

The Barry Gray Archive

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Introduction

The British television and film composer Barry Gray...

bequeathed to generations of film and TV viewers a creative legacy whose technical brilliance and inspiring creative sweep, has become an enduring and integral part of ..British culture.¹

Barry Gray

Born John Livesey Eccles in 1908 to musical parents, Barry Gray spent his early years in Blackburn and Blackpool; attended the Royal Manchester College of Music and studied harmony and counterpoint at Blackburn Cathedral. There is word he later studied composition with Matyas Seiber who taught at Morley College.² In the late 1920s, Gray went to work for Feldman & Co. Music Publishers in London, later becoming staff arranger-pianist for Radio Normandy's English Studio in London, until the outbreak of World War II.



Fig. 1 Barry Gray

The following year, Barry Gray was called up to the Royal Air Force. He continued to

¹ Titterton, Ralph and Ford, Cathy. Paraphrased from Liner Notes to (unreleased) DVD of the *Barry Gray Centenary Concert*, Royal Festival Hall, South Bank Centre, London, 8/11/2008.

² This has been verified after consultation of the letters in the Matyas Seiber collection at the British Library.

submit work to Chappell's throughout his service and was de-mobbed from the RAF in 1946, with the rank of Pilot Officer.

A civilian once again, he became a freelance writer-arranger, toured with various variety acts and worked for ten years as accompanist to the wartime singer Vera Lynn, on home and European tour shows and on all of her Decca recordings. At this time, Gray started recording music for advertisements. The Barry Gray Archive includes meticulously-kept note books, detailing 180 recording sessions for some 200 commercials, including the crazily catchy barbershop tune for Quaker Oats' 'Banana Mellows'.³

Vera Lynn introduced Barry Gray to her acquaintance: Roberta Leigh (Rita Lewin), who was presenting an outline for a TV series: *The Adventures of Twizzle* to AP Films, run by two, young British television producers: Arthur Provis and Gerry Anderson. For *Twizzle*, Gray was obliged to transcribe recordings of improvised tunes by a non-musician friend of Leigh's. Another series was made in 1958: *Torchy the Battery Boy*, with similar compositional workarounds.

Rather than remain intermediary, Gray proposed his *own* 'TV cowboy Western' format to Anderson: *Four Feather Falls*, writing the script for the first episode. AP Films bought the concept, selling on to Granada TV for broadcast in 1960. Henceforth, Gray became Anderson's staff composer and music director for Anderson's later company: Century 21 productions.



Fig. 2 Century 21 productions' logo

Iconic television series ensued: *Supercar* (1960), *Fireball XL5* (1962), *Stringray* (1964), *Thunderbirds* (1966), *Captain Scarlet & the Mysterons* (1968), *Joe 90* (1968), *The Secret Service* (1969), *UFO* (1971) and *Space: 1999* (1974) – Gray's last

³ Available as a track on the compact disc: 'Stand by for Adverts: Rare Jingles, Jazz & Advertising Electronics', Trunk Records, 2011.

composition for screen. Gray also composed the scores to the feature films: *Thunderbirds are GO!* (1966), *Thunderbird 6* (1968) and *Doppelgänger* (a.k.a. *Journey to the Far Side of the Sun*) (1969).

1965-6 were busy years for Gray as a sonic artist. He produced and recorded sound effects and atmos. tracks for the two Dr Who feature films, starring Peter Cushing: *Dr Who & the Daleks* (1965), and *Daleks Invasion Earth 2150AD* (1966), Terence Fisher's *Island of Terror* (1966) and François Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451* (1966).

The Barry Gray Archive

The Barry Gray Archive was originally formed in 1993. Before he passed away in 1984, Gray had retired to a house on the English Channel island of Guernsey, setting up his studio in an adjacent German bunker. Following his death, his wife Joan, suffered from memory loss and was, understandably protective of her husband's working materials. She passed away in 1993. In England, Ralph Titterton, a critical care ward manager who had met the composer and contributed to the inauguration of *Fanderson*: the Gerry Anderson Appreciation Society, was asked by the Gray family's removal firm (White & Sons), to go to Guernsey and take stock of the materials. Due to short notice, Titterton reluctantly declined. Gray's adoptive son Simon, arranged for the items to be brought over to a lock-up in Chelsea, with a view perhaps to auctioning items off; but was surprised subsequently to receive an injunction from Lew Grade's ITC Entertainment company, intercepting the sale. It held many of the copyrights. ITC did not want to keep the artefacts, but at the same time they didn't want them sold. The distinction between 'owning' and 'possessing' is an intriguing one.

Ralph Titterton travelled to Chelsea in a rented van, collected the materials and with together his partner, the active Gray archivist Cathy Ford, has looked after them ever since.

The archive comprises hundreds of beautiful and sometimes illuminated, hand-written manuscripts; over 600 x 1/4" and 1/2" reels of audio tape, left in an 'appalling' state in damp cardboard boxes, covered in mildew and dust⁴; notebooks; receipts; letters and miscellanea.

⁴ Personal conversation with Ralph Titterton, 7/2015.



Fig. 3 Tapes from the Barry Gray Archive

Since then, most of the reels of Gray's magnetic tapes have been digitized. The majority of this work has been carried out professionally by Tim Mallett and Glenn Pearce of Kindred Productions in Bracknell, Berkshire. Surprisingly, the vast majority of 1/4- inch reels of the '50s and '60s which had been in damp boxes, transferred well. It was found necessary to bake some of the 1/2" and 1" multi-track reels at Abbey Road Studios, to effect safe transfers. A further problem involved the glue on the splicing tape used by Gray to join sections of music. These would sometimes come off after one pass over the player head. This caused breaks in the music, challenging subsequently to fix. A solution was to refer to audio cassettes of previously released music and lift 'patches' from these to cross-fade over the spliced breaks. In this way, the original recording could be reassembled.⁵ Ralph Titterton reported problems with the spools for the soundtracks to *Space: 1999* whose tape stock had degraded. To restore them, these tapes were also baked at Abbey Road.

The Manuscripts

Barry Gray's manuscripts are all in his exquisitely-neat hand, usually in pencil, with red and green felt-tipped pennings to indicate timing and other synchronization or performance instructions. Their format and layout are strangely *Andersonian* in look, with colourful, red and yellow title tape and caligraphic typefaces of consistent beauty.

⁵ Personal conversation with Tim Mallett of Kindred Productions, 7/2015.

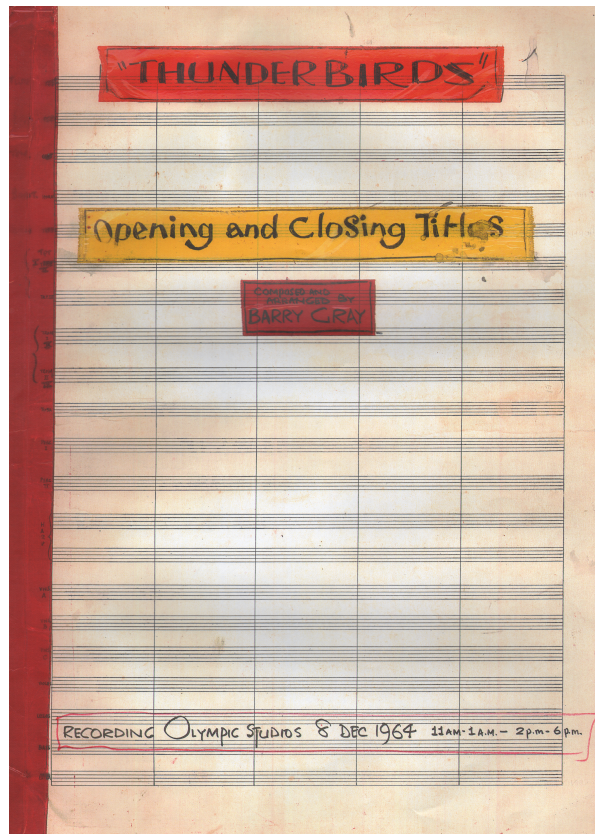


Fig. 4 Title Page to the manuscript for the opening and closing titles of *Thunderbirds* (1966)

Chosen as the most suitable, uncompressed image format for archive purposes, all of the manuscripts have been digitized to 'TIFF' files, to a resolution of 300dpi. This depicts note stems and ledger lines clearly, when the digitized image is scrutinized.

Ralph Titterton purchased an A3 scanner, carefully to digitize all of the manuscript pages. Larger scores had to be scanned in two halves, with images reassembled digitally. A final problem was encountered with the largest of the scores: Gray's manuscript for the feature *Doppelgänger*, which would not fit onto the large scanner. The author got in touch with Bartosh Pajak, a postgraduate student in the photography department at Middlesex University who, with a many megapixel camera, enabled detailed photographing of the complete masterscore.

Paper from the scores has fared well. The tape binding and titling less so, as the tape glue crystallises over time. All scans now fit onto a 1TB hard drive, which has been dispersed to different locations, for safe keeping.

Interest in Gray's orchestral and electroacoustic techniques is growing in university music teaching today. Recently, the Barry Gray Archive has embarked on the production of a series of study scores for student use.⁶ With a loving detail and accuracy, these have been transcribed directly from Gray's handwritten manuscripts and edited for pedagogical clarity, by Giangaleazzo Gamba. The scores relate to musical cues which now exist on commercial CD releases of Gray's music, so that score and soundtrack may be cross-referenced. This in itself has led to interesting discoveries, as Gray's liberties in the recording studio become evident.

On visiting the archive, the author learned that Barry Gray's ondes Martenot session

⁶ Further details regarding the published study scores of Gray's manuscripts, are available from the Barry Gray website: www.barrygray.co.uk

player on *UFO* and for *Doppelgänger* had been the French *ondiste* Sylvette Allart. Madame Allart was traced to a flat on the outskirts of Paris, and a *rendezvous* was arranged for interview. Details from the meeting were written up for readers of the *Fanderson* magazine.⁷ On a return to Paris the author tried to visit Sylvette again, only to be informed by a neighbour that, sadly, she had passed away.

The author has begun to discuss research with encouraging peers at ‘filmusicological’ conferences. A book by Cathy Ford and François Evans on the life and music of Barry Gray is in preparation. From this startling composer, a wealth of unparalleled early innovation in the language and technique of electroacoustic music for film and television, is beginning to show itself. From the archive, it has been possible to pose research questions relating to special aspects of Gray’s working methods: electronic, harmonic, orchestrational, timbral and even proto-spectral. As Gray said in an interview:

*I don't go along with scoring ordinary music for a bundle of synthesizers [...] you could still tell that it was synthesized sound.*⁸

While Gray’s music often seems purely acoustic⁹, imaginative analogue processing techniques are also frequently in play, producing a thrilling sound, impossible to effect by acoustic means alone. The author spent a day trying to transcribe the ‘Century 21 logo’ music for the Philharmonia orchestra, only to discover through failing, that this unique and apparently simple acoustic sound, can *only* be realized by multitracking of strings, possibly with some tape transposition in the dub. This makes the logo very special.

Even the well-known *Captain Scarlet* timpani link is not ‘real’. Any *bona fide* timpanist will tell you, such a sound can only be struck by tape-splicing recordings of separate timpani strokes, to produce a powerful and tightly clipped, ‘upholstered’ result. Necessity as the mother of invention, it is possible that this four-timpani sound ended up sounding as it did, because Gray only had one or two timpani drums to hand!

Gray’s techniques serve, almost magically, to render a *hyper-real* sound from axiomatic expectation. This is his ‘beseeching tone’¹⁰. The hyper-realist approach is in keeping with a philosophy Gray hints at, in an interview he gave for *CinemaScore* magazine in 1982:

*I never wrote down to children. I scored as I felt, I treated the puppets as if they were real people.*¹¹

Gray is being humble. To make puppets real, instead of ‘not writing *down*’, he actually writes ‘*up*’: combining acoustic and electronic techniques to give his music its unique and unnervingly convincing qualities. Concurrently, Gray was often working with limited budgets and resources. As well as engendering a sound that was

⁷ In an article called *The Lady of the Lamp*.

⁸ *Barry Gray Interview* with Randall D. Larson conducted in 1982, published in *SoundTrack* Vol. 12 No. 47, September, 1993.

⁹ By ‘acoustic’ here is meant standard mechanical musical instruments, rather than effects achieved by electronic means including tape manipulation.

¹⁰ ‘The beseeching tone’ is a quote from Carlo Collodi, original author of *Pinnocchio* (1883) viz:

[grasping] the hatchet quickly to peel off the bark and shape the wood ...as he was about to give ...the first blow, ...he ...heard a wee, little voice say in a beseeching tone: ‘Please be careful! Do not hit me so hard!’

¹¹ op. cit.

‘realer than real’, his techniques also aim successfully to make small ensembles sound bigger than they were. His resources are to his music, as Anderson’s puppets were to real people: believable. Gray’s scoring is a key part of the ‘super’ in ‘Supermarionation’.

Archive Philosophy

Set in 802,000AD, the subject of ‘preservation’ is taken up in Herbert Wells’s 1895 novel: *The Time Machine*, in which the time traveller writes:

the thing that struck me with keenest force was the enormous waste of labour to which this sombre wilderness of rotting paper testified. At the time I will confess that I thought chiefly of the PHILOSOPHICAL TRANSACTIONS¹²

When designing and building an archive, it is vital to consider its purpose as a *source* for such ‘philosophical transactions’. As Sir Tim Berners-Lee, British inventor of the internet recognizes:

I like the idea that a piece of information is really defined only by what it’s related to, and how it’s related. There really is little else to meaning. The structure is everything.¹³

Several, separate attempts have been made to catalogue the Barry Gray archive. These have resulted in usefully interconnected lists from which a definitive catalogue is being compiled for central reference.

The Audio Tapes

All Anderson-related tapes have been converted to digital format by Kindred Productions in Bracknell, Berkshire, at sample rates of between 44.1KHz and 48KHz. Higher sample rates will always be possible. With the sanction of the audio copyright holders Sony ATV, it has been possible subsequently to release many CDs of Gray’s music in a format and to critical acclaim of which Barry would have been extremely proud. There have been two markets for these: completeist fan and commercial user. To respect the music, released tracks have been cued according to the structure of the episodes they served, these respecting broadcast order and musical syntax. As well as Sony-ATV, record labels involved in the subsequent commercial exploitation of the archive have been Fanderson, La La Land (US), Silva Screen and Trunk.

The Barry Gray Website

The barrygray.co.uk website went live in 2008, serving as a portal to share background information about the archive, concert news, biography, discography, to identify the masterful musicians Gray employed and give details of associates who contribute to the perpetuation of the composer’s work. In turn, these include Alfie

¹² Wells, Herbert: *The Time Machine*. (1895), p88.

¹³ Berners-Lee, Tim: *Weaving the Web*. Orion Business Books, 1999, p14 .

Pugh who, from original manuscripts, has produced solo piano and wind band arrangements of Gray's music for sale. Monthly, the site fields emails enquiries from parties requesting information on score hire, copyright and details of Gray's working methods for contemporary music productions.

November, 2008 saw the staging of the *Barry Gray Centenary Concert* with the 81-piece Philharmonia Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall, in aid of the Cinema and Television Benevolent Fund. Through intimate reference to the original scores, the producers were exhilarated to have been able to perform authentic representations of Gray's music. Negotiations for release of the concert's video footage with its mastered stereo soundtrack, are on hold.

2016 marks the 50th anniversary of *Thunderbirds*. To get in early, in summer 2014, a team of musicians was assembled by conductor Charles Hazlewood, to play at the Glastonbury Festival. The archive provided access to manuscript materials for arranger Ian Gardiner, currently Head of Music at Goldsmiths' College, University of London. Players included Adrian Utley from the band *Portishead* as well as session musicians from the duo *Goldfrapp*. The author played the ondes Martenot parts. A further concert is planned at Colston Hall, Bristol for 1st December, 2015.

Century 21

To preserve and purvey Gray's legacy, cataloguing craves consolidation, the final tapes beg to be digitized, curators wish to consult to check that digital audio backups have been made as well as they can have been. Customer reviews at media sellers such as Amazon, point to the lack of CGI in film bearing Gray's music. Young children ask: "Why are there strings?" We are wising-up to the fact that Barry Gray succeeded in being *avant-garde*, without ever losing touch with his audience. It would be fulfilling for posterity, to unravel the strings in this composer's music. With support, the Barry Gray Archive purveys for future generations an understanding of early British electroacoustic music production and world reception, whose quality in Gray's work, endures.



Fig. 5 Illumination from final page of Barry Gray's manuscript score for the film *Doppelgänger* (1969)