentration.
26
27 Ah right, so that's how you do it. You concentrate on the music and that distracts
28 you from the nerves, but afterwards what happens?
29
30 So then afterwards you tend to be really wired
31
32 When you can't settle down, what do you do?
33
34 What do I do? Well, if possible, I probably drink a lot, or maybe do some other
35 stuff.
36
37 What sort of stuff?
38
39 Stuff. I dunno. I'm not averse to taking drugs, but quite within.
40
41 But afterwards, not before?
42
43 Oh yes, and pretty much within a fairly, I would say very, erm moderate intake.
44 I don't really do that much of anything to be honest. Yeah, if I've played a gig
45 and the opportunity's there I'll have a good drink.
46
47 So it unwinds you.
48
49 Yes a little bit. Yes. But it also and I think what does tend to affect a lot of
50 people is also presumably you want to stay up at that level, so maybe it isn't
51 because it unwinds maybe it's the opposite reason [laughs].
52
53 It keeps it going.
54
55 To keep the excitement going. Until you just hit the sack. I'm sure it's the
56 undoing of a lot of professional musicians, and people who are doing it every
57 night.

1
2 Do you have that same kind of high when you are writing?
3
4 No. No.
5
6 Does it make a differences whether you are playing your own stuff or other
7 people's? In terms of the enjoyment and pleasure, that sort of high?
8
9 Probably not. No.
10
11 Anything else you'd like to add?
12
13 I can't think of anything.
14

Transcript 13 :

Vince

1 When people ask you to describe yourself as a musician, what do you normally
2 say?

3
4 It depends who I am talking to, because if they are offering me work and it's for
5 – I don't know, an improvised music gig, I will call myself an improviser!
6 [laughs] It sounds very mercenary of me, but in a lot of ways I have to be quite
7 mercenary because there is so little work around. If it's a, I've never been asked
8 to write a composition for anybody so that hasn't arisen, but if they did I would
9 say. Oh yes, I've got a Masters in Composition, blah de blah de blah and yes. I'll
10 write you something. So that's basically that.

11
12 OK. When people who aren't about to offer you work ask you, people meaning
13 friends and so on, what would you say then?

14
15 I think probably I would put piano somewhere in the phrase because of the fact
16 that the piano is essentially an instrument that I've worked on and with since I
17 was 10 years old and it so therefore I would say I was a pianist, improviser
18 stroke composer. I mean we are talking about composition today, but I would
19 have to also say that composer is a word that I wouldn't necessarily use,
20 actually, in describing myself, to be quite honest.

21
22 That doesn't surprise me! But can you tell me why!

23
24 Yes, I can tell you why. It's because the process of composing is normally
25 associated with somebody who sits at a table and notates. That is the usual kind
26 of job description of the composer. Having said that though, I think improvisers
27 as soon as they improvise and for instance make a recording of the improvisation
28 and agree to have that recording released commercially or whatever. as a
29 document of an occasion and a group and what you do with those people, other
30 musicians and stuff, and what you do as a musician yourself, then that is also
31 kind of a form of composition. It's a kind of process of freezing, if you like, a
32 kind of segment of sound.

33
34 When you are working with improvisers do you start with musical ideas that you
35 are improvising on?

36
37 Erm.

38
39 Would you call those compositional elements. How would you talk about them?

40
41 I would bring into play whatever I felt was appropriate to that particular situation
42 with those other musicians. In certain situations I might find it more difficult
43 than others. For instance if the person who I was playing with had a very
44 different vocabulary or syntax, musical syntax, I would find it more difficult to
45 obviously apply what I knew and what I felt would be appropriate or relevant to
46 what they're doing, so erm.

47
48 How do you arrive at a mutual way of working/playing?

49
50 Getting to know somebody is obviously very important. I think that many of my
51 relationships have stretched over years, rather than weeks or months, now,
52 having said that, because I am 52, and I've known (first name) since about,
53 (full name) since I was in my late twenties, (name 2) since I was in my early 30s,
54 (name 3), people like that, (name 4), when I was in my early thirties through to
55 early forties, um so these are kind of long term relationships so the vocabulary or
56 the syntax is quite often shared, and also kind of even given to one another. I
57 would say that quite a few of my ideas and some of my (1) have been formulated

1 and formed by being with other people, and being influenced by other people,
2 the way they think and breathe music.

3
4 So having a musical and personal relationship, to develop a common language,
5 or syntax as you call it, is an important condition for the music to emerge.

6
7 Absolutely. Very important. It's crucial really. If you don't and you just kind of
8 work on your own, then you just, all you have then is your own agenda and your
9 own soloistic um abilities, and it's more difficult then to (2) You lose out one of
10 the important components of the equation, in other words, other people. So for
11 instance, Goethe the German philosopher, said that talent is acquired in solitude
12 and character in the stream of life. I think, similarly with music, the musicians
13 who I know are not necessarily that: talent is not an important part of their er life
14 and their music, but the fact that they've been around and they know how to
15 work with other people in a lot of ways is more important and they know how to
16 adapt and contribute ideas that can sort of relate to an occasion, I think.

17
18 Before we leave working on your own, can you just say a little about how
19 working on your own is different for you. How would you characterise it?

20
21 Yes. Right OK. I think working on my own is in a lot of ways a form of social
22 autism, because of the fact that I'm locked away in my little studio here in (name
23 of town) which is where we are talking from now. And it's kind of a little house
24 on my back that I kind of live in, and from my experiences in the past, it doesn't
25 really, it has very little kind of effect, what I create in here, as such, on my own.
26 The only kind of time that I think I created anything that had any value to other
27 listeners was a piece of, a CD that I recorded called (name), that I recorded quite
28 some time ago now, and was put out on a record label called (name) and I've
29 had favourable reports from quite a few young musicians who feel that it's a
30 very positive (1) record, sort of document. But for instance, I have composed in
31 here, it's almost like admitting guiltily to this, no but I have on my computer
32 over there, for instance, some software called Sibelius which I use for
33 composing with, and I've even taken part in 2 competitions that you can see
34 advertised in the PRS magazines and stuff. And I've kind of like sent off scores
35 and stuff and never heard anything back from them, which is the usual game,
36 with these competitions. I got that feeling. But at the same time what it did force
37 me to do, was sit down and produce something, which is the important thing.
38 But it ends up on that top shelf over there and it'll probably stay there for the rest
39 of my life. Whether it'll have any value after I live I don't know but that's the
40 way things are.

41
42 So working at a particular place, in a particular set up has no importance for
43 you?

44
45 I must say I find this environment good because I don't get in the way of the
46 neighbours. I don't have any problems and I can actually rehearse in here with
47 other musicians. So I think environmentally speaking this is a very good
48 environment for me, because I'm near London, I can get into London, I can
49 come out of London late at night. The last train goes at 1.43 from Finsbury Park
50 up to (name of town) and so I can do gigs and stuff except for Saturdays funnily
51 enough. But I consider this to be the best of both worlds in a lot of ways,
52 although (name) is a terrible cultural desert. If I lived and worked here and
53 didn't have any connection with the rest of the world I think I'd go stark raving
54 bonkers.

55

1 So one of the benefits of working in the way you do with other musicians, that
2 you built up a long standing relationship is that it gets you out, and getting out is
3 seen as part of the good side...
4

5 Absolutely, yes. I must say, playing improvised music and being involved in the
6 scene now is very different from being an improviser in the 60s when I think
7 there was more opportunity to work in this area and there was a more acceptable
8 face for radical thought and even a market for it, whereas now there's a kind of
9 over-saturation of the recording industry and market, and life is far more
10 complex, and the opportunities are far more difficult to find as far as outlets go.
11

12 So it's part of the work you have to do is now spend more time relatively
13 creating the outlets and following through to maintain them.
14

15 To a certain extent. Yes. I spend a lot of time, I think I spend more time now in
16 front of a computer than in front of a piano, which is sad really. However I still
17 value the time sitting at the piano and working on pieces that I'm learning and
18 whatever else for various projects and stuff.
19

20 You don't use the computer very much for composing – apart from the piece
21 you told me about?
22

23 For composing? I did for this Luxembourg competition. I wrote entirely on
24 computer. But I don't use a midi keyboard, I use the Sibelius – I just go straight
25 onto notation.
26

27 Turning to the things that make it easier for you in your music – what kind of
28 things would they be? Obviously the relationship with the people you're playing
29 with – can you say a little more about how that musical relationship contributes
30 to the music?
31

32 Well, it provides me first of all with sanity actually! Having relationships with
33 people that, I consider them to be absolutely vitally important to my sanity, as
34 I've just said, because you learn that way a lot about yourself and about the
35 outside world and it's very much then an organic and intrinsic part of the work
36 process and crucial really and whatever the conflicts might be, it helps you
37 perhaps also as far as learning how to work with other people as well, your own
38 kind of inadequacies or whatever else, so I think it's vitally important. When I
39 don't, if I spend a lot of time up here in this studio I have had occasions where I
40 haven't worked for maybe 2 months, and towards the end of those 8 weeks,
41 between week 6 and 8 I would say that I get pretty depressed. Depression begins
42 to sort of like bite in.
43

44 What is it you're missing?
45

46 Well I'm missing the whole process of interaction with the outside world, and
47 music is my kind of language that enables me to have that interaction. Yes.
48

49 When you are interacting musically with people, when you are creating music in
50 that way, can you say more about the relationships with the others?
51

52 OK. That's kind of interesting because there are certain kind of (1) quite (3) er
53 (2), sort of (1) Were you going to supplement that question? You were just
54 about (2).
55

56 No it's OK. Let's keep it wide.
57

1 There are certain things that are developed over a long time with musicians that
2 can become, almost – there's a kind of psychic telepathy, if you like, which is a
3 lot of fun to work inside of, where you kind of anticipate each other and do
4 things together. It's like those two dogs outside: they're brothers and they tend
5 to do things together, quite often, and it's almost the same kind of thing. Having
6 said that I always like meeting new people, you feel go.. [clicks fingers] They're
7 like kindred spirits.

8
9 So there's a sense of familiarity and predictability but also excitement because
10 you are in tune, sorry! [laughs]

11
12 Yes that's right.

13
14 But on the other hand it doesn't have this surprise, novelty and sort of edge to it
15 which it might have if you didn't know the people so well.

16
17 Well that's right. I think that for instance (name) and his kind of (named)
18 approach is sort of, it's like I suppose maybe, I mean I don't like to make a
19 parallel like this, but maybe it's like sleeping with lots of people!![laughs]

20
21 In what sense?

22
23 Because it can be like, there is excitement in finding a new relationship, and
24 whatever that is, discovering somebody else's body and (1) there is a mental
25 thing as well as a physical thing in a relationship, sexual relationship. But having
26 said that then I feel that long term relationships in a lot of ways for me enable
27 me to explore and cherish (2). I suppose a common language without being stale.
28 I don't get bored. If I get bored, then I stop. There has to be something new
29 happening in there.

30
31 How do you keep the momentum going? Presumably people have their, their
32 days vary, there isn't that consistency.

33
34 Yes. Sure. Sure.

35
36 Or there is that variation which can be a good thing as well. How do you cope
37 with it?

38
39 By having, if for instance somebody actually stops playing, then they will stop
40 playing perhaps because they want some input from you, or they feel that there
41 should be a bit more space, for various reasons. I would then obviously gauge
42 the situation and create some space there for both of us to remain in the picture,
43 so to speak, the musical picture, and I would probably still have input musical
44 ideas. I would find ideas that I considered to be appropriate to what has been
45 before and what needs to be maybe er kind of introduced to the situation. So it's
46 kind of, I don't know, it's a mixture.

47
48 So is it a kind of, I hate to use the word managing, I'm trying to think of a better
49 word. But it's kind of being responsive to, sensitive to what's going on, in that
50 you can kind of move it, [phone ringing] keep it going in a way that's (2) I'm
51 struggling with my vocabulary, productive, constructive (2) that works.

52
53 Yes, that's right. It's the same thing as like if you meet somebody. I mean the
54 thing about this scene is that you don't ever get the chance actually to get bored
55 with playing with people because (3). If I played for instance a tour lasting 3
56 months, or a month or 2 weeks. I don't think I've done a tour or a residency
57 with anybody. So therefore I've never been in a situation where I've been

1 bored. I will play for instance with (name), when we do our improvised gigs.
2 We've got one gig for instance at the end of (the next month) in Brussels and the
3 last one we did was last year— probably once or twice a year, we play. I play a
4 little bit more with (name), because we have also other contexts in which we
5 play together, for instance play bebop and stuff. And with (name), I'll play in
6 quite a lot of different contexts with him. Projects.

7
8 When you're working, do you each play an equal part at inputting the musical
9 ideas that get you going?

10
11 I think so. If it's unequal then it becomes dominant, you become dominant, and
12 therefore it no longer becomes a sharing thing, and it interferes with the other
13 person's kind of expressive, their own outlet. So you have to be totally (2) in
14 tune I think with other people. If you don't, like for some unknown reason I
15 don't know. I don't play music with enemies for instance, because that defeats
16 the object of playing music.

17
18 Coming back to the long term relationship. How does that, what does that long
19 term relationship contribute to the music? How has it changed from when you
20 were earlier on, say, playing earlier on?

21
22 I think in a lot of respects a long term relationship can - You can feel more
23 relaxed and less er (4) I have to think about this. You have a kind of mutual
24 vocabulary that you can work inside of,

25
26 And that's presumably based on your

27
28 Previous musical encounters

29
30 And you'll know what kind of thing the person is likely to do and the things they

31
32 Yes. That's right. Yes.

33
34 Responses. You know what they're not likely to do.

35
36 Yes. Exactly.

37
38 Their strengths, their weaknesses.

39
40 Their own kind of like musical predilections in a way.

41
42 And are you working to their strengths or weaknesses or what? What are you
43 developing for them to play off or with, or play on?

44
45 That's kind of important because obviously you can't just mirror them. You
46 have to have input yourself into a situation, so for instance I think you have to
47 have the courage of your own convictions in order to be able to feed them with
48 something as well as feed off them. Yes, that's basically it.

49
50 When it works best and you're happy with it, what's happening there?

51
52 I think a piece of music has been created that felt at the time very satisfying, and
53 sounds satisfying on, say, for instance, if it has been recorded. The ones that,
54 yes, the ones where I've been in a recording session and the ones that I did feel
55 went well, do sound like they went well. Sometimes you can get a distorted
56 image of things a little bit. I say that because of, whatever, drug experience. I
57 don't find for instance smoking dope or anything like that helps me in any way

1 at all improvise, because it gives me a false state of reality in a lot of ways, and I
2 think you have to, or me, I have to be very focussed when I improvise and I find
3 smoking strong dope unfocussing!
4
5 Right! Is that true of the other people you play with as well? You notice a
6 difference in playing?
7
8 Yes I notice – If I work with somebody who smokes dope I find it difficult,
9 because their world is different from mine.
10
11 Would you attempt to influence them about it? If you knew them very well?
12
13 Well if I have to work with them for a time. I've said, because, yes, it's got in
14 the way of the music. Yes.
15
16 What are your views about having your music recorded and listening to it. For
17 you making that music is clearly a very satisfying creative process to be part of.
18 What about the
19
20 The end product
21
22 The end product. If there is something on tape or recorded in some way. How do
23 you approach that, as an improviser?
24
25 Well as an improviser I like to feel that erm that somehow, er, what has been
26 recorded is a good representation of what I'm about. And when I say a good
27 representation, I mean an accurate representation.
28
29 Do you mean of what you are about in general rather than
30
31 General. A description of me. For instance, if I make a mistake with a classical
32 piece of music, I won't use an editing machine, because I feel that we are
33 already living in a world of far too much self-censorship and editing, and I feel
34 that mistakes and those parts are kind of quite charming actually, and I quite – I
35 think they are important.
36
37 They are part of the reality of what's going on?
38
39 Exactly. Exactly.
40
41 Your feelings about playing back something? A gig that you did or.
42
43 Playing back gigs and stuff. Erm. Usually what I like to do is leave a nice chunk
44 of time between doing the gig and then listening back to stuff.
45
46 Why is that?
47
48 So that I can't remember it.
49
50 Why do you not want to remember it?
51
52 Because I like to hear it with a fresh pair of ears so that I can hear it more
53 objectively. Because at the time quite often, playing (2) playing music requires
54 concentration, struggle, all those kinds of things. So,
55
56 You like to get a distance, a mental distance.
57

1 That's right. A mental distance.
2
3 What's the difference then between the way you would evaluate it without that
4 distance and with it?
5
6 I think probably because there's an overlap of , almost an overlap of mood, or
7 emotional overlap, with what you've done. You're still kind of like, the paint
8 hasn't dried yet almost.
9
10 You kind of recreating it when you are listening to it, rather than
11
12 Yes Yes. Yes exactly.
13
14 Listening to it in a more detached way.
15
16 That's right, yes. I think so. Something like that. I mean, yes, I think that if
17 there's more distance then there's more objectivity. Perhaps.
18
19 And that's desirable?
20
21 I think so. In making choices for instance about whether something is going to
22 be worthy of releasing.
23
24 OK. What about comments between members of the group after a performance?
25
26 Yes. Those are always kind of important. And sometimes I -
27
28 What effect do they have on you? Good ones, bad ones, you know.
29
30 It depends. Yes. I actually had a kind of big confrontation with my old friend
31 (name) recently after finishing a concert in Strasbourg. He's done it on a couple
32 of occasions where he's complained, and I've kind of I've basically got very
33 angry with him and said "If you don't want to play with me, then don't play with
34 me" and stuff like that.
35
36 What was the complaint about?
37
38 It was a complaint about really the volume of the piano. Because he chooses to
39 stand right in the bow of the instrument, but of course that's the loudest part!!
40 And if he complains and he says he can't hear himself, this, that and the other,
41 it's more to do with his own feelings of inadequacy I feel in a situation like that.
42
43 Apart from comments about self-expression, if you can call it that, what other
44 sort of musical comments would you make to each other?
45
46 Erm. That's kind of interesting. I think that in the past, in the more distant past,
47 than the more recent past, For instance, when I've been very close with (name),
48 we've had situations where we have drunk whisky together and whisky is a real
49 "trouble with you-ist" type alcohol. "Trouble with you!!" [laughing] That one.
50 And it's a good test of a relationship getting this kind of thing thrown at you!
51 You can be really quite nasty and I've seen it hap.... other musicians doing it to
52 each other and
53
54 Is it something you try to avoid?
55
56 Yes. I think it's like that little line from the Yeats poem – 'tread softly for you
57 tread on my dreams'. You really do.

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So you feel you're very much on the line in that situation, as you are when you're playing.

Yes. It's sacred really. Everybody else's world is sacred as well. You don't want to kind of like tread on. (1) You're there sharing it with them because you love what they do, hopefully. And like what they do and

But if you feel that it isn't working very well, you'd keep that comment to yourself?

Yes. I think

Or think someone's having an off night, or whatever.

Right. Well, off nights don't happen. But you can have problems with sound, which so often is the case at gigs, especially things like festival gigs, where the sound engineer's changed all the kind of settings on his mixing desk just before you go on, and it sounds completely different from when you did the sound check kind of thing! And you sort of come off and you feel "God what's the point? Over to the other side of Europe in order to do a half-hour gig, and get paid (2). You know, when you get paid well and stuff and you feel dissatisfied, somehow there's an even greater feeling of dissatisfaction and it is quite often to do with sound.

You think you have a right to expect more

Yes it makes. The reason why I put so much importance to this is that when you improvise you've got to be able to hear what everybody else is doing, and so therefore if somebody is really loud and somebody is really quiet, it means that your own kind of picture of the music is very distorted, somehow and sort of unreal and it makes life difficult.

If there isn't a lot of comment on the music, obviously there's praise if you think something has gone especially well, how do you, in what sort of terms do you know how well you are doing, yourself? How do you evaluate your own work?

By listening back to it after a period of time.

And if you haven't been able to do that – it hasn't been recorded?

Er. Well.

Say at the end of a gig.

At the end of a gig erm I suppose really (2) I tend to er gauge the performance from what other people say, that's another way.

Is that the audience?

Yes if an audience comes up and says "That was a really good gig". You go "Ah, that's nice." Whereas if. At the moment I'm embroiled in this kind of piece, it's strange actually. This is a composition actually that is proving to be very very difficult because it is very demanding on both me and the audience. And I'm not sure, I'm at the point where I'm wondering whether to drop it or not.

1 Is it a solo piece?

2

3 Mmm. It's a solo piano piece that lasts an hour, non-stop, and it's called (name)
4 and it involves some very very. It involves for instance a whole series of
5 pentatonic scales that are strung together in a kind of shifting sequence and I've
6 got two ideas for improvising on each scale with. So there are about 104
7 improvisations, and it's divided in half so, like a piece of Indian music, so you
8 have the Tintal, the metric side and the out of time side, the Alap side, and it's
9 for solo acoustic piano and it does make serious demands on my concentration,
10 to be able to actually produce a piece of music that is complete without any
11 ...lulls or lacks of concentration, or that kind of thing, is very difficult. I've done
12 a few concerts of it now. I've done 3 concerts in (name of country) and one for
13 radio and one in (name of city) last about -- 2 weeks ago at the Musical
14 Instrument Museum, and it's one of those situations, going back to that question,
15 where I am not sure whether I want to pursue it or not, because it, you have to
16 somehow, somehow the music that I make has to have some kind of function,
17 with the outside world,

18

19 You feel that communicating is one of the functions it should have

20

21 Definitely. Very definitely. Communicating is essential really. Erm. A lot of the
22 music that I listen to is quite functional music.

23

24 How do you mean?

25

26 Well, Bach cantatas, take for instance. I listen to quite a lot of those. Because of
27 the fact that he was doing things for the Church calendar. He had a gig, he had a
28 job that he had to do. Or Karl Stalling cartoon music-- it was clearly defined..

29

30 And as far as your own work is concerned?

31

32 As far as my own work is concerned, then if I cook some idea up, like this
33 (name) piece and then try and sell it, in a lot of ways I think there are, you are
34 entering the world of, sort of (4) alienation if you are not careful.

35

36 And it's not a world that you'd want to

37

38 It's already pretty alienating in a lot of ways!!

39

40 What's the most alienating aspect of it for you?

41

42 I suppose in a lot of ways, erm, not doing very much.

43

44 I'm not sure I understand.

45

46 Because of the fact that somebody of my age, who has been playing music for as
47 long as I have and somebody with the tech., the kind of ability that I've got
48 now, because I should have my act together by now and I think I have to a
49 certain extent. Still not getting very much work, really, comparatively speaking.
50 And there are problems with, one of the main problems actually, is that the piano
51 is a dinosaur really. There are fewer and fewer places with pianos, and the only
52 kind of situations that I find myself in are now festival situations where they hire
53 a nice Steinway grand or whatever, and then I go and play that.

54

55 That's very irksome, having to put up with pianos that are pretty bad. Coming
56 back to communication and audiences, you were saying earlier how good it is to

1 be told that people have enjoyed your playing at the end of the gig, how
2 important is the reaction of other people to you?

3
4 Um (4) I would say that (3) I think it's pretty vitally important. It's vitally
5 important, because, whatever the reaction is.

6
7 Constructive, destructive, critical, praise, whatever?

8
9 Yes. For instance, I did a gig with (name) in a pub I suppose about 9 months
10 ago, where we played bebop but (name) and I kind of play bebop now which is,
11 we tend to take a lot of liberties when we play it, and it sounds like it, and we
12 had quite a few friends just come down the road, because it was at (name of
13 district), and we got various friends and family and stuff like that, and they were
14 very appreciative. They liked it because they know us so therefore there's a kind
15 of friendship thing there, the audience is quite often people who you know, and
16 it's a two-way thing.

17
18 Would you actually call them a following?

19
20 Yes that's right. It's part of a following. Whereas there was some guy
21 afterwards who was obviously really riled. We'd done it in this pub and he'd
22 found it kind of disturbing, annoying and he was outside the pub. He was a
23 young guy, probably younger than my son

24
25 How old is your son?

26
27 30. And he was talking to his mate on a mobile phone and he was obviously
28 straight from the City or somewhere like that, all dressed in a whistle and this
29 that and the other and looking terribly posh, and to me, and the fact that he
30 hated the music, for me that was very important! I was quite pleased that he did,
31 so I feel that I am obviously getting somewhere with it!!

32
33 So you've got an idea of what kind of audience to have, really!

34
35 Yes, it's small but appreciative and very special.

36
37 How would you describe them?

38
39 Um. I would say they were mostly male, unfortunately. When I say
40 unfortunately I think that the scene is still quite imbalanced gender-wise for both
41 artists and audiences. It's a kind of, a real, something that needs to be
42 continually addressed and stuff. I must say I find it heartening when (1) there is
43 a better mixture. For instance the (name) Club, the one that (name) runs, is very
44 good now.

45
46 Coming back to your audience, you've got a clear idea of who they are?

47
48 Yes. I know most of them.

49
50 How would you characterise them? In general.

51
52 I think they are probably middle-class, post-grads, graduates, people who are
53 interested in (3) Having said that though, for instance there's Irish (name), there
54 are quite a few working class people, a retired fork lift driver who goes to the
55 gigs that I play at. But he's developed a real interest and taste and knows all
56 about the scene and knows more about it than quite a lot of us musicians because
57 he goes to more gigs.

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So like a lot other music there are people who are well-informed, very knowledgeable.

Yes knowledgeable. They've acquired the knowledge but they don't necessarily come from one class actually. This is something unfortunately that is part of our culture. 'British' culture. Less so with America or whatever.

Would you like, is the thought of leaving music behind you when you are dead important to you? Leaving a body of work, presumably recorded or written down. Do you write things down?

Yes there's the pieces that I've written might be useful. I mean one of the things that I've done really is research into these particular structures, musical structures, these pentatonic scales. And (name of piece), going back to (name of piece), is a kind of exposition of what you can do with those particular scales and they are all very closely related and I gave a talk down at Bordeaux Mathematics Faculty a few months back, to music students. We used the University because there was a lecture theatre there, and I gave it in French, which I kind of impressed myself with, particularly 'cause they actually understood!! But, so one of the things that I would like to feel, that might happen is that perhaps this information. I'm more interested in seeing the information going out than my name. Because it would be fun. It's like creating a ripple. It's something to me that I think is quite important and interesting and I'm just hoping that people will catch onto it.

Yes, you'd like to leave that. What about all those hours of live performing, though. If they are not recorded then they are gone, aren't they. They are very ephemeral in that sense, how do you feel about that?

Um (2). Well I think. Yes. That's a good question. I think in a lot of ways that erm. (3) Therefore recordings become snapshots. When you are on holiday a very small amount of time is spent taking a picture. The rest of the time is actually having the holiday.

I can see that in connection with your sort of music. But how do you feel about it?

How do I feel about it?

The fact that you've produced some wonderful evenings, moments and so on, and then they're gone!

Yes that's right, Carol. I mean and also some not quite so wonderful! [laughs] That are also recorded! [laughs]

Yes, that's true. Those you can understand, but what about the outstanding moments? Ah yes. Yes. I know. I know.

What would you like to leave behind, or is not a concern to you, leaving a record of what you have done?

I must say there are still things, there are dreams that I would like to come true and the dreams that I would like to come true is nothing about like being incredibly successful and famous but

You mean in your lifetime?

1
2 In my lifetime, yes. But one of the dreams that I would like to come true, the
3 main dream I would like to come true is kind of specific moments of playing
4 with people that really that are quite magical, that do happen occasionally, um,
5 and I still feel that they are going to. (name of band) is an example. This band
6 that I play with, well, an American drummer. A Dutch bass, acoustic bass
7 guitarist, and (name) on voice, and myself on acoustic piano and we are doing
8 quite a lot of material. And that has a good feel about and I think it will, I think
9 there are going to be some quite good concerts and so on.
10
11 And what about leaving something behind?
12
13 Oh recordings? I'm very lucky in so far as amongst myself and quite a lot of my
14 friends and associates who I work with in the music scene, we have a kind of
15 guardian angel really in our midst, his name is (name). And he runs a label
16 called (name) and (first name) is fantastic in so far as he seems to put a lot of
17 music out.
18
19 Does he record gigs?
20
21 Yes, he records gigs and he listens to stuff that you send him and he puts it
22
23 So it's important to have that, those wings, as it were, spread over you?
24
25 Oh absolutely I don't know what I'd do without (first name).
26
27 Protecting you and protecting that music for the future.
28
29 Yes. (first name) has protected this music and developed it. His catalogue now –
30 he's got about 100 recordings going back to early 60s.
31
32 Are they available, so I could go and buy one?
33
34 Yes. Going back to the early 60s.
35
36 I know I can, I'm just saying it for the record.
37
38 Yes they are available on – you can access them on the www etcetera
39
40 Is it important to you to have that there ?
41
42 Yes sure because not only, it functions as
43
44 Despite the fact that it crystallises moments? Frozen in time.
45
46 Yes of course. They also generate work. So you can use it as a method of
47 getting a little bit more work and, working from that.
48
49 Coming on to the effect of being a musician on the rest of life OK. Is your life
50 mainly within music? Do you have friends and people as part of your life that
51 are outside music?
52
53 Quite a lot of (4) erm. Not that many actually. I have a friend from (name of
54 house) , when I lived at (name of house) with (name) and various people, which
55 was the whole reason why we came to (name of town). It was an arts centre and
56 there were a colony of artists there and I was myself and (first name) were the 2
57 improvisers. There was an electronics composer called (name) and the rest were

1 potters, painters, weavers and artists, visual artists, so I've got one or two of
2 those friends still.

3
4 Do you feel you have things in common with other artists?

5
6 Yes writers. Yes. Oh very much so. Yes. Yes.

7
8 What kind of things?

9
10 Well, politics, for instance. I (2) sending, for instance, the current politics. I can
11 chat with (1) poets or, I have a poet friend down in (place), or a poet friend who
12 unfortunately just died, who was an amazing communicator on the internet, a
13 guy called (name) who wrote the text for (name of piece), and erm. He was,
14 spent the last, after he retired from teaching French, I think he lived outside
15 Toronto, spent a lot of his last 10 years just on the Internet, on the www sending
16 stuff round to people. And I used to communicate with him a fair bit and we
17 hung out together in Cologne. I did a week with (name) once, and (name), like
18 myself, we were a little bit shy of performing with these big American, the Big
19 Band and stuff.

20
21 What was it that you were a bit wary of?

22
23 I think this kind of American bravado that's stoked up by cocaine. I found it
24 actually intimidating, and very uncreative and I was in a situation at that
25 particular time where I was having to. (First name) decided that she didn't want
26 to play piano, she just wanted to conduct, so I had to play all the piano parts and
27 so on. But I was just hired in originally to do some of (name's) vocal parts with
28 (name), and I was just presented with this score by (name) and just said "We're
29 rehearsing this afternoon". And it was an enormous, that (name of piece) is. I
30 think it was originally a 3, a triple album, I'm not sure, maybe it was a double,
31 I'm not sure, but it was a big piece that was a studio piece of music.

32
33 Did you get very wound up beforehand when you were doing that? Did you get
34 nervous?

35
36 No I had no time to get wound up, because I didn't know I was going to!! I
37 sudden, I kind of went. My jaw dropped and I said "What! Well, I don't know if
38 I can do it" Because I would say that there are certain inadequacies that I've got
39 as a player. I wouldn't say that for instance that I was a great sight-reader. I can
40 work my way through things but I'm not a great repetiteur or anything like that,
41 which I'd like to be.

42
43 Do you get nervous at all when you play, normally, not in that situation?

44
45 Yes I do in certain situations, with (name). We do a repertoire which is very
46 demanding, because I have to play things which are difficult, that come difficult
47 to me, like Schubert songs and Schumann songs and classical music. and those,
48 that particular genre has always given me the willies a bit, because it's just
49 something that, that. You have to be (3). It's so alien really to the way I play
50 music, so you could slip notes, or make mistakes, and things like that very easily
51 and it's just something very different.

52
53 Why do you do it, if it's very alien to you?

54
55 Because I think in a lot of ways it's a bit of a challenge for that reason. And also
56 I think it's important for (name) to, think it's important aesthetically that
57 somebody like (name) sings Schumann and Schubert the way he sings them,

1 because he doesn't have any of the classical affectations of Lieder singers, that
2 Lieder singers do. And I get the feeling that probably Schubert sung his
3 Winterreise more like (name) sings than – I don't know, Fischer-Diskau, or
4 Peter Pears and all those wobbly canbeltos!!

5
6 Quite! Coming back to your, when you are improvising do you get nervous at
7 all then?

8
9 No, not really

10
11 What does it feel like to be playing. Tell me what it's like when you play. I
12 know it can vary. What kind of state of mind would you start with?

13
14 Er. I usually sit at the piano and I make sure my colleagues have finished
15 fiddling about with whatever they are fiddling about with and I'm finished
16 fiddling about with what I'm, and we look at each other and then there's a
17 moment's pause, and then we start playing.

18
19 What's going on in that moment's pause, for you?

20
21 Yes. That's a good question. Well all kinds of things really, because, the last
22 thing you want to bring to a piece of music, in a spontaneous, in an improvised
23 situation, is your own agenda. So the agenda that you bring has to be very very
24 small or short so that in a lot of ways you present it, if you need to present it, if
25 nobody else is going to do that, so that then they can fire off it and then you can
26 work off of them, you know what I mean?

27
28 Yes. Can you give me an example?

29
30 What, on the piano?

31
32 No. Can you talk about it?

33
34 Well it might be just a kind of little phrase, it might be a musical phrase or an
35 idea, a mood. For instance, if the audience is kind of busy and there is quite a lot
36 of talking and stuff, people are settling down, and people still coming in, and
37 they've asked us to start playing because there's other musicians wanting to
38 play, or for whatever reason you have to start, then perhaps that would affect the
39 way I would start a piece. If I was with 2 other players, like for instance (name)
40 and (name), who are both quite energetic, very interactive players, so in a
41 situation like that I would go straight into a kind of concentrated fast flowing
42 thing in order to kind of get people's attention and so they can.

43
44 Here I am, we've started!

45
46 Yes. But on the other hand if it's a very quiet concert-type situation where you
47 could hear a pin drop, I think I would start from silence in a lot of ways and
48 bring it in very quietly, because of the fact that that silence is something which is
49 important, it's precious.

50
51 And as you're playing, what are you becoming aware of?

52
53 I'm becoming aware of (4) the material that you're using. It's all about the
54 material.

55
56 Are you thinking about this in a conscious way, like "I can do this" or "What if I
57 take this here?"

1
2 Sometimes it has to be conscious. If, for instance it dries up or whatever. If, I
3 don't know. Maybe not. That's difficult. That's difficult because (3) I think in
4 the past, I think the, maybe the, less desirable sort of improvised situation is one
5 where you are having to consciously put in things, because you are feeling
6 nothing is happening somehow.
7
8 So it would be flowing through you, the ideas would be coming without any
9 conscious effort.
10
11 Yes. That's right. You're part of the situation. Yes. That's right. You are part of
12 what somebody else is playing and you're playing with that playing.
13
14 I was asking a while ago about having friends outside music and you said you
15 had friends who were writers and
16
17 Painters
18
19 And painters and working in other kinds of music. What do you think the effect
20 of your life in music has been on your family?
21
22 Well both my children are not musical. Or rather they love music but, erm, I'm
23 quite pleased that they're not musicians. Quite simply because it's, er, to a
24 certain extent has been very difficult for me. It's actually been quite difficult for
25 the family, quite difficult for us financially. And also it's been kind of like even
26 emotionally quite difficult as well. Kind of like being ignored and feeling
27 alienated has not been easy for (name) my wife.
28
29 How has it affected her?
30
31 Well, one's own mood, for instance, can, is a contagious kind of entity in a lot of
32 ways, so, and we're kind of obviously quite bound up with each other,
33 psychically, because of
34
35 Is (wife) in music?
36
37 No she's not. She's a er, she er works as a care worker in the mornings and is a
38 counsellor and quite involved in. She's a peace activist and stuff like that and
39 secretary and she does the local um community club now. She does
40 administration for that every day during middday. She's very busy. But, so
41 (name) and (name), the son and daughter. (daughter's name) (3) more artistic,
42 plainly or literally artistic, whereas (son) is, works for the BBC, and erm erm is
43 involved in the World Service. He spends. He is earning more money than I'll
44 ever earn.
45
46 What's it been like for them having you doing what you do?
47
48 It's been difficult for them. I remember (son) feeling that he used to have the
49 piss taken out of him when he was at school, for instance, because he was
50 always so scruffy, scruffily dressed. 'Cause we didn't have money to make sure
51 he had his kind of like Nike shoes and whatever else, trainers, whatever.
52 Whereas (daughter) was sort of a bit was less involved in being a, no, it was
53 difficult for them both.
54
55 So the lack of money, or the ups and downs of income has been a difficulty. Any
56 other difficulties?
57

1 I've never, erm, I think that whatever other difficulties I would have had, I
2 would have had in spite of the music. Whatever, with personal relationships with
3 my wife and in any other

4
5 Whatever you'd been doing?

6
7 Yes, whatever I'd been doing. I think the good thing about, erm, having been a
8 musician is at least I've done something I wanted to do. So therefore kind of
9 ultimately the reward is in the actions rather than the reward itself.

10
11 Yes. Was it something you always wanted to do?

12
13 Yes. It was a kind of dre-, it was based round dreams really. Like in my, when,
14 before I was in double figures in fact, um, I used to have little dreams of
15 playing.

16
17 Right! Did you come from a musical family? Or shall we say a family in music?

18
19 Well, my moth-, the funny thing was. No not really. I mean my father was er in
20 the forces and fought in the War, so he'd become, he was quite scarred as a
21 result of having gone through all that one. And he also denied my mother her
22 profession, as being a dancer. He kind of said, "Either you marry me or you have
23 a profession but you can't have both." And so she chose to have a family, and
24 her kind of, her aspirations and all her sublimated sort of inclinations, artistic
25 inclinations, were downloaded onto her children so we got a lot of
26 encouragement. In fact she didn't actually like being a mother too much either. I
27 come from a sort of like one of these slightly posh backgrounds. Not slightly,
28 quite posh. And so I had a nanny who did all the kind of mother duties, and a
29 mother who kind of became interested in me when I showed signs of having a
30 musical talent. And I thought "Ah! At last my mother has taken notice!" And it
31 was all bound up with her own psychology and denial of what she had not been
32 able to achieve creatively herself. That's her there [pointing to photo].

33
34 Oh I was wondering who that was!

35
36 Stage photographs.

37
38 Amazing.

39
40 She would have been in the Four Feathers which was a very famous film, with
41 Janet Leigh and people like that, but my father said no.

42
43 So was she able to see you fulfil those dr...

44
45 To a certain extent, but she was she worked from the emotions. In fact she loved
46 flamenco music. My father hated it. He thought that flamenco singers sounded
47 like they were in pain and, the usual sort of Wagnerian response to music. He
48 even looked like Wagner, actually, my dad! Whereas my mother was kind of,
49 she really liked the emotional content of folk cultures and she studied dancing,
50 flamenco dancing, and um er Haitian dancing as well.

51
52 I'd like to be able to ask you about that but I can't, it's beyond my thing, but,
53 music was there from an early age?

54
55 Sure. We had an old piano in the playroom which I played.

56

1 Coming back to the impact on your children, apart from not having had the
2 income to give them the latest consumer whatever. What other effect has you
3 leading the life you have had had on them do you think? Apart from not having
4 the monthly pay packet and so on.
5
6 Yeh yeh yeh sure. Well fortunately, I think it would be different now, having
7 said that, because I think the scene has changed, as far as social security goes,
8 but when I was at (name of house), which was when my children were being,
9 that's where they spent their childhood, and here as well, and (son) is 30 now.
10 He was born in Brixton, before at the age of 4 we moved to (name of house), and
11 (daughter) was born at (name of house), so she was a (name of house) child.
12
13 Did they have this sense of community there?
14
15 Yes there was a good collective. Without, not without plenty of complications
16 there, as well, for obvious reasons. I mean the residues of the 60s, happening at
17 (name of house) as well, so. And funnily enough our children took us to see this
18 great Swedish film recently, which was about precisely that. I can't remember
19 what it was called now, but it was very good. About like, people messing their
20 life and kids being very (1) observant of this kind of mayhem going on and
21 thinking "God! These parents are wacko!!"
22
23 And is that what they thought about you?
24
25 And I think they thought that to a certain extent.
26
27 What about now?
28
29 Now. Well (son) will come to conc-, will come to gigs and stuff.
30
31 How do they feel about you as a musician?
32
33 Er. I think they erm (4) I don't know to be quite honest, because I think that they
34 have a different interest, to a certain extent, in music, and I'm more interested in
35 what they listen to. Whereas I don't think they've necessarily (5) acquired an
36 interest in what I do, as such.
37
38 Did they listen at periods to your music, come to gigs?
39
40 Yes they've come to gigs. If I do for instance a more straight-ahead gig, they'll
41 come to it.
42
43 Is that because it's more to their taste, musically, or what?
44
45 Yes I think so to a certain extent, whereas having said so, I think (name), my
46 younger, the daughter, she is more willing and able to accept the more radical
47 side of things. Yes.
48
49 And how do you think having a dad in music compared to doing something else
50 has been for them?
51
52 Um (2) Well they haven't done, they've done well at school. They did well at
53 school, which is what I didn't do. Erm. I did really badly at school and I think
54 the reason for it was because I was at home a lot so I had a lot of time at home
55 with them and I was interested in kind of like their heads really, and not getting
56 not getting too sort of, yes. Yes. I used to enjoy reading them stories and
57

1 So that was maybe a benefit for you, as well as for them, in being a musician,
2
3 Absolutely.
4
5 Having that time available for them, that you wouldn't have had otherwise
6
7 Whereas my parents sent me off to Public School and had nothing to do with my
8 education.
9
10 You were boarding?
11
12 Yes. I went to a boarding school so it was a big mistake really, a huge waste of
13 money and waste of time.
14
15 It wasn't something you would have wanted to do for yours?
16
17 No because well, I knew that it was. They are horror places to be in, they're
18 anti-social. They teach you all the kind of rudiments of being quite bestial
19 towards your fellow human being whereas (son) was good. He was at a
20 comprehensive school. Very good, mixed, and he did very well.
21
22 Do you think being a musician and having a particular set of values or beliefs,
23 whatever you want to call them, has affected your family?
24
25 Yes
26
27 Do you think there is a set of beliefs that goes along with being a musician and
28 working in the fields you do?
29
30 Yes I think so. Yes.
31
32 What would you say
33
34 Well we're both, (wife) and I are both. We are both I think, are practising
35 socialists, or we try and be, and both, I think both our children, are to a certain
36 extent. They certainly, they haven't rebelled against us being socialists!! I have
37 discovered various people who have, actually, sort of, strange kind of Tory
38 children!
39
40 Thatcherite children!
41
42 Yes that's right! [laughs] Terrible! But they're fine. We'll go to demonstrations
43 together, and stuff like that.
44
45 Do you think that politically there are similar views amongst the people you play
46 with, your friends in music?
47
48 Oh very much so, yes. I mean if. Again I don't think I could, I would have to
49 talk to somebody about it, if the
50
51 That's part of the developing relationship over years with people you work with?
52
53 Erm. It's part of the politic. It's the politic, definitely, and the process of making
54 music. Yes. I mean. I think even with composition. I was going to be nasty about
55 composers...
56
57 You can! [laughs]

1
2 [laughs]But I don't think I need to be. Because I think most composers are
3 sensitive, very sensitive people and they are not kind of. I think they are more
4 likely to be, kind of, radical, have radical political or left-wing political ideals as
5 opposed to right-wing ones.

6
7 Do you see that as more likely among composers?

8
9 Yes I think because, but at the same they are bound up. For instance the process
10 of composition, whereby you're creating this piece that is then performed by an
11 orchestra that has a conductor. I think politically speaking that could be kind of,
12 that could be questioned. That's something for me that doesn't necessarily
13 politically hang too well.

14
15 Which came first for you – did you choose to work in the field of music that you
16 do because – well tell me how you came to it, because I am wondering whether
17 you chose it musically or whether there are other reasons?

18
19 No I chose it because as I said, in about 1958 or 59 I started just playing the
20 piano, at home, playing on the piano, without any music, but just playing stuff,
21 emulating some of the ideas that I'd heard on records, and stuff that were
22 hanging around in the house, quite a few bits and bobs really. Louis Armstrong,
23 Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, Kathleen Ferrier, this that and the other. Stuff that
24 was around, that my elder brother and two older sisters were listening to, and so
25 therefore it was about sort of like creating feelings from that, and so therefore it
26 was directly as a result of that, that my own personal instinct, musical thing,
27 came from. It was when they tried to harness it, when they sent me off to a
28 Cathedral School and got me into doing classical music that I came really
29 unstuck. That was the big problem.

30
31 What happened?

32
33 Well for a start I wasn't able to sight-read, because I didn't feel that musically. I
34 couldn't. For a start I wasn't able to concentrate. My education as such was very
35 bad at the time, because of the fact my parents had moved around the country
36 and my father was also going through absolute shit because of having been in
37 the War and he was involved in, I think he was involved in actually kind of
38 killing people face to face, and so he had a lot of problems with his own gender
39 and particularly with his two sons, myself and my brother. And so, sort of
40 emotionally and stuff, I had problems concentrating. They tried to teach me
41 French, or. They tried to do the best for me, like they always do, and sent me off
42 to Public School and spent all this money on and, which I didn't want and I
43 didn't want this thing of kind of trying to harness my intrinsic musical ability
44 into learning to play Bach or whatever. Although of course I love Bach now. I
45 didn't then. Particularly.

46
47 Do you think having had those early struggles – how do you think it has affected
48 you?

49
50 Shaped. It's shaped it. Because of the fact that. Again, it's about listening and
51 playing and responding and improvised music is about listening, playing and
52 responding and working with people who have gone through the same thing.
53 And I think that, it was the beginning period of having recordings and er
54 beginning to listen to lots of different musics from all over the world, and stuff
55 like that, and jazz of course, which was a revelation, and Blues, which was a
56 revelation, and

1 Did you discover them for yourself?

2

3 No I discovered them through I would say my younger sister, (name), who was
4 also quite intrinsic in the music scene in London actually as far as improvised
5 music goes, because she got, she organised the (name of club) for people like
6 (name) and John and Co., (name of band). Because she was doing a gig with um
7 Paul McCartney's brother and the Scaffold, Roger McGough and various
8 people, up in this little Theatre, and she knew the person behind the bar and she
9 let them use the place for 1 day each week, so that John could. He was just fresh
10 out of the Royal Air Force and he was wanting to experiment with name) and
11 various people doing improvised music. And I remember coming out of Public
12 School and going to hear this lot when I was about 17. I was just about in long
13 trousers. [laughs] And thinking to myself "What the hell is going on there!! Why
14 are those guys playing radios? And playing music with radios on and stuff like
15 that!" But yeh... So I was a different generation. I came onto the (name of club)
16 scene and it was an important part of the scene, but a little bit later.

17

18 And how do you see your own musical voice developing?

19

20 (4) I'm less interested in that than I think a lot of people. I used to be interested
21 in it. I used to be quite obsessed with finding my own voice, whereas erm I am
22 less interested in that now because I think it happens anyway.

23

24 Oh right.

25

26 And it's a kind of subtle process. It's a more subtle process than trying to
27 imprint it.

28

29 You don't think you can force it?

30

31 Well. Yes. I do, but with kind of like devastating consequences sometimes! For
32 instance, I don't know but for instance, Cecil Taylor, had a very original voice
33 on the piano, had all kinds of problems, and it's not necessarily done him any
34 favours as such. He has been an absolute pioneer and an amazingly important
35 musician on the scene.

36

37 What about you then?

38

39 But me – that is less important to try and find my own voice because er. You
40 see. Cecil had a lot of problems playing with other musicians. And because they
41 would walk out and say "I'm not playing with you because you can't play the
42 piano" or "I'm not playing with you because you've got your own agenda".
43 Whatever reason, what it was, "I'm not playing with you , because you're not
44 listening to what I'm doing" perhaps, as well, erm because you want to play the
45 way you want to play, and, It's kind of like an interesting two sides of a coin
46 really, because he's an innovator and a great. It's really kind of changed and
47 developed the aesthetic.

48

49 How have those conflicts been reflected in you?

50

51 Right OK. That's a good question. I think in a lot of ways my er my own er.
52 It's. I don't necessarily. I work with more radical people than myself. (name)
53 with his extended vocal techniques and stuff like that, er is somebody. I suppose
54 out of all of the people who I work with I would say that he is the most radical,
55 or the most innovative. Let's say innovative. But I don't think everybody can't.
56 Not everybody is an innovator. In fact by definition innovators are a very small

1 percentage, aren't they otherwise they wouldn't be innovators perhaps, I don't
2 know!
3
4 True. Coming back to you and your own
5
6 Oh Ok
7
8 What you don't like to call your voice.
9
10 Well I would just kind of say I was somebody who was er part of a generation of
11 musicians that perhaps erm (3) erm kind of come after modernism. I'm not
12 calling myself a post-modernist on purpose, because I think post-modernism is a
13 label that doesn't necessarily fit completely what I do. But I'm also saying that I
14 don't necessarily, I'm not extending that kind of thread, upward thread of
15 aesthetic into the refined areas of whatever it is now, what they call the New
16 London Silence!
17
18 What's that?
19
20 It's like people have got so involved now in the refinement of sound and timbre
21 and texture, in fact they are working from silence rather than from Jacques Attali
22 would call noise, which is a more essential, in the past has been more of an
23 essential starting point. So it's like a binary, changing the binary thing round,
24 from silence rather than from noise.
25
26 Coming back to you because you are giving me an answer from the outside in,
27 and I would like an answer from the inside out!
28
29 Yes Ok!! All right. Going back to where I would say...
30
31 Your own thing
32
33 I'm an internationalist, that's all I can say really.
34
35 Musically an internationalist?
36
37 Yes. I would like to see in myself an internationalist and also I would like to also
38 try and like defy time, so
39
40 We're crossing territories, boundaries, genres, and styles
41
42 Genres or fashions. Styles. Yes exactly.
43
44 So the music, your music is unclassifiable.
45
46 Well I'm sure someone will find a pigeon-hole
47
48 Well, it's coming from certain things but it's not of them.
49
50 Yes. I think so. Yes.
51
52 How would you describe it, if I had to write a thing about you or you had to
53 write something about yourself that communicates this.
54
55 OK well. I'm not er (7) I don't think. I have to This is kind of like I'm being
56 sort of laying myself on the line, chopping block a bit here.
57

1 I won't be chopping anything off you ...
2
3 Yes, well I'm just thinking that in a lot of ways I'm not a radical improviser,
4 although I'm an improviser.
5
6 Is that a criticism of yourself?
7
8 Yes I think it is really. Because in some ways I have more respect for radical
9 improvisers, than, because of the fact that. Well having said that, there are
10 people now playing jazz, for instance, a young guy in his early 30s or mid 30s
11 who I like a great deal, called (name).
12
13 Yes I know.
14
15 Who plays piano. He's a real bright spark on jazz piano and what he's done. I
16 suppose, really. OK I can say now. I suppose I have more of a synthesis, an
17 ability to synthesise my musical environments, so that can include classical
18 music as well as improvised music. I don't exclude that. The only thing that I do
19 exclude, and it's not through any kind of choice is kind of new complexity
20 composition, because I don't have the kind of ability to think as complexly as
21 that using notation and I certainly wouldn't be able to play it. I mean. I just
22 don't. There's only so much you can do in one life. One side of me says I'd love
23 to be able to play Boulez's 1st 2nd and 3rd Piano Sonatas on the piano, but another
24 side of me says, it would be so much work.
25
26 Within achievable things what would you like to do that you can do that you
27 haven't yet done?
28
29 [laughing] Er (5) I suppose I'd like to do more gigs. Just basically that.
30
31 Just get out there and
32
33 Get out there and do more. Er But at the same time one side of me also says that
34 I don't want to travel that much. I don't I, I find travelling, especially by
35 aeroplane, uncomfortable, and travelling a lot, but I suppose I'd have to accept
36 that. I'd like to do 2 or 3 gigs a month, good payers, which, that were central to
37 my kind of *raison d'être*.
38
39 Any other things you'd like to do?
40
41 I wouldn't mind hearing what some of my pieces would sound like, other people
42 playing them.
43
44 Have you asked other people to play your pieces?
45
46 Yes. In certain situations. Yes. Sometimes I've written stuff for particular
47 groups.
48
49 What has it been like having those groups play your things?
50
51 Some of them have worked out Ok. Yes some of them have worked out fine. But
52 never a situation where I've, the nearest I got to it was er writing something for
53 an orchestra in Bologna, but that was an arrangement of Lindsay Cooper's
54 music, 'O Moscow', so that was just for a small 35 piece orchestra, having to
55 write the arrangements.
56
57 Is that something you'd like to do more of?

1
2 I don't know. If I somehow would know that somebody was going to play it, I'd
3 love to. I'd love to, but the two times that I've really busted a gut writing stuff. It
4 took me 6 weeks to write this piece for an ensemble of instruments that is such a
5 peculiar ensemble of instruments that it'll never get played.

6
7 What was that then?

8
9 Well it was a. They give you the brief. A lot of these competitions give you the
10 brief. It was for 3 saxophones, soprano, tenor, alto, er, clarinet, french horn,
11 tuba, string quartet, accordion, piano and percussion, tuned percussion.

12
13 Oh gosh,

14
15 So therefore, the balance, it was very difficult writing something for just single
16 string players as part of that something which quite loud and stuff and with those
17 competitions, it is like pissing in Niagara, really. The usually, they have 300 plus
18 entries quite often, and they choose six out of it, and quite often they have their
19 agenda for choosing those six is obviously kind of the judges, where they're at,
20 where they're from, as well.

21
22 If you had unlimited money to put into the sort of music that you'd like to, what
23 would you do with it?

24
25 If I had some money to put into

26
27 Your music

28
29 My music? Um. (4) If I had a little bit more, what would I do?

30
31 Apart from arranging some well paid gigs, what would you?

32
33 OK, yes. My first, if I had a bit of money, I would replace that piano with a
34 modern piano which is what I'm intending to do anyway. But it would make life
35 easier if I had, for instance, £20,000 quid, because I could buy a reconditioned
36 Steinway for £20,000. Not brand new, but reconditioned. Whereas, so therefore
37 that would be for me, kind of an investment, because I would be able to then
38 record, make recordings of stuff that I could then possibly release, whereas I
39 can't on that as it is now. Unfortunately. I've had people come in and look at it
40 and they've said the bridge has dropped on it, so it's got a lot of falseness up the
41 top and it sounds like an old clanger.

42
43 Has it sounded like an old clanger to you, when you use it? Does it worry you?

44
45 Unfortunately when I've recorded sessions here, it sounds very clangy and
46 unfortunately it doesn't have the ring of a modern grand piano, which also poses
47 a problem for me, because when I do gigs on nice pianos and stuff I feel quite
48 inadequate, because I haven't had that kind of, I'm not familiar with playing
49 good pianos. So I'd like to have a reason. I think there's a chance of getting one
50 from er this shop in North London. They are going to sell me a piano with
51 nothing done on the bodywork, but all reconditioned, a Yamaha ex-rental, which
52 will be a modern piano sound. So that would be the first thing, if I had the
53 money, that's the answer to the question. A piano, because I've got the recording
54 equipment now. As far as I could producing erm recordings go, I think I am at a
55 point now where I'm taking stock of things, a little bit, er, I mean, Somebody
56 for instance in Czechoslovakia has said they'd be prepared to put out a piece of
57 electronic music of mine, a CD of electronic music of mine. Er. But that was on

1 the strength of sending them a 7 minute piece that I realise now was when I was
2 at (name of college), when I was doing my Masters down there, my music
3 masters, and so therefore I would, I'm in the process of using what I've got on
4 hard disc there, and thinking what I'm going to do with that, so. Er I don't think
5 I need money, as such, to produce these projects, I need ideas.

6
7 Yes. Would you put out more of your music?

8
9 No is the answer to that. No. I think no. I'd like the opportunity to work with
10 people but those are there, if you see what I mean.

11
12 What about reaching a wider audience, is that

13
14 Having time.

15
16 Having time?

17
18 Having time. Yes. I'd like things to be a little bit more comfortable for (wife),
19 because if I had more money then she wouldn't have to work so much.

20
21 Has that caused problems between you?

22
23 Well not rec- No. Miraculously. She's amazing. 'Cause. She's the main
24 breadwinner at the moment. She's. She gets about £400 for her care work in the
25 morning, which is not easy. She has to get up at 7 o'clock and look after these
26 old people, get them up, clean them, sometimes they're incontinent, some of
27 them, and stuff like that. It's a difficult bloody job,

28
29 She's very understanding to do that...

30
31 Yes she's a very caring person. And she comes back at sort of 10 o'clock and
32 then I take the dogs for a walk and then I come back and she goes off and does
33 this admin job and then the rest of the money is supplemented hopefully by at
34 least 1 or 2 gigs that I do in Europe.

35
36 Do you find you have a routine in your days?

37
38 Yes. Very much a routine.

39
40 Do you prefer it that way?

41
42 Yes [doubtful] but I like to get out of certain routines. I like to have specific,
43 more specific projects.

44
45 Um Absolutely. Very definitely. I must say I would like to

46
47 You like having something to work towards?

48
49 Write a piece for somebody like the London Sinfonietta. That would be great.
50 And I'd put all this stuff about the pentatonic scales into that piece. But
51 unfortunately I just don't have. I'm not familiar with, I funnily. I did know the
52 person who used to run, a woman called (name) somebody or other, a woman
53 who funnily enough was the Secretary of the Society for the Promotion of New
54 Music, and I don't know whether she's still doing it or not, but as you and I said
55 before the tape started rolling. That world is so exclusive, and I'm kidding
56 myself in a lot of ways. When I took part in that competition, with that
57 composition, I did it because I was, I had very little work, it gave me something

1 to focus on, but really I was living in fantasy world, cuckoo land, cloud cuckoo
2 land, as far as thinking that something would come of it, because it doesn't.
3
4 It's very very difficult, isn't it, to break into that world.
5
6 Yes. Um Absolutely, However highly qualified you are.
7
8 So you have a sort of way of working here.
9
10 Yes. The mornings are kind of like, walking dogs and stuff. Doing stuff like that,
11 looking after (wife), doing, and I do quite a lot of housework and stuff like that
12
13 Has that been a pattern for a while now?
14
15 Yes it's a routine. And then occasionally we, and then occasionally and
16 necessarily I go and do something somewhere else and that provides me with
17 the, the ability to deal with the routine [laughing], if you see what I mean. I'd
18 like less routine, I think.
19
20 Within that, do you find that if you're writing, creating, composing, whatever we
21 want to call it, how does that fit in? Have you got favourite times, favourite
22 places, do you work at the piano, it just comes from your head?
23
24 Writing and composing. I think the afternoons really are the times, and the
25 evenings. Not the mornings, because I have to do, there are too many other
26 things. Like taking on these two unwanted legacies, these dachshunds which are
27 the er, none of other children wanted have not liked it if they had been put down
28 I think.
29
30 Talking about uses for money, there are quite a lot of things to make life easier.
31
32 Yes I think so. Really yes.
33
34 Any other things that we haven't mentioned that make it easier and harder for
35 you in your work?
36
37 (5) [sighs] No not really. Um.
38
39 Anything glaringly obvious or important that has been missed out?
40
41 Yeh. Not really. I must say. I think when you first sent me that letter, I was
42 going through absolute hell at the time, I can't remember why exactly. There are
43 certain situations that (3) This kind of line of work is not easy at the best of
44 times really and it is really tiring. I mean, for instance I'd done this gig in
45 Brussels on. What sounds like a great idea was – sounds great, sounds very
46 exotic. I played (name of piece), which is this pentatonic thing, on a Lutheal
47 piano, which is, and it's the only remaining Lutheal piano in the world. The
48 other one was destroyed in a Paris fire and stuff, which is an amazing
49 instrument.
50
51 I do know what you mean. I've never heard it. Have you got a recording of it?
52 I'd love to hear that.
53
54 Yes. And also with a dancer, who's this 82 year old woman and visual artist,
55 called (name).
56
57 Extraordinary – a most extraordinary affair altogether!

1
2 [laughing] Yes! On the face value that sounds like – and to me, at the time when
3 I cooked this idea up, it sounded beautiful. Everything about it is wonderful. But
4 I came back completely and utterly drained. Completely emotionally and
5 physically and everythingly drained.

6
7 Why? Had it gone well?

8
9 Well, because the 82 year old woman of course, needs a lot of caring for. She's
10 very slow, and quite forgetful so I had to kind of, getting her on and off
11 aeroplanes, and getting her to gigs, things like that.

12
13 Oh gosh – you had to take her with you?

14
15 Yes. She's (name's) widow – (name), and she's a fantastic artist, but, she's 82,
16 she's very slow. So you have to take everything and make sure that she's in the
17 hotel OK. And then everything's done on the cheap anyway. So I'm staying in a
18 different place with this guy who likes to talk at you a lot and you have to listen
19 to them telling you what music they like and doing this and that and the other.
20 And the gig itself, which is no easy thing. Because (name of piece) is a difficult
21 piece anyway, having to do this hour long thing, with lots of scales and stuff.
22 But having these stops that you have to pull out on the Lutheal piano, with a. I
23 had somebody to help me, and (name), to make sure she was quite happy with
24 her materials, and this that and the other. So all in all, when I came back, it was a
25 feeling of exhaustion, rather than elation and I've, quite often, there is a feeling
26 of exhaustion.

27
28 So it has a cost to you, in terms of...

29
30 Yes I think so in a lot of ways.

31
32 Has it affected your health, do you think?

33
34 No. No it hasn't at all,

35
36 What I haven't asked you, is how you deal with these stresses. When you get
37 stressed out and wound up, how do you deal with it?

38
39 Well fortunately I'm quite healthy, in so far as I don't get too – I'm not an
40 alcoholic and I'm not a kind of um I'm not into serious drugs. I'm kind of
41 careful about that. Erm. If I smoke a joint it'll be if I don't have anything for 2
42 weeks evidently. Erm. So I'll have a joint if I've got nothing for 2 weeks. After a
43 gig, not before it! That's what Louis Armstrong once said to Kenny Clarke, only
44 afterwards, please! [laughing]

45
46 What about other things important to do for the next week, or two, because it
47 stays in the system, do you exercise, anything like that? Relaxation?

48
49 Yes. I had a run this morning, I did 20 minutes this morning. I used to do yoga
50 but unfortunately (wife's name) and I had a motorbike accident in Majorca, and
51 a car hit us sideways on and this kneecap split and it's still not right. And I've
52 got a tiny bit of arthritis. I haven't done yoga now for 5 or 6 years but I did it for
53 20 years. I did Hatha yoga for a long time. When I last saw you I was kind of
54 involved in that. Yes.

55
56 I seem to remember that.

57

1 Yes. It kept me. Yes, I'm reasonably fit.
2
3 What about things affecting your playing – stresses, strains, injuries, things like
4 that?
5
6 Arthritis, finger arthritis is something that has been a little bit of a concern.
7 That's all sorted out now, as a result of keeping off too much wine, and also just
8 having organic food and organic wine as well. So I like my poison to be pure!!
9 [laughing]
10
11 Yes very good! [laughing]
12
13 So when you get wound up mentally, what would you do? Angry, upset?
14
15 Urrgh! OK. If I get upset and angry it's usually because of things like bicycles,
16 like not being able to do something with a bicycle that's not. I can just see my
17 father coming out in me, this complete impatience with technical things that are.
18
19 What do you do?
20
21 Oh, scream and shout and kick the bicycle!! [laughing] The usual things. Or if I
22 can't find something. If I'm going somewhere and I can't find a piece of paper.
23
24 What about musical frustrations, or frustrations connected with music? What
25 do you do then? Same thing? Do you have arguments with the guys you work
26 with?
27
28 That's a good question. No, er but for instance, computer is a great catalyst for
29 frustration, isn't it, as we all know. Computers have got, often they can be
30 extremely cantankerous and difficult, especially PCs that are quite irrational
31 sometimes, and they give you messages and this that and the other. And quite,
32 most of my musical programs are, what do they call it, cracked, so I don't have
33 manuals so I have to work out how they all work by doing everything wrong
34 first, before I can do things right, so it's a good tester for, er patience, actually
35 and sometimes I've actually done terrible things like lose 2 or 3 days work.
36
37 What happened then? How do you react to that?
38
39 Oh I'll go inside and get terribly miserable and (wife) will say [very quietly]
40 "Ah, never mind."
41
42 Have you had personal difficulties at work? How would you manage those
43 then? Falling out with people?
44
45 Falling out with people. Yes, that's a good. I've only really fallen out with one
46 person, musically speaking, with one person badly. I mean (name) sacked me
47 from his band after we went to Australasia because I was a bit of a naughty boy
48 on one occasion. I got very drunk with vodka and was very abusive towards one
49 of the promoters, [laughing], which didn't bode well and I was also a bit
50
51 That doesn't sound like the you I've been hearing about!
52
53 That's right!! [laughing] Oh you fucking bastard, that kind of thing, and sort of
54 telling.. I asked (name) if he was having a good holiday! That kind of thing..
55
56 What provoked that then? The drink?
57

1 Probably the drink and the frustration of hanging around. We were in Sydney
2 Australia and er the guy who had us there. We ended up in Sydney for about 3 or
3 4 days and me sleeping on a floor, with no gigs to show for it because they'd
4 managed to screw up with the Australian Musicians' Union, nothing worse than

5
6 Going all that way..

7
8 New Zealand was fine and we played in India, at the Nehru Centre after coming
9 out of Australia, which was fine, but the time in, and my last gig with (name)
10 was at the Nehru Hall in Bombay, and um, and then (name) kind of got rid of
11 me and the other keyboard player.

12
13 What, there? Out there?

14
15 Well, yes, kind of. It was. I would say there was a certain problem with his
16 management abilities. Quite often musicians aren't very good managers. I mean
17 if you've got a big band, the most important thing is to be a really good
18 personnel manager. That was the thing about Ellington evidently. Ellington was
19 a real gentleman one, when he sacked people! I think Mingus said he's never
20 been sacked so politely! [laughing]

21
22 But you weren't, on that occasion, was it...

23
24 Well (name) sent me a letter saying, I'm changing the direction of the band, and
25 that was the thing. But he said to other people, "I can't take any more of this
26 thing." But since that time (name) and I have kind of reunited and we've played
27 together and we've even thought that it might be an idea for me to play on some
28 of his music again. At the moment we're just improvising. We've got a gig
29 together in Belgium. But. Yes.

30
31 We're talking about stress, managing stress.

32
33 Managing stress with other musicians. (3) Well that's right.

34
35 So you would have an argument and shout and swear and all that stuff? Now?

36
37 No. No. Not at all. Not with people. The only time was as I said in Sydney when
38 I got drunk one night.

39
40 OK That's not typically you.

41
42 And it wasn't that I got aggressive, I just go very mouthy.
43 Very mouthy and said, er I didn't get aggressive. I got belligerent and paraded
44 around like being provocative. [laughing]

45
46 Sounded off a bit! OK.

47
48 That's right! [laughing]

49
50 So if you have frustrations now, what happens? How do you deal with it
51 yourself, if you're angry or annoyed or upset?

52
53 Yeh. Erm. I think (4) they're tangible moments of anger and frustration.
54 They're. Well. OK. There are two kinds. Because there's that. There's the kind
55 of momentary thing where you, something irritates you. The computer or the
56 piano or you can't find something or you can't play something even. And there's
57 also the more deep-rooted feeling of social rejection from being a player.

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Talk about both of them. The first one.

The first one is one where I think I've inherited my father's characteristics in so far as one does in a lot of ways. I remember seeing my father frustrated and being quite unfulfilled as a person himself, 'cause, as I said, his career-building period of his life was thrown to the wind by six years in the Army and he couldn't go back to what he'd studied. Before, he went to Lincoln's Inn Fields and was a lawyer and stuff. Just couldn't take it. He couldn't work like that any more because he'd lost so many of his mates. And so they, his own frustrations were about finding himself in situations where he was having to build a chicken house for my mother, because she had this ideal about having a farm in the country in Dorset, or wherever and he had no understanding of the land at all, He'd spent his, a lot of his education and stuff so therefore his frustrations I think I kind of inherited. He used to get frustrated with me, for whatever reason, that was manifested physically and stuff so I kind of learned to deal and fight him myself in the same way as he would. So I used to (1) fight him. I used to literally fight him. Now and again. The best, I think the most telling kind of moment in my relationship with him was at a point where I said I'm not going to work for English China Clay, 'cause he said that he knew somebody who could get me a job at English China Clay, but I said "I want to be a musician and that's what I'm studying to be." And he took a swipe at me and I managed to just move away from his swipe. And I thought, "Right, this is a key moment in my life. First of all I've managed to avoid being physically abused, and secondly I've managed to say what I wanted to do." But it still meant that I had to leave. A few months after that I left the house, my parent's house, packed my bags the next day after a huge barney with them.

How old were you then?

Seventeen. I was 17 and I came to London and stayed with my sister for a little while and er she was quite useful and helpful, in Elephant and Castle.

What is it about your father in yourself that you see when you get angry and frustrated?

Well, the actual manifestation of er anger.

What would you do, then?

Oh I'd probably throw things about a bit, kick stools over, scream and shout, that kind of thing, that,

OK

And, yes, manifest it in a primal way, in a lot of ways. I've not gone to the point, I've almost felt, sometimes, like covering myself in petrol, sitting in the middle of this room and dropping a match on myself [laughing].

Why would you want to do that?

Well just destroying everything because of feeling so, at the point.

That's the second kind, really serious self-doubt, self-criticism.

Yes, Well just complete and utter self-criticism. Self

Are you very critical in that way?

1
2 Yes pretty critical. Yes.
3
4 Do you listen to other people's views. Do you take any notice of what other
5 people say about yourself?
6
7 Yes. Sure. I do. Yes. Very much so. I do. I listen to what people. Maybe a bit too
8 much. I get to the point where I'm a bit paranoid if anything, if somebody, but I
9 don't think that's a problem.
10
11 What?
12
13 Er. Not listening to what people think about me, not taking people's criticisms. I
14 take that from my children, which I think is important. I've always let my
15 children criticise me, so that I can work on the relationship that I have with
16 them.
17
18 As far as your musical work is concerned, has that been criticised?
19
20 It has been, yes. I've had a few rough crits.
21
22 From yourself?
23
24 Oh, from myself. Yes. From (name of piece), for instance. I've listened to the
25 piece and I've heard things that I've just got to try and sort out and deal with.
26 But at the same time it's very much part of my metabolism and physiology.
27
28 And will you praise yourself when you do something that's good equally? Say
29 "Yes, that works. That's good."
30
31 Yes if I praise myself, I'll praise myself in the same way as I'll praise another
32 piece of music that I really like a lot. And there's a feeling of achievement and
33 success. But it's nothing to do with success from getting some kind of accolade
34 or whatever.
35
36 It's not externally rewarded.
37
38 No no. It's not. That's right, yes.
39
40 What about the harsh criticism. In terms of comments about your own music.
41
42 Well my sister and my father were pretty harsh.
43
44 How much attention do you pay,, for instance to the critics, when you had works
45 reviewed.
46
47 Yeh yeh. Um, It depends who they are. If I value what they say, then I um, take
48 heed in a lot of ways.
49
50 So if you feel it's informed
51
52 Yes. But on the other hand I'm also slightly wary of people who are very
53 positive about things that I think are slightly flawed. So it's difficult.
54
55 So you're listening to yourself by and large.
56
57 Mmm Yes I think. Well.

1
2 What about other composers, let's say, or other improvisers how much attention
3 would you pay to comments from them?
4

5 From them? Erm, quite a lot really, but having said that, I think that there would
6 be certain people who I know wouldn't like, for instance, (name of piece), that
7 I'm playing because they have a more kind of specific musical aesthetic
8 ideology, and I think that they would find that what I was doing with that er. I
9 think. (name) said to me. He kind of advised me to get in touch with a label – I
10 can't remember what they're called, Winter or something or other. He said,
11 because it's more accessible. It's music that is more accessible. Which is. So
12 therefore, Yes. That's to be understood and expected from those particular kinds
13 of people. For instance, I've done something with this violinist called (name),
14 and that's been criticised a fair bit by a few of my friends, like (name). It's a
15 double CD and he said. I said "What do you think of it?" And he said "Well, I
16 really have a lot of difficulty with (violinist's name)." Cause (name) and I have
17 worked together and stuff and he said "I just don't like it" and (another name)
18 has said "Not my cup of tea!"
19

20 And how does that affect you when they say that?

21
22 To be expected.
23

24 Would you take any notice of it?
25

26 I can't take notice of it because of my relationship with (violinist), because
27 (name). He has got his own fairly uncompromising thing and he's quite a
28 hardened player. He spent quite a lot of time in Amsterdam, and he was very
29 alienated in Amsterdam, he spent a huge amount of time as an outsider there,
30 being ignored and ostracised by the improv mafia there, as he would call them,
31 people like (name) and (name) and all that lot. They're all right. All of them are
32 OK actually. That's from his angle, you see. Everybody's got their own angle,
33 haven't they. I like (name). I think he's a lovely bloke.
34

35 As you know, I work with musicians now. Is there anything you think I should
36 be aware of, that might come up, that it would help me to be aware of generally,
37 from your experience over the years with improvising musicians especially?
38

39 Yes. I think what you, erm, you've got. In a lot of ways you've got a flavour of,
40 a strong flavour, hopefully, of what I'm about, given today's particular state and
41 everything. And we've covered a lot of territory and I think you're gonna, in
42 whatever way you structure, you're gonna have to pull bits out of this, aren't
43 you? And search through little strands and find certain things and there will be
44 things that you remembered we talked about on this occasion that you will be
45 able to go straight to and pull out and refer to. It'll be easier than other bits. I
46 would say that if we were to talk about sanity or some of the more (2) intangible
47 aspects of the music, sanity and melancholia and the survival thing, because I
48 think there are a lot of artists
49

50 Self-expression too.
51

52 Self expression too, Yes. Well, Self-expression, yes.
53

54 Or rather realising the music, realising the perception of the music, not quite the
55 same thing..
56

57 That we haven't really talked about.

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No we haven't.

Well OK I feel that in a lot of ways that's changed over the years. When I was younger I was very much more into the, energy level of playing and the physicality of it, and the speed and the tempestuousness of youthful, just like a young dog will run around like crazy. I think I did as well, musically speaking, and I think that would be manifest in recordings that I did with (name of band) or some of the earlier recordings I did and the time that I spent with those guys. But I would say however on hindsight, when I've listened back to the material, when I've listened back to that stuff, I would say that it's quite erm immature, or kind of undeveloped. It lacked real cohesiveness and it was too (1) unconsidered, ill-considered really, for lots of reasons, for reasons of um, given the situation that I was with those other musicians. But at the same time there was an element of, plenty of expression there, energy and expression, youthful vigour and people enjoyed it. We used to get good feedback from gigs. People used to shout and scream and stuff like that, especially when we used to go to places like Poland, and do gigs. Somehow where they didn't know who we were, and stuff, it was nice to have a clean slate. But then I think playing with (name) and self-expression, the self expression. I think Stravinsky, I think it was him, almost denies expression in his music. And feels that it gets in the way. And funnily enough I've heard it a little bit sometimes with.. there's a little section, for instance, in a piece that (name) and I wrote for a 25 piece choir, called (name). Sometimes the self-expression can actually interfere with the overall cohesive quality of music.

So it's a kind of intrusive individual voice.

Yes intrusive and it gets in the way of the clarity of the piece somehow. For that reason, I would say that the material, the content of the music that I play now is clearer, and more unified. And I think it's because of the fact that er I have just specific things that I have to work with. Having said that, with the composition that I wrote for this Luxembourg group, that will never get played, there was a lot of disparate elements in that. And I did try a lot of different genres out. It was very mixed genre. I think you can do a little bit more with composition, you can experiment more with things. Probably why they didn't like it. It didn't have enough specific unity about it.

We haven't talked about sanity and insanity.

Well sanity and insanity. Er (6) I've not had erm any absolute essential need to go and see a psychotherapist or psychiatrist, ever, apart from in fact maybe when I was about 16. I had a little thing at school when I was using, feigning madness in order to seek attention a little bit, and they put me on Librium for a little while.

Was this 'cause of difficulties with your parents?

Yes possibly. Just feeling totally. It was a very alienating situation just being at public school as well, and people thought I was an oddball because of the fact that I was, I used to spend a lot of my time in the practice studio, playing in the music studio, the piano and stuff. And it was probably not very healthy either, there was an element of autism going on there as well, using music as an escape.

How do you mean?

1 Self-imposed autism. Kind of going away just shutting myself off from the rest
2 of the world, and occupying myself with the piano and living in a land of make-
3 believe or whatever.
4
5 There's a popular conception or misconception that high levels of creativity go
6 with a kind of imbalance- what's your view on that?
7
8 It's interesting. It leads to some interesting (1) I, I think there are certain artists
9 who have had problems like that. Obviously.
10
11 Generally
12
13 But generally. Possibly. I think that.
14
15 Is it an occupational hazard?
16
17 It is an occupational hazard but I think it is possible also to be quite levelheaded
18 and sane and again. Well, we don't know for sure.
19
20 In your experience of people that you've worked with, have they have been as
21 much level headed and sane and they have been up and down and ..
22
23 Yeh. Yes. Working with improvisers there has to be a high degree of sanity
24 there. That sounds semi-fascist really.
25
26 How do you mean?
27
28 Because I think that if you are going to be insane, then the level of
29 communication is going to be interfered with, just as it would be with a
30 conversation that you would have with somebody
31
32 You have to have a certain kind of receptivity to make it possible, so enclosed
33 on your own..
34
35 I think probably insane people would be more better off being composers or
36 visual artists, because they can somehow seek solace in their solitude, and it's
37 obviously good for them.
38
39 Would you not say that people seek solace collectively in their shared music?
40
41 Oh yes. Definitely. That is definitely the case. Yes. That's right. There's a
42 certain degree of sanity that you can get from working with people, playing with
43 people. That's absolutely right. That you wouldn't have if you didn't, so yes.
44
45 Anything else you think that I should know as a psychotherapist working with
46 musicians, that you have learned from your experience or observed? Say, for
47 somebody setting out to work in the fields you've worked in the sort of problems
48 they might have.
49
50 Yes I think one of the big problems is that musicians can be overtrained, or they
51 can spend too much time on their own. And this can create all kinds of problems
52 because they have some kind of then inability to somehow make music freshly
53 with musicians in situations. Sometimes they can miraculously find a way of it
54 being harnessed, if they are in a situation where they are working with good
55 band leaders. I'm thinking for instance of, for example Weather Report, with
56 Jaco Pastorius who was evidently a bit of a head case. But somehow his abilities
57 were used and harnessed by Joey Zawinul or whatever. It's not anything

1 particularly musical that interests me as such actually. It's not aesthetically
2 something that I listen to. In fact I don't think I've got any Weather Report
3 records, but something that I noticed with... It's just an example of a
4 relationship, if you like, that is possible in a lot of ways or can be possible in
5 some ways, to have. But it makes it difficult.

6
7 So people coming from a very schooled culture where there's a right way to do
8 things and so on, it would be difficult to break free, that would be one thing,

9
10 Yes. Highly trained. I had a student from Minneapolis or Minnesota who heard
11 John Butcher play at the Vancouver Festival about 3 years ago and she said that
12 she was doing an exchange with her University could she come over and study
13 with me while she was here on her exchange and that she wanted to improvise
14 and she was a pretty good Bach and Mozart player. In fact she sent me
15 recordings of her playing the Mozart Double concerto of her playing with a
16 friend of hers, the piano concerto and stuff. And now she's living in Seattle and
17 playing accordion and living with this guy who is treating her accordion playing
18 electronically and stuff and she is working freshly from that. And she obviously
19 needed to get out of that, and away from all of that, and think things freshly
20 again.

21
22 Has that been what you have been doing in your teaching work, helping free
23 people from those constraints.

24
25 It's never that conscious. If they say can they come and if they say I'd like to
26 study with you, to me they are already there, if you see what I mean, and the last
27 students that I

28
29 That's why you've been chosen.

30
31 Yes. I don't know. It sounds terribly conceited.

32
33 Not at all.

34
35 But in my last year at (name) University when I was a teacher, I gave up
36 teaching composition. I had 2 students, which are very close friends of mine
37 still, and they were the best students I ever had in a lot of ways. When I say best,
38 just because they, I was able to give them a huge amount but not as a teacher
39 almost. We just used to hang out a lot, drink in the bar a lot! [laughs]

40
41 How did the teaching affect your own music?

42
43 Distraction. I remember a woman called (name) said that teachers are thick-
44 skinned and artists are thin skinned. [laughing]

45
46 Do you agree with that?

47
48 I don't know whether I do or not. I think it's a real hell of a generalisation.

49
50 So it took you away from what you'd rather be doing?

51
52 Yes. That's right.

53
54 Is that why you stopped?

55
56 Yes.

57

1 Was there anything you got out of it positively, that affected your own creation?
2
3 Meeting younger students.
4
5 Like the two you were telling me about.
6
7 Just the two. (name) who is now the keyboard player for (name's) band, but he's
8 playing tonight down on a boat on the Thames in a band called "They came from
9 the sea" which is a surf band. But he works with (name) at the (club) in a band
10 called ("name") and he's amazingly broad and incredibly talented and when I
11 first met him. He was referred to me by this Australian teacher who said [in
12 Australian accent] "Don't trust that geezer. I think he's really lazy. Watch him!"
13 [laughing] And then I met this scruffy geezer, this really scruffy geezer with
14 long hair who said "Can I have lessons with you?" and that was it! I thought
15 Great!!
16
17 I think we've probably covered it now haven't we?
18
19 Yes that's right
20

Transcript 14 :

Adam

1 If anyone ask you to describe yourself as a musician, what would you say?

2
3 Well I'm almost entirely a non-executive musician. I think of the executive
4 branch as being composer, conductor and related things like that – arranging and
5 so on. And my relationship with music more or less always has been practical,
6 often functional. I don't think it is functional nowadays, but it is practical, it's to
7 do with playing. It's about playing. Yes maybe it's about playing, in a way, what
8 I do, and outside of the practical application of this playing thing, which is a –
9 for years I've tried to think of a definition of playing. I've never found it. They
10 used to say to old jazz players, years ago, they used to say. "What do you do?"
11 And they would say "I just play, man!" And I've come to see that as a
12 philosophical statement, more than a defensive one. And I just play, but it does
13 entail a lot of aspects of music, approaches to music. Or in my case anyway, I
14 don't know how it applies to other people but

15
16 I'm not really interested in other people, just you.

17
18 Currently, and I mean by currently, these last 10 years or so, one of my interests
19 has been playing with people who don't normally play free improvisation. I've
20 always done some of that, when I used to run (name). So I'm interested in, the
21 part of playing that particularly appeals to me is playing with other people. I do a
22 lot of solo work but that's economic really. I mean it interests me to do it but..

23
24 Can I take up some of these things?

25
26 Yes, Sure.

27
28 Coming back to what you said originally, the first thing about the executive
29 branch, how do you see yourself as being different from that executive branch
30 then?

31
32 I think of myself as a sort of musical labourer.

33
34 Right!

35
36 It's a practical matter. It's just I think of the executive branch as being
37 essentially not practical in a music-making sense, even though I realise a
38 composer makes music by writing.

39
40 Even performers?

41
42 Of course, but that's not quite what I meant. If I could define playing I would
43 define it. It's something that seems to me to be different to all other aspects of
44 music, and is central to virtually every kind of music making. But a definition, I
45 don't know. I can't find one, and it's the non-executive side of it, is if it drifts
46 away from being purely practical, there's something wrong with it.

47
48 Practical as opposed to?

49
50 Theoretical.

51
52 Because amongst the group of performers, people who play in musical styles and
53 so on, there are people who would see themselves as non-executive in that sense.
54 How do you distinguish your approach from them.

55
56 I don't know who they are.

1 I'm thinking about people who play in jazz bands, all those people who
2
3 I don't think of that as playing.
4
5 What's the difference?
6
7 I don't know. I think it's performing. The playing I mean is a creative activity,
8 let's say. It's not to do with reproducing somebody else's stuff.
9
10 So if you're following a script or a score or something,
11
12 It's not what I mean. It can be described as playing. This is the trouble with the
13 name playing. It can be described as playing as all kinds of things – like the kids
14 out in the street play. Yes. That's not what I mean either.
15
16 Isn't there a playful element in what you do though, in that kid's sense?
17
18 Maybe. Maybe. Could be. But the playing at the centre or the focus, of what I'm
19 interested in, what I like to do, is this creative thing. If it's not both, at least if
20 it's not at least explorative I lose interest in it, and that's in the context of freely
21 improvised music. There's a lot of improvised situations which I don't
22 particularly like. I don't maintain continuing regular relationships. That's a
23 musical decision.
24
25 Yes. What is it you don't like about those continuing relationships?
26
27 I think it leads you away from what I'm talking about with playing.
28
29 You get into patterns, into habits.
30
31 Yes it can be very sophisticated, you know, but for my taste it's not where the
32 most interesting aspect of playing is. But then again, I've said this many times,
33 as you might guess, and the assumption is that what I really like is ad hoc
34 playing, but that's not right. I do like ad hoc playing, but
35
36 I'm not sure what that means either, apart from a musical sense
37
38 That's like the first time you play
39
40 Oh OK
41
42 The first time you play with somebody. I quite like that and it does attract me but
43 that's not what I think of as the most rewarding area of playing. The most
44 rewarding area I've found, for me, I'm not making generalisations. I've found
45 out a long time ago, don't make generalisations about free improvisation! But
46 just as a personal thing, I find that from the early stages of a relationship, a
47 musical relationship, let's say after the immediate ad hoc. Well the immediate ad
48 hoc can be exciting, but once it goes beyond that, then it gets really interesting,
49 until it becomes formalised, when for me, it's got no interest.
50
51 So when it stops being creative in that sense of formalising itself, it's time to go,
52 as far as you are concerned, it's time to stop.
53
54 Yes. As far as I am concerned. I know there are many
55
56 I'm not interested in other people's views really, just you...
57

1 OK. But the, yes, for me, once it becomes. For instance,
2
3 Does that mean that if you've been playing with a person or a number of people
4 and it has reached that stage and you stop playing with them, that you never play
5 with them again? How does it work?
6
7 Oh, no, no. Most of the people I play with now I play with intermittently. Many
8 people.
9
10 Is that what keeps it fresh?
11
12 I think so, because you change. They change and you change, in the intervening
13 period, and the most extreme example of that. But then a lot stays the same. The
14 bit I like is if it's more continuous and it's kind of developing. I used to find if I
15 played in regular groups, for me it finished after about 18 months. I don't know
16 why. I always seemed to finish then for me.
17
18 What were the signs for you, that it was time to stop?
19
20 Oh, familiarity. You knew what the other guys were going to do.
21
22 Was this a personal thing as well as a musical thing?
23
24 Oh no. No, I've maintained friendships and stopped playing with people.
25
26 Do you think it is necessary to get on, or to like, even, people that you play
27 with?
28
29 No. Some of the best playing I've ever had has been following an argument,
30 particularly recordings. Oh no. No. It's interesting that. And I don't like, for
31 instance, I'm not taken much with compatibility between players, so I mean...
32
33 Musical compatibility?
34
35 Yes. So if they have a kind of interlocking style, that doesn't appeal to me much.
36 It's not something that attracts me a lot. What I like is when it doesn't interlock.
37
38 Would you gather together ingredients, as it were, with that in mind. I'm
39 thinking if you had two people that are used to playing with each other in a
40 different context, thinking that if you put them together to play with you.
41
42 I do that. I've played together in recent times with other, like say two people,
43 who have played together for years, but they don't play free improvisation, and I
44 suppose – I don't know. I played last week, or the week before I think, in New
45 York 3 nights and in each case I played with the people I played with before, but
46 in the first case I played with this electronics player, (name) a Japanese lady, and
47 I had played with her a few times, but I'd never played duo with her and we did
48 this duo concert. The following night I played with a Brazilian percussionist
49 called (name). I used to play almost regularly with (name), but it was 20 years
50 ago, and we had a very refreshing night, actually. It was great. And then on the
51 last night I played with this duo, two guys from Chatanooga. They call
52 themselves the (name). And they are very good actually, that's organ and drums,
53 and I've played with them I suppose about once a year for about 10 years or
54 something. That's OK. But the most extreme example of this leaving a gap was
55 when I played again with a group I used to play with continuously for like 2/3
56 years, and that's (name) and (name). And we didn't play together for 38 years.
57

1 You're all from (name), aren't you?

2

3 Yes. Well (name) is actually from (place) but we played in (name of city). We
4 worked in a nightclub and then we played this, used to do a lot of playing other
5 than that. And that's when I started playing freely.

6

7 And you got together with them recently?

8

9 Yes. We got together. We stopped playing in 1966 and we got together again in
10 '98. It's not 38 years it's 32 isn't it?

11

12 Yes.

13

14 And that was for (name)'s 60th birthday. And we played in Cologne and for the
15 Radio. And since then we've played together a few times.

16

17 And has it had that same freshness?

18

19 It's different, but it is recognisably the same, I think. It is to me anyway. But I do
20 like it. I've always liked the music that they play. But you see that's a peculiar
21 trio. (name) and (name) both write music. But nobody would ever programme
22 (name) and (name's) compositions on the same night. They are totally different.
23 But they play together great. They don't necessarily get on too well together but
24 they play very well together and they did for years. And they still do. It's a
25 funny, mysterious business, playing! This is partly why it is difficult to explain,
26 but there is a lot of magical stuff going on.

27

28 At the other end, when you are choosing people that you haven't played with
29 before, how would you go about that?

30

31 Well I used to do that regularly with (name) And I still do it. I've done 3 in the
32 last few years but they've all been in New York. I do enjoy doing that but it
33 depends. I sort of. You try and balance a sort of – with 10 people you try and get
34 a certain compatibility. What you need for sure are at least half of the ensemble
35 should be experienced improvisers. Then you can get all kinds of things. You
36 can have non-improvisers. I used to like doing that. I haven't done that recently,
37 but for instance one of the most interesting Weeks I did last year or the year
38 before was it. We had a tap dancer. This guy is the only person I've worked with
39 who is actually older than I am! And in fact he has got a concert I think this
40 week, or last week for something for his 75th birthday. And he is American.
41 Black American and he comes out of that tap tradition. Now we played at Tonic
42 in New York which is a total kind of cutting edge/avant-garde you know, all
43 these names, it's sort of lot of mainly electronic stuff, lounge electronics I think
44 of it, power book stuff. Firstly the audience couldn't make head or tail of him
45 but the musicians couldn't because his main relationship. I mean he's got great
46 ears, has Will, I've often worked with him actually and he can work with
47 anybody, but his main relationship is with the audience. Now all these
48 downtown people in New York were used to any kind of relationship with each
49 other but they weren't used to a guy who flat out courted the audience.
50 Meanwhile he's listening, not missing anything. So that was kind of intriguing.
51 Now on the first night, we did 4 nights, I think, people were saying to me
52 "What's happening with this guy? What's going on?" By the last night
53 everybody wanted to play with him. Everything had changed. And I used to get.
54 I would always pick, like in the British ones, at least one person who was
55 difficult for them to swallow.

56

57 Just to kind of keep them on the edge?

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Yes. It was something to chew on, something to work on, otherwise it seems to me you may as well write the stuff.

I used to hear a lot about that from (name).

We made a record called (title). I'll give you a copy. Because the sleeve note is just definitions of playing, sort of. Remind me to give you one. I like it actually. But I found that (name) wasn't actually so interested in somebody being there who was kind of alien to the general thing. He liked. He did have his own music actually, (name).

He liked to work round structures of some kind.

Yes.

Yes he did. Well he liked compatibility. A certain kind of compatibility, yes. I always enjoyed working with him.

What keeps you going in it, what is it you find rewarding in the free improvisation?

Well a lot of it is guitar playing. I like playing the guitar. I play the guitar in a certain way which some people find totally objectionable I think, but the reason for that is I've tried to develop an approach to free playing which is associated with free playing. I think of it like that. Not. For years I worked as a commercial musician – 15/20 years almost.

How do look back on that period?

Well it depends which period. The early part in the 50s I enjoyed, that kind of work in night clubs and dance halls, that kind of thing, I didn't leave that. It left me. And then when I went in the studios I did not enjoy it.

What led you into free improvisation out of that commercial world?

(name) and (name).

Oh right, yes. We met playing in a night club and then we started playing other – running a jazz club kind of thing and gradually, because the three of us were so different characters and musically as well. It finished up, it seemed the only way we could really play together was freely! It was funny. And it took 2 to 3 years for us to get to that point because we did play what was then contemporary jazz, which still seems to be contemporary jazz.

So you kind of fell into it through.

Well I was maybe looking for somewhere to go and they were going somewhere. They were much younger than me anyway and I went with them. That was it.

It obviously worked for you. What was it that was so good about it for you that made you stay there?

Well what has always been good about it is partly the people I met. I've met some great musicians in this music. And then more recently as I say I've tried to develop an approach to playing this freely improvised music and more recently

1 it's taking that approach and putting it into non-free situations. So for instance
2 I've worked occasionally with a Chinese pipa player, a classical musician, and
3 then I work with two funk guys in the States. And all kinds of people I've
4 worked with in recent times. And I like that. I like trying to do what I do in their
5 context. I don't try to play their way. I try to do what I do in their context. They
6 provide the context.

7
8 How far do you see the guitar as your expression.

9
10 Oh yes it is totally. But I think the guitar is an amazing instrument.

11
12 Has it changed, your relationship with the guitar over the years?

13
14 Oh yes. Yes. I hope it changes all the time. I hope it changes all the time. But
15 it's a technical approach. It isn't a, I don't kind of saw the end off it or put it
16 upside down on a table and whack it with a cricket bat, something like that.

17
18 Is there a particular instrument that you prefer to use?

19
20 Well, I've got two that I use at the moment and I've just bought, well I bought
21 one about a year or so ago. It's a guitar I have to say I lusted after for 50 years.
22 It's an Epiphone Emperor. It's an acoustic guitar. Epiphone Emperor Acoustic.
23 It's not from the 30s, which is the one I'd really like, but they are just
24 ridiculously expensive now, but it's from 1951.

25
26 What is it you like about it?

27
28 Well, the sound mainly, and its responsiveness. It's really extraordinary,
29 particularly the bottom end of it. But they were built, these things, to cut through
30 big bands, to chop it. It's not a, I happen to know that you can't successfully
31 amplify these things. They used to try that in dance halls and all they would do
32 was feed back, 'cause they are so responsive. If you put a pickup on it. Guys
33 used to stuff cotton wool inside the body just to stop it being responsive. But it's
34 that responsiveness that I found stimulating.

35
36 Does it bother you that you can't amplify it if you are playing in a large
37 ensemble.

38
39 No I play electric otherwise. I mean most of the situations I play in I have to
40 play electric.

41
42 Is it for this reason really?

43
44 It's just to play with other people really. Sometimes – I played yesterday here
45 with a guy who was visiting this country, a drummer, and he plays clarinet. He
46 came up and we had a play. Then I play acoustic. I think more or less every
47 week if I'm here, somebody comes up and we have a play and then I'd virtually
48 always play acoustic. But let's say publicly, I find it necessary to play electric.
49 Also I quite like sometimes to make a lot of noise.

50
51 How so necessary?

52
53 As I say I like to sometimes make a lot of noise.

54
55 Oh OK. You turn the amp up to 11 and a half and all that?

56

1 Yes Yes. Yes. I do that sometimes but not as a general rule it's just that to
2 balance with other instruments it needs some amplification.

3
4 You've got some control over your

5
6 Yes, I don't like playing acoustic through a microphone you see. It seems
7 pointless, that, to me.

8
9 Does it make it easier for you if the equipment, that side of it, isn't a bother, you
10 can just do it. You don't have to think about it?

11
12 Oh yes. I hate the equipment thing. But I take, I've used the same equipment for
13 years really, a volume pedal. I need a volume pedal. For me it's a kind of
14 breathing device. Then I have a distortion pedal. But I've used those for – I don't
15 know – 30 odd years or so.

16
17 What made you decide to go beyond the colours of the guitar to use effects in
18 the first place?

19
20 I don't think of them as effects. I think of them as bringing out certain aspects of
21 the guitar. I use a lot of clusters for instance. Now a cluster, combined with a
22 distortion is an extraordinary sound, because the cluster is a distortion in certain
23 ways and if I want to make... it just depends... In certain contexts where its nice
24 to make a noise.

25
26 It enlarges your vocabulary or range?

27
28 Yes that's right. Yes.

29
30 Anything particular that drew you to the guitar as opposed to other instruments,
31 originally? What was it about the guitar?

32
33 I think it's because my uncle played one.

34
35 The uncle that taught you?

36
37 Yes.

38
39 All the rest of my family. Well most of them worked in the steel works. I could
40 see the difference between him playing in the band and the rest of them working
41 in the steel works. That was easy. And he was to me an exotic figure when I was
42 a child.

43
44 Did he play in a dance band?

45
46 He played in a dance band. Yes. Yes. We always played in dance bands. But it's
47 funny. I played the guitar a bit when I was very young, but subsequently, maybe
48 because of him. I don't. I mean. It's still. Well not now, because they are all
49 dead actually, but for all my aunts and uncles there was only one guitar player,
50 and that was George. But for a long time I played drums and then I played
51 clarinet but eventually I went back to the guitar. And I think it was to get away –
52 I think it was the sight of him in his nice suit and bow tie as opposed to
53 somebody else covered in sweat and shit.

54
55 But having said that, that kind of dressed up sort of performing is completely
56 different from what you yourself have done.

57

1 Oh yes. Yes. Well. It's just symbolic. I knew what they were doing, the other
2 people. They were getting up at the crack of dawn or they were working all
3 night. I come from a working class background and most of my family... I mean
4 my father's family. My father comes from a family of 13 people and most of
5 them did gruesome jobs. They no longer exist those jobs now in [name of City].
6 But yes. I saw the advantage, But then again it might be genetic because my
7 grandfather played banjo! You never know.

8
9 Yes there's some music in your family!

10
11 You never know!

12
13 OK Turning to the things that help you create you music, what would you
14 include amongst them. Obviously one we have already talked about which is this
15 thing about having the freshness if you are playing with others.

16
17 Other people are the main thing to me. Other people and how I feel physically
18 and technically.

19
20 Would you prepare yourself for a performance?

21
22 Yes, I sleep. If I get the chance, I sleep before I play.

23
24 Immediately before, so kind of, "Wake me up when it's time to go on?" type of
25 thing.

26
27 If possible. It's not usually possible to do that. But I've done that and I find it
28 very beneficial. But what I can do is to sleep up to the time of the gig, for a
29 couple of hours, and then I don't think of it. I just go and start. That's a lie down.

30
31 Do you go on pretty relaxed when you go on?

32
33 Yes. It doesn't bother me too much. Again it depends on the context. If I'm
34 playing solo in a l- I don't like playing solo on festivals for instance. There's a
35 large audience and it doesn't seem to me, to be the right thing to be doing there,
36 somehow, you know, what I do. But then again.

37
38 Would you say no then to it, because of that?

39
40 It depends on the money. It would depend on the money. I do it for a living, you
41 know. So I've got a gig in -- where is it? -- somewhere in East Europe which I
42 know is a big festival but they are paying me a lot of money to go and do it so
43 that's OK,

44
45 When you are feeling, you've got that big audience there, and you are thinking
46 this isn't quite the right place for this, how do you get over it?

47
48 I just carry on. Play. It depends on. If the audience is docile, it's OK. When I say
49 docile, I mean they're not aggressive,

50
51 Yes. They're receptive.

52
53 Yes, then concentration comes fairly easily. Once you get into it, it doesn't
54 matter. But for instance I've got a .. And it depends on the context. I've got a
55 concert in June in Amsterdam at the Koncertgebouw which is their concert hall,
56 and I have to play for 20 minutes and it's an electric guitar festival. I think of
57 that as OK, you see. Anyway I've played the Koncertgebouw before and it's not

1 the kind of thing I'm thinking of with the festival, but .. So I don't feel any
2 reluctance about that, even though it's not very well paid. But it depends. I had a
3 great gig about 3 or 4 weeks ago. Usually nowadays if you play this stuff, you
4 play to the converted. I mean, there is an audience for it.

5
6 I was going to ask you about that. Are you aware of who the audience is?

7
8 In some cases I know their names! I mean if I play in New York at the Tonic
9 which I've been doing ever since it opened, I would say there'd be at least 10
10 people – mind you there might be 80 or 90 people – but I would know all the
11 front row..

12
13 How does that make you feel when you see the familiar faces there?

14
15 I don't know. How does that make me feel? I'm not sure. I'm not sure what my
16 reaction to seeing...

17
18 Is it positive?

19
20 Oh yes. Yes. My friends!"

21
22 Would you acknowledge them?

23
24 Yes, sometimes! Amongst friends. But then again you are aware. This is
25 something they don't get very usually with touring, where they've heard you
26 quite often, and there's that, some kind of stimulus to try and...

27
28 Is it important for you to try and communicate with an audience?

29
30 I don't think it is actually. No I don't think so.

31
32 What are your views on that sort of thing?

33
34 As long as they are not throwing anything I'm OK! If they keep quiet and not
35 throwing anything... But then.. I was going to tell you about this gig I had in
36 place called Amstetten in Austria.

37
38 Where's that?

39
40 About two hours drive from Vienna. It's a small Alpine town. It's not small
41 enough to be a village. It's a beautiful place. And I got this gig. At first I didn't
42 take it seriously. But somebody got in touch with me and they wanted me to play
43 for somebody's birthday. And I said, "Well that's very nice. Why is that?" And
44 they said "Well, you're the birthday present!" So I said "You don't want me to
45 come out of a cake playing the guitar do you?" So they said "No no no!" So
46 (name of wife) and I went. They were very generous actually. There was a bass
47 guitar player lives there. And his friends had said to him. "What do you want for
48 your birthday?" It was his 40th birthday. And he said "Him". So I went over
49 there and did this solo concert and also played with him. He was a good player
50 actually.

51
52 Did that surprise you? Wanting to be somebody's birthday present?

53
54 It is unique in my experience! But when I went there, one of the people who had
55 put the thing together was, owned a kind of coffee bar and I did this concert on a
56 Sunday afternoon

57

1 In his house I assume, a private party?
2
3 No I did it in the coffee bar. Now there was [name], that's the guy whose
4 birthday it was, and his friends, and one or two musicians there. So it was maybe
5 10 or 12 people. The place was full. Now that's the first time I've played to a
6 total, like unknowing audience. It was stimulating in a way because it always
7 used to be like that. Whenever you played it was "What the - is he doing?" That
8 was a bit like that. But they were as I say very well behaved. There was a
9 beautiful actually. So I was aware that most of the people there had never heard
10 any of this kind of thing, anything like it, in a way. But they were very well
11 behaved and it was enjoyable actually.
12
13 That's an amazing story! How do you react to audience reaction? How does it
14 affect you, what you are getting back from an audience?
15
16 I enjoy it when they enjoy it. I mean I. This is a sort of boast I suppose, but I've
17 had the unusual experience lately, of actually having on a couple of occasions a
18 standing ovation at the end, not just for me, I've been playing with other people.
19 I've been playing in San Diego with (name), who is a brilliant player, and at the
20 end of that we had a, they all just stood up and clapped for hours on end which I
21 thought was an absolute. Eventually it becomes a bit embarrassing, but maybe
22 it's because it's so unusual for me to get that kind of thing. But I prefer it if they
23 appear to enjoy it, I like that. If they don't, I try and forget it.
24
25 Do you succeed, while you're playing?
26
27 In forgetting it?
28
29 Do you ever get heckled?
30
31 Ah. It's a long time since. At one time I always got heckled.
32
33 How did you handle that then?
34
35 Well I sort of understood what they were talking about. I mean. Like when I
36 used to play with (name), he used to say: "Don't leave spaces, because
37 somebody will shout Bullshit."
38
39 Did he!
40
41 And so it wasn't unexpected in those days. Like, it was nice to have an occasion
42 when you weren't either heckled or there was any kind of, or people walked out.
43 More – people didn't necessarily heckle, they walked out. But it seemed to pass
44 fairly quickly. Or there seemed to be an audience. It depends on the size of the
45 audience. This is where the larger audience probably still is, there's always the
46 possibility that you might be in the wrong place at the wrong time you know.
47
48 What is it about the smaller audience you like?
49
50 Well they all, it's the reason they've come is because they want to hear the
51 music.
52
53 Coming back to earlier. You were saying that in some instances you know who
54 the audience is going to be, literally. But are you aware in more general terms of
55 who is into the music?
56

1 No. No. I'm not. You're aware of certain things, though I'm not very aware,
2 anyway, of what goes on around, off the stage. But one thing that's noticeable
3 in recent times is how the audience has got younger. Funnily enough, the older
4 people are still there. A lot of them anyway. And, for instance this concert in
5 New York. There were two people there, both in their 80s and they'd been
6 coming to concerts I'd been playing for 25 years. So I'll see how long we can
7 carry on! But it's definitely got younger. The bulk of the audience, if I could
8 describe it like that, has got younger. And they come from. A disadvantage of
9 this music used to be, I think, and again I'm, this is a personal expression, not a
10 generalisation, is that you are usually working in some fringe jazz situation.
11 Now I think jazz people hate this music. Whatever. I think they hate it. Now
12 there's a kind of audience which seems to be open to almost anything.

13
14 What do you think has led to that change?

15
16 I think it's because there are so many bits and pieces of music, so there's a kind
17 of goulash.

18
19 And that's kind of helped you, hasn't it?

20
21 Yes. We can jump into this thing and they put up with us

22
23 Made your music more accessible to people who wouldn't come across it
24 otherwise.

25
26 Yes. They listen actually.

27
28 Do you think having recordings out in the market place has helped?

29
30 Oh Yes, yes, of course.

31
32 I know there are strong views amongst the improvised world about recording
33 and how recording stands in relation to what you do when you are in front of
34 that audience, what are your views on that?

35
36 Well, it's not the same. But then again, what we do is music, and no recorded
37 music is the same. If you had the choice of going to an opera or playing an opera
38 on a record. No music is the same, they do make a song and dance, free
39 improvisators about recording, but it actually applies to all kinds of music. Like
40 performers, solo. I used to work with singers, quite often. They would always
41 always talk about the stimulus they'd get from an audience, as opposed to a
42 recording studio. But a lot of my recordings are live recordings 'cause I quite
43 like to use that. But then again I like to work in a studio. It's an unusual situation.

44
45 Does it matter to you the fact that when you're dead you will leave live
46 recordings when people are no longer able to come and hear you. Is it important
47 to you that people have a body of recorded work.

48
49 You mean posthumously?

50
51 Yes. Posthumously. How do you feel about that?

52
53 No, I feel OK that it's there, but I don't have any great expectations from it. I
54 say to (wife) "I think the best thing economically we could do is if I shot
55 myself!"

56
57 How so?

1
2 Yes it is isn't it? But then that has always been the case with musicians.
3
4 How would that benefit you though?
5
6 Well the flow of records has dried up.
7
8 Oh right.
9
10 But that's always been the case with performers, people who perform. But I
11 don't know. It's not. I mean I. The audience for this is so small, that I don't think
12 it's, it's not something (2)
13
14 Has trying to enlarge that audience been a part of your work?
15
16 Proselytising?
17
18 Yes.
19
20 No it hasn't.
21
22 Getting involved with marketing, marketing yourself.
23
24 No. But I did get involved a little bit in it through...
25
26 You've had your own, for many years you've been putting out your own
27 recordings.
28
29 Yes. But I don't think of that particularly as proselytising. There is actually a
30 market, let's say, for it, people will buy them. I like to make CDRs now.
31
32 The market you see is the people that come to the gigs?
33
34 And others.
35
36 And others.
37
38 So you can sell more. The number of copies you can sell of a record always
39 exceeds the audience at a gig but the main or perhaps the only proselytising I've
40 done is, I wrote a book about improvisation and then we made with (name) a TV
41 series.
42
43 Did that affect your work having done that? Was there much of an effect on your
44 life as a result of all that?
45
46 It's always. It was interesting but I learned more about TV than I learned about
47 improvising although (name) is a very perceptive guy and. He was the Director.
48 But during that period I did like to talking to other people about, or listening to
49 other people, who didn't play free improvisation about. And that's where I come
50 to think there's a big difference between improvising in other areas and free
51 improvisation. Some people seem not to think that. But their attitudes are very
52 very different.
53
54 How would you sum them up?
55
56 Well I sum it up by calling one idiomatic and one non-idiomatic. But there are
57 all kinds of things..

1
2 I'm not sure I understand what you mean there – you'll have to say a bit more.
3
4 No nobody seems to know what I mean. But with, what I think of as idiomatic
5 players, there are all kinds of concepts for them, which I don't think you get in
6 free players. And one is they'll all talk about their responsibility. Free players
7 talk about themselves, right. You must know that. About their music. They call
8 it "My music". Now a lot of what I think of as idiomatic players whether they're
9 jazz players, flamenco players, Indian players, talk about the music and their
10 responsibility to it and that's the main thing for them.
11
12 I see. One way I would describe it is style based, or within a tradition, or a style,
13 a structure.
14
15 Yes. And that's essential to them. So they have a concept of authenticity, of
16 course, which I don't know what authentic is in free playing except possibly to
17 not commit yourself to an idiom.
18
19 Yes. It's interesting that, thinking about authenticity, sometimes it goes
20 differently to others. Sometimes it goes better than others. Is there a sense in
21 which you know how you are judging yourself.
22
23 Are you talking about free playing?
24
25 Yes. I don't think there is any authenticity in free playing except as an attitude
26 which won't take, which won't be deflected from improvisation. That's the
27 authentic improvisers, but in other areas it's, like for a blues player to be
28 authentic is absolutely essential. He's not a blues player if he's not authentic.
29
30 I accept that. I understand that point. What I'm trying to get at is an
31 understanding of how, for you, when you have different playing experiences:
32 sometimes it's good, and you're really aware of it, what it is that makes it good.
33 Because you're not judging against style-based criteria. What is it? Is it speaking
34 to your heart?
35
36 That's the million dollar question. That's the one everyone asks and I have no
37 idea.
38
39 No idea. But you know?
40
41 Oh yes, unmistakable. It's unmistakable.
42
43 How does it affect you then? Is it a kind of joyous thing, a head thing, or body
44 thing or what?
45
46 It can make a difference to, like the whole of the following week if you have a
47 good play, and if you have a bad one, it can affect the following week as well, or
48 until the next time you play. You're always kind of feeding off. Well, for me,
49 I'm always feeding off the last time I played. Now yesterday, when we played
50 here it was OK, so it doesn't go one way or the other, but it was nice. Had it
51 been a tragedy then I would feel a certain depression today about that. Well it
52 would lead into all kinds of things.
53
54 While you're playing OK, would you be thinking.
55
56 Oh no...
57

1 Other improvisers I've spoken to said there's a kind of parallel process
2 sometimes for them sometimes. There's this kind of expressivity coming out and
3 there's also the observing self in there? Is that true for you? Is that the way you
4 experience it?

5
6 I think thinking is fatal. For me, the one thing I mustn't do is start thinking
7 about the music. No.

8
9 So it's all an unconscious?

10
11 No it's not unconscious, but again I couldn't describe it. It's a sort of, it's a
12 highly conscious thing. Hyperconscious. But it's got to be reactive, and to start
13 thinking. I know people who start thinking about improvisation but what it
14 usually means is they think about what they are going to play. Now I think that's
15 fatal, especially if you are playing, to start thinking, well the next time he does
16 that I'll... Well, forget it.

17
18 What will you be doing then on this intuitive level?

19
20 I try and maintain some sort of reactivity and, there are two things that
21 contribute to that and they are both quite banal – One is how you feel physically

22
23 I don't think that's banal – it's very important.

24
25 And the other is – how you are playing technically. If you are really on top of
26 what you're playing. If you're having a struggle with the instrument, it can be
27 very distracting, and then again sometimes it can lead to things. But to me,
28 anyway, because I am really basically a conventional musician, so if I'm not, if I
29 feel I'm not playing the instrument well, it bothers me.

30
31 Do other people's reactions bother you?

32
33 Other musicians' reactions bother me, yes.

34
35 How do they affect you?

36
37 I don't like them to not like it. But then I know that ...

38
39 Is it important for you to get – what shall I call it – feedback, to get a sense of
40 how they think it's going.

41
42 Oh yes some sense, they don't have to say anything. I'm talking about the
43 people I play with. But the. It only applies to people I play with. I mean the vast
44 majority of musicians in the world I'm sure hate what I do. It's kind of a cosy
45 position to be in actually, to know exactly where you are!

46
47 Just on that point, what's kept you going in the face of being at the cutting edge,
48 having a lot of hostility and lack of understanding? How come you've never
49 stopped or given up?

50
51 I think interest in the activity. Oh I don't know what else to do! It's too late. I'm
52 too old to get a job in the Post Office! But I think it's interest in – I think you
53 have to keep moving it a bit, just a bit. Shifting around a bit, and that's why I
54 find the most important people to me are the people I play with. If I only ever
55 played solos, or if that was the most important thing to me, I think I could get....
56 I think I might get disenchanted with it, eventually, just playing solo. But then
57 again, there's quite a lot in playing solo.

1
2 What would disenchant you particularly about playing solo?
3
4 Oh it's just seems a futile bloody business I have to say! I mean it, there's too
5 much of a demonstration element to it, I think.
6
7 Demonstration of what?
8
9 Oh abilities and your musical prowess and that kind of thing. You're not dealing
10 with other people which is what this music I think is about. But the
11 compensation about playing solo is that it does lead to, a great intimacy with the
12 instrument, and that's essential, otherwise playing solo is grotesque I think.
13
14 Has the way you've approached the instrument changed over the years?
15
16 Oh yes, drastically. But then again, in some ways probably not. I still ... I'm still
17 basically a very conventional musician, so the things that attract me are
18 conventional things actually. Did you ever hear a record by Jimmy Durante
19 called "The Guy who found the lost chord?"
20
21 Oh yes, I know it!
22
23 I'm the guy who lost the lost chord! And I've always, I'm quite happy putting
24 notes together as it were. I mean logic I like in music.
25
26 You like the mathematical side of it?
27
28 Yes I do, but then again I'm also attracted to the Dadaistic kind of element to it.
29 I like playing with people like that. We put out a record recently of (name), of a
30 recording that he and I first did when we first played together and when we first.
31 That was the first time we played together that was a big concert actually. It was
32 very successful funnily enough. But to play with him in those days. He's gone
33 more. He's more kind of, what can I say – disciplined now. He was very
34 refreshing. I liked that sort of craziness about him. Craziness is the wrong word.
35 But that I don't know, some like uncontrolled quality. I like working with that
36 but I find difficulty doing it, because you can't do it deliberately. It's not
37 uncontrolled, is it?
38
39 Do you think it's part of your character. Is it a character thing?
40
41 Yes, you have to be given to that kind of thing, yes.
42
43 Have you found that in general, that particular sorts of personalities blend with
44 you?
45
46 Well this is the music for having personalities reflected in the music, this
47 particular type of playing, yes.
48
49 Is that something you consciously go for. Say, I want this personality
50 contributing.
51
52 I don't know.
53
54 You work with different ensembles, different instrumentation groups, how do
55 you make your decisions about that?
56

1 I think it's just on the way they sound. I'm attracted to certain. My favourite
2 people to play with are percussionists and that's partly because unlike most
3 instruments percussionists in this area, and in other areas too, are all different.
4 They really are all different. They have different kind of kits. Well they used to
5 have, all used to have enormous kits. Now they don't, but they all play a bit
6 different. The difference between Eddie Prevost and Hann Benninck is
7 enormous and you would never get it on any other instrument except possibly
8 guitar. There's a big wide range of players on guitar, but most instruments
9 there's usually 2 or 3 styles, even in free playing.

10
11 You've got a lot of options on the guitar, a huge number of options for playing.

12
13 Yes, and they seem to be an interesting range of people.

14
15 Have you formed any particular relationships musical relationships with other
16 guitar players?

17
18 No, I don't like playing with other guitar players. But I have a lot of
19 relationships with guitar players. Good relationships. They're friends, but I don't
20 like playing with them much. No.

21
22 When you have had this reaction of lack of understanding, how has it affected
23 you? How do you keep yourself going in the face of being in this particular part
24 of the musical

25
26 Well I mentioned at the beginning that I think of it as a very practical thing. You
27 have to just get on with it, you get on with it. And it can be. And just the
28 practical business of getting on with it, in a situation which is not encouraging, is
29 quite absorbing and requires some concentration, so you get on with it.

30
31 It has obviously affected the amount of work that you've been offered at
32 different times, has that been something that you've had to struggle with over
33 the years?

34
35 Years ago I didn't get any work, but nowadays I get offered more work that I
36 can travel to, in a way. Because I hate travelling. I detest travelling. One of the
37 reasons I go to New York quite often is that I can work. I don't go there and play
38 one concert. I can do like 2 or 3 concerts and a recording and this and that and
39 hang around a bit and do a bit more. But most places you go bang and that's it.

40
41 So touring is not ..

42
43 (wife) always goes with me now. And we travel very slowly. So for instance
44 when we went to Amstetten for the birthday one, we stayed about 5 days. But
45 they invited us to do that. They put us in the (name) Hotel. It was a really
46 beautiful occasion and now, yesterday, they sent us a bunch of photographs that
47 they'd taken and a video and a recording and the photographs were in a photo
48 album. It was terrific. They were really generous people.

49
50 You made a huge difference to them.

51
52 Mm. We went to, the day after the concert they had his birthday party and we
53 went to that and it was very nice.

54
55 How do you think being a musician has affected the rest of life?

56
57 The rest of my life?

1
2 Yes . Has it affected your personal relationships?
3
4 Oh I suppose so. I've had a very chequered background actually. (wife) and I
5 married. I've been married 3 times now.
6
7 Did the music affect your relationships?
8
9 Well, if you change direction...
10
11 Is (wife) a musician?
12
13 No she isn't. But she runs (name of record label) so she is quite close.
14
15 She understands what it is like.
16
17 Oh yes, yes.
18
19 Is that important to you to have a partner who
20
21 I don't know. It's never happened before and it seems (wife) and I are the most
22 successful relationship I've ever had and we've been together for 18 years,
23 where it used to be like 3 or something, but the
24
25 Do you think being a musician affected that?
26
27 Oh yes.
28
29 How?
30
31 Well it is if you change direction. If you change direction your nearest and
32 dearest don't always want to go with you, or move, even, physically, like from
33 one part of the country to another, or from one country to another...
34
35 Have you seen that as part of your life as a musician, having to do that?
36
37 Yes. It's changed.
38
39 Was this moving for work reasons?
40
41 Yes. Because of work, or because of musical demands in a way. But one of the
42 things I find extraordinary about free musicians is how happily married most of
43 them are. When I worked in the band business I didn't know anybody who was
44 happily married. I mean they were all. I knew people whose married life lasted –
45 and you will think this is an exaggeration – but less than a fortnight.
46
47 Oh boy. What do you think it is about the free musicians you know that...
48
49 I don't know and they have lots of children! Like 3 children or something. The
50 people I used to know didn't have kids at all. I think one of the things is that in
51 the band business everybody was very young. Like it was unusual to find
52 somebody, I don't think I ever knew anybody over 40 whereas in free playing
53 the young players are usually over 40! So I think that's definitely part of it....
54
55 Do you think there are a lot of people like you who move into it – How old were
56 you when you started the free playing?
57

1 Oh no I was much older. I started when I was 33 or 34. Then there were some
2 young musicians like the ones round (3 names). (name) was like 19 I think. But
3 there are quite a lot of young musicians in New York at the moment. And a lot
4 of them are women, Its very strange . There's a whole bunch of women coming.
5 Good players.

6
7 That's great. I've spoken to one, just one free player. Anyway, back to you. Do
8 you think having an understanding of what it is, that musical life, is important in
9 your personal relationships?

10
11 Yes. But I don't think it, if there is an understanding, I don't think it would
12 necessarily provide stability. Given certain circumstances...

13
14 Like

15
16 Certain personalities. Nothing will provide stability. It's the kind of job which
17 you need certain people. I mean (wife) is amazing, I think, with what she's put
18 up with, or how

19
20 Do you think what she's had to put up with is part of the job, as it were?

21
22 Yes.

23
24 What kind of things do you mean if you don't mind my asking? What sort of
25 things were you referring to, having to put up with what?

26
27 Well, I mean travelling. But now she goes every where with me, but we have
28 this thing where (wife) runs (record label) you see. And wherever I go she is
29 Madame (name of label). So she takes records. I play and at the other end she's
30 got a stall, which is fantastic. Sometimes she makes more money than I do! Well
31 that doesn't happen very often. And she likes doing it. The great thing is she
32 likes it.

33
34 Does that mean that your partner has to be aware of, when you do have those
35 gigs that affect you for the next week, in not such a good way, the ups and
36 downs-

37
38 Yes, she's very perceptive, very good at that. Whereas in the past I've associated
39 with people who weren't. (wife)'s amazing. But she has an art background, as
40 well, which I think might help. I don't know.

41
42 You see those things that you have as a musician similar to. Do you compare
43 yourself to others in different arts?

44
45 No, I don't like art. I get given a lot of art. It's all in that box.

46
47 Any effect of being a musician on your family life – you have had a child?
48 Grown up child, I'm assuming.

49
50 Oh, (name). He's now 37.

51
52 Is he in music?

53
54 He plays the guitar and his children play the guitar.

55
56 So you're a grand-dad.

1
2 Oh yes.
3
4 He has got 3 kids. [shows photographs] They live in San Diego. He's a chemist
5 and he appears to be rich.
6
7 How does he feel about having a dad who has spent his life doing the music you
8 have been doing?
9
10 He says he doesn't. He's been listening to it for 25 years, doesn't understand any
11 of it.
12
13 Do you mind?
14
15 No. I read some of his publications and I don't understand any of his, so we're
16 even.
17
18 When he was growing up, how would he have described you then, say at school?
19 My dad's a...
20
21 I don't know because we never lived together.
22
23 His mother and I separated when he was born. That's a long story. But I used to
24 spend as much time as possible with him. I used to take him out when he was a
25 kid. But we never lived together except when I was living in New York and he
26 came over and stayed with me for a bit, which was nice. His wife likes the
27 music. Interesting!! I don't know if it's a bone of. Anyway she came to the San
28 Diego concert and after. This was one where we had the standing ovation, right,
29 and afterwards (name) said. She wanted to meet (name of musician). She said it
30 was a great concert. And then she said to (name of son) – "You thought it was
31 great didn't you?" And he said "Yes. Yes [not really believing it]" Whether he
32 did or not I don't know.
33
34 Would it make a difference to you if he adored the music?
35
36 I think he likes music. But I don't think he likes. He used to. When. I mean for a
37 long time I used to get him to come to (name of event) and particularly when
38 with (name), with his wife, who loved them, and I used to get them to work on
39 the (events) doing something, like helping (wife) with the stall or something, and
40 they liked to be involved, but in (son's name) case. I don't know exactly
41 which music he likes. He plays the guitar OK. Plays it very well.
42
43 Did you teach him?
44
45 I didn't teach him. I put him on, well I did, yes, a little bit. But I put him on to a
46 very good teacher, a guy I know in
47
48 Do people approach you very often to teach?
49
50 Oh yes. But I don't...
51
52 Teach them to improvise?
53
54 Oh no, I don't do that. I teach the guitar. I used to work in a music shop on
55 Charing Cross Road on Saturdays.
56
57 Which one was that?

1
2 Well I think it's gone now, it was called Sound City I think. And if they bought a
3 guitar they got a lesson from me free. Imagine that!
4
5 But they would be complete beginners. And I did teach a lot of, at one time in
6 the interim period between working as a commercial musician and making a
7 living in this I did quite a bit of teaching.
8
9 But since you moved over into this area you've by and large not combined it
10 with any other musical activities. Is that deliberate? It doesn't work for you?
11
12 Yes. I think it is. I just feel I don't have the time really. Yes. Well I've got a, I'll
13 mention this but it's a bit odd. Somebody approached me recently from a college
14 and asked if I would be a mentor. So when I'd figured out what that meant I said
15 "Well, er yes." So this guy comes occasionally and it seems what they do is the
16 college pay me and the idea is to get mentors for people who, I think they are
17 graduate students and they pick somebody whose career they think they want to
18 model themselves on
19
20 So he picked you?
21
22 Yes.
23
24 He is a music student is he? At one of the music colleges?
25
26 Yes one called – it used to be the Naval College at er
27
28 Oh Yes, Greenwich.
29
30 Greenwich, yes. And the woman who got in touch with me is called [name].
31
32 Very appropriate.
33
34 That's not something you do very much of?
35
36 No. He only comes when I'm around. He's only been 2 or 3 times.
37
38 Is it important to you to have that space, free space.
39
40 Oh yes. I need to, That's one of the things I don't like about travelling. I sort of
41 seem to work much harder here than in other places.
42
43 Do you have a kind of routine, approach – say when you're practising you're; in
44 a particular place, particular time?
45
46 No. I don't do that. I practise at intermittent times. I practise pretty much every
47 day but it's at various times. When you go I'll practise a bit. And I practised this
48 morning a bit.
49
50 How do you prepare yourself
51
52 For what
53
54 For performing, for playing
55
56 I go to sleep if I can.
57

1 No other ways? Nothing else you do?
2
3 If I'm out of practice I hate it.
4
5 So you get yourself up to a technical level.
6
7 I don't believe for instance in practising on the day of a performance. You have
8 to come to it a little bit fresh.
9
10 Any other mental things you do to prepare yourself apart from sleep?
11
12 No, the mental is a suspicious area for me. I like to go with my mind a blank.
13
14 Well that's preparation isn't it? And you succeed in doing that?
15
16 Easy. It's not.
17
18 How do you manage it then?
19
20 Well, there's always dope! No I don't use dope. I've never used.
21
22 Do you drink and stuff?
23
24 Oh only afterwards. I've never been able to combine alcohol and playing.
25
26 Do you take anything to help you relax?
27
28 One of the things I can take is an old man's thing called Temazepam.
29
30 Oh yes.
31
32 And one of those, like in the afternoon before I play, and then to sleep, is great.
33 And also it has some sort of lifting effect I think. Now I'm not going to talk
34 about these things because, (2).
35
36 And that helps?
37
38 Yes.
39
40 Any other things you do – exercise, sporty type of things?
41
42 No. I walk a lot that's all.
43
44 In town?
45
46 I walk on the (place) here.
47
48 Regularly when you're here/
49
50 Daily, yes. But it depends where we are. We are going to, for instance, spend a
51 month in Barcelona. In Barcelona I walk all the time. Hours and hours and hours
52 until I am totally exhausted.
53
54 You go there regularly?
55
56 Yes. It's beautiful. I've tried to move there for years. Yes, we've got a little
57 apartment. We've tried before to and it's so difficult. It's not our apartment. We

1 hire it. But the bureaucracy is amazing but we tried to do it officially, you
2 shouldn't try to do things officially.
3
4 Are holidays having breaks, important to you?
5
6 I hate holidays. Three days is too long. (wife) likes holidays.
7
8 So do you have a short holiday – is that what happens?
9
10 Three days. I have 3 or 4 days but then we'll stay. For instance, in New York
11 recently I worked for 4 days but we stayed for 10 days. I like New York, that's
12 another good walking place. And it depends. We usually stay longer, but that's
13 partly due to my lack of interest in travel. I really hate the idea of, I no longer do
14 this thing where you arrive on the day of the concert, play the concert and the
15 following day leave. That's just dreadful and is such a waste of time anyway.
16 Apart from being too tired to play the concert.
17
18 Do you find settling somewhere you are going to play is important?
19
20 I like to be there for at least 24 hours. Yes
21
22 You like to feel comfortable. You like to have a particular comfortable
23 environment.
24
25 I've found that it's nice if it's familiar. And most of them aren't of course. No.
26 But. Like. That's again the thing I like about New York. I know the place and I
27 borrow a very good amplifier there and I know almost all the people who work
28 in the place I play in usually so that's nice, In fact it reminds me of working in
29 dance halls. I we also stay quite close to where I work so we can walk to work.
30 The only time I've ever walked to work before is working in the dance hall. So I
31 take the guitar on a trolley.
32
33 When you work in this country do you drive yourself around?
34
35 (Wife) drives me around. I don't drive. I've given up driving. But we don't have
36 a car. We use taxis. But I don't work in this country, hardly at all, and if I do it's
37 usually in (name of area), there are a couple of places in (area) where I might
38 work. But if I do 2 or 3 gigs, I'm talking about London. If I do two gigs in a year
39 in London that's quite going a bit.
40
41 Does that bother you?
42
43 No it doesn't bother me at all. I play here regularly and there's no money
44 anyway. So I may as well play here.
45
46 How have you managed over the ups and downs, the feast and famine?
47
48 Financially?
49
50 Yes.
51
52 All right but we live on a like paupers.
53
54 Is that something you just accept?
55

1 Yes although sometimes we are bit profligate with eating and drinking which is
2 where Barcelona comes in. (wife) says you don't go to Barcelona for your
3 health!"
4
5 Has that been a concern to you, the fact that it is very difficult to make large
6 sums of money doing what you do?
7
8 No. As long as I can survive. As long as I can keep doing it, no it doesn't bother
9 me that.
10
11 How do you feel about the critics, people writing things about you?
12
13 If they say it's great, I think they're great and if they don't like it I don't like the
14 bastards! It's very simple.
15
16 Have you tried to proselytise to the critics to make clear what you think you are
17 doing .
18
19 I don't think so. I kind of think of most people who write about this music as
20 being – I'm trying to restrain my language!
21
22 No you don't have to! I'd like to hear it the way it is!
23
24 I think them as ignorant motherfuckers. Most of them. And there's also a – the.
25 You know there are only two things. You know there are supposed to be sort of
26 compensations in age. And there are only two things I've found. One is a free
27 bus pass and the other is that I can no longer read the print in music magazines,
28 because it's so tiny.
29
30 Have you ever taken critics on in any sense?
31
32 No I don't think so. I sometimes take the piss.
33
34 Have you had well informed criticism.
35
36 Oh yes. They're the good ones! Yes I know one or two well informed critics but
37 they all seem to be American. But there's something about most magazines,
38 before I stopped reading them, that I found repellent and that is the – even the
39 reviews were in a sense promotional, or anti-promotional, I mean there was not
40 much real analysis, even in an impression or something. They are either for or
41 against and in some kind of blanket way. But. I don't know. I'm not too well
42 informed about critics.
43
44 As far as friends and others- are most of your friends in music
45
46 Yes
47
48 Or do you have friends and interests outside music at all?
49
50 No I don't have any I don't think. Do I? Apart from relations, I don't think I
51 have any. No. Possibly I have. I can't think of any. I know people who follow
52 the music
53
54 That become friends?
55
56 Yes. There's a guy, (name). He used to run. He used to be ship's captain. And he
57 he ran Hong Kong harbour.

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57

Oh really. Extraordinary.

Yes. And then he retired. When the Chinese took Hong Kong over they retired them all, of course. And he now lives in Liverpool. He goes all over the world to listen to this music! Not just what I do, all kinds of people. That's his hobby.

What do other people who don't play the music see in it? Do you think it's lots of different things?

I think they think it's garbage.

No I mean people who are into it. What do you think they see in it.

Do you mean other players?

No I mean the audience. People who don't play.

Oh don't ask me about the audience. I really don't know anything about audiences.

No

No I just know that once it gets about a certain number. Economics.

What I'm just thinking is that, if I'm in the audience, say, then I can make a comment about the music, this was good, I liked it, I thought it worked because...

Yes

And also get a sense of your personality that night, or that day, or whatever it was, and how you are playing together. So the way I think about that sort of music is very different from the way I think about or talk about other kinds of music, because its free

Yes yes

Do you get a sense of that kind of thing from the audience?

I find that if . Occasionally I talk to the audience or, about anything, just the fact that there's going to be no interval or something and I might dribble on a little bit talking. That seems to help. Them and me.

What would you be saying?

Well if its about, I might say something like. "I've got some bad news for you. There's no interval." So something like that. Some stupid remark. But it seems to help, that kind of thing. I did a concert at in Birmingham – as I say I don't get to play in England very much but last year I did this concert in Birmingham where I had to, part of the deal. It was a solo concert, and I had to play, to take questions. So I incorporated that into some of the playing, I mean I carried on playing the guitar. But I played the acoustic guitar, and asked questions and that seemed to work all right because I could play little bits when they were asking me and I'll play a little tune or something but they. That was all right. So if I had to do it again I wouldn't mind doing that but just.

1 Do you mind if people ask you to analyse what you've done? Is it OK to do that?
2
3 They never seem to ask that. They seem to ask, like. How do you tell whether
4 it's good or bad, and why do no longer play with him, and how old are you, and
5 do you sing? Do you sing! Well, you get the most amazing questions!
6
7 Would you talk about it with (wife) afterwards?
8
9 Only to kind of register enthusiasm or disappointment.
10
11 And she has to live with you when you are continuing with that disappointment
12 or
13
14 But she actually, she's heard a lot of this stuff of course, but then again she's
15 usually selling records. If she's had a good night with the records. I usually. The
16 first thing I do with (wife) is to ask her how she did with the records. But, it's
17 um. We do talk about the music and talk about certain players and that. Yes, we
18 do, quite a bit actually.
19
20 Does that help?
21
22 I don't know. It's something to talk about. I mean, it's of interest to me, and it's
23 of interest to her. It doesn't help playing. It might help our relationship. I don't
24 think it helps playing much. No.
25
26 Where do you think you get your, get it all from?
27
28 What?
29
30 Whatever it is that enables you to improvise. Do you think it is a talent, an
31 ability, is it a gift? What do you think it is?
32
33 Oh I think I don't like to get up in the morning! I had a period when I was
34 young, when I first started playing. I did OK actually for 2 or 3 years and then I
35 had a really rough patch for a couple of years, and I did all kinds of things like
36 delivered milk, read gas meters, and that I think I got some stimulus from that.
37
38 And in recent years, are you aware of drawing, what shall we call it, inspiration,
39 stimulus, from people or situations?
40
41 No there is some funny thing about um . There is something about the situation –
42 I mean like [place], the birthday thing , because it was so new, and the people
43 were so nice. That helped. Um. I think logistics help. If it's a kind of difficult
44 thing to and there's some radio guy who's being abnoxious, that doesn't help at
45 all.
46
47 Anything else that we haven't mentioned?
48
49 There probably is but I can't think what it is.
50
51 As far as the future goes, are there any things that you haven't done in music that
52 you would like to do?
53
54 I don't know. I think mainly what I'd like to do is carry on and look for other
55 bits and pieces to add onto it, you know.
56
57 Like?

1
2 Little avenues here and there. Certain musicians I'd like to play with. For
3 instance, the last (name of event) I did, which was in New York, in I think it
4 was October or something, on the last night 2 guys from the (name of) Orchestra
5 sat in. Now they were both very good players and they knew what they were
6 doing. The violin player was good but not very interesting. But there was an
7 accordion player who was remarkable. I've never heard anybody play the
8 accordion like that. It was. His control over things like – he played feedback. It's
9 easy enough on the accordion, He sounded like Cecil Taylor on the accordion.
10
11 Really!
12
13 He was a remarkable player. I'd like to play with him again, for sure. I know
14 where he is. And if anybody asks me to go to Poland, I'll rope him in, but
15
16 Would you like to play music that was immensely popular?
17
18 No
19
20 I don't mean what's out there now. I mean would you like it if your music was
21 immensely popular?
22
23 I think it might be nice if it turned out to be useful.
24
25 How so?
26
27 Like cured toothache or something!
28
29 Oh right! What would you like it to be able to do?
30
31 I think it might be nice if made everybody younger.
32
33 Yes.
34
35 Then there would be no problem working.
36
37 Do you think it has kept you younger/youthful?
38
39 Maybe. I don't know. Maybe. I don't know if I'm younger. Maybe. It keeps me
40 going I think. There's a shakuhachi player I met in Japan once, and we were
41 talking about practising and I asked "When do you practise?" And he said "I
42 practise when I get up in the morning, about 5 am." And so I said "Why do you
43 practise then?" He says "I practise for the good of my health." So I think there
44 are beneficial effects of doing, because I do what I want to do. That must be, I
45 would have thought beneficial. I know that doing what you don't want to do is
46 definitely no good for you at all.
47
48 Do you get ratty, angry, upset in particular situations?
49
50 Oh I used to, but now I don't have the energy to spare for that now.
51
52 What would you do in that situation – would you have got aggressive, or
53
54 When, which situation?
55
56 If things annoyed you, or frustrated you?
57

1 I'd get – Yes I have in the past got – it gets a bit dramatic. I've I mean when I
2 used to work in the other business I walked out of quite a few jobs. I was very
3 poor sort of employee. I mean I just walked out. Packed up my amplifier in the
4 middle of the dance floor and that sort of thing in a restaurant.
5
6 What sort of thing would do it for you?–
7
8 Oh somebody's behaviour. So, that occasion, which I mentioned. I was working
9 in a restaurant and some drunk came up and was abusive to the drummer who
10 was Singaporean, racially abusive. So I asked the head waiter to do something
11 about it and he said "Oh I'm not doing anything" So I packed up and left. And
12 I'd been working there for 5 months. So it used to be kind of dramatic like that!
13 Sometimes I've had disagreements with people, yes.
14
15 What would it be - shouting, arguments, a fight, anything like that, leaving?
16
17 It's been obscene!
18
19 Words?
20
21 Yes.
22
23 A load of mouthing of?
24
25 Yes, but I'd try and avoid it and anyway the reasons to do it don't seem to be
26 around much anymore.
27
28 Did you find that ever happened in a musical situation?
29
30 It's happened. Yes.
31
32 What happens then, how do you handle it now?
33
34 Now, I don't know of an occasion when it has happened now, in recent times,
35 but I can think of like in this music,
36
37 So if you had somebody's ego or someone won't allow you any room, or, that
38 sort of thing or something else.
39
40 I used to hate it when people were late. So that would sometimes lead to
41 altercations. I don't mind if they don't turn up, because then you get a
42 completely different group! I mean that's a new situation and it starts from their
43 not coming. But drifting in late and also appearing not to care much about it,
44 used to annoy me enormously, but I can't think of an occasion when it has
45 happened in recent times. No.
46
47 Is that because you set things up differently now or do you look at it differently?
48
49 I think the musicians are more, they want to play more, I think.
50
51 You have your reputation, too, which brings them to you.
52
53 Maybe. It's easier for me to put a group together now than it used to be, or to put
54 a group of people – I don't put groups together, to put a group of people
55 together. It's much easier now. In fact people volunteer now when there isn't
56 anything to volunteer to.
57

1 Why do you think that is? What has made it easier?

2

3 I think some musicians are attracted to the kind of situation I try and create.

4

5 You said a long time ago that you find interesting the difference between
6 working with free improvisers and working with people who do a bit of
7 improvisation, sort of style based improvisation. Have you seen people develop
8 their own improvising abilities from those

9

10 Oh yes. This lady that I work with – strangely enough I work with a lot of ladies
11 at the moment, 3 or 4

12

13 Does it make any difference to you if you have men or women to work with?

14

15 It depends whether they are good players or not. All these women are great
16 players. Very good. This Chinese woman I work with. She plays the pipa, a
17 classical musician. And when I first, the first time I played with her. She'd
18 never. She plays mainly solo and she sings, in that melodramatic Chinese thing
19 about dragons coming up the mountain.

20

21 Yes

22

23 And she's terrific. She's a terrific player. She's one of the most impressive
24 instrumentalists I've ever worked with. And its only a little instrument – the
25 noise she gets out of it - but when we first played together she'd never spent the
26 whole, like say an hour, improvising. She's played a bit of improvising. She
27 lives in Brooklyn and she'd lived on the West Coast before that. She came from
28 China about 7 or 8 years ago, her family still is in China, Shanghai. And they are
29 all musicians. Her father's um Principal at some school and that. But anyway.
30 She played because she did a bit of new music she'd played little bits of
31 improvisation, you know, from here to there and stuff. So an open-ended
32 situation she'd never done that before. And she was terrified, She was literally
33 terrified. Now she's. That was 3 or 4 years ago. And I played with her in Berlin
34 in October or November. She asked me to play with her. It was a Chinese event,
35 funnily enough. I was the only Occidental on it. And she had this solo and she
36 persuaded them to invite me as well. She's very much into it now and she brings
37 so much energy to it as well. She's a very remarkable musician I think. So she's
38 developed certainly in 3 or 4 years from being somebody who was terrified of
39 doing it to somebody who has a big appetite for it.

40

41 That's wonderful. Are you aware of your music still developing, your own
42 music developing continuously.

43

44 I hope so. I hope so, It depends who I am playing with. If I do a lot of solo
45 playing I don't think it develops at all but

46

47 Why is that?

48

49 I don't know.

50

51 You keep returning to that point –it's kind of disappointing to you, isn't it?

52

53 Only because I have to do a lot of solo playing. But I think it makes sense. I
54 think free improvisation is about playing with people. That solo thing is a kind
55 of aberration, I think that developed mainly for economic reasons and also the
56 audience like it. They just have one thing they can listen to and they like it so
57 and let's face it one person is cheaper than three, so it's worked like that and it

1 has become a standard thing. Everybody plays solo. And I think it's an
2 aberration.
3
4 So playing with people is self-renewing, endlessly renewing.
5
6 I think that's what it's about. I can't see any justification for this kind of music
7 except playing with people. I don't believe that, and then we are back to these
8 earlier points – about it being to some degree explorative, because I think that if
9 it isn't, then there might be better ways of getting to the music you want to play.
10
11 Have there ever been any musical ideas that you did want to develop in a more
12 formal way? Things that come up that you want to pin down in some way?
13
14 No, but there are certain players I'd still like to play with, who I haven't played
15 with or who I've only played with once or twice. And that's possibly in some
16 cases that's because they do have something that I think might be nice to get
17 into. When I played with this Japanese lady, (name), we'd played together in
18 groups but never as a duo. I think there was something down the road there, you
19 see, where you can play – find something if we played together a few more
20 times. You can't guarantee these things of course.
21
22 How would you like people in the future to look back on your contribution to
23 music?
24
25 What a macabre question!
26
27 It's the last one, I promise you!
28
29 I'd like them to look back and say "Wow! He was terrific!"
30
31 OK! Thanks.
32

Transcript 15 :

Susan

1 When people ask you to describe yourself as a musician, what would you say?
2
3 I usually try and say "I'm a musician" and keep it at that! And it depends on the
4 context that somebody asks. Obviously if you mean a gig, you might be more
5 forthcoming about some things. Sometimes I say "Oh I do weird music" because
6 everybody knows what that is. And to somebody that doesn't know what free
7 improvised music is, 'weird music' sort of makes them laugh, and it sort of gets
8 you off the hook.
9
10 What kind of a reception would you get then if you were to tell people you were
11 playing, you were involved in free, weird music?
12
13 What kind of reception do you get?
14
15 Yes
16
17 Well usually people sort of um kind of go "Oh right" and then kind of change
18 the subject! Yes, but that's all right if they're not interested, in it, but if they're
19 interested in it I probably wouldn't have said that in the first place. If they're
20 already interested in and will show that they're interested in a particular kind of
21 avant-garde music and then
22
23 Then what would you say?
24
25 Oh well then I – and again it depends who I am talking to, um because I'm either
26 – it would either be in the context of, as I say, like a gig, where I've been playing
27 or I'm in the audience, of a free improvised gig, in which case I would probably
28 say the free improvisation thing first. And if it was in the context of at a theatre
29 performance, then I would say that I compose music for theatre, and radio, and
30 you know, drama, and the free improvisation would be sort of, if I really trusted
31 them, then I would tell them.
32
33 How does trust come into it?
34
35 Well, trust as in – like that they'll know what you mean. I don't mean trusting
36 them as a person. But because if people aren't into that kind of music they just
37 kind of glaze over and think that "Oh my God" somebody has come to tell me
38 about their work" which kind of gets
39
40 So it comes across very much as a specialised interest to people who don't have
41 any kind of following for it.
42
43 Yes. A specialised interest. And that's fine. You do that because that's what you
44 like doing and don't expect me to be interested, kind of thing.
45
46 Is that the way you see it yourself?
47
48 No, because I love it.
49
50 How would you see it then? If you were asked to describe your kind of music to
51 someone who's really into it, then how would you characterise it?
52
53 Um. Well if I was describing what I do in free improvisation, I would, well in
54 both actually, in both composition and free improvisation I would explain the
55 tools that I use. So I'd probably say something like: "Well recently I've been
56 going out, I've been doing some solo gigs and playing with other people. But the

1 solo gigs would comprise me taking along, maybe four instruments”, (inaudible
2 words)
3
4 What was it?
5
6 A musical saw.
7
8 OK
9
10 Violin, sarangi, and um bowed bicycle wheel, and I use that with electronics,
11 which are mainly delays, delays sort of all operating at different levels and you
12 can do the kind of transposition of um sounds, and I also use voice as well. So it
13 gives you quite a wide repertoire, but quite low-tech. They’re quite old
14 fashioned delay boxes, and mainly you can hear what’s being done. And you can
15 hear “Oh that’s that sound, but it’s different.” So I’m not trying to make
16 everything totally mysterious, but at the same time I’m not giving a lesson in
17 how to use the tech-
18
19 The music itself, how would you describe that? Do you play on your own?
20
21 I do do solo gigs, yes. So if I’m doing, I’m working a lot with atmosphere and
22 feeling. That’s not to say that I work totally from feeling, there’s a lot of
23 thinking on the spot that goes on, in order to create something that’s quite
24 atmospheric. A lot of people have said about my music, that it’s very haunting,
25 but that’s been in a completely different context, that’s been in reviews.
26
27 Is that the way you would see it yourself?
28
29 Yes, Well I like to evoke. I’m not a very um (4) I like to evoke a kind of sense of
30 memory, or nostalgia or um (3) They’re quite kind of, I suppose (inaud.) like.
31 Sorry, I’m coming out with sort of psychobabble now, which I don’t normally!
32 But, what do you call it, right brain.
33
34 Is it evocative in a very personal way, so you’d expect your audience to hear
35 different things in the music or from the music?
36
37 I’m not expecting them to hear things from the music. I’m trying to create music
38 which works. And they will hear different things and different things but that’s,
39 and occasionally I might think myself. Oh, this will sound like the sea, if I do
40 this particular thing,
41
42 What kind of ideas do you start with when you are doing free improvised gigs?
43
44 I start with a note. One note.
45
46 A tone or something particular?
47
48 No. I try and, well I sort of vary between sort of thinking, Oh it would be good
49 to start in a comfortable place and it would be good to start from somewhere I
50 don’t normally start. So I kind of fluctuate between each sort of thinking each.
51
52 Would that note have a colour or would it be evocative in some way for you or
53 could it be any note that – whatever you could hear at that time? How far are you
54 drawing on what’s going on for you at that moment?
55
56 No I don’t draw on what’s going on for me. That’s completely. You’re, it’s like
57 telling a story. It’s like the story that you’re telling is not actually what’s going

1 on in your life. Although the degree of openness that you're going through in
2 your life might have an effect. I mean like. Last autumn I did a solo gig two days
3 after my mother died and it was about the only paid work that I had all autumn,
4 so I had to. So I was kind of like in quite a weird state. But I was trying to make
5 music that worked, but because I was in a weird state that kind of, it obviously
6 affected

7

8 How did it affect it?

9

10 Um. I think I kind of got into a sort of vocal thing at one point that was – it was,
11 I mean I hadn't planned it or anything but it seemed to be that I was kind of
12 keening in some sort of way. And erm

13

14 How did you feel when you did that

15

16 (Inaud.) where did that come from? Yes. It sort of . But you don't decide to do it.
17 It kind of got to a point where. I suppose it is particularly when you use your
18 voice, because the voice is so keyed up with emotions really and although
19 having heard my voice today I've just (inaud.)

20

21 More so than another instrument?

22

23 Yes Yes. Do you (inaud)

24

25 I get nervous if I have to play right notes, so I am putting myself through some
26 exams, having to go through the grades that I didn't take

27

28 Is that for a particular reason?

29

30 Yes, to try and erm understand, stand under my demons.

31

32 Yes (inaud) overcome?

33

34 Yes, what is it? That's quite a safe context for me, because I'm not trying to be a
35 classical violinist, so I can explore it outside the area that I'm working in.
36 Actually it helps.

37

38 Is it important for you to draw on other areas, musical areas, to feed into your
39 music?

40

41 Yes. Definitely.

42

43 A number of people I've been talking to have asked me how I define
44 composition, which I try and duck out of. Are you working in an area where
45 you could describe yourself as writing things? How would you see the
46 difference between that and the free improvisation in terms of making music,
47 creative music?

48

49 Yes. Well (4) I write in different ways. If I'm writing, for instance if I'm doing
50 something for a radio play, and it involves a combination of, say, three
51 instruments or something, and it depends what those instruments are, I might
52 either write at the piano, or I might write at the kitchen table,

53

54 Paper?

55

56 Paper, yes,

57

1 So I've got a sense of what I wanted to do, and that's to kind of free myself from
2 what my fingers would normally do, on the piano, so I'm thinking in a different
3 way. I'm thinking of the sound of the instrument that I'm writing for.
4

5 Would you start with a musical idea of some kind in that situation?
6

7 Yes. Yes. Yes. probably, Yes. Or. No, not necessarily. It could be something
8 musical like you're trying to evoke, some central thing that I was trying to
9 evoke, a sense of place, say it was a foreign country.
10

11 A particular place, was this?
12

13 Yes, Egypt. And so I immersed myself in some Egyptian music and then I just
14 wrote some music. But sometimes you might be looking at character and
15 thinking. I want to convey something which is not in the script, that is actually
16 about a sense of edginess in this character. Voluptuousness or whatever it is, and
17 so yes, I either write at the piano or the kitchen table or on the computer, and the
18 computer depends. I mean I can either play things in or else work with samples.
19 I go round. I just sample, all the sampling instruments and sample sounds and
20 then playing them in, or writing them. And that's kind of. Well, once you're on a
21 roll that's really exciting because you're getting the sound you've been thinking
22 about, and er thinking of the quality of the sound. Is it a hollow sound? Is there
23 something missing? Is that a spiky sound. Is it a dense sound?
24

25 Do you have a perception of the sound you want in those situations?
26

27 Yes usually for samples yes usually. I have a sense of texture.
28

29 So if you want, say, this voluptuous sound, for a particular character, you have
30 an idea of the sort of colours you'd want?
31

32 I'd have to think quite hard about how to do that with samples, to get a kind of
33 brownness, roundness, in the sound.
34

35 This unusual instrumentation – does it dispose you to make your own samples.
36

37 Oh I never use samples. I've got a whole library of media and recording inserts
38 and (inaud.) media. And if I haven't got it then I'll fake it.
39

40 How so? Give me an example.
41

42 OK. I was asked for some body noises, for sounds inside a body. This is a recent
43 piece of work, so this is not going to go any further is it?
44

45 No.
46

47 Right. Inside the body, and um I was listening to my own stomach rumbling.
48 Well if you put a microphone on it you kind of get the noise of the, against the
49 cloth. There's a lot of other noise that kind of comes in so actually you get a
50 more realistic and more erm better sound by isolating something which then
51 sounds like that.
52

53 Yes kind of recreating it rather than actually recording it.
54

55 Recreating it. Yes. Based on what I've heard. Yes so sort of analysing what it is
56 about that sound, how it kind of, the gastric juices erm, listening to a heartbeat,
57 sort of thinking, how can that.

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57

Could it be any? Have you done all kinds of natural sounds?

Yes I have yes. To some extent yes. And then sometimes you sort of produce, a little bit like, but they are not meant to be the thing that they are

How do you know when you've got it right? Have you got a sense of it?

Because people say "Oh, where did you get that recording from?" [laughing] So that, er. Usually, in the past I've always told them. But in this particular instance I didn't, I didn't tell them I was sitting there with a microphone (inaud.) cup of water and things and then it's heavily filtered, so you do all sorts of treatment to it, until it sounds like what you want it to sound.

Before we move on, I am trying to capture the experience of creating music in a free improvised way, the difference between that for you, and what you are doing when you are at the kitchen table, or wherever, doing this other kind of composing. Is there any way you can encapsulate that difference for me? Or maybe not?

Well I thi-, they all feed, they are different, but they feed into each other, very much and the sense of how something is working or not working is sort of like, Oh I must start to change or (inaud.) . They are all decisions that you make whether you're doing free or doing composition.

If you are playing free with other people, I'm trying to understand how what they're doing can impact on what you're doing.

Yes

And when you are playing on your own or when you are writing on your own, how do you enable yourself to take that step back, or to the side, or however you put it?

And in fact there's a piece of work to be handed in tomorrow morning.

So deadlines are one thing that

Deadlines are essential. I find it really hard. There are various projects I've got with people. If they don't have deadlines then they don't get done.

Again I'll ask you quite a lot about deadlines.

It just helps to sort of focus. What are the questions to answer?

Without deadlines?

Without deadlines. I don't write music without deadlines. I don't compose music without deadlines.

When you are making music, when you are creating or improvising or whatever we want to call it, what is the sense that says to you "Let's change this, or (inaud), what's your experience of where it is coming from?" Or is it completely without awareness?

Well it's like you've always got, I kind of think of it as a bird, that's kind of like watching, that is quite detached.

1
2 Watching you?
3
4 Watching everything. Everything. Like erm. (3). That can kind of (4). So you've
5 got that and then you've got the other bit of you, that's kind of actually inside it.
6 Inside the music. That's kind of going with the.
7
8 So you're kind of experiencing and observing at the same time?
9
10 Yes. Yes. Yes. So you might sort of think. Right. I think I seem to have been
11 doing this an awfully long time. This is what sometimes happens to me in gigs
12 when I sort of get into a kind of thing which is almost quite like er quite trance-
13 like, quite physical or whatever and and you just erm you think "God I've been
14 doing this for ever! Somehow or other I'm going to have to stop or. That would
15 be interesting. Just suddenly cut it. Or gradually transform it into something
16 else." Transforming is what one does lots of times so I do quite often make
17 decisions to just suddenly stop. It gives a sense of surprise.
18
19 Would you have a clear idea some of the time where you would be going?
20
21 Where I'd be going? Er (4) Yes and no I suppose. I try not to.
22
23 You think it's better for the music not to.
24
25 Yes.
26
27 What difference do you think it makes?
28
29 Because it's no longer free improvisation and I have a lot of experience of that,
30 because I work with dancers who like to work with improvising. But they like to
31 know what area they are going to go into. So, it's the hardest kind of
32 improvising in the world I think. It's kind of like. You've got to pretend that
33 you're free, so it's like being in a (5) being in quite a small space and actually
34 pretending that it's the biggest space in the world. You know, it's like going in
35 like this [gestures]
36
37 Down and down
38
39 Down and round
40
41 In a small space.
42
43 Well it shouldn't be a small space. It should be a beautiful garden.
44
45 It feels very constrained, and restrictive, down there!
46
47 Yes it does. But you have to work at not feeling that, so it's kind of
48
49 Can you give me an example of something that a dancer would say?
50
51 Well OK. So in rehearsal we're working with, I mean this is rehearsed
52 improvisation, so you've been working with a particular kind of erm vocal call
53 or something, and then that kind of gradually build up erm, until you've got the
54 violin, and delay, and it's all kind of happening. It's got to kind of build at the
55 same time as the dancers and you know where it's going to end up. It's going to
56 end up with [Loudly] "Chugga Chugga chugga, chugga chugga! Chugga
57 Chugga Chugga!" That kind of thing, you know. Whatever it is, you've got a

1 rough idea what sort of territory you are going into. And you've got to pretend
2 that you've never been there before. So that it's fresh, and sort of slightly
3 surprising, but at the same time working with a dancer who is also improvising.
4 It does my head in sometimes. [laughs]

5
6 Really. So it's very difficult to keep it fresh while you know where you are
7 going.

8
9 Yes.

10
11 You have a beginning. You know where you are going to end, and it's trying to,
12 to change the route.

13
14 Well I think I sort of take the imagery, but um (3) of a garden that you go into a
15 garden. It has walls around it but it's a garden you can kind of explore inside.
16 And I think that sort of kind of helps me to erm do it and then that thing of just
17 playing. I can play. I can do anything. But of course you don't do anything. You
18 don't because actually most of the things that you could do would be
19 inappropriate. So you just have to keep telling yourself I can do anything and
20 then actually stay on track. It's very weird.

21
22 It's very (inaud) in a paradoxical way.

23
24 Yes And I toured for a while with erm (4) the RSC. I was working as a
25 performer. I was a musical performer and the composer I had to work with had
26 been with improvisers, and while we toured that show, we used to (inaud) things
27 and the way he worked..

28
29 Which show was it?

30
31 It was the Comedy of Errors.

32
33 And the way that it worked was erm that in rehearsal he would say things like
34 "Could you start on a high B and then kind of move around it and as he walks of
35 the stage you kind of come down to an E?" So you got the shape but the steps
36 that you take in between, as long as it's within the erm, within the style, within
37 the area, that has been set up. And you can vary it. And that was a real challenge.
38 After 200 performances to keep saying, go back to the original instructions on
39 how can I make that route slightly different, without upsetting anybody, without
40 being late. And in way it's only because it had those very tiny windows of
41 freedom within it, that I could do that many shows.

42
43 Working in a huge range of situations from the most free to the more and more
44 constrained, is there any difference for you in terms of erm which you feel you
45 are able to express yourself most easily? (4) From what you were saying earlier I
46 would guess that where sometimes constraints constrain you, as in the situation
47 with the dancers, other times you can make use of them,

48
49 Yes absolutely. That's why. The obvious thing is to say. Oh well, when I'm
50 being freest. But actually I get pushed into discovering new things, sometimes,
51 through working in a more constricted way, erm.

52
53 Do you impose those restrictions on yourself sometimes? Say, in a free
54 improvisation context you're saying. Well, I feel like exploring this vein, or
55 staying within this?

56
57 Yes there's all sorts of things you don't do because it might upset other people.

1
2 Like
3
4 Playing tunes! [laughing].
5
6 Yes OK!
7
8 So you'd think of a tune or something and you won't play it incase the audience
9 reacts.
10
11 Well, I quite often do. No, not the audience, I'm not bothered about the
12 audience. They usually like it. But no. Just if, if. Like there are certain free
13 improvisers who might frown if you get involved in a tune. All right. It might be
14 all right just to play sort of half a bar or something. And I'm not necessarily
15 talking about playing known tunes because I don't really do that much.
16
17 But when you are on your own would you find yourself
18
19 Going into tunes? Working melodically?
20
21 Yes. Or whatever it happens to be. It might be something else.
22
23 Turning, moving on to the things that make it easier for you to compose, create
24 music. talking about that wide range of activities. You've mentioned deadlines.
25 When you've got a deadline. Any other things that help? But I wanted to ask you
26 – when you've got that deadline, for the kitchen table or wherever, do you have
27 a very disciplined pattern of work or do you go with the flow there? Would you
28 work at particular times, have a particular way of going about it?
29
30 Well I have a lot of work displacement activities! [laughing].
31
32 Cups of tea, kind of thing, whatever?
33
34 Oh. Cups of tea, constantly. I don't usually smoke, so.
35
36 So you're a good procrastinator when it comes to it.
37
38 Well actually I've sort of got very strict with myself. One is, if I'm working with
39 the computer, the hardest thing is to switch it on, so what I do is I think "I am
40 just going in the music room and I am just going to switch it on. That's all I have
41 to do," having had a cup of tea! And that sort of works. Because then when you
42 come back in, it is all ready for you and it's up and running.
43
44 What is it about getting started that is so hard?
45
46 Erm (8) thinking; "What am I doing?" [laughing] What am I doing?
47
48 What shall I do? Why am I doing it?
49
50 Yes. If I don't know why I am doing it.
51
52 What kind of answers would satisfy you to those questions?
53
54 Well I usually have to break it down into. Maybe I've had an idea in the night or
55 something. I might break it down into: today I'm going to ...make some songs
56 on bowed metal. Or whatever I'm doing."
57

1 So having a plan.
2
3 Yes but it's not a grand plan, it's a very manageable sized thing.
4
5 Breaking it down into manageable bits.
6
7 And then once I start doing that then that usually leads onto Oh right OK. and I
8 get involved with it. But having that first thing. I was supposed to be working
9 today, but I just didn't. I didn't have the plan. And. I don't know what I'm doing
10 with this particular thing so I don't know what I would be doing if I was doing
11 it. So I don't know.
12
13 So you've got to have a kind of concept. I don't think that's the best word, an
14 idea, a way into it.
15
16 A way in. Yes.
17
18 To get you going.
19
20 Yes. Yes.
21
22 Any things that help you find your way in? Apart from breaking it down into
23 tiny, very tiny things, like turning the computer on and stuff. Any other things
24 that help get you there?
25
26 Well, if there's a script, then I'll read the script. But if there's not a script, you
27 sort of (inaud) which is kind of why I am worrying. If there is a script then you
28 can use it. So I don't know whether to. So really erm, if I was really stuck, then
29 I would phone up the Director and say "I'm stuck. What do you want from me?
30 You want me to do something. What is it?"
31
32 Does that usually help?
33
34 Yes. It doesn't sound. It doesn't come out as terribly, as (inaud – [laughs]) .
35
36 Does it vary?
37
38 Yes. That's if I'm really stuck.
39
40 You wouldn't do it unless you were really stuck?
41
42 No. Because I usually. I usually know better than the Director what is going to
43 work.
44
45 Yes. Have you had directors who've got a peculiar or idiosyncratic or ignorant
46 knowledge of what
47
48 Yes I have worked with such directors..
49
50 How do you get them to (inaud.) ?
51
52 And I have had to ask them for help.
53
54 How did it pan out in the end?
55
56 Well I did the job. It was for a TV Company. They'd asked me because of
57 something that they'd heard which was kind of quite way out, on the radio.

1 Radio 4. And then they liked me to work across a variety of things that I'd
2 worked with. And somebody had heard, one of the members of this Company
3 had heard some things I'd done and so they got in touch with me. The other
4 Director of the Company erm was a. I mean he had been a jazz musician once,
5 but was very, he knew about jazz, and wanted pastiche, but very carefully
6 crafted pastiche, which I can do, up to a certain extent. But there were things that
7 I hadn't grasped, of course. I was never given an edited script to work with. So I
8 was working to things which were a bit of a challenge, like you've got to place
9 everything. And I think I did 3 submissions of sketches, entirely different things.
10 The first one was quite avant-garde. The second one, he said "Well, try and
11 make it far more straightforward – can't you write any tunes?" So I wrote a tune.
12 So it was kind of like, but he didn't know where I was coming from and erm.
13 Oh that's right, and the worst thing was he kept saying he didn't want it to be
14 like television music, which is exactly what he wanted. In fact he wanted it to
15 sound like any other television music, and he said "I want it to be like the
16 Hollywood Bowl". Sorry but he hasn't got the budget for the Hollywood Bowl.
17 So I kind of. There were several times when I just kind of thought I'm gonna say
18 No I can't do this. And then I thought "Well, in a month it'll all be done. They'll
19 either use it", and I was able. Luckily I had a friend who does quite a lot of TV
20 work and I phoned him up and said "Help!" and he said. "Oh well you just carry
21 on composing and they send it back and they say "No it needs to be more this or
22 that" and you just carry on composing as long as you get paid. You carry on
23 composing and at the end of the day they'll either use it or they won't. And if
24 they don't use it, they've got to find something else in a hurry, so they probably
25 will use it. Which is what happened. They used some of it.

26
27 Did you have a say in what (inaud)

28
29 No, so, so it's very. I mean.

30
31 Did that bother you, that what it ended up being wanted was not what you were
32 talking about (inaud) ?

33
34 Well it sort of annoyed me that I was led to believe that some of the sketches
35 that I'd done were going in the right direction. "Oh yes, that sounds quite nice."
36 We'll have this. Erm and then they found out that actually they could use some
37 great jazz

38
39 Quotes from recordings?

40
41 They could actually use the real people, not recordings for not as much as they
42 thought they were going to have to pay. So erm I'd composed all this music,
43 recorded it, musicians, recording studios, the lot, and er, erm paid the musicians

44
45 Spent a long time

46
47 Yes yes I mean it was about 2 or 3 weeks, 4 weeks wasted. But part of it was just
48 getting to, trying to understand what it was they did want. And then by the end
49 they kind of really erm. Well by the end the deadline had passed and they were
50 still coming up with requests even though the deadline had passed. They were
51 really nice. Whereas up to then it was kind of "Oh can't you sort of like! Oh it
52 was awful. [gesticulates and rolls eyes and shrugs shoulders]. So that was the
53 only time that I've written stuff for television and it's really put me off, although
54 I do understand There's so much pressure from Channel 4 and it's kind of like

55
56 You'd like to be doing more of it if it wasn't such a difficult world to move in?

57

1 I think what would interest me more is doing a film actually. This piece that I'm
2 doing at the moment, is going to be in some film
3
4 So having control of the music is important?
5
6 No no. No I don't like that. I'm quite good at handing people yards of music and
7 saying "You can use as much or as little as you want" and then usually they end
8 up doing something that I think "Couldn't you hear? The best bit was just after
9 that bit." It's like "Why have you used the crap bit!"
10
11 Does that bother you the fact that people can't judge your music?
12
13 No I just kick myself. I just think that was silly of me to say it's fine. And so I
14 just live with it because I'm the one who said that it was fine.
15
16 Does that bother you on a live gig when people say "I like this bit" if it's
17 something you don't see that way yourself?
18
19 No. I find that quite interesting. But it sort of bothers me in rehearsals say with
20 these sort of semi-structured improvisations, if somebody says "Oh I loved it
21 when you did that." And that puts me in a really weird position, 'Cause then the
22 next time we play I'm under pressure to recreate that for them and you can't
23 really, but then you're in the business of recreating not improvising.
24
25 Do you listen to your own improvisations when you do recorded live gigs?
26
27 Eventually.
28
29 What effect does it have on you?
30
31 Well I would never listen to it the next day. I really don't want to.
32
33 Because, why not?
34
35 Because you can remember it. (6) And you can remember what you were
36 feeling. Well I suppose. I mean I've never done it actually. [laughs] I just think..
37 I'm not interested in post-mortems.
38
39 What about me as a fan or a follower of that kind of music. How do you feel
40 about me listening to a recording as opposed to coming to a gig to hear you
41 doing it?
42
43 Yes that's all right. Yes. If people want to. Yes people do sometimes do that. I
44 mean I would listen.
45
46 Is it important for you to have improvisations as well as other things recorded
47 and kept?
48
49 Oh I see. No I'm more interested in, if something is an improvisation then I'm
50 more interested in it being a one off thing, that's what I
51
52 So played live and then that's it?
53
54 That's it, yes. But having said that. Some things have been recorded by other
55 people. I hate recording myself doing an improvisation.
56

1 Why? Is it the process of setting it up or just the thought of it being – I'm not
2 quite clear what you mean really.
3
4 Yes. I don't know. Well it's interesting, because I do have to do it for the
5 dancers that I work with. They want me to record every rehearsal that we do and
6 every gig that we do.
7
8 So that they want to listen to it to rehearse further?
9
10 Because they want to be able to work with something that is not always the
11 same. And so they record that place or that date and so each subject is different
12 for them, when if I'm not there and rather than just put on a dry recording of
13 somebody else, they want to keep within the world that we create together,
14 which is fine, but I just don't like being the one who switches on the microphone
15 and quite often there have been problems like I've had the microphone too far
16 away, or there's been some problem and I can't I'm not I'm not being
17
18 Is that you and recording technology or is it something else?
19
20 No. I'm fine with recording technology if that's what I'm doing. But if I'm
21 actually trying to play, I don't want to be thinking about like "Oh are the levels
22 all right?"
23
24 So it interferes with the process.
25
26 It's the wrong part of the brain. It's like trying to talk when you're playing. You
27 can't do it and so
28
29 No I'm interested in what you say about listening to a live improvisation as
30 opposed to someone like me who likes to listen to a recording afterwards. Does
31 it matter to you? Does your audience matter a lot to you and what they like?
32
33 Yes I like audiences.
34
35 Live audiences or what about the wider public.
36
37 Well if I. If I do CDs which I do, erm the way of thinking about the CD. I
38 wouldn't just well, my choice wouldn't be I'll just tape a gig and put it out.
39 Having said that, other people have taped me, with my permission, but that's
40 not, I wouldn't conceive of that. Oh I know what, I'll do this gig and I'll tape it
41 and if it's good enough then I'll put it out. I never think that!
42
43 Why not?
44
45 Because then you're, then you're thinking about fixing it before you've even
46 done it.
47
48 Oh right.
49
50 I think that's the problem with it. That it's that, you're thinking about the fixing,
51 when there's nothing to fix.
52
53 So it is fixed?
54
55 Yes, well I think so. Yes it just sort of goes against the grain. Whereas if
56 somebody else has recorded something and they say "Look, we really like this

1 and we'd like to put it out." Then I listen to it, and if I think the balance isn't
2 good, I'll say so, but usually, I give permission if somebody else thinks it's good
3
4 Are you aware of who the audience is that you're playing to, for particular gigs?
5
6 Yes. Well yes. I'm just thinking about a gig that I did, a solo gig that was erm
7 where some of my piano pupils came. And in fact over half the audience were
8 16 year olds who had never heard free improvisation. And I thought "I know
9 them all, well I know most of them. And they are also friends, sons and
10 daughters of friends, and sisters of friends, but there was this kind of quite, they
11 took up a whole row of chairs. Gosh this is going to be so weird for them
12 because of that.
13
14 How was it for you doing this?
15
16 Well I thought. "Well, I'll drop them in gently." So it started off like just do and
17 then
18
19 Would you generally do that, look at who's there and er
20
21 No I don't normally.
22
23 But do you have a sense of
24
25 Context.
26
27 How about the wider public listening to your music?
28
29 You don't have any control over that.
30
31 Do you have a sense of who they are, does it matter to you?
32
33 Well it's very nice. It's very nice of them.
34
35 Is it important for you to leave music behind when you die, a body of works?
36
37 Well, no. That's why I write to commission. I mean when I studied composition,
38 I studied, some of the people I studied were just writing their string quartets, you
39 know, it doesn't matter if nobody ever plays them. I just thought I can't, I can't
40 write like that.
41
42 So if it's not commissioned, you are not going to write it?
43
44 Yeh er I mean commissioned in the wide sense, I don't mean it has to be
45 financially commissioned but in some way, somebody wants it. Someone wants
46 it, yes. Yes. No I don't just sit down and the music pours out of me, I'm afraid.
47
48 We are talking about what makes it easier and harder – what for you are the
49 main rewards of being a musician? What are the best things about it?
50
51 Oh. It's just great. It's just fantastic.
52
53 What is it that's great for you?
54
55 Er (10) Well lots of things I suppose. Yes. Lots of things. Well OK on a practical
56 level, erm. A lot of my work can be done at home. But I can also go touring. So
57 you get that nice contrast between being at home and not being at home.

1
2 You like working at home?
3
4 I love it. That's my main reward.
5
6 OK.
7
8 And is it having that freedom too? About how you work and when you work?
9
10 Yes. Yes.
11
12 You feel comfortable working that way?
13
14 Yes
15
16 Is it easier for you to work when you are in a familiar place?
17
18 No not necessarily. It's just that I've got all my stuff. I've got everything in that
19 music room.
20
21 So it's got that aspect of (inaud)
22
23 Yes. So. You get paid for it. Sometimes!
24
25 How about managing the feast and famine side of it? How has that been?
26
27 Erm. (3) Yes it's very up and down.
28
29 How do you cope?
30
31 I've always been saving for the (inaud) and I (inaud)
32
33 So it takes a bit of managing to negotiate
34
35 Yes Yes. I don't fly Concorde!
36
37 Any other rewards? The main one is that it is very fulfilling.
38
39 It's very fulfilling. Yes. That's the word I was looking for. Yes. It is very
40 fulfilling - both the playing and the composing, erm and the improvising and
41 composing. Erm. It's. Sometimes, for instance if I'm working in a theatre
42 context then I might [clicks fingers] work really really fast, on something and
43 say "Right this is it." Or if you're MDing in a BBC studio or something, erm
44 you've got your 2 or 3 musicians, and the thing that you've written is chronic
45 stuff and is not going to work or something so you've got a lot of thinking on
46 your feet, which, I'm usually quite a slow and lazy person, and actually I get
47 really sort of buzzed up about that, by having to think musically on my
48
49 So you like a change of pace?
50
51 Yes. Yes. I do.
52
53 Having to think on your feet fast and then being laid back about it, in other
54 situations
55
56 Yes and knowing that it's gonna be all right, and I love that thing of - being able
57 to, after a little bit of thought, it's like you know, you just have an intuition about

1 something and it's right. And it concurs with somebody else's view of what
2 might have been happening and I would say that in 90% of the time that's kind
3 of what's happening. Yes.

4
5 Do you find, is it important for you to build up a relationship with particular
6 individuals, does it matter to you?

7
8 It does seem to, it seems to be what I do erm.

9
10 Is that one of the good things about being in music, building up that kind of
11 relationship? [nods] Is it a musical relationship or a personal relationship?

12
13 Well it becomes, it becomes personal.

14
15 Do you find that you can work musically with people that you don't get on with
16 personally?

17
18 (4) Yes. Yes. Well, if I respect their music. Or, wait a minute. That's if they are
19 a musician. Difficult. It can be difficult. It can be really difficult. There's all
20 sorts of kind of [makes noise of explosion] I have worked with some people who
21 are notoriously difficult to work with.

22
23 How do you cope with that?

24
25 Inaud [both laugh]

26
27 How come you have to work with them? Are they the best musicians for the job?

28
29 No I'm just thinking of some theatre people.

30
31 Oh right.OK. How you do manage it?

32
33 (4) Make sure you get some space. Make sure they know, the boundaries are
34 clear.

35
36 Your own space?

37
38 Yes, just sort of. Yes. You've got somewhere (inaud)

39
40 When you get stressed out, how do you relax?

41
42 How do I relax? I don't relax when I'm stressed out!

43
44 No, but what do you do to make it tolerable?

45
46 Oh I see. Well, I usually talk to them, start again, talk, conversation (inaud
47 sentences)

48
49 What do you do when you get stressed?

50
51 Write things down.

52
53 Is this a sort of diary?

54
55 Erm. Yes. Yes. I do it very rarely. But I did find myself doing it the other day.

56
57 Would you lose your temper, shout and rant, get angry, or go quiet, withdraw?

1
2 I might either withdraw or say "Look I really think we need to talk about this."
3 Or, write my diary, or just "Let me talk about it" or (inaud few words). Erm.
4
5 So that would be one of the downsides?
6
7 Or I get fierce.
8
9 Oh
10
11 I get my fierce face. It's like [makes face] and people don't. Well some people
12 won't cross me when I'm looking fierce.
13
14 So you can be tough?
15
16 Very tough. Sometimes too tough.
17
18 How so?
19
20 Well sometimes I come across all fierce and they won't talk to me. When that
21 happens, then I've crossed a boundary I shouldn't have crossed.
22
23 So what are those boundaries about?
24
25 Well what they should be about is, like "I'm a musician, if I'm working in the
26 theatre, I'm a musician, they're the Director, and somebody else is a, it's like
27 you all have your things and everybody can kind of work together but that you
28 kind of know that your professional status is intact.
29
30 OK. So you don't cross beyond your professional role?
31
32 Well I shouldn't. But if I feel that there's a hole, then I might.
33
34 How about people crossing over into your professional area?
35
36 Yes sometimes.
37
38 Like that Director you were telling me about, telling you what to do with the
39 music...
40
41 Well I didn't mind his ideas, I just didn't like him. I just completely.
42
43 That wasn't a boundary issue.
44
45 I could kind of handle that. I could handle that. You know, it was. They were
46 paying me to do a job and you do a job, and if you sort of, you just absent
47 yourself from it in a way. You just sort of think "Oh right, I thought this was a
48 composing job but actually it's not it's a pastiche job".
49
50 So you kind of distance yourself.
51
52 You just distance yourself.
53
54 That helps you to cope. Any other ups and downs?
55
56 Well I suppose, being on tour can be stressful Can be. It can be a lot of fun as
57 well.

1
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57

What would be the stressful aspects? The travel?

Just erm. When my son was younger, all the stuff leading up to it, having to work out where he was going to be, and who he was going to be with, the management side, was stressful. And then you sort of think. "Oh I'll be away from home, how will my baby get on?" sort of thing.

That brings me on to the effect of being a person in music on the rest of life. You've already mentioned managing being away and fitting in childcare. Is it something that has been difficult for you at times? Has it affected the course of your career being a working mother?

(5) I've never turned down something because, I've never turned down something that I wanted to do because of that, but I've turned down things that I haven't wanted to do because of that. So you just think, "That's all right but it's not going to be that satisfying to do."

So it helps you get your priorities?

Yes exactly. Yes Yes. It's quite positive. In that sense.

Any other effects of being a musician on your personal life? What about your partner?

Well he's a musician too.

Do you think that's important?

Yes.

It helps having a musician as a partner?

Yes. Because they understand.

How does that understanding show itself? How do they need to be understanding?

Well OK he understands that I sometimes have to go away with work. He's never going to question it and whereas I know men who have women partners who are, who find that hard to accept that he's gone away on tour. Although he's having a great time and actually yes, there are good things about touring, and it can be stressful too, yes, so erm

Any other aspects?

Erm. (6) I talk about musical things.

What about when your son was growing up, how did you manage to combine work with being a mother?

Well when he was very young I was much more, I had much more full responsibility for him. But you probably don't want me to go into that sort of area?

Well I was just wondering how it affected your ability to work and so on.

1 I had support from my mum and from my sister and in return I used to teach her
2 kids music. So we had swops, we did a lot of swopping.

3
4 And that enabled you to work?

5
6 And it meant that I could then take on work that was not necessarily paid well
7 and I did not have to pay for every hour of childcare. And then as he got older, it
8 became much more (inaud) with my partner until he actually encouraged me to
9 go away with (inaud) and it took a year, but coming back every weekend. It was
10 relentless, as a touring schedule it was relentless. It was hard.

11
12 How about on a day to day level?

13
14 We don't have set mealtimes. Well OK I don't actually live. Oh yes, that was the
15 one question that I found difficult to answer on the questionnaire – single,
16 married, cohabiting...

17
18 What was difficult about it?

19
20 Oh because I don't live with my partner.

21
22 Oh right OK

23
24 He actually lives in a separate house. And. Which means that he's around a lot
25 of the time, probably most of the time, except when he's away. He's around a lot
26 of the time, but he is not under my feet [laughs]

27
28 Is that important, for you to work?

29
30 Yes [emphatic].

31
32 OK.

33
34 He likes listening to country music and if I'm trying to work. It's hard. I'll go
35 and make a cup of tea, and there's music going on. I just – it throws me. It's
36 hopeless.

37
38 So having quiet, peace, is important for you?

39
40 Peace and Radio 4.

41
42 Radio 4 - When you are working. Yes.

43
44 I can cope with Radio 4 because it's words and I can switch off from words. Not
45 music. I can't switch off from music.

46
47 Before we move on, any other ways in which being a musician/composer has
48 affected the rest of life.

49
50 Affected my personal life? Erm, I don't know if this is still the same question? Is
51 this still the same question? 'Cause I was just thinking that the thing um, of being
52 able to talk through and play through and actually have a sounding board, which
53 we do for each other. If he's working on something, for instance, it won't take
54 long. He says "Hey what do you think of it?" and I'll say "Hmm vocals too
55 loud." and then he does the same for me. And it's accepted with a lot of erm
56 respect.

1 Is there anybody else that you would do that to? Use as a sounding board?
2
3 My son. He does it for me, sometimes.
4
5 What about activities and interests and friends outside music.
6
7 Yes. That's always been an odd one. Um. OK. Well I like going walking. That's
8 one activity. So when my partner's around we go for walks erm. Friends outside
9 of music?
10
11 Are most of your friends in music?
12
13 Well I don't know, because it's never occurred to me to think about friends as
14 friends. There are some people that you just see on a regular basis. You sort of
15 think, yes, yes I think I'd call them a friend. But they haven't been round to my
16 house for years.
17
18 I'm more interested, less in how close they are to you, more in whether they are
19 musicians or not?
20
21 Yes, well I don't throw dinner parties, hardly at all. So, what is a social life?
22 What is a social life? I don't know. Yes I think I have one but
23
24 Whatever you do, talking to people somewhere,
25
26 Yes I have some local friends, who are not musicians.
27
28 Like neighbours?
29
30 Yes, people that I just know locally. And I have people that I have worked with
31 but we've managed to stay in contact. There's those kinds of friends, and then I
32 have got old, one old college friend.
33
34 Do you socialise with people that you play with? Do you meet them for a drink,
35 whatever, before a tour,?
36
37 Occasionally. Occasionally.
38
39 Even after you've been working on something?
40
41 Oh yes. We go for a drink. Yes. Not always but sometimes.
42
43 The neighbours – how would they see you?
44
45 Well some of them I teach their children.
46
47 So they'd see you as a piano teacher.
48
49 Yes. Yes. Mainly.
50
51 It would be just that?
52
53 But they know that I do this other stuff, and they might, they might come to –
54 like when I was playing in a band, they would come to that. With a saxophone
55 it's much easier, more accessible, but um um I wouldn't normally bother to
56 invite them to a gig that I was doing because (inaud) embarrassing for the
57 musicians, but if they want to go to that sort of music, it's there. They can go.

1
2 If they want to they can go of their own choosing.
3
4 I wouldn't want them to go just because they know me.
5
6 You've talked a bit about your audience. Are there any things that you haven't
7 yet done in music that you would like to do?
8
9 [Laughing] I just want to do my Grade 8 violin! Yes. Yes so that's my, the thing,
10 before I'm 50. Get my grade 8 violin.
11
12 How much time have you got then?
13
14 I've got 1 term. I can do it next term.
15
16 Oh OK.
17
18 And um er I'd like to. Spent more time on the sarangi next year. When I've had
19 a real concentrated bout on the sarangi I want to get my thing together on a
20 classic komanche which is a Graeco-Turkish instrument. Greek instrument. And
21 I like transcribing things off records. So I want to do more transcription. Erm.
22
23 If you had a huge chunk of money given to you, what would you do with it?
24
25 The things that I want to do are not things that require huge amounts of money.
26
27 You like the blend of activities and the teaching. How much teaching do you do?
28
29 I don't know. The number of pupils keeps changing. I've got about, between 6
30 and 8 pupils.
31
32 That's when they come. Yes. They don't have a definite day. Well some of them
33 do, but every lesson is done by arrangement.
34
35 Do you find it OK switching between activities?
36
37 Yes.
38
39 What about if you've got a deadline, or are under pressure to finish something.
40
41 Sometimes. I might occasionally have to rearrange a lesson. I try not to do that. I
42 feel quite strongly that if I've made an arrangement. I mean, probably twice in
43 the last year I've had to rearrange a lesson, actually not because of deadlines but
44 because but I wanted to go away with somebody. But I feel that if I make this
45 arrangement with somebody else I have to keep it, which they don't! Not
46 turning up, or turning up half an hour late!
47
48 When it comes to the improvised side, how do you get to meet people when you
49 are playing. Do you check out other musicians? How does that work?
50
51 I suppose I am a conservative when it comes to playing with people. If it's up to
52 me I play with people I know. If somebody says "Oh who would you like to play
53 with?" I'll choose somebody very very close rather than.
54
55 Someone familiar
56
57 Very familiar rather than somebody who I've never played with.

1
2 When you are improvising, do you feel that you are laying yourself on the line?
3 Are you always confident that the music will come?
4
5 Yes. Because. Because I don't try and project onto the blank space. I don't try
6 and think. What's this going to be like. I can't stand it when people say "I've got
7 a really good feeling about this gig!" It just drives me nuts.
8
9 How do you start then, when you go on?
10
11 Nothing.
12
13 Nothing. Is this something you've learned to do, or have you always done it?
14
15 Well it just works better.
16
17 How do you get yourself to that state? Is it a kind of openness? A
18 responsiveness?
19
20 Well hopefully. Yes. I just don't think about the music that's going to happen. I
21 just think about anything else.
22
23 Right. So you just think about -- what?
24
25 What I've got to do tomorrow.
26
27 OK so you go on with whatever's going on for you.
28
29 Yes. As long as I'm set up. Erm. If I'm working with electronics, or delays or
30 whatever, then I have to know that it is all working. Otherwise I'm worried. And
31 I would always check that it's all happening before I actually start playing. One
32 time somebody unplugged one of the preamps and I just suddenly. It means
33 suddenly a machine isn't working. And I just thought. "Right I'll take it out of
34 the system."
35
36 Is that what you did?
37
38 Yes it was out of the music.
39
40 You cope with it?
41
42 Yes.
43
44 So you don't get nervous on gigs?
45
46 No.
47
48 Has this always been so?
49
50 No. I used to get, I think when I first started improvising, I used to get nervous
51 that, in the form of, I'd feel terribly sleepy.
52
53 Really.
54
55 Yes it was quite weird.
56
57 At what point did you become sleepy.

1
2 On stage.
3
4 Would you start dozing?
5
6 No no no not that way. But everything seemed rather sort of surreal, and kind of,
7 I thought God, this is really weird!
8
9 Did you feel disconnected from the situation?
10
11 Yes. Yes. Sort of like you are in a dream. And kind of not really making it
12 happen or something. And I think from that I kind of gradually learned to (4)
13 take things, just, I suppose take control of it more.
14
15 How did you manage that?
16
17 Through working with theatre and dance.
18
19 And how did that help?
20
21 Because I'd be part of a new looking visual element
22
23 So it's something to do with having your attention focussed.
24
25 So then suddenly you could, I could then really explore what my role was. I
26 think that actually
27
28 That gave you space and less pressure.
29
30 Yes you're working with people but you're working in a solo way, so you have
31 to take responsibility. It's not control, it's responsibility for how, for the music
32 that happens.
33
34 The process?
35
36 Yes, so that, erm. And so now, yes, I don't get sleepy at gigs.
37
38 Where do you think the inspiration comes from?
39
40 Erm. Well, as I say, there's these two things that are going on. There's being
41 involved and there's the observer. And the observer is aware of quite a lot of
42 possibilities. It's a bit like playing chess really. It's like you might make the
43 same move every time you start. You make the same move but the game is
44 different. And um.
45
46 So that's drawing on your experience and your training?
47
48 Yes
49
50 Bringing the past to bear...
51
52 Yes and just sort of um. Yes, there's part of you that's sort of saying "Is this? Is
53 anything happening?" If it's not happening. I mean if you're playing with people
54 you've got to sort of be quite careful. Like if there's nothing happening, when I
55 say happening, there's just doodling, and so on, nothing. And then you sort of
56 think "Well, I'll either stop, and wait for it to clear, like it was muddy water or
57 something", or I might sort of think "Well, if I come in with something really

1 strong, then people might follow.” Sometimes they do, sometimes they don’t. If
2 they don’t then you sort of back off, “That didn’t work” and I’m personally not
3 that interested in playing music that isn’t going, that isn’t happening.
4
5 Do you find that you get inspired, challenged, by particular people that you are
6 playing with? I know it’s very hard to talk about these things.
7
8 It’s an energy thing. It depends who it is I think. It might be intensely physical,
9 where you’re kind of like almost wrestling with the instrument, or it might be,
10 you might end up being totally minimal, a lot of focussed listening.
11
12 Do you use audience reactions to work off at all?
13
14 (5) I am sometimes aware of the audience in that
15
16 Are there particular audiences that give you something musically?
17
18 No. Not in that way. You might be aware that they are giving you something.
19 Yes. Oh well, yes, I mean: if a baby cries or something, you might choose to
20 respond to that, perhaps. Mind you it depends whether it’s appropriate within the
21 context of what you’re doing. If it’s just like, “Oh well I’ll get pulled over there,
22 then it doesn’t feel necessarily appropriate. Sometimes it might be very
23 appropriate. But there are times when you might have, a very kind of talking
24 audience, and sometimes I focus on that.
25
26 How? What effect does it have?
27
28 I just play with them. And it works. Usually.
29
30 You are drawing them back into the music?
31
32 I don’t know, what it is that I do. I just direct
33
34 Your energies
35
36 Yes, but not antagonistically. Just sort of friendly!
37
38 Just finally, if there is one thing that you feel is the most, because you work in a
39 very wide area, most satisfying for you?
40
41 The contrast. I just love it all. I like going from one thing to the other.
42
43 Just finally, do you think it has made a difference being a woman in some of
44 those areas? There are very few women in some of the areas you work in. Do
45 you think you’ve had a different experience being a woman?
46
47 I’ve never tried being a man!!
48
49 Yes. OK!
50
51 Have you had any unfriendly reactions or any sexist treatment that you’d like to
52 point out at all, or not, maybe?
53
54 No I think it is different being a woman.
55
56 Why are there so few women, put it that way, in that field of music?
57

1 Well I think, yes. I think it probably is to do with, partly with role models. Erm.
2 Confidence. I think women, this is a horrible generalisation, but I think women
3 succeed very well in erm structured, taught environments, because they get
4 feedback on who they are.
5
6 Is that true of you too?
7
8 Well I get my feedback through other ways. Erm I've always I've always been a
9 stubborn musically, yes (inaud)
10
11 Would you like to be seen as a woman?
12
13 By all means.
14
15 But you haven't had that experience yourself?
16
17 No. I think. Most of. I knew women in other art forms, but erm
18
19 There are some women composers in other fields.
20
21 Yes but I didn't really know them and I felt a bit on my own.
22
23 Would you call yourself a woman composer?
24
25 Well I would have done at one point, erm but I think because what I do is so
26 wide. I don't know. I think there are social issues around women and men
27 working together and it's to do. I think people work with people, people ask
28 people to work with them, because they feel comfortable with them. And I think
29 that's an overriding reason that people ask me to work with them. So for some
30 people they feel more comfortable working with other guys and it's not because
31 they don't like women, the women who are playing music, it's just that maybe
32 the women, and there aren't very many of them, are playing a slightly different
33 aesthetic. We probably all invent our own aesthetics anyway. So there's
34 probably a lot of men that they don't play with. So I don't kind of blame men for
35 choosing to play with men. I can see how it happens, and it's only when people
36 consciously start to say "Hey there aren't any women in this! There's something
37 missing. There's an energy that's missing.
38
39 You think women bring a different energy to it?
40
41 Yes. Yes. I think it's sort of, and I'm not talking about flirting or anything like
42 that. It's just erm. Having said that, I was on tour with somebody the other day,
43 and I said (inaud) "I just wished they were more like a man to work with!"
44 Sometimes working with women, like, because all the emotions are out there,
45 and you have to deal with each other's emotions and actually sometimes it's
46 really refreshing to work with men, because you're not having, you just deal
47 with the music.
48
49 Right. So it can get in the way.
50
51 Its pluses and minuses. Sometimes you can get much closer to a woman than
52 you can to men, because you understand each other, and that actually never gets
53 in the way.
54
55 Why do you think there are so few women who improvise?
56
57 Well I think it's hard to

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Because it's hard to become validated?

Yes. Yes. Sort of like "Oh you look nice." So you think back. "Oh, so that means I'm OK." Or you hand in your homework. "Oh that was good. I got an A for that, so I'm OK" and the . Yes, it is. It's to do with how we validate ourselves. Or how we are validated.

So for you it hasn't been a big thing in the same way?

Well I suppose I've sort of gone ahead, with something slightly marginal, and I've been validated for that, so it's all right. I think I would have to be a little bit nutty if I went on doing it without any validation, because I am very context-based. So if I was doing something and everybody thought "That's tosh." I couldn't do it. The thing about music is that it communicates. It's a form of communication, so if you're not communicating then don't do it!

Yes. That's why I was asking you earlier about your audience, who it was you are communicating with.

Yes, No I think. Yes. Well there was a very. There was something I once did in a workshop. I was taking a workshop on improvisation. I asked people to play a note, a note that they feel comfortable with. Now play that note as if it's the most precious thing in the world. And give it... You just love that note. Not necessarily loud, but just total attention. And "Whooo" That was just amazing! And I said OK. Now I'm thinking that this might be the next stage on. "Now think of something that you really really really love, in your mind. Somebody that you really played that note for", and it wasn't as good. nIt was OK but it didn't have that focus that just communicated, because they were totally focussed on what they were doing. So when I'm performing I'm not thinking a lot about the audience, I'm thinking very intensely about what I'm doing and having the confidence that if I'm completely focussed, I can then, it will communicate. So that. But having said that, occasionally, I might sometimes remind myself to look at the audience, but it's a kind of conscious thing.

Transcript 16 :

David

1 When people ask you to describe yourself as a musician, what would you say?
2
3 From a musical point of view?
4
5 If I met you, and you said “I’m a musician” – how would you describe yourself?
6
7 I suppose I would focus on the fact that I do what I want musically rather than
8 being involved in commercial music, for instance. To me that’s one of the things
9 which defines me a lot.
10
11 Freedom to follow your own musical path is very important to you?
12
13 Yes. Exactly.
14
15 How would you describe that path?
16
17 Well I like to be surprised if I go to someone else’s concert, and, or just in life
18 in general, and so it’s important to me to put those kind of surprises into my own
19 music. And I think I just organise a gig or a piece or a tour in a way that I’d like
20 to see if I was just turning up as a member of the audience.
21
22 Yes. Freshness is very important and you get sparked off by not only playing but
23 listening to what people are doing.
24
25 Very much. Yes.
26
27 If I asked you to describe your own music, what would you say?
28
29 Erm (3) Well I suppose after mentioning the (2) surprise factor That we’ve just
30 talked about, I would say that I probably in the early days used all sorts of ideas
31 from other people’s music quite openly. I did my own thing with them but for
32 instance African music – because I played with African musicians for a while, I
33 did a lot of things that were based on those kind of harmonies but let’s say made
34 a bit more complicated and dense in some ways.
35
36 So you wouldn’t regard yourself as working within that tradition, more kind of
37 borrowing and developing ideas that come from it.
38
39 Yes borrowing and developing Yes. But that was for a stage when I was in a
40 band called (name) really and then when that finished I felt there was a need for
41 a more – let’s say a less obvious kind of music where people wouldn’t be just
42 tracing back to certain different styles and so I
43
44 Obvious in what kind of way, in the sense of within a style or tradition?
45
46 Yes I suppose I didn’t want people to be sitting there listening and saying “Oh
47 that was 8 bars of African and now he’s gone into a gospelly thing. I wanted it to
48 be more that they would listen to it and say “Ah that’s (name)’s music!” and so I
49 just tried to amalgamate the whole thing and add a lot of my own musical
50 techniques to it.
51
52 How did you go about that?
53
54 The easiest example for applying my own techniques to it would be – I used to
55 compose on a computer program called Cubase which a lot of people use, and
56 that, there’s two things about that. One is you can set it and record and play into
57 it

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Using Midi.

Yes. But more importantly, for me, I accidentally hit on something where – It's quite technically boring in a way but

That's all right! I might love it!

I wrote a bass line that was 40 beats long and I really liked it but that was just the very beginning of the piece, and you could loop things on CuBase- so you just listen to them again and again, and I just wrote this melody that worked over the top of it and I looped that just so I could press Play and hear the whole thing together and accidentally I had a loop in let's say the right hand that was shorter than the left hand so you had this loop just gradually going out of synch and getting further and further away from the start point and then eventually coming back and that was a moment of real excitement because it was such a surprise and it worked, by a coincidence. And then I thought right the next thing to do ...

There was a bit of serendipity really coming in there

Exactly.

And then the next thing I did was to fill in between the bass line and the top line and try and make harmonic sense and of course the harmony was always changing.

Yes. Do you follow your own harmonic rules, or would you say your harmony uses a system?

Yes I follow my own rules but I think they are not like serial music really intellectually. They are more based on all of the jazz and stuff that I have listened to and also they are based on what's pleasing to the ear, even when it's not meant to be jolly-jolly music. There's another kind of pleasing – I suppose it's a sort of logic that's pleasing, musical logic.

Yes. So you appreciate working within a kind of architecture, or a structure that is apparent to you,

Yes. But that would be a starting point. If you followed that process through I don't think personally that you'd have a piece. I think you'd have to then write a beginning which got you into that place and an ending which takes you out.

So you are working within structures,

Yes

But your music also contains improvisatory elements, doesn't it, or space for people to.

Yes. Yes.

How do you build those in?

Yes. It's another interesting challenge. I try to make them relevant by making sure that the improvisation comes from the material so whoever's playing, let's say it's often a saxophone player, as its such a great instrument, the saxophone, often they will have been playing something quite unusual and personal to me,

1 which leads into a solo space for them and because of what they'd been playing
2 beforehand, the hope is that that would flavour what they played then on and it
3 seems to work like that.

4
5 So you want the improvisation to be derived from and musically identified with
6 what they are playing over.

7
8 Exactly.

9
10 I mean jazz has some pitfalls.

11
12 How do you tell them what to do in those situations, 'cause clearly, I know you
13 work with people you know, so you know the kind of thing they like to do.
14 Beyond that,

15
16 A lot of it is that, finding people and working with them for such a long time and
17 growing up with them through the same kind of listening patterns. You know,
18 we go through phases of. A few years back being into be-bop or something and
19 all of this becomes part of a common language, which you can then bend to your
20 own rules and some people like (name), who I've been working with since er
21 and (name), the trumpet player, which, I must have started working with him in
22 1970 something.

23
24 What do you think that developing musical relationships gives to the music, that
25 it wouldn't have if you had somebody in off the street as it were that could play.

26
27 A coherence, I think it gives it a coherence and meaning. By that I mean it's
28 meant to be about communication, music, like all art. And when you get a jam
29 session situation where there's a queue of people coming up to, in a competitive
30 environment, to show off that they can play. Often it's like that anyway. For me,
31 there's very little music in that situation.

32
33 You want to set up a situation where people don't feel competitive and feel they
34 are working together to develop this music.

35
36 Erm. Yes. And people listening to it can hear a flow of ideas from one person to
37 another and back. I think that's what subconsciously makes jazz listenable even
38 though it's really complicated music.

39
40 Would you describe yourself as a jazz musician to people?

41
42 Yes I do still. I struggle to fit in in those ways.

43
44 I sometimes struggle to understand when someone describes themselves as a
45 jazz musician – as somebody who knows and loves jazz for years– what that
46 means? I could say a few years ago what it meant more clearly but now I think
47 it's harder.

48
49 Well a lot of the people that I work with, (2 names), for instance, I really think
50 of them as jazz musicians, no doubt, because they are improvising 80 per cent of
51 the time. What they play is coming from them and it's not written down. Myself
52 it's a different proportion because I spend a lot of time – well I get asked to write
53 music for orchestral people and everything has to be written down, so I've kind
54 of blurred the line a bit, myself.

55

1 So how does the jazzer in you, as it were, when you are asked to do a classical
2 piece, or let's call it a piece for orchestra rather than a classical piece, how does
3 that match up? How do you approach it?

4
5 Well at the beginning it was very difficult because I had all sorts of snobbery
6 built in about classical music and

7
8 Your own snobbery rather than their snobbery towards you or somebody else?

9
10 I'm not sure. You'd have to work that out! But it was kind of stuff that I'd got
11 from having a classical music training at the same time as going home and
12 playing jazz at home and seeing that there were quite big differences, and there
13 were, certain kinds of rules in classical music that I thought weren't particularly
14 justified

15
16 Like

17
18 Like um having parallel fifths, consecutive fifths

19
20 Oh right, yes.

21
22 That's the only thing I can think of.

23
24 Rules in traditional harmony and that kind of thing.

25
26 Exactly.

27
28 That's probably not such a great example. I think there's a whole other snobbery
29 which I don't even understand, about classical music which is to do with the
30 kind of people who get attracted to that music and where they've come from,
31 and where they studied and who they've been hanging out with. It's not that the
32 musicians are, unpleasant at all, they're great.

33
34 You're talking about a kind of culture,

35
36 Yes I suppose that. And also the way that for a long time: I don't know if it's
37 still the case, but it was rewarded financially in a different way by the radio and
38 by collectors of royalties, and now I am in a position where I could be benefiting
39 from that. But in a way I still think, it doesn't change my opinion that it's all
40 totally unnecessary, it's based on the class system I think.

41
42 Yes absolutely. How do you manage to operate in those different fields then
43 when you are having to deal with those different cultures and face things that
44 you don't like in that classical world.

45
46 Well it has been very interesting and I suppose it goes back to the question that I
47 didn't answer about writing music for my own thing. The first time I did it I got
48 bogged down with having to prove myself and do a little bit of fugal stuff and

49
50 How would you prove yourself?

51
52 By harking back to some of the stuff that I'd been taught and that I'd worked
53 hard at and

54
55 Kind of proving yourself in the medium, is that what you mean?

56
57 Yes. Show that I understood it, that I could write a fugal passage for strings and

1
2 Is that the way you saw it?
3
4 Having said that
5
6 Was that the sort of commission that you were given? To write in that way?
7
8 Probably not, because it was a collaboration between this big anarchic Big Band,
9 (name of band), and something called the (name of orchestra) and they probably
10 wanted a bit of our wildness. I mean in the end.
11
12 Do you think that's why they asked you?
13
14 Yes.
15
16 In the end the results were fine and we still play that piece and I like it, only I
17 just laugh at the fact that there are bits there where I am trying to prove that I am
18 allowed to do this job.
19
20 There's less you, more something else really coming through in that music? Or
21 is it just as much authentically you there?
22
23 Maybe or maybe I would still be the tendency to do something like that, maybe
24 it's just inbuilt. And also I do, I like the challenge of writing complicated music
25 but still making it interesting for people, so it's not intellectual in an exclusive
26 way. It's just exciting.
27
28 Yes, accessible as well as being complex.
29
30 But how have I managed to work with those people? It's become a lot easier by
31 doing it quite a lot, and very slowly realising that those musicians are also
32 musicians, and they have exactly the same um challenges that we have, and in
33 any orchestral situation you always get – you know when my band (name) play
34 in the middle of an orchestra there's a kind of mutual respect for what the other
35 kind of musician does.
36
37 A lot of classical players are terrified by the thought of improvisation.
38
39 Yes absolutely.
40
41 They admire people who can do it, their training does not prepare them at all for
42 that.
43
44 No, sadly not. And then from a management point of view again it's realising
45 that there's a lot of, quite a lot of – I was going to say bluffing – but erm, I've
46 been quite lucky to have had a manager for the last few years, which is a whole
47 interesting story but, because most people don't, and he's totally home made, if
48 you like, he's invented his own way of dealing with it. And for him to engage
49 with the managers of classical establishments has been really interesting and
50 after a while I just began to see that quite often he was thinking much more
51 creatively and enabling things to happen. 'Cause it's a big thing to make happen,
52 to get an orchestra and a band with electric gear and actually get someone to put
53 this on and take a risk, so I've become a lot more relaxed and I guess the whole
54
55 And you have had to get involved in whole organisational management side, in
56 order to be able to do that kind of thing?
57

1 Yes I found myself being involved I guess because he (name), my manager, was
2 learning as he went along as well, that so he'd ask me things, a lot of the time.
3 "What do you think about this?" and it has been a very interesting experience
4 that.

5
6 What do you think having a manager has added to your musical life?
7

8 Well in a really, just in a really obvious way I would say. I remember myself
9 trying to organise my own gigs and trying to organise work for myself and I was
10 very bad at it and I would still be. Just the thing of negotiating with people over
11 fees.

12
13 Yes. And he takes all that burden off you. Does he get the work as well as
14 negotiating?

15
16 I would never be any good at doing that and I think it helps if there's someone
17 between the so-called artist and the promoter, to take the edge off, because
18 otherwise it feels like you're. The whole thing about asking for money is just
19 extremely hard. And you are always asking for money to cover the costs of
20 flying everyone out there and the excess baggage and where we are going to
21 stay. There are so many questions. I don't want to spend hours doing that. Also
22 I know a lot of musicians that – put it the other way round actually. I can think
23 of a tiny number of jazz musicians that have any kind of management, and partly
24 it's because there's such a culture of not having that that they can't quite have
25 the nerve to go through the initial painful stage of paying someone 20% or 15%
26 of everything.

27
28 Why is that, do you think?
29

30 Because when you start off as a jazz musician it's inevitably playing in a club
31 for cash, which a lot of people probably don't erm declare, and it's all underhand
32 and it's all scuffling around, and I think it takes quite a leap to say actually, I
33 want it to be a bit better than this.

34
35 Yes. You see it as a step towards being more, what can we call it, professional?
36

37 I suppose so. I do sometimes use that word, I must admit. But it's also removing
38 a lot of work that is totally unrelated to anything artistic.

39
40 You're in the position of not only playing, but also in charge of the music, your
41 own music, so that's a number of different things as well as writing your own
42 music, So having a manager takes all that off you. When you did that, was that
43 something you didn't like to do before you had the manager?
44

45 Absolutely.
46

47 Was it something that was an idea you had or was it somebody else's?
48

49 To have a manager?
50

51 Yes. Where did it come from?
52

53 (name of band). I'm assuming that you know about them, I don't know why I
54 am, but

55
56 Yes, you can!
57

1 That band fell together in lots of accidental ways, but there was a man there who
2 used to just hang about called (name) who was a very amusing guy. I think he
3 was an administrator of the band but it was all very unofficial and vague and
4 then he gradually

5
6 I'm not sure what an administrator of a band would do, actually.

7
8 Well exactly. Keep the phone numbers I suppose!

9
10 Oh OK! And say, tomorrow it's so and so!

11
12 Yes. And he gradually became the manager but it was never said "I'm the
13 manager". And if it was said people would have resisted it probably and it was
14 the same thing. Most of the time he worked, probably made hardly any money
15 out of it, but then we'd do a week at Ronnie Scott's and he'd take 15 percent of
16 the overall amount of money at the end of the week and someone would hear
17 about it and they'd go "(name of manager)'s just earned this amount of money"
18 and none of us had the intelligence to think. Yes but he's been working all year
19 for nothing and this is the payback. And a lot of those people still can't – like
20 (name) for instance. Every now and then he'll try to have a manager 'cause he's
21 got a really busy career to sort out, and he just... The first time it comes to that
22 handing over some money, it just all falls apart. Anyway, (name) was the first
23 manager and then that band collapsed and I was actually approached by
24 someone who said: "Are you looking for management" And I said "Well I
25 hadn't really thought about it." And I knew this person. He was from the jazz
26 world. And he took over the job and a few years on. I'll just tell you this because
27 it might be interesting in some way, a few years on he hadn't, kind of, he'd been
28 withholding money for quite a long time and then eventually he said "Look, I'm
29 sorry to say I'm £50,000 in debt, and I owe you Nine Grand."

30
31 Gosh, so he hadn't been paying you for things.

32
33 That's right. So that was tricky. And then I had to

34
35 How did you deal with it?

36
37 Well I had to – it sounds really underhand, but I had to pretend that there was a
38 possibility that we would carry on working together but that I couldn't speak to
39 him until he got me that nine thousand pounds and eventually he did, at which
40 point I just rushed off and banked it and then as soon as it had cleared, I had to
41 say I'm sorry but I've decided not to carry on. And then his administrator,
42 (name), who'd managed tours for some time, like come on the road with us, she
43 offered to take over. So I suppose looking at this pattern, people have
44 approached me and offered and I've said Yes. She didn't work out because she
45 was much more of a bookkeeper and I thought this is exactly what I need, after
46 having lost this nine grand, but actually you don't need a bookkeeper you need
47 someone with a real vision.

48
49 It sounds like the person you have has got flair and can create that job to suit you
50 really.

51
52 Yes. Yes.

53
54 Suit you both.

55
56 That's right.

57

1 How about selling it to the band though? How have you managed to do that?

2

3 Selling what?

4

5 The idea of having a manager. Or is that their job!

6

7 Well, it's me that has the manager and then I have a band.

8

9 OK So they're not involved directly with them. I'm just trying to understand
10 how it works?

11

12 Well, it is an interesting area that. He would ring them up and say (name)'s got a
13 gig on such and such date, are you free? And then, er, they get on quite well. But
14 there is a little friction in the fact that he is my manager so he's talking to them
15 but at the same time he is working on my behalf.

16

17 How would they see you then, differently, as somebody having a manager?

18

19 Um. (5) I don't know. It's really hard to know.

20

21 It's very common in the pop world and lots of other worlds really, that writers,
22 other creative arts people have managers. It's common in America isn't it. You
23 have plenty of American people in jazz with managers for different reasons. But
24 it's rare here.

25

26 Yes. There aren't that many people that would want to do it, to be honest,
27 because they can't make any money from it.

28

29 Sure. Yes. The money for jazz musicians hasn't changed very much.

30

31 No. But in a way that's because there aren't enough managers, asking for the
32 right amount of money.

33

34 Yes I agree actually.

35

36 I mean jazz musicians get on the phone. They ask for the absolute minimum and
37 then they get knocked down a bit further, again and again. It's like that.

38

39 Do you think that is one of the difficulties of being a jazz musician, that kind of
40 lack of respect when it comes to being rewarded financially.

41

42 I don't know if it is a lack of respect but there is certainly a real problem there
43 because it's, there's an argument going on in the musician's mind I think, about
44 the fact that "Well I'm doing exactly what I always wanted to do, so why should
45 I expect to be given anything in return."

46

47 Yes, what do you think of that argument?

48

49 Oh I'm still prey to it. I, quite often. Well, let's say there's a very good jazz club
50 down the road called the (name), and if I go there and see a band I quite often
51 think. "Mmm I really feel like playing. Why don't I just go up to the guy
52 running it and say?" 'cause I know he'd say yes, "Any chance of a gig next
53 month?" "Yes. Great!" But then my manager would say. "How does this work in
54 the big scheme of things?" Because I've been trying to build up some kind of um
55 – what's the word?

56

1 Profile?

2

3 Yes. Exactly. So that you can do a gig at the Queen Elizabeth Hall once in a blue
4 moon and actually get a big crowd in.

5

6 So go for the large venues, larger.

7

8 Yes. And it's a very good argument.

9

10 Different kind of circuit, let's call it that.

11

12 Yes. And I still do gigs at the (name of local club) but I usually do them as a
13 benefit, because that way, it's a nice way to play and the money is seen to go
14 somewhere else good and. But yes, it's very easy to say yes to things. And also,
15 dating back to the early stages of being a musician, every time someone calls
16 you up and asks you to play you say yes, because it is such an honour. And just
17 about everyone I speak to, always feels like that. So every time you get offered
18 anything , even if it's not quite the right musical environment for the way you
19 play, you always want to say yes and a lot of people always do say yes to
20 everything. And you end up then I think with, quite a confusing mishmash of
21 different things going on, which is great, in a way, it's quite creative, but it
22 might also stop you from doing that one thing really well.

23

24 Yes. You think it kind of diffuses the energy.

25

26 Yes I think it can. I mean if you are playing with other people's bands all the
27 time, I think it's harder to get the momentum to make your own band.

28

29 Is that a decision that you are having continuously to make? Being able to say no
30 sometimes? And change you priorities, really? Is that something you've had to
31 learn?

32

33 Definitely. But I think over the last few years it has become easier. Possibly
34 through er through realising that there are some quite good reasons to be at home
35 as well as there are good reasons to be out on the road playing other people's
36 music. That you can actually

37

38 Are you talking about family commitments?

39

40 Yes.

41

42 'Cause I was wondering whether you were talking about writing here, or things
43 like that, work that you do when you are home.

44

45 Well that as well. But even beyond family I think, maybe for myself it is
46 important to be at home more, over the last few years.

47

48 Do you like travelling and touring? Is it something that you enjoy?

49

50 Yes I do. And I like the idea of it as well. And the idea isn't the same as the
51 reality.

52

53 How do they differ? I have to ask you that! What are the good bits and the bad
54 bits, put it that way.

55

56 Well, whoever is left at home thinks it's really glamorous and exciting and the
57 reality is mostly waiting. I think everyone will say this. Most of the time, from

1 the time you leave home at six to get to Paddington to get the fast train to
2 Heathrow, most of it is waiting around.
3
4 Does the management side mean that when you travel you've got it easier than
5 you would otherwise have, in terms of the arrangements for instance.
6
7 What, to have a manager?
8
9 Yes. Absolutely. It's a nightmare.
10
11 The quality of the journey and the getting around and all those nuts and bolts.
12
13 Yes. But it is becoming much harder to travel these days. Obviously, you know.
14 In the last few days flights to various places have been cancelled but when I
15 heard about Morocco, I thought that's interesting. I was offered a gig there. It
16 fell through actually but it was a couple of months ago we were talking about a
17 gig in Morocco at a European Music Festival, and I thought I could easily now
18 be listening to the news and thinking "Oh well, that's it, that's off" But in terms
19 of getting gear onto a plane, and how happy an airline is to see you when you
20 turn up with 100 kilos of gear, is really quite a complicated thing to do now, and
21 then you get things like erm 30 percent artist tax to be paid in Italy. They don't
22 want to pay it, so the question is whether I pay it or whether each musician gets
23 billed separately. These things are so boring I feel embarrassed to tell you about
24 them.
25
26 No, they affect very much the day to day how well or badly things go, don't
27 they? These small things add up.
28
29 Yes. And how often someone like (name) for instance who works an awful lot
30 with visiting bands like (name of American bandleader) or something, just going
31 off to appear in Europe and suddenly something like that can become impossible
32 to so because no-one anywhere along the line is going to make any money from
33 it because it has all been paid back somewhere.
34
35 All these things obviously do have an impact on playing music. Turning to your
36 music writing - and thinking about what you were saying about the classical
37 world, I hesitate to call it composing because that also raises a few hackles in
38 certain quarters- what do you call it? What you do to produce your music?
39
40 Yes I do call it composing. Composing. I don't mind that at all.
41
42 OK Good! What kind of things make it easier for you to compose? I mean for
43 instance again being very practical, are you someone who likes to be in a
44 particular place, say in here, in front of the piano, in front of the computer. Do
45 you have a way of doing it or does it vary? Is it in the morning? That kind of
46 thing.
47
48 It's a bit difficult to answer that clearly because if I look back a few years ago I
49 was erm, in a two year period or something I moved house, or moved where I
50 was living five times.
51
52 Oh yes, really disruptive.
53
54 Yes. And I can think of one particular
55
56 Did you have to or did you to choose to move?
57

1 Yes it was all a complete mess and I was also carrying around every time I
2 moved I was carrying around a lifetime's accumulated rubbish and also rubbish
3 belonging to my mum, who'd gone off to teach in Africa and had left all of her
4 previous life behind, in boxes. So all this.
5
6 The past was weighing you down?
7
8 Yes! And (you probably walked past lots of boxes) I'm still in the process of
9 chucking them out. Which is getting back to the question. If I look back to that
10 period I remember writing some pieces in a. The worst place I can think of was a
11 tiny room with a wall that had been painted in this terribly bright pink colour and
12 the wall was like that far away from me
13
14 Yes, About a foot, two feet away from your face
15
16 Yes and I had paper there, computer here, and the rest of the house was filled
17 with all this junk and furniture and most rooms you couldn't go into, and
18 everything was a complete mess and yet I look at the music, and it's a really nice
19 um pastoral piece for cello and piano. It's a really beautiful serene thing and it
20 makes no sense to me at all, And then there were other things that I wrote that
21 were um quite angst-ridden as well at that time, but that's because I wanted to
22 write something like that and I like those pieces as well.
23
24 So there's no real tie-in between the mood, the conditions under which you
25 produce something and what comes out so you can have joyful music when
26 you're feeling really, that kind of thing.
27
28 Yes It seemed to be like that.
29
30 It is extraordinary.
31
32 I'm not sure if that's still the case. Looking back at that time if I was asked to
33 write some I could finish it more or less by the deadline and be happy with it and
34 still listen to it now and be happy whatever was going on around me but now
35 recently –
36
37 I was going to ask you about deadlines. So you have to be flexible if you can
38 work in a tiny corner and things are very, there's a great deal of change going on
39 around you.
40
41 I guess you have to use your imagination anyway, that's what music is.
42
43 Sounds like a real strength being that adaptable really.
44 Since things have settled more have you found you have got into more of a
45 pattern? Is that something you prefer or are you still happy to write – in an
46 airport lounge, or whatever, that kind of thing?
47
48 I think it um where I've been given a deadline to finish something erm I've been
49 able to get into patterns quite easily. If I think of the last big piece that I wrote I
50 was probably working on it every day for a certain amount of time, until it was
51 finished.
52
53 I'll ask you about deadlines in a second, but when you haven't got a commission
54 or a deadline for a piece of work, how does it work then? What gets you writing?
55
56 Well the first thing to say is that
57

1 I am using the word writing because I am kind of making assumptions, because I
2 haven't asked you really whether you write at the piano, the keyboard or
3 playing...

4
5 Well I've done lots of different ways, but what I'm doing now, purely for
6 pragmatic reasons really, is erm play into a program called Sibelius which is to
7 do with getting beautifully prepared printed music out, which I then hire out to
8 orchestras so that's great. I'm very happy with that.

9
10 It's already a published version as it appears, isn't it? Publishable.

11
12 Yes. It's very easy to tidy up and, it's great.
13 What was the question again? About writing..

14
15 Yes, when you don't have a commission or a deadline.

16
17 Oh yes, most of the time I've found it much easier to produce stuff if there is a
18 deadline and for years now, years and years, there's always been something that
19 I'm meant to be writing for somebody, which has really helped me to make a lot
20 of music. Right now, I have actually got a big piece which I'm meant to finish
21 by December, and I should I think I should really be working on it now but
22 we've had a baby on February 13 so that's

23
24 Oh, that's my birthday actually! Congratulations!

25
26 That's three months away, three months previous,

27
28 How's it going?

29
30 It's going great!

31
32 You must be just a bit short of sleep then!

33
34 Yes. I spent that 3 months thinking.

35
36 First baby?

37
38 No. I've got 2 from a previous life before all the 5 moves and all of that. And my
39 partner has got a daughter as well, so there's lots of us here, and yes, since she
40 was born I think, have I written a note? I think I probably haven't written a note,
41 which has been, it feels like an enormous stretch of time, and I know that I could
42 be working on this violin concerto, but I've noticed that in the space that's
43 opened up by not writing, I've started to think about things that I would like to
44 write other than this violin concerto, like for my own band, 'cause your own
45 band is the one thing that no-one ever asks you to write music for, so that's been
46 interesting.

47
48 Has that been so in the past, when you were doing (name of band) and things
49 you were kind of having ideas..?

50
51 Yes where there's been space to just let things come out, that has been good.

52
53 What kind of things have helped to create that mental space for you?

54
55 I wonder. And it's hard to know. Because having composed in the midst of
56 complete chaos I've always thought, well I don't need to worry about that, but
57 what I have been doing the last 3 months is emptying out all of those boxes, and

1 throwing things away, lots of trips to the dump, thinking that – well it's a good
2 thing to do anyway, but almost like I felt – well I'm not going to start even
3 trying to compose until I clear some space, so in a way that shows that I'm
4 beginning to change my mind on that one. It's almost like I am reluctant to start
5 working in the midst of chaos again. I think that's because I know that once you
6 do start writing something it's, you know, 20 minutes of music for a small
7 orchestra – it's a lot of notes. Once you start on something like that, there's no
8 going back until it's finished. You can't suddenly go off and start doing some
9 decorating or something like that.

10
11 So once you start you have to remain concentrated on it?

12
13 Yes.

14
15 So having things like decorating or whatever, are a real distraction. How do you
16 handle it when these things intrude?

17
18 Well sometimes it's a distraction that I really welcome. I remember my manager
19 came round and said "So you're meant to be writing this." I can't remember
20 what the piece was now, quite a big piece, "You know it's due in so many
21 months. How's it going" And I said "Well actually I've just started this, you
22 can't see it but there's a big tree-house out there. "I've just started this tree house
23 project and I think I'm going to have to finish this first." And he was quite
24 amused by that. But it's like a weird period before you start writing something
25 where you hold it off by doing something else and you build up this momentum
26 to want to do the music.

27
28 Is that kind of while the music is getting ready? Are you thinking about it
29 consciously or is it not a conscious process?

30
31 It's largely not conscious.

32
33 How do you know when it is ready then? You are ready to go, as it were, to start,
34 putting it onto Sibelius.

35
36 I suppose there comes a day when you wake up and you are honest with yourself
37 about the fact that you've been procrastinating like mad, for weeks or months
38 and you just can't, it's almost embarrassing [laughs], the realisation that that's
39 what's going on.

40
41 Is that because the time has passed and the deadline is approaching, if there is a
42 deadline of course, coming back to what you were saying about this music going
43 on and developing until it's ready, kind of thing. What about that side of it?

44
45 It's not so much the music developing as the momentum, the need to do it.

46
47 Oh OK so you're kind of building up momentum.

48
49 Yes I suppose, it's like if you had to go into a hole and be covered up and er it's
50 almost. Well you know people do that, be buried for a couple of weeks. Imagine
51 the bit building up to that. You'd be building up the strength to do it. (4) It is a
52 bit like that.

53
54 So it's an ordeal of a kind too? Being buried would be.

55
56 Well you do shut yourself off from, an awful lot.

57

1 It's kind of a bit 'time out' of life, time out, in a funny sort of way?
2
3 I think it is. Yes. Socially it's to do it properly you have to shut yourself off quite
4 a lot, socially ...
5
6 Tell me about what it's like when you're in the middle of that.
7
8 (4) Well, (4) I think once you reach the stage where it's an unstoppable force,
9 then it's very enjoyable because it's um just because it's great to be creative and
10 when it's going well, which is the same as when it's an unstoppable force, then.
11
12 Does it suddenly come out of you, is it something that you're struggling with,
13 you're describing it like some sort of flow process? Is that right?
14
15 Yes, Well it's you suddenly see the light and how you're gonna make something
16 happen that the day before you had no idea what it was going to be. But
17 suddenly there's a kind of um (3) understanding of something musical that is
18 quite hard to put into words, like the thing I was talking about, the loops going
19 out of synch, a moment like that where you think "Ah this is the key to the
20 whole piece" in a way.
21
22 Do you think it needs that kind of um realisation, you get some central thing
23 right, something that enables you to move on with it?
24
25 Yes, and it's not always the same kind of thing. Sometimes it's more of an idea,
26 or a title, for instance. It can be something quite real.
27
28 Can it be a mood as well? A feeling?
29
30 Um it can, although. Yes. I can think of examples. Mood is a hard one because
31 people have used music so many times to create certain moods in a romantic
32 classical kind of way..
33
34 I was thinking more of a mood in you, you have a sort of feeling that you want –
35 this is a feeling that wants to be expressed musically, as it were...that kind of
36 thing I was thinking of.
37
38 Yes that's true. I probably don't even think of it as a mood. I think it is the same
39 thing but I think I would probably by that time be seeing it as a musical idea. For
40 instance when I described that piece as angst-ridden, that really was both what
41 the music was going for and what the resulting mood was,
42
43 Yes. Any other things that make it easier for you?
44
45 To write music?
46
47 Yes.
48
49 Time.
50
51 Having empty time, time to be able to do it, that sort of thing?
52
53 Yes. I've never experienced going to the seaside, staying by the sea, overlooking
54 the sea for 3 weeks and just working at a piece of music, so I don't actually
55 know whether that's the ideal way to write. It might well be. I've done the
56 opposite. As I say. I've produced stuff from being in the smelly city with all
57 sorts of things collapsing around me.

1
2 Do you have that belief that you need a certain amount of pollution, friction,
3 difficulty, struggle, that kind of thing, for something good to emerge?
4
5 (5) I don't know. I'm starting to think that I might like to experiment and find
6 out, because I've always been quite scared of the idea of moving to the country
7 because I do, I like to,
8
9 All that fresh air, peace and quiet!
10
11 Yes, and the idea of , well, socially it's quite scary, because I like. When I
12 moved here, in '97, and I found a very interesting pub that's full of artists, on
13 (name of Street), musicians, and very interesting people
14
15 Is that important to you, having a community of like-
16
17 Well for the first time in my life I had a local pub and I'd always wondered what
18 it would be like, and it's still my local and I've built up all sorts of different
19 relationships with people there, and the idea of living by the sea as a composer
20 who gets up at nine o'clock every morning is quite scary.
21
22 So this romantic view is of the conditions being perfect but then, the fear that if
23 it is perfect
24
25 There might be nothing left.
26
27 There's too heavy demands on you.
28
29 There's that, but there might be nothing to write about as well. But then again,
30 so well if writing is to do with imagination then you should be able to be
31 anywhere and do it. So I think the answer really is I don't know, and I might
32 have to experiment. The last time I went to Cornwall, because my mum lives
33 there,
34
35 You've been able to write, wherever you've been, so far that's been your
36 experience, so there aren't necessarily any conditions that made it easier in that
37 sense, places, environments,
38
39 That's right
40
41 Other than having people that. Is communicating when you are writing
42 important? Is there anyone for instance that, while you've been writing pieces
43 that you would want to talk about work in progress let's call it, with someone
44 whose input you'd appreciate? Has that happened?
45
46 I imagine, just a small thing like I might ring someone up and leave them a little
47 snippet of the music on their answering machine just because I was proud of it or
48 something or just to have a little bit of inter-reaction. But it's not something I
49 rely on.
50
51 'Cause I'm just thinking, if you are writing for known musicians, people that
52 you know, would you talk to them about it? Would be aware of writing or want
53 to communicate about writing things to their strengths and
54
55 I think probably because we've played together such a lot, A) I think I know so
56 much about the way they play and B) I would probably be thinking along the
57 lines of challenging them in some way. I think they probably. Well, I think I like

1 to. Writing music is about controlling things in a way, with musicians and
2 sometimes there's been a bit of resistance about that, about how much I've
3 written down, for them.
4
5 How closely they stick to the dots and things?
6
7 You know, "Did you have to write all of this out?"
8
9 Oh really. How have you managed that? How have you resolve that situation
10 then?
11
12 Well I just said "I know that I write a lot down. Maybe it's just a phase that I'm
13 going through, and you're going through a phase, to (name) which is almost the
14 opposite, about having total freedom (with his own band) when you go on stage.
15 And I said "Well in the end, it's up to you whether you want to pursue it. But I
16 can't stop myself from doing this. This is what I want to pursue at the moment,
17 which is detail. I like the detail, and also it's a way of setting this music apart
18 from other kinds of jazz which are a bit vague sometimes for me."
19
20 How do you see this question of your musical identity then? Is it changing? Do
21 you have a clear idea of it?
22
23 Yes I do but as soon as. All these questions are really hard!
24
25 They're terribly difficult, I know
26
27 They are really hard to answer...I would hope that other people, like the people
28 that play the music would be quite good at answering them
29
30 I get that answer too from people!
31
32 .and people that listen to it.
33
34 Do you have an idea of an audience that you are writing for? Are there any
35 particular individuals or groups or people. How do you feel about your
36 audience? Can you say something about that?
37
38 You were saying earlier that it is important for you to communicate...
39
40 That's right. I think I have an idea of my audience as people similar to me I
41 suppose.
42
43 Yes. Like-minded people.
44
45 Yes. People that – it sounds a bit corny – they probably listen to Radio 4 and buy
46 the Guardian a couple of times a week,
47
48 OK. Are those the people you see in your audience when you play?
49
50 I think so.
51
52 Or other country's versions of them, if you know what I mean.
53
54 I'm sure I do. I also am interested in people that I see in the audience who I
55 don't recognise at all and don't – they look as if they would be in some other
56 category, if they have to be in a category. But playing somewhere like the
57 (name) is great because you can actually see everybody's face and you speak to

1 the audience. You can see where there's a flicker of recognition in what's being
2 said,
3
4 Is that important to you to get that communication, that flicker?
5
6 It is. It is. Having said that, it's not like me going to a gig and if there's no
7 flicker of recognition we come offstage and go "Oh well [tuts] we failed, they
8 don't like us here." It's more like, if there's no flicker of recognition then you try
9 another way in.
10
11 So one of the aims is to communicate?
12
13 Yes I want to persuade people to give what can be quite detailed music a chance,
14 and I've been amazed at how successful we've been at doing that. Every time
15 we play I end up thinking that it's a success from that point of view.
16
17 What about a wider public, people who listen to your recordings as well as those
18 who come, or hear broadcasts or whatever?
19
20 I kind of feel the same. We started keeping a mailing list a few years ago as a
21 way of keeping in touch with anyone in the audience who wanted to know about
22 the next record or anything, and I've done about 2 or 3 newsletters a year since
23 then and sometimes there are huge periods of time go by without one, then
24 there's something to write about and to me it feels like writing to your family,
25 and just having a bit of fun and people come up
26
27 There's a sense of intimacy there that you achieve with your audience
28
29 I think the letters are quite personal. In fact there was one that had Dear, and
30 then where the name would have been, it was all handwritten in ink, there was
31 like an accidental blot of ink, so it looked like I'd written each one personally.
32 Obviously everyone would know that I hadn't but it was just playing on that
33 game that we all know each other and you go to Copenhagen or somewhere and
34 someone will come up to you and say: "For some strange reason I receive your
35 newsletter, once in a blue moon, and I don't understand any of it, but it's great to
36 receive it" and it's a linguistic problem, or he was joking!
37
38 How important to you is that when you die you leave a body of work behind-
39 what are your thoughts about posterity and the future and that kind of thing?
40
41 Well I think when I was growing up, when I first became a musician and I was
42 reading books about heroes like Charlie Parker who died in 1955 or something,
43 it all seemed very romantic, the idea of leaving behind recordings that would be
44 cherished and I thought "Yes, I'm going to do that." And I think as you get
45 older, as I get older, I probably prepare myself for the reality that all of that stuff
46 is totally beyond everyone's anyone's control, so it's probably not a good idea to
47 think in those terms.
48
49 Do you mean that we can't control our place in the future?
50
51 Yes.
52
53 But you can control putting out recording, having a body of recorded work, can't
54 you, and a body of other material about you.
55
56 Yes But when I record stuff it's more about documenting it so I can move on
57 and do something else.

1
2 Yes, it's a kind of document of what you were doing at that time.
3
4 What about the critics. I haven't asked you about them. How do you respond to
5 journalists, critics and so on. Do you read what people write about you? Can say
6 a bit about that?
7
8 Yes. I've got kind of two minds about that. One is that I've been, I've come off
9 quite well from that point of view, ever since (name of band) days, so in general
10 I can't complain about the whole thing about the critics, and on the other hand
11
12 Because they have treated you well.
13
14 Yes. And on the other hand I have had some horrendous reviews as well, which
15 have been so kind of.
16
17 Horrendous in the sense that they didn't like it or they were ill-informed, or
18 both?
19
20 Ill informed is probably the most annoying because you know that you've got no
21 come-back and you can't say "Hang on, you just didn't read the liner notes, " but
22 horrendous in getting personal about me, When I read those, I suppose thinking
23 about it now, I must have really really pissed those people off, almost as if, and
24 that's quite a weird thing to do
25
26 For them to write that, you mean?
27
28 Yes. Something about me on stage really grated against their whole being.
29
30 What kind of thing have they said, without making you..
31
32 Well there was one which was just a catalogue of things. "He does this, he did
33 this", but it ended with "And he wears orange trousers."
34
35 Oh, what!
36
37 But that isn't a very, that's not a good example. There was one that said um that
38 we'd done a version of (name of song) my arrangement of it, which is purposely
39 quite extreme, and
40
41 Extreme in what sense – sorry I have to ask you that before you move on...
42
43 It kind of deconstructs the original piece. It's not a cabaret thing any more it's
44 more like real (title). It's very aggressive in places and almost punk, or punk-
45 jazz. And a lot of people have loved it, so I shouldn't worry that one person was
46 annoyed by it but this guy happened to be a critic. But his comment that annoyed
47 me was, "At the end of the evening the audience left whistling (name of song)'
48 but not (own name's) version". And the reason that annoyed me was that. How
49 could he know? 'Cause the melody is the same in my version and in the original,
50 so. But to other people that probably seems like a petty little part of it to get
51 annoyed by. But that's me being annoyed by a musical error I suppose.
52
53 How do you get over that annoyance then? Do you take the critics on? Are you
54 likely to phone them up.
55

1 Well back in, when I was with (name of band) so when I was about 20 I guess,
2 I'd get very pissed off about it, and would engage with critics and write songs
3 about them which would go on the next album. I did that once actually.

4
5 What, engage meaning phone them up and say "You blah blah blah...?"

6
7 I wrote a letter to one. It wasn't that rude actually. I wrote a song that included
8 comments about 3 others, not really rude, but just poking fun in a way. And
9 what was the other thing I did erm. And then more recently, I was a bit more
10 well whatever, about it. It's just a review. Don't get. Think. Don't take it
11 personally and then a couple of years ago there was one.

12
13 Did that work, were you able to do that?

14
15 Well it did feel like that. And then a couple of years ago there was one which –
16 It was another of those ones where the guy personally really took a huge dislike
17 to me, I could tell, and he said something about my name being (name), and
18 (pun on name) and made some joke about that. Well not joke actually. I took it
19 that he was saying that I was a wanker, really, in a roundabout way. And it was a
20 horrible review, and I put his phone number. I managed to get hold of his phone
21 number - and put it on the website, my website, along with the review, and just
22 said "If you wish to engage in discussion on this, here's the number." And that
23 was quite funny because that review – at the end of the year they have this kind
24 of yearly round-up things. I won some little thing for the Worst Review of the
25 Year! Which is quite good really! I mean there is a pride in getting the worst
26 review of the year! And they mentioned that I'd put the number on the website
27 so it was quite a funny little story.

28
29 Did you ever find out how many calls this person got?

30 No. I would be interested. But I think there's something about England – is – I
31 look at all the good reviews I've had and I think the next time I bring out a
32 record I bet it's gonna be that English thing where – right he's had his nice bit,
33 now we'll slag him off. And it's almost like I'm prepared for that to happen,
34 'cause it, I dunno, it seems necessary to crush people if they look like they are
35 doing well or getting to feel comfortable about what they do.

36
37 What are the main rewards for you in doing music?

38
39 Erm. I think the actual doing of it, playing the music. That's also something that
40 I miss, it's the physical playing. I must say.

41
42 You don't do it all? You don't do it very much?

43
44 No I do it. The last gig I did was erm, when was it? It was about a month ago
45 and it within someone else's. It was in a big, actually it was called (title) at the
46 (name) Theatre, and I played a 20 minute solo piano thing and I really enjoyed
47 it. And it left me thinking. "God, I really need to play to people more." But
48 actually it's quite hard for everybody, to do that, unless you just go out there
49 and take every small little pub gig that's knocking about, which you could do for
50 a year but it would do you immense damage to your overall profile as we said.

51
52 So you'd like to be out but it's difficult to get the right sort of work really.

53
54 Yes. A couple of weekends.

55
56 It must be hard struggling with this and wanting to play.

57

1 Yes. Maybe that's not something that most people have a problem with.

2

3 Do you think its hard being a musician in this country? Or do you see it as a
4 general thing?

5

6 Definitely. This country is quite hard at the moment.

7

8 Is that the main reward for you?

9

10 The playing? No that's just the first thing that sprang to mind. I think hearing a
11 piece of music that I've written, if it's, recording it, um

12

13 Do you like to have control over the recording process?

14

15 Yes.

16

17 You have strong ideas on how you like to get things down?

18

19 For me it's almost essential really that I'm there, and involved in what happens
20 to it, because there's still room for lots more detail when you record. When you
21 play the piece live you play it to the best of everyone's abilities but when you
22 record it you can move the instruments around, obviously pan things and
23 enhance every little bit of it, so that's good fun, recording. I suppose, to be
24 honest, seeing a record in a shop that you've finished and you're happy with is a
25 good feeling. What else? Having what I do appreciated, I enjoy. So I suppose a
26 gig like the (name) for instance, a proportion of that audience would be music
27 students. I know, because there are contemporaries of mine that teach at the
28 (name of college) and places like that and they'll recommend certain gigs.

29

30 Are there just students from the (name) and places like that?

31

32 Yes. Most likely yes. But I like that feeling that they're there, they're interested
33 and we are playing things which they erm how do I put this? They wouldn't be
34 able to just hear them, and imagine how it's written down. It would be quite
35 challenging. I like that part of it. The fact that it's keeping them interested I
36 suppose.

37

38 I've heard quite a lot about the down side of it. Any other things that haven't
39 come up yet?

40

41 What from the down side? Um. (6)

42

43 Or the things you find very difficult, that you struggle with... You've mentioned
44 a few. Anything else?

45

46 I'm trying to think.

47

48 We haven't talked about money. You talked about having a manager. But I
49 know that it's feast and famine very often particularly when you are in jazz.
50 How do you manage that? How do you keep yourself going through the hard
51 times as well as the...

52

53 Well I think that is one of the things which can be a bit disruptive, the not-
54 knowing how it's going to go the rest of the year or the following year, and (3)
55 for it to be constantly changing. However it looks as if it's like that for most
56 people these days, so I don't know if that's just a music thing.

57

1 How do you manage it though?

2

3 I think I've managed it myself by always being in work and always taking on as
4 much as I could do (2) to the very limit. Which isn't because I was worried
5 about money, although it was about 2 years ago. I remember actually taking
6 things on thinking "I haven't really got any choice" I should actually just say
7 yes.

8

9 Things you'd rather have said no if you had had the choice?

10

11 No it wasn't so much that I didn't want to do them, it was that if I'd been relaxed
12 about everything, I would have said "I want to do all of these things from an
13 artistic point of view. However I've only got time to do two thirds of them, so
14 I'll drop these". But on this occasion I said "Well, I'll take them all on and I'll
15 just work a bit harder."

16

17 When you get, when you are working very hard like that, do you get stressed
18 out?

19

20 Um. (4) Not in a way that I recognise as stress.

21

22 What would you call it then? How would it affect you?

23

24 Well that's interesting. What I mean is if I'm in a car and some kind of road rage
25 thing happens, there's that kind of stress.

26

27 Does that happen to you? Do you get road rage or wound up?

28

29 No I'm just saying on the one hand there is that kind of stress in life. That kind
30 of feeling of "God how am I going to be able to do this?" I've experienced that I
31 think once in writing music and I'm very glad to say that because

32

33 What happened?

34

35 We were going to Denmark the following morning, and I had this. It was the
36 biggest piece of music I'd ever written. It was for a huge orchestra and it's a
37 piano concerto for (name) and I just, It had to be finished before the following
38 morning, because I was meant to be leaving it behind and it was going to be sent
39 via my brother and I just couldn't.

40

41 How close were you to finishing it?

42

43 Well I had thought I was close enough that by the end of the night, by the
44 following morning, I would stay up all night and I'd be finished, but as it came
45 closer I could just see that it wasn't going to be possible

46

47 Yes, scary!

48

49 Yes quite. Yes. It was. It was horrible. Until you stop and you think – It can't be
50 done. What's going to happen instead? But the hours leading up to that plus the
51 fact that it was going through the night so the fatigue was setting in. But having
52 said that, I've only experienced that once, so

53

54 How did it end, that situation?

55

56 I think I ended up saying it can't be done, putting it in a suitcase and taking it
57 with me to Copenhagen and carrying on out there, which wasn't ideal, but also it

1 wasn't the end of the world. But it's not a situation to get into at all. Back to
2 your question, I, it's quite hard for me to recognise what problems it causes in
3 me, working hard, because I've never really kind of kept a record of behaviour
4 matched up with workload. It would be interesting.

5
6 I wondered whether you had a memory, looking back, of any particularly
7 difficult times, maybe there haven't been?

8
9 I'm sure there have, but I just find it hard to tie in the two things together.

10
11 I just wondered whether there are times when you find you have to do something
12 different, or find another way of dealing with the difficulty? I mean for instance,
13 well put it this way, you told me about that situation. Have you otherwise,
14 generally, been able to get work in on a deadline, OK?

15
16 Yes.

17
18 Or put it another way, that time when you were taking all the work, to keep
19 yourself going financially, what was that like?

20
21 I just made sure that I started everything enough in advance to get it done, and
22 actually at the end of the period of time, I was happy that I'd sorted out the
23 financial thing and also I looked at all the music and thought "Great- I've got
24 more done than I thought I would be able to." I guess the computer thing helped
25 as well. It was when I just started understanding the Sibelius program. And I
26 suddenly realised "Actually I can do a bit more now." Because it used to be a lot
27 of time spent transferring

28
29 Writing stuff out

30
31 Yes. Transferring stuff from one page to another.

32
33 So Technology has helped a lot then.

34
35 It has. I think there is a little stressful moment before I start a piece. You know I
36 was talking about this build up of

37
38 Momentum

39
40 Yes. I think there's also a build up of um other emotions as well. I think I can
41 find that a difficult time. Sometimes.

42
43 Is it a time of doubt ever?

44
45 It could be, or it could be a time..

46
47 Of what is going to happen, uncertainty?

48
49 Yes it could well be. Or it could be that I'm getting annoyed with myself for not
50 actually starting to do something, and I think I was probably. I mean my mum's
51 a bit of a workaholic I think, and I see that as a positive thing actually. We all go
52 there on holiday and she'll be like "OK so what are you going to do today? I
53 propose that you walk to so and so and then we'll come and pick you up and
54 blah blah blah."

55
56 How much of that is there in you?

57

1 I think there's a lot. I feel really bad if I get to the end of a day and I can't look
2 at anything concrete that I have done, that is something worth doing.

3
4 Are you talking musically there, or generally?

5
6 Not necessarily. If I've written some music then I'll feel good about that, but
7 sometimes I can do a certain amount of stuff and get to the end of the day and be
8 pissed off that actually it should have been a bit more, and I don't like to
9 see my kids doing nothing either, during the day.

10
11 Talking about the impact of being a composer on the rest of life, can you say
12 how you think it has affected your personal life, your personal relationships.

13
14 Well again, it's very hard for me to say what is caused by music and what is
15 caused just by who I am.

16
17 Yes. Yes.

18
19 I'm trying to think. I mean I could easily give one concrete example. Quite a
20 few years ago, I did a lot more playing, and the way I did that was, and a lot less
21 writing, er, and I just got into working with American bands that would tour
22 Europe, and I did, I didn't do it for all that long. It was probably only about a
23 year, a year and a half, but I ended up finishing one tour, meeting up with some
24 other people and going straight into another and then another. And so it was
25 about six months, or maybe it was only three months of being virtually away
26 from home for three months and I think that contributed massively to ending that
27 relationship that I was in. And to me that's a really obvious example and I only
28 ever did that once, because by the end of that period, I didn't want to be playing
29 other people's music all the time, and travelling around in not very good
30 conditions. But I wonder how other people do that? There are a lot of musicians
31 that do that all the time and I don't I can't imagine how you can keep any other
32 kind of life together if that's going on, if you're away so much of the time.

33
34 Do you think it is important to have a partner who understands how it is to be a
35 creative musician?

36
37 Yes, although I haven't experienced not being in that situation. I've always been
38 with artistic-minded people and now I'm with someone who played in my band
39 before we got together. So I think it's probably pretty essential because
40 otherwise how could she understand something that obsessive, without liking it.

41
42 Is that how you see yourself? As immersed in it?

43
44 I think you've got to be obsessed by what you're writing, to come up with
45 anything that's going to be original or...

46
47 How would it manifest itself, the obsession? Sort of "Leave me alone, I'm
48 writing" kind of stuff, or in the way you spend your day? If I was your partner
49 how would I notice that and know you were obsessed with it? Would you keep
50 talking about it all the time? Not talking?

51
52 No, that's probably the worst thing. It's probably not something you can talk
53 about. So. Yes if I was to spend 6 hours in my room writing and not come out, or
54 come out for the occasional cup of tea, I would be feeling really good about that,
55 and if (name) was also able to spend 6 hours working at her thing, she'd feel
56 great as well. We're both the same on that one. But she'd have to understand
57 why I was doing that and I'd have to understand why she was feeling good about

1 doing that, which I think is the case. But I can imagine the opposite where you
2 just didn't know what the person was doing, .You'd just think. "Why the hell are
3 they just playing this 5 notes around and round".
4
5 Is that understanding that you don't need to paint the wall, or do the shopping
6 that kind of thing?
7
8 Well those are real things which have to happen, so that's where, But no, we
9 don't fall out about things like that. No.
10
11 I think it is understood that there are some really boring things in life that need
12 to be done, and neither of us particularly want to do them and sometimes neither
13 of us do them, and then we have to, no there's not a problem there.
14
15 What about family, children? How do you think being a creative musician
16 affects them? Your pattern of life is going to be different from say someone who
17 does an ordinary job, but apart from that....
18
19 Yes there's been times where. Well, I should say that my children er they come
20 here on. I pick them up from school on Tuesday or Monday and they're here
21 Monday, Tuesday Wednesday Thursday. I take them to school on Thursday,
22 sorry Friday morning, and they get picked up by their mum Friday afternoon so
23 it's like a half week thing, and there's been times when, if I'm immersed in
24 something they would come back and I'd be pretty much working there for the
25 whole evening, and would hardly see them. But having said that I seem to have
26 moved away from that. I'm not quite sure how it's working because I must still
27 need to spend as much time writing.
28
29 Moved away in the sense that, what's changed?
30
31 It seems to happen less often that they would come back and I'd be, maybe it's
32 just
33
34 Have you had to change your pattern to accommodate the children or it it not a
35 conscious thing that's happened?
36
37 No I think it is conscious. I think more recently I've become aware that certain
38 things have to, I suppose that I have to think about other people sometimes,
39 that's, Yes. Maybe (3) it's with having a new baby arrive, and the months
40 leading up to that, erm I think it has marked some kind of change in.
41
42 Do you feel differently now about parenthood with this new baby, being a Dad?
43
44 Yes I suppose its erm looking at what can make family life liveable for
45 everybody, rather than just how it's going to work for me.
46
47 So what would be the differences then in how you see it now?
48
49 It's weird, but this has only just occurred to me but it's been a while, it's been
50 quite a long time, that they would have come back from school and I would have
51 spent the rest of the evening working. So that's one quite major change.
52
53 Yes. It certainly is, and has that been OK for you?
54

1 It seems to have been. Yes. We get a chance to work at the weekend, on stuff
2 like that, without them, without the children missing out on time. What other
3 changes? Well I think that's the main thing that springs to mind.
4
5 Talking about friends and social life, are your friends mainly in music or do you
6 have friends and interests and a social life outside it too?
7
8 A lot of musicians, erm and, let me think, and then, when I talked about my
9 local, there'd be people there that are
10
11 Artistic you said
12
13 Yes
14
15 Kind of painters and writers
16
17 Yes Yeh couple of painters, poet, writer. And that's not to say that that's all we
18 talk about, we probably get to talk as much about politics and other stuff as we
19 do about artistic things, but I'm not the kind of person who would, half way
20 through the afternoon, ring someone up and say "Do you fancy coming over for
21 a coffee?" and hang out and chat, so. Mind you I suppose going to the pub of an
22 evening for a couple of hours is similar, but I always think of that as a reward for
23 if you've done anything good during the day! But I'm always aware of time
24 passing, I must admit, if it's during the day! And I've got a brother who lives
25 very close by, we meet up quite a lot and my other brother, who lives in South
26 London, we probably get together once every two weeks, or something.
27
28 And how do they feel about having a composer in the family?
29
30 Um the two brothers are both involved in music too,
31
32 Oh right!
33
34 so we kind of exchange ideas and.
35
36 I haven't asked you about performing. Do you ever have nerves performing, is
37 that something that has ever troubled you?
38
39 Nerves, did you say? Erm I wouldn't say it troubled me. You feel a build up of
40 adrenalin before a gig.
41
42 That's very positive isn't it, excitement rather than fear?
43
44 Yes. If you can control it. Yes, direct it. And I remember just the other day, the
45 gig I was talking about, the 20 minute piano thing, I remember saying to
46 someone just before, remarking on it as a point of interest, I said "God I feel
47 slightly nervous!"
48
49 'Cause it was an unusual thing to be!
50
51 Yes But also a good thing is a sense of expectation I suppose..
52
53 And is it a different experience for you when you are actually playing your own
54 music rather than other people's. Do you play other people's music very much?
55
56 Sometimes Yes.
57

1 Do you play the jazz repertoire or whatever?

2

3 I do it if I think I can add something to it worthwhile, and then I probably get
4 pretty much the same feeling, only it's a slightly different responsibility – if it's
5 someone else's band. I'm probably a bit more relaxed in a way because I'm not

6

7 Do you do much work as a sideman or a soloist?

8

9 No. I think that period of being away for 3 months that I mentioned, at the end of
10 that I felt I'd been, I almost felt like I'd been hired to make things better than
11 they were. It sounds a bit big-headed but I kept on being handed bits of music
12 that were really untidy and scrappily written out and I just felt "All right now
13 you want me to turn this into a silk purse." And it got on my nerves a bit towards
14 the end. That is not to say that every situation is like that. Sometimes it's
15 wonderful.

16

17 What was it about that situation? Did you feel used? Put upon? What was the
18 feeling there? Sounds like a negative kind of thing for you, the way you were
19 talking about it. Is that right?

20

21 Yes I suppose I didn't feel that they were directing things enough. I thought that
22 they should be. If they were going to bring me all the way out there to do a tour
23 that they should give me something quite specific to work with. It was all a bit
24 vague. It was almost like. And this goes on a lot – if we get this bunch of
25 musicians together, something good'll happen.

26

27 Without actually doing anything more than putting them together.

28

29 Yes exactly. It was again. It comes back to my thing about laziness, probably!
30 [laughs]. I always resented the fact that they hadn't spent the previous months
31 slaving away bringing some very neat music for us to play.

32

33 Writing out parts and stuff

34

35 Yes

36

37 What about personal relationships with other musicians- when it goes well,
38 when it goes badly, what's likely to happen?

39

40 I think um for the most part I really enjoy hanging out with other musicians in a
41 work situation because they are all, there's a lot of the same kind of humour
42 floats around

43

44 You like because it's a good social thing?

45

46 It's very good socially yes. And I think when I'm running my band which is um
47 the 19 piece thing, I like rehearsing that band because I quite like being in
48 charge of something that powerful, musically, and being able to play around
49 with it and mould it. But also I quite like erm the diplomatic side of rehearsing
50 as well, getting people. And it's the same with an orchestra, even more so,
51 because you can never say anything that might be taken as humiliating to
52 someone because it might be the end of the world for that person, so there's this
53 kind of game of how you get things to work, which is very interesting.

54

55 You like being able to manage it in a way that is skilful and constructive – that
56 gives you satisfaction.

57

1 Yes.

2

3 What about when it goes badly?

4

5 What musically?

6

7 Musically and personally. Do you think, did I ask you this, whether you think it
8 is necessary to get on personally with the people you play with? Because some
9 musical relationships obviously work musically but they don't work personally.
10 What's your view on that?

11

12 I think it is possible to make good music with people that you don't see eye to
13 eye with. I don't know how it works. But it can be done. I think it gets difficult –
14 let's say in the situation where I have a Manager. And that's slightly more
15 difficult because sometimes I'll get a message from him that seems as if
16 someone's being a bit negative about a certain gig or they don't want to leave
17 the day before, and that's complicating things for me – those kind of things can
18 be annoying, but they don't seem to affect the music. I suppose because it's been
19 such a long relationship and we know that we want to play together.

20

21 What about when the music, are there times when the music goes badly, people
22 aren't really on it, they're not trying, they're preoccupied, or whatever, they're
23 not there, don't turn up, sort of stuff. What about that sort of thing? They're
24 drunk, they're out of it, whatever?

25

26 That's very rare because I would do everything in my power not to work with
27 someone who would be drunk on the gig, for instance.

28

29 I didn't ask you whether you used anything to help you work?

30

31 No I'm really kind of weird about that, puritanically. Only because if I, which
32 I've done at a party, say had a drink, and then go and play something, I can feel
33 how it suffers, the playing. But that doesn't really matter – it's a party. However
34 I've been in bands where some people had, er well I guess they were alcoholics
35 some of them, and it was really sad, but the music suffered terribly from that.
36 We kind of got away with it because it was a bit of a party band, but the only
37 time, So I get. If we're in the band room before a gig and someone in the band
38 cracks open beer or something, I even go to the extreme of trying to make sure
39 there are no beers in the band room until after the gig. And I immediately feel
40 nervous that that person's going to muck something up! 'Cause they're going to
41 be drunk, But you asked something else? Oh yes, when the music goes wrong.

42

43 When someone has an off day or really not, what shall we call it, the vibes on
44 stage are really not what they should be, whatever.

45

46 I suppose it depends on exactly what it is, but I used to be really childish about
47 that, in the days of (name of band), if things went wrong and I thought it was just
48 through sloppy playing then I'd be really really pissed off about it

49

50 What's childish about that?

51

52 Well (3) yes, I remember this tune going, and it was my tune, I suppose that's
53 another thing, and it went wrong, and I, this was with (name of band) and it got
54 to this bit at the end where it went round and round, this thing, and I was meant
55 to bring it off and stop the whole piece. And I was so pissed off I left the stage
56 and I was just sitting in the wings feeling grumpy and this thing was going round
57 and round and round and I thought I'm just going to stay here and see what

1 happens! [sits hunched up in chair] So I would say that was childish because I
2 was not rescuing the piece, I was allowing it to be worse than it was. And it is
3 very hard to, I think you have to, when you are doing a gig you have to have a
4 big amount of tolerance, just in case anything does go wrong, and if one thing
5 does go wrong you've got to have room for even more to go wrong. That's the
6 way I see it now.

7
8 So how do you manage it? How do you get it back on track? Or do you just
9 ignore it and carry on? Obviously people will occasionally mess up musically
10 and play the wrong thing or lose their place or whatever,

11
12 I think normally, well, How do you rescue it? You just try to carry on making
13 everything as good as it can be. My assumption is, if a gig starts to go a bit
14 strange, because we've rehearsed the piece and I know that we've played it lots
15 of times, I know that there must be a reason for it to be going wrong and
16 normally that reason is to do with the sound. I don't know why after all these
17 years it's still so complicated to get this to work, but each person has a monitor
18 and you get onto the gig and quite often it feels as if everything has changed, and
19 you can't hear that person, and it's a horrible feeling and that's where you have
20 to have this amount of space to relax and just try not to worry about it and let it
21 sort itself out and quite often you'll find that you can hear them. It's just the
22 balance has changed somehow and your perception has changed, and there's an
23 audience there. I think speaking in between pieces helps somehow, because it
24 reminds the band that you are still the same people you were before you started
25 doing the gig, and this is what we do, we play music.

26
27 It doesn't rattle you, too much?

28
29 Well I'm trying to remember the last time. I think it's like everything, the more
30 you do it, the better you get at

31
32 I'm just trying to see what it is you get better at doing, that's what I'm trying to
33 understand really.

34
35 It's interesting isn't it? I remember doing a gig, very early on, we used to play in
36 this club on the River Thames, a really kind of derelict old building,

37
38 Which one was that?

39
40 It was a, it was called the (name) and it was run by Johnny Edgecombe, who'd
41 been involved in the Profumo scandal, he was quite a romantic figure, and we
42 were support band, basically because he had heard me play somewhere and he
43 knew that he could get me to get a band and never ask for any money, so we did
44 this every Friday night..

45
46 Lucky man!

47
48 Yes. But I mean for us it was a training thing.

49
50 Who were you supporting, just out of curiosity?

51
52 We'd play and then it would be the next band – it would be John Taylor, or
53 Harry Beckett, or John Stevens, Henry Lowther, Stan Tracey, Dudu Pukwana.
54 Each week was another shock – Wow! And we kind of learned from them. But I
55 remember Dudu Pukwana – did you ever see him?

56
57 Oh yes.

1
2 I remember saying to someone, because we'd done our little bit, and they came
3 on and the whole place just turned into a party, I said to someone: How do they
4 do this? And just having that moment of just really wanting to know, like
5 looking at a master and feeling like you've just started out for the very first time.
6 How the hell do they do this? Create this atmosphere? And this person said,
7 "Well, he's been doing this for 35 years" which is a very good answer actually.
8 At the time I didn't think it answered the question at all, but
9
10 Now you've been doing it for a fair old time, now....What's your answer?
11
12 How do you create that? By wanting to create it and writing your own music
13 which creates the atmosphere that you want, and by trying it out on audiences
14 and noting how they respond to different things and um just learning all the time.
15 Yes.
16
17 What things in music that you haven't done would you like to do?
18
19 Well my answer would probably change if you asked me that next year or
20 something!
21
22 Sure!
23
24 It's going to be a changeable answer!
25
26 Sure. What's today's answer then?
27
28 Today I feel like I would like to do what I'm doing but take it to the next level,
29 by which I mean erm instead of, OK, I've got a band at the moment. We've just
30 recorded something and erm
31
32 Are you talking about the big one?
33
34 No this is (name), and a singer from Sweden.
35
36 OK
37
38 So it's a bit like the thing called (name) but it is the next stage, some new songs,
39 and so that then there is this inevitable question, where the record is going to go,
40 and so if you ask what I'd like to happen, I'd like that record to come out..
41 Actually I'd like to licence that. To a good label.
42
43 I'm glad you brought that up, because I haven't asked you about that...
44
45 Who could actually distribute it in a way that would help it to come to more
46 people's attention
47
48 Reach a wider audience
49
50 Because it's surprising to me A How hard that is and B How much difference it
51 makes. I met up with a band yesterday called Goldfrapp who did a record round
52 about the same time that I did that (name) record, and I think there are quite big
53 similarities between the two records. They are both very serene and have lots of
54 girls' voice singing in quite a pure way. And theirs came out on Mute Records,
55 which is quite a good label, and mine came out more or less independently,
56 although I licensed it to a New York Label called (name) and I look at the

1 difference in what happened with the 2 records and I just think. It is really hard
2 to actually change those things, to do anything about them...

3
4 Is it the distribution mainly, you are talking about?

5
6 Yes. And the money that a record label puts behind something. It's like "Here
7 I've made something and now I want to sell it. " And you can either stand
8 outside your house going "Does anyone want to buy this?" Or someone else can
9 go- "I'm going to sell this to the world". And in a way it's a boring subject
10 because it's all about.

11
12 And you'd like to get your music to as wide an audience as possible?

13
14 Yes I think everyone would say that probably. And it's not that I think it's pop
15 music for, that I think it should have equal chance that Madonna has. I'm being
16 totally realistic about it. I would just like it to come to the attention of people
17 who would like it, so they can have the choice to buy it if they want to, or hear
18 it, even more important.

19
20 How do you know how well you are doing in your work— how do you get a
21 sense of your own success?

22
23 It's a very interesting question that. It's really hard isn't it? I think speaking to
24 my manager, who actually when I first met him he was a sound person. He came
25 on tour with us doing the sound, and then he when Erica stopped being manager
26 suddenly to start a family, he kind of stepped into the gap there and said "I'll do
27 an interim,"

28
29 You didn't tell me the story of the changeover...

30
31 We called him Interim Manager. 'Cause the Opera – English Opera thing they
32 had an interim manager, which we thought was quite amusing. And then he
33 seemed to have a really unique way of doing it and a flair for it, so actually
34 looking back, he started as a friend and he is as much a friend as he is a
35 manager, but in answer to your question, how do I gauge things like that.
36 Talking to him is very useful because he has a stepped back view of the jazz
37 scene in England, which he finds very amusing and very. He thinks we all are
38 too small-minded about it all.

39
40 In what way? Can't see the bigger picture? Too parochial?

41
42 Yes exactly and for years it's been run by amateurs. And that's not a dismissive
43 thing to say, and it's been kept alive by retired schoolteachers in Birmingham
44 who want to put on a jazz club. These people have held it together, and that's
45 because the Arts Council have not...

46
47 Recording fanatics in Oxford...

48
49 Yes, have not been. The Arts Council haven't seen it as something worthy of
50 setting up a structure for.

51
52 Yes I do agree. I've seen all the figures on funding— jazz and opera, same size
53 audience, yet look at the difference in support. So that affects the way you see
54 yourself?

55
56 I just remember a conversation the other day and he said "You should take stock
57 of where you are, in this picture." He said. "You don't go out all over the place,

1 playing for no money. You do exactly what you want to do. You've got a Violin
2 Concerto coming up at a Festival that you're the Artistic Director of, this is
3 something I'm doing next year –
4
5 Where's that?
6
7 (place).
8
9 Right. OK
10
11 You've got a meeting with Goldfrapp to talk about them doing a gig there, blah
12 blah blah . He listed out some things which made me think. Yes, I feel pretty
13 good about where I am, and at the same time, in answer to your question of what
14 I would like to be doing. I still feel there is a lot of room for, I suppose, breaking
15 out of this English the thing.
16
17 I agree because in certain kinds of music there are certain standards, markers
18 that you can do. If you're in the jazz world in Britain it is not easy to see what
19 they are. You can do so many broadcasts, and make so many appearances there,
20 and that sort of thing and then more of it.
21
22 That's right.
23
24 It's more straightforward in America,
25
26 Bu that's the weird thing about America. One of the markers for an English jazz
27 musician is if they get to play with Americans.
28
29 Yes sure. Played "with", the way people describe themselves.
30
31 And then the Americans go home and that person is left and it hasn't really
32 moved them on, because everyone forgets that they did that tour.
33
34 But one of the main ways that people make a mark for themselves is doing what
35 you've done, that is having your own music, your own thing, and putting it out,
36 and continuing to do that, isn't it. You're not going to have a No 1 hit in jazz,
37 but there are other things aren't there?
38
39 Variety. I really enjoyed writing some music for a theatre piece, (name), the
40 Tennessee Williams play, and it went to the West End, and I went up, got the
41 train and went up and stood outside and looked at my name outside, not that it
42 was a musical or anything, I'd just written the incidental music, but to me as
43 someone that doesn't do that, I found it quite exciting.
44
45 Is that something you'd like to do more of?
46
47 Yes if I could do it on the same terms, which was that I worked for the director
48 who was – or maybe it was just a happy coincidence that what I wanted to do
49 was perfect for what she wanted, so we both felt happy about it. But if it was like
50 that... I think music and theatre, very often it's a very subservient role, so I
51 wouldn't be that interested.
52
53 You're just being asked to do what the Director, or whoever wants.
54
55 And it's really there to allow them to change the scenery around.
56

1 It sounds very incidental, the way you're describing it!

2
3 It can be, but this was something where I'd got my own musicians in to record
4 music that I thought summed up the play, and it kind of worked out. So it's
5 always nice to find another kind of part of the music world that you had not
6 really thought about, and where there's a possibility to get involved and do
7 something personal.

8
9 Do you think it has changed over your own musical life the balance between
10 playing and writing? Do you still practice?

11
12 I do practice reasonably sensibly but the things I need to practice are keyboards,
13 E flat horn, and singing which I started doing for fun a couple of years ago,
14 taking lessons. Actually that's a lot - if I was to do half an hour on each, that's
15 an hour and a half so I have to come to terms with that - it's impractical really..
16 Somewhere along the line I should drop something, but it's very hard to do that.
17 Plus I like the idea of doing as much as possible and surprising people by
18 coming up with a new instrument on a gig! Which would be very amusing!

19
20 I noticed on your questionnaire that you had had some therapy before for
21 something. Was it related to music, anything to do with life as a creative artist,
22 that kind of thing? I'm not going to ask you to go into detail about it.

23
24 The immediate answer would be no, it isn't but again I feel that it all must be
25 bound together in some way. It's just I can't unravel it. It was much more
26 marital stuff, which I went to, me and Sarah, we are still together, we went to to
27 various people.

28
29 Did it help?

30
31 Um, the first two, the ones that I found, neither of them worked out, and then
32 Sarah found someone who was a very interesting guy. He was 70 something and
33 erm had an incredible life story himself. And so I went to a few, I don't know if
34 it helped. I talked to him a lot, and he said a few things which maybe, perhaps
35 they had an effect, just recently, weirdly enough.

36
37 Good effect?

38
39 Well maybe it just made me think about a few things which I had not, hadn't
40 crossed my mind.

41
42 Last question! People sometimes, you hear a lot of statements popularly in all
43 sorts of circles about the link between creativity and instability/madness, what
44 are your views on that? Do you think there is anything in it or not? We talked a
45 bit about this earlier, connections with it, talking about moods, and things that
46 feed into it - what's your view on the mad genius type of stuff.

47
48 Well I think that to be creative I think you need a certain part of your brain to be
49 overactive and it's the creative side, which is the imaginative side which is
50 probably - it wouldn't surprise me if it was far removed from the, not far
51 removed from the madder bits of your brain. I like eccentricity in other people,
52 and I like it in art, and if people tell me that something that I've done is
53 eccentric I take that as flattery. I'm probably quite interested in madness and
54 obsession and I've read a few books, come to think of it, that are probably about
55 that. I read a book about Glenn Gould, and a book about a guy called Donald
56 Crowhurst who sailed around. He went on this round the world boat race in the
57 60s and he got a certain way out and decided he could never make it in this boat

1 and he was a real eccentric and then he decided that he was going to cheat and so
2 he stayed in one place and tried to work out, he was a mathematician, he tried to
3 work out where the stars would be if he was on this part of the globe. It was an
4 impossible thing to work out and he gradually drove himself mad and jumped
5 off the boat in the end and they never found him. But a book like that I think my
6 brother, because he is similarly interested, he introduced me to that, and I find
7 that fascinating in some way.
8
9 Do you see aspects of it in your own creativity?
10
11 Aspects of madness?
12
13 Yes. That obsession you have talked about, you have mentioned that. Maybe
14 other things? Is it working itself out through you in some way? Where do you
15 think your inspiration comes from? Is that a result of a single minded kind of
16 passion?
17
18 Yes, I've used the word obsession a few times and I think you have to be
19 obsessed otherwise you'd give up after 3 pages and think "Well that's enough, I
20 won't pursue this." You've got to be obsessed to go further and further into
21 detail.
22
23 You need that focus and persistence. Skill, of course, you haven't talked about
24 that, you have to be able to realise it,
25
26 Wherever skill comes from
27
28 That vision, in the dots or however you describe it...
29
30 Yes I think a lot of people say, as a matter of pride, that all artists, it's related to
31 madness.
32
33 You think it's another way of saying we're special?
34
35 It probably is, in a way. Or maybe it's a way of excusing any strange behaviour.
36
37 Yes that too, artistic licence and all that. Do you find that if you tell people you
38 are a composer you get a bit of artistic licence, your licence to be yourself, be a
39 bit eccentric.
40
41 I think I expect to be allowed to be myself and not necessarily because I'm a
42 composer but I think that could be the reason. It's just the kind of person that I
43 am. I want to be slightly different. Maybe it's showing-off thing as well although
44 I'm not a person who'd feel comfortable going into a room of strangers and
45 drawing attention to myself, but at the same time I would probably –
46 contradicting that – I would probably wear something that was slightly unusual
47 in some way, so there's a bit of a friction there.
48
49 What you are talking about there is self-expression rather than drawing attention
50 to yourself...
51
52 That's true. Yes. Me and my other colleagues for years and years we've called
53 each other and certain things "Nuts" and it became a kind of um ...
54
55 Nuts is a compliment? Nuts is good.
56

1 Yes. Well it's very childish in a way but it became a way of describing ourselves
2 – we're nuts. I don't know why that is. I think we are all very childish in a way
3 that I don't see as a bad thing. I don't mean childish in a way that annoys other
4 people so much as um just allowing yourself to enjoy life as you did when you
5 were a kid
6
7 Playing. And play in all senses of the world?
8
9 Yes definitely....
10
11 OK thanks.
12