

# Introduction

## Genesis and composition

In August 1977 Anthony Burgess received a letter from Dan Taylor, the Master of Eliot College at the University of Kent, asking if he'd be interested in giving a series of lectures in 1980. The T.S. Eliot Memorial Lectures at Eliot College began in 1967, with W.H. Auden giving the inaugural lecture, and they have continued as a yearly event.<sup>1</sup> The letter from Taylor specified that the topics of the lectures (three or four in total) should be 'appropriate to the memory of T.S. Eliot', noting that among Eliot's interests were 'English or foreign literature, culture, religion, and politics'. The lectures would be published by Faber and Faber as part of the agreement, as Faber had endowed the lectures.<sup>2</sup> Burgess accepted the offer from Eliot College, and by December 1979 had chosen a title for his series and had devised titles for the four lectures he would give. The series would be called 'Blest Pair of Sirens: Thoughts on Music and Literature', and its four lectures would be 'Under the Bam', 'Rhythm, Sprung and Unsprung', 'Curiously Coloured Things' and 'The Novel as Music'.<sup>3</sup> These lectures would form the basic bones of *This Man and Music*, published in 1982.

1 The series has had brief gaps in its fifty-year history; the longest was from 2001 to 2009.

2 Dan Taylor, letter to Anthony Burgess, 8 August 1977, Anthony Burgess Papers at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin (HRC), box 93, folder 1.

3 Anthony Burgess, postcard to Dan Taylor, 15 December 1979 (HRC).

Burgess gave one forty-five-minute lecture each day from 28 April to 1 May 1980.<sup>4</sup> At the final lecture, he concluded his talk with a brief commentary on his ballet suite, *Mr W.S.* (see Appendix 1). He then played a short excerpt from the suite on audio cassette. (The lectures were subsequently broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in October 1980, but this final part of the lecture was cut.) About a week after Burgess's departure from Kent, Taylor wrote an enthusiastic letter to him, praising the lectures, for which he had received positive feedback. At the end of the month, Taylor also mentioned that the BBC would broadcast recordings of the lectures: 'It seems to be the universal opinion that your lectures were outstanding in the series so far. I certainly don't remember an occasion when there was such unanimity of judgement ... Your own interest seems to have been transferred to most of your audience'.<sup>5</sup>

Earlier, in 1979, Gerald Duff, Chair of the English Department at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, invited Burgess to participate in the John Crowe Ransom Memorial Lectures in 1980. Like the Eliot lecture series, the Ransom lectures were 'in some sense [to] reflect the kinds of interests Ransom himself showed'. Furthermore, Duff requested that 'any publication of the lectures carry a statement designating their origin in the Ransom series'.<sup>6</sup> The timing of Duff's request seems to have been entirely coincidental, and there is no acknowledgement that Burgess was already working on a series of lectures to be given in April and May 1980.

In a letter dated 14 May 1979, Burgess wrote to Duff:

Being more of a practising novelist (and hence something of a rogue or mountebank) than a practising scholar, I am limited to themes which have a direct bearing on my work. One of these themes is the relationship between music and literature,<sup>7</sup>

4 Recordings and transcripts at the International Anthony Burgess Foundation, Manchester (IABF).

5 Dan Taylor, letter to Anthony Burgess, 9 May 1980 (HRC).

6 Gerald Duff, letter to Anthony Burgess, 8 May 1979 (IABF).

7 Burgess mulled over the topic of music and literature throughout his career. In 'The Writer and Music', a radio talk published in the *Listener* in 1962,

an enquiry not yet much pursued but which I, as a writer who began as a composer, am qualified to pursue.

He further explained that he was already considering the inclusion of analyses of Joyce and Gerard Manley Hopkins and musical ideas as formal constructs.<sup>8</sup> Burgess gave the Ransom lectures at Kenyon College on 13, 14, 16 and 17 October 1980. Instead of using the title 'Blest Pair of Sirens', he chose to call this second series of lectures 'Disharmonious Sisters: Observations on Literature and Music'. Two of the lecture titles used at Eliot College remained unchanged ('Under the Bam' and 'Rhythm, Sprung and Unsprung'), but 'Curiously Coloured Things' became 'What Does Music Say?' and 'The Novel as Music' became 'Music and the Novel'.

Recordings and transcripts of the Eliot lectures are available, and one can easily compare their subject matter with the chapters later published in *This Man and Music* (see Appendix 2). Recordings of three of the four lectures given at Kenyon College are also extant. On a close reading of both *This Man and Music* and the content from the seven available recordings, we can see that Burgess drew on his lecture material throughout the book, but also greatly expanded and somewhat reorganised his themes. In addition, there are four chapters in *This Man and Music* that have little in common with the lectures, namely 'Biographia Musicalis', 'A Matter of Time and Space', 'Let's Write a Symphony' and 'Bonaparte in E Flat'.

The expansion and reorganisation of the lectures took place in Monaco while Burgess was engaged with a number of projects, particularly the novel *The End of the World News* and the radio musical *Blooms of Dublin*. Even with these other projects underway, Burgess found time to turn his lectures into a ten-chapter manuscript, and

we see for the first time Burgess mentioning some of the anecdotes, references and conclusions that he revisited in the T.S. Eliot lectures, the Kenyon College lectures and *This Man and Music*. For the text of the *Listener* article, see Appendix 6. Some years after the publication of *This Man and Music*, Burgess borrowed the title of his Eliot lecture series in a 1988 article for the *Listener* titled 'Blest Pair of Sirens?' The 1988 article appears as Appendix 7.

8 Anthony Burgess, letter to Gerald Duff, 14 May 1979 (IABF).

eventually an eleven-chapter book, which was delivered to Faber in November 1981, a little over a year after he had spoken at Kenyon College. In correspondence with Faber, Burgess's agent described the book as partly an autobiography and partly an exploration of the relationship between literature and music.<sup>9</sup>

The prefatory note from an early manuscript of 'Blest Pair of Sirens' acknowledges that 'this book draws its materials from two sets of lectures, four each, which I delivered in 1980 – the T.S. Eliot Memorial Lectures [and] the John Crowe Ransom Memorial Lectures ... On both occasions I spoke on Music and Literature, but I covered, or at least trod, two quite different patches of ground'.<sup>10</sup> This prefatory note did not appear in the book, nor was the title 'Blest Pair of Sirens' retained in the published version (see Appendix 3).

The question of how many patches of ground Burgess trod in his two sets of lectures is an interesting one. When we compare the lectures side by side, the first in both series, 'Under the Bam', are extremely similar. There is a great deal of overlapping material, down to the same anecdotes and seemingly ad-libbed quips. The recording for 'Rhythm, Sprung and Unsprung' as it was given at Kenyon College has yet to be located, although the reuse of the title suggests a similar resemblance. It is in the third lecture at Kenyon College that we can observe Burgess pulling away slightly from his earlier Eliot lecture material. The order of topics changes minimally, and there is an anecdote from 'The Novel as Music' (the fourth of the Eliot lectures). These changes are merely superficial, however, as Burgess strikes the same main points and significantly borrows from 'Curiously Coloured Things' (his third Eliot lecture). It is in the fourth lecture given at Kenyon College, 'Music and the Novel', that we identify some wholly new material. There is still some similarity with the fourth Eliot lecture, namely the central place in the analysis of James Joyce's *Ulysses* and also a discussion of the two types of fiction. Where the two lectures diverge is in the final

9 Gabriele Pantucci, letter to Matthew Evans, 10 November 1981 (IABF).

10 Manuscript draft of *This Man and Music* (HRC, box 48, folder 1).

quarter. Burgess embarks on an exegesis of his novel *MF*, a topic he had not broached at all in the Eliot lectures. This section of the lecture would form the basis of the tenth chapter of *This Man and Music*, ‘Oedipus Wrecks’.

One topic that appears in the book that seems to have no analogue to a lecture is Burgess’s musical pedigree, covered in Chapter 1, ‘Biographia Musicalis’. Brief ideas from the first and second Eliot lectures as well as the first of the Ransom lectures can be found here, but it is primarily a detailed account of Burgess’s first experiences with music as a listener, his first stumbling steps as a performer and, finally, his work as a composer. One of the most fascinating things about the chapter is the ‘works list’ at the end, in the manner of an entry in Grove’s *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. The final piece from 1982 is ‘Homage to Hans Keller for Four Tubas’. Keller was a musicologist and critic who gave Burgess’s *Blooms of Dublin* a scathing review in February 1982 (see Appendix 5). Inclusion of this humorous work may be read as Burgess thumbing his nose at the musical establishment, in which he never felt welcome. In Burgess’s own copy of *This Man and Music*, which is housed at the International Anthony Burgess Foundation in Manchester, he added musical works composed after the 1982 publication date, including ‘Twenty-four Preludes and Fugues for Keyboard’ (officially known as *The Bad-Tempered Electronic Keyboard*, composed 1985), ‘Festal Suite for Brass’ (1986) and ‘Rhapsody for Oboe’ (1987).<sup>11</sup>

The second chapter, ‘A Matter of Time and Space’, also covers

11 Annotated hardcover copy of *This Man and Music* (1982 Hutchinson edition) in Burgess’s personal collection at IABF. Burgess often relied on his memory for details, and this sometimes resulted in inaccurate information. For example, Paul Phillips has noted in *A Clockwork Counterpoint: The Music and Literature of Anthony Burgess* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010) that, in this handwritten list, Burgess ‘mistakenly listed the “Twenty-four Preludes and Fugues for Keyboard” (i.e. *The Bad-Tempered Electronic Keyboard*) under 1983’ (p. 300, n. 5). In the liner notes for the 2018 Naxos recording by Stéphane Ginsburgh, Andrew Biswell notes that the manuscript indicates the composition dates as between 23 November and 13 December 1985.

ground not specifically alluded to in the lectures. In the early typescript which still bears ‘Blest Pair of Sirens’ as the title, Chapter 1 ends on page 32, while ‘A Matter of Time and Space’, begins on page 32a and ends on 32k so as not to disturb the pagination of the remainder of the book. All of the subsequent chapter numbers in this typescript have been crossed out and re-numbered by hand, suggesting that this section must have been written after the rest of the manuscript was complete. The inserted chapter addresses some weighty philosophical questions about classifying disciplines into spatial arts and temporal arts and what we might consider the ‘primal reality’ of a play, a novel or a piece of music (meaning either a performance or a written score).<sup>12</sup> It appears that Burgess decided, on revising his work, that these issues had to be addressed before getting further into the book.

In *This Man and Music* there are frequent references to authors, composers, poets and lyricists, but Burgess also does a fair amount of self-referencing. In Chapter 3 he uses his own Symphony No. 3 in a discussion of the creative process of composition.<sup>13</sup> It would have made sense to have this chapter follow directly after ‘Biographia Musicalis’, as Burgess had originally intended, but the ideas and questions brought forth in Chapter 2 seem to have superseded the logic of this pairing.<sup>14</sup>

Chapters 4 to 8 carry the bulk of ideas and themes from the lectures, albeit fleshed out with new examples and more detail. It is in the closing sentences of Chapter 5 that Burgess gets to the heart of the matter, indeed the heart of the book: ‘it may well be that music can do things for literature which only the musically trained *littérateur* is capable of envisaging. We can at least speculate about this.’<sup>15</sup> Burgess’s subsequent discussions of the works of the lyricist Lorenz Hart (Chapter 6), the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins (Chapter 7) and

<sup>12</sup> *This Man and Music*, p. 64 (all page references refer to the current volume).

<sup>13</sup> See chapter 17, ‘Symphonic Shakespeare’, in Phillips, *A Clockwork Counterpoint*, pp. 185–97.

<sup>14</sup> Burgess had already written about his compositional process for this symphony in 1975. He covered the topic in an article for the *New York Times* and in the programme note given out at the work’s premiere. See Appendices 8 and 9.

<sup>15</sup> *This Man and Music*, p. 115.

the novelist James Joyce (Chapter 8) try in various ways to speculate about this question: what can music *do* for literature?

Chapter 9, 'Contrary Tugs', has its origins in the two lectures 'The Novel as Music' and 'Music and the Novel', but it goes into more depth on Burgess's ideas of Class 1 and Class 2 fiction (which he had called 'T' for transparent and 'O' for opaque in the lectures). After establishing these categories, Burgess seems to draw a conclusion: 'The novelist can, unfortunately, learn very little from music, but he can meet music in an area where concerns of structure themselves provide a subject matter.'<sup>16</sup> The subsequent chapters refer to Burgess's own work: Chapter 10, 'Oedipus Wrecks', is a discussion of *MF* which originated the final lecture Burgess gave at Kenyon College, while Chapter 11, 'Bonaparte in E Flat', discusses *Napoleon Symphony*.

Burgess's agent's description of the book was quite correct: *This Man and Music* is partly autobiographical, and also a lengthy discussion on the interconnectivity of music and literature. There is an internal logic to the way the chapters are arranged, although this is perhaps not apparent to the reader at first glance. It may seem that Burgess flits from topic to topic, allowing his easy erudition to lead him into questionable arguments and problematic conclusions. For example, his argument pertaining to the supposed incongruity of setting iambic pentameter to four-beat bars is confidently presented as a statement of fact but is nevertheless open to question. It presupposes that four-beat bars have no secondary accent (untrue) and suggests that the cadences of sixteenth-century speech should somehow still fit with musical structures that became popular centuries later, a theory for which Burgess provides no rationale.<sup>17</sup> This is one of many issues raised by the most musically savvy reviewers. Yet there is value in this discussion. There is value in even asking the questions. If the conclusions spark debate, so be it. At least we are discussing the possibilities.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 132–3.

### Publication history

A little over a year after Burgess gave the lectures at Kenyon College at the University of Kent, his agent, Gabriele Pantucci, was settling the details for the publication of 'Blest Pair of Sirens'. As Dan Taylor had stated in his letter of invitation, publication by Faber was part of the original agreement to deliver the Eliot lectures, and many speakers before and since have had their lectures published, although there have been exceptions.<sup>18</sup> In the autumn of 1981, Matthew Evans, the chairman of Faber, was already encountering resistance from Pantucci, who would become the dedicatee of *This Man and Music*. On 10 November 1981 he sent a letter to Evans which accompanied the manuscript of 'Blest Pair of Sirens'. He explained that the manuscript had grown significantly from the four lectures given at Eliot College, and offered Faber a first look at this new text, noting the firm's history as a publisher of music and also as the sponsor of the T.S. Eliot Memorial Lecture series.<sup>19</sup> It was odd that Pantucci was even suggesting that the publication of 'Blest Pair of Sirens' by Faber was not a *fait accompli*. Evans attempted to clear up the matter by explaining the original arrangement, set forth in the early correspondence from 1977:

I think at the outset that I ought to make one thing clear to you which from what you say in your letter, Burgess obviously hasn't. One of the conditions of doing the Eliot Lectures is that Fabers publishes the book arising from the lectures. So a lecturer by taking on the lectures commits himself to Fabers as the publisher for the book.<sup>20</sup>

But Pantucci, maintaining that the manuscript written by Burgess had grown substantially from four lectures to ten or eleven chapters,

18 According to Stephen Burke, Master of Eliot College, before 1980 Faber had not published the lectures of Jonathan Miller (given in 1977) and Asa Briggs (1978).

19 Gabriele Pantucci, letter to Matthew Evans, 10 November 1981 (IABF).

20 Matthew Evans, letter to Gabriele Pantucci, 11 November 1981 (HRC, box 93, folder 9).



believed this expansion rendered the original agreement moot. The additional factor of using material from the John Crowe Ransom Memorial Lectures further complicated matters.

The prefatory note for the manuscript of 'Blest Pair of Sirens' begins: 'This little book draws its materials from two series of lectures, four each, which I delivered in 1980'. In a letter to Liana Burgess, Pantucci surmised that Evans had ignored that particular information from the prefatory note. In Pantucci's estimation, this was not the original agreed-upon manuscript; it was something much greater.<sup>21</sup> If Faber wanted to publish it, they would have to offer new terms, although Evans did not agree.

Evans and Pantucci had a telephone conversation (recounted in a letter of 18 December 1981) in which, according to Evans, Pantucci said that Faber had less of a claim to the manuscript because the Eliot lectures constituted only a quarter of the text; that Hutchinson had an 'irrevocable option'; and that Faber and Hutchinson should discuss the possibility of a joint imprint. Whether or not Burgess had expanded the lectures into something greater, however, was immaterial to Evans and to Faber. Evans's letter of 18 December 1981 takes Pantucci to task:

There was therefore no question of our 'making an offer', although it remained to agree terms. Instead of negotiating on that basis or at least coming back to me for clarification you sent the book to Hutchinson from whom you have obtained an offer and indeed with whom you are proceeding to contract; given that you were aware of the legitimate claims on the manuscript I find your behaviour inexplicable ... What you must do, and should have done before now, is to withdraw it from Hutchinson so that we can agree on the arrangements for publication as soon as possible. To sum up, I don't agree with the implication of your letter that BLEST PAIR OF SIRENS is not the book arising from the lectures as set out in my letter of

21 Gabriele Pantucci, letter to Liana Burgess, 19 November 1981 (HRC, box 93, folder 9).

11th November. Certainly no other publisher can bring out a book bearing the present title or containing any material deriving from, or any mention of, the T.S. Eliot Memorial Lectures.

He concludes the letter by stressing the importance of a quick and amicable resolution.<sup>22</sup>

Three days after the letter from Evans, Pantucci received a contract from James Cochrane of Hutchinson, who had been Burgess's editor for *Earthly Powers* and *The End of the World News*.<sup>23</sup> Burgess and Pantucci did take one part of Evans's correspondence to heart; by early January of 1982 the book officially had a new name: *This Man and Music*.<sup>24</sup> The title 'Blest Pair of Sirens' was still earmarked for use as the title for the published version of the T.S. Eliot lectures, which would come out at some undisclosed time. A letter from Pantucci to Evans (copies sent to James Cochrane, Anthony Burgess and Valerie Eliot, T.S. Eliot's widow) confirms this agreement, yet makes no attempt to offer a projected timeline. It also explains that Burgess's musical autobiography – *This Man and Music* – would go ahead as planned.<sup>25</sup> The publication of the Eliot lectures by Faber has not yet come to pass.

Frank Pike of Faber took over the conversation at that point. In an undated letter that references back to correspondence from 11 January 1982, Pike wrote to Pantucci:

I am writing on behalf of both Matthew and myself to thank you for your letter of January 11th. It is good to know that the position is now clear and that Anthony Burgess will retain the title BLEST PAIR OF SIRENS for the book form of his Eliot Lectures and that we may look forward to publishing them in

22 Matthew Evans, letter to Gabriele Pantucci, 18 December 1981 (HRC, box 93, folder 9).

23 Contract between Hutchinson and Anthony Burgess, 21 December 1981 (HRC, box 93, folder 9).

24 Pantucci mentions the title *This Man and Music* in correspondence with Liana Burgess on 7 January 1982 (IABF). James Cochrane mentions the title in a letter to Anthony Burgess, 14 January 1982 (HRC).

25 Gabriele Pantucci, letter to Matthew Evans, 11 January 1982 (IABF).

due course. I assume that when you speak of the Hutchinson volume of musical autobiography being in a different form from the present one you mean that, apart from the change of title, the material that derived from the Eliot Lectures will no longer appear.<sup>26</sup>

About a week later, Cochrane wrote to Burgess: 'It seems that we are now entirely free to proceed with publication of the book that we shall now be calling THIS MAN AND MUSIC ... Can you let me know whether you want to supply me with a new short introduction in place of the present preface, which we shall of course be discarding?'<sup>27</sup> It was no longer appropriate to mention the Eliot lectures, and indeed the new foreword that opens *This Man and Music* steers clear of any reference to them.

Dan Taylor of Eliot College in Kent wrote to Anthony Burgess on 2 February saying: 'I am glad that the dust which appeared to rise rapidly has settled in an amicable way. There seems to have been some misunderstanding and I am glad it has been cleared up. I look forward to seeing your musical biography when it appears and hope to see at some stage the Eliot Lectures in print.'<sup>28</sup> One wonders what Dan Taylor, Matthew Evans and Frank Pike thought of *This Man and Music* when it came out. There is no record of their reaction, but the references to the same ideas, examples and anecdotes from lectures that can be found throughout the book could not have eluded them.

With the publication question out of the way, Hutchinson published *This Man and Music* on 13 September 1982. The original hardcover edition from Hutchinson has a maroon dust jacket with white lettering. A single staff resides between Burgess's name at the top and the book title below. On the staff are a bass clef and two minims, an A (in the bottom space) and a B flat (on the line adjacent)

26 Frank Pike, letter to Gabriele Pantucci, 20 January 1982 (IABF).

27 James Cochrane, letter to Anthony Burgess, 14 January 1982 (HRC, box 93, folder 9).

28 Dan Taylor, letter to Anthony Burgess, 2 February 1982 (HRC, box 93, folder 9).

to represent his initials. The flat is in parentheses, and the two notes are connected by a slur, indicating that, were they to be played, they should be performed in a single breath or with a single bow stroke. Burgess had drawn the same stave and notes freehand on the manuscript version of *This Man and Music* housed at the Harry Ransom Center.

By January 1982 Pantucci was also looking for an American publisher for *This Man and Music*. He was in contact with Eric Swenson of W.W. Norton in New York, who had been sent a copy of the typescript of *This Man and Music*. In March, Pantucci wrote to Liana explaining that he had received an offer from McGraw-Hill, which he had revealed to Swenson. Swenson did not come through with a counter-offer, and in March 1982 Gladys Justin Carr, the editor-in-chief at McGraw-Hill, agreed to publish *This Man and Music* in the United States. The publication date was set for 8 August 1983. Burgess received an advance payment against further royalties of \$13,500 for this edition. The hardcover edition for McGraw-Hill has a dust jacket in off-white with large lettering. The title is at the top in purple type, and the author's name – the same size as the title – is below in olive green. The only musical flourish is a pair of semiquavers sitting on the curves of the ampersand between 'Man' and 'Music'.

The book received a good number of reviews and a fair amount of publicity. The initial print run was small, only a few thousand, but Burgess had enquiries from publishers in other countries. After the initial excitement over the title, the book faded from view. Hutchinson had written to Burgess in July of 1982 that, 'if all goes reasonably well', they would publish a paperback edition in 1983.<sup>29</sup> A sales memo dated 9 May 1984 indicates that 2,327 copies of the Hutchinson hardback edition of 4,000 were still unsold, and as a consequence the British paperback edition never appeared. By May 1984 David Roy, the sales director at Hutchinson, wrote to Liana to say that 'the sales have not been going forward very well for this

29 James Cochrane, letter to Anthony Burgess, 26 July 1982 (HRC, box 93, folder 9).

title'.<sup>30</sup> An American paperback edition was published by Avon/Discus in 1985. A resurgence of interest in the writings of Anthony Burgess after his death in 1993 brought a number of his books back into print, and *This Man and Music* was published in a second American paperback edition in December 2001 by Applause Theatre and Cinema Books, but this fell out of print in 2009 when the eight-year fixed-term contract expired.

### Background and contexts

There are good reasons to believe that the 1980s were a time of self-reflection on music for Burgess, in part because of the lectures he gave at Eliot College and those he gave a few months later at Kenyon College. In what ultimately became *This Man and Music*, and other projects he undertook around the same time (the novel *The Pianoplayers* and the first volume of his autobiography, *Little Wilson and Big God*), Burgess seemed to be reaching back to tell the story of his own musical history and to clarify it, not just for others but for himself.

The first chapter in *This Man and Music*, 'Biographia Musicalis', is a biographical sketch in which Burgess outlines his first experiences with music, and indeed his first forays into teaching himself how to play, how to listen and how to compose. He spends pages explaining how he himself came to understand theoretical principles and various features of style. It is also a justification in a way, a rationale for explaining why he might be the person to best try to get at the connections between music and literature. Not having his formal education stamped with a musical degree, he set out to show he had the life experience to measure up.

In these pages, we find a fair amount of overlap with some passages in the memoir *Little Wilson and Big God* – begun in 1985 and published in 1987 – and early chapters of *The Pianoplayers*, a pseudo-memoir novel that Burgess published in 1986 but which existed in a substantial typescript first draft, originally submitted to

30 David Roy, letter to Liana Burgess, 29 May 1984 (HRC, box 93, folder 9).

publishers by Liana Burgess in June 1977.<sup>31</sup> In this novel, there are elements of Burgess's biography in the life of the protagonist, Ellen Henshaw, who learns music from her father; there are also a few elements of Burgess (and his father) in the character of Billy Henshaw, who seeks to give Ellen a crash course in music.

In this chapter and in the third, 'Let's Write a Symphony', Burgess takes on the mantle of music professor, explaining the very nuts and bolts of his creative process and telling his readers what they need to know to complete the task of writing a symphony. This unique essay gives us a glimpse into Burgess's compositional process, which, he notes, is a rare thing. In his estimation, composers keep their secrets like the purveyors of sleight of hand: 'take my inexplicable magic and ask no questions'.<sup>32</sup> Here he intends to show the inner workings of the machine, so to speak. It is this part of *This Man and Music* that is perhaps the most valuable to Burgess scholars, and especially to students of his music. This is the creative process laid bare, in ways that are sometimes practical, sometimes whimsical.

Burgess had been occupied with the process of composition ever since the first novel he wrote, *A Vision of Battlements*, in 1952. The protagonist, Richard Ennis, daydreams about musical themes and scribbles snatches of music on bits of paper.<sup>33</sup> In the character of Robert Loo from *Beds in the East*, we are shown where his themes come from. As his teacher Victor Crabbe comments: 'Robert Loo had sucked in hundreds of polyglot street songs with his mother's milk, absorbed the rhythms of many Eastern languages and reproduced them on wind and strings. It was Malayan music, but would Malaya ever hear it?'<sup>34</sup> There is also some material about the creativity and compositional process of Michael Byrne, the protagonist of

31 In the Irwell Edition of *The Pianoplayers* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), the editor, Will Carr, writes that the earliest reference to the novel occurs in a 1977 letter from Gladys Justin Carr (an editor at McGraw-Hill) to Liana Burgess (p. 2).

32 Burgess, *This Man and Music*, p. 14.

33 Anthony Burgess, *A Vision of Battlements* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), pp. 58–9.

34 Anthony Burgess, *Beds in the East* (London: Heinemann, 1959), p. 31.

Burgess's posthumous novel *Byrne*.<sup>35</sup> Burgess referred to himself as a 'faker, a patcher, something of a showman' in *This Man and Music*,<sup>36</sup> but perhaps he knew he had actually become more than that. He was, in some ways by the 1980s, legitimised, as evidenced by the radio broadcast by RTÉ and the BBC of his musical *Blooms of Dublin* in 1982. This process of legitimisation would continue after Burgess's death in 1993. In fact, interest in Burgess the composer continues to grow, with new recordings and public performances of his work appearing with increasing frequency. In the last few years, two major recordings of Burgess's compositions have been released. In 2016 Naxos released an album of Burgess's work including the ballet suite *Mr W.S.*, and in 2018 the pianist Stéphane Ginsburgh released a recording of Burgess's *The Bad-Tempered Electronic Keyboard: 24 Preludes and Fugues*, also on the Naxos label.

In addition to discussing his musical concerns, Burgess spends a good deal of time in *This Man and Music* dealing with the poetry and prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins and James Joyce. These two great influences on his life and writing had already made their impact known before Burgess was eighteen. In fact, the biographer Andrew Biswell says of this: 'Everything he wrote [after 1934] would be written under the twin shadows of Joyce and Hopkins'.<sup>37</sup> In his autobiography, *Little Wilson and Big God*, Burgess notes that when he left for his service in the Royal Army Medical Corps, he 'travelled up with Hopkins and Joyce in my rucksack but little else, not even a change of shirt'.<sup>38</sup> In the first of his books on Joyce, Burgess states of the two writers: 'Both were so acutely aware of the numinous in the commonplace that that they found it necessary to manipulate the commonplaces of language into a new medium that should shock the reader into a new awareness.'<sup>39</sup>

35 Anthony Burgess, *Byrne* (London: Hutchinson, 1995).

36 Burgess, *This Man and Music*, p. 15.

37 Andrew Biswell, *The Real Life of Anthony Burgess* (London: Picador, 2005), p. 39.

38 Anthony Burgess, *Little Wilson and Big God* (London: Heinemann, 1987), p. 239.

39 Anthony Burgess, *Here Comes Everybody: An Introduction to James Joyce for the Ordinary Reader* (London: Faber, 1965), p. 21.

Although Joyce is frequently and overtly invoked in the writings of Burgess, references to Hopkins can also be found.<sup>40</sup> In *The Clockwork Testament*, Enderby writes a screenplay adapting Hopkins's poem *The Wreck of the Deutschland*. In *The Doctor is Sick*, Edwin walks down the street and pauses to read the names of pornographic magazines displayed in the window. He notices *Brute Beauty, Valour, Act, Oh!, Air, Pride, Plume* and *Here*.<sup>41</sup> Of course, these are the words in a line from Hopkins's 'The Windhover': 'Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here'. In *This Man and Music* it is chiefly 'The Windhover' and *The Wreck of the Deutschland* that concern Burgess as he discusses the rhythms of words. Here we see Burgess trying to reason out how poetry approaches music, and indeed what poetry has in common with music apart even from the rhythmic aspect. Using *The Wreck of the Deutschland* as an example, Burgess declares that Hopkins, a priest, 'had both the poetic and missionary urge to present a theological concept in a flavoursome sensuous brevity: he had to compress his thought and feeling into small entities of great mass.'<sup>42</sup> Finding no other poets doing a similar thing in 1877, Burgess can find similarities only in the music of Richard Wagner. In the original lecture 'Rhythm, Sprung and Unsprung', he is more explicit about what this means:

There was nothing available in the field of literature at that time which could adequately express Hopkins's own feelings and, as it were, the complex theological convictions which were

40 There is some evidence that Burgess began to plan a book about Hopkins in the early 1990s.

41 Anthony Burgess, *The Doctor is Sick* (London: Heinemann, 1960), p. 84. Quoted by Biswell in *The Real Life of Anthony Burgess*, p. 217. Paul Wake makes note of a similar use of Hopkins's work in his Irwell Edition of *Puma* (and refers by extension to *The End of the World News*). Burgess draws the titles of Val Brodie's best-known novels from Hopkins's 'Moonrise'; among them are *Eyelid of Slumber* and *Cuspclasp and Flukefang*. See Burgess, *Puma*, ed. Paul Wake (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), p. 34, and Burgess, *The End of the World News* (London: Hutchinson, 1982), p. 28.

42 *This Man and Music*, p. 142.



re-aroused by reading of this event. Only probably somebody like Richard Wagner could do it. It could not be done in the style of Wordsworth. It could not be done in the style of Alfred Lord Tennyson. It could only be done in the style of some Wagnerian or post-Wagnerian composer because, in expressing the image of a ship foundering on the rocks (the wind whistling, the shrieking of the women and the children, the groans of the men) in so elemental a situation, we don't want the language of intelligence or even the language of emotion: we want a language of physicality. The crash of chords, the bang of the drum, the howling of the woodwind ... *The Wreck of the Deutschland* can be interpreted as an attempt to musicalise poetry, an attempt to drag poetry out of a region where it had been confined for many centuries, and make it behave like music.<sup>43</sup>

To illustrate his thoughts on writing novels that approach a musical structure, Burgess spends the final two chapters explaining the musical references and structures in *MF* and *Napoleon Symphony*. Of *MF*, Burgess says: 'the story discloses all the elements of a closed structure, like a piece of music'.<sup>44</sup> And he concludes that *MF* proves that 'it is possible to juggle with the free will of fictional characters and the predestination of an imposed structure'.<sup>45</sup> *This Man and Music* ends with a discussion of *Napoleon Symphony*, showing how he divided the book into four main sections, each corresponding to a movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 3, 'Eroica'. It is a useful discussion for any reader of the book, as it explains even the smallest details that Burgess used to bring out the musical ideas. Waltzes, a funeral march, a double fugue and reprises are matched with their counterparts in the book. Burgess's final questions about *Napoleon Symphony* are the questions we may well ask of *This Man and Music*. 'Does the artefact work?' he asks. 'Is the concept viable? These

43 Anthony Burgess, 'Rhythm, Sprung and Unsprung', lecture given at Eliot College, University of Kent, 29 April 1980.

44 Burgess, *This Man and Music*, p. 202.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 202.

questions are not to be asked. Most art is a failure, but art that does not risk failure is not worth attempting.<sup>46</sup> In speaking of his novel, Burgess also offers an implicit defence of his musical autobiography.

### Critical reception

Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* is the standard reference work for musicology in English. Anyone who has been immortalised in an entry must be important to the history of music. Anthony Burgess probably had access to this multi-volume work in the Manchester Central Reference Library,<sup>47</sup> but he could not have hoped to find himself there despite his great and enduring passion for composition: the entries go straight from 'David Burge' to 'Jarmil Burghauser'. There is a John Wilson, but he was an English lutenist and composer who lived from 1595 to 1674. Burgess's absence from *Grove* was mentioned by Ernest Bradbury in his review of *This Man and Music*: 'In The New Grove you will not find an entry for Anthony Burgess. And why you may well think should one be expected for the famous novelist, reviewer, and man of letters.'<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, the 2001 edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* has an entry for Burgess, written by Paul Phillips. Like most entries, it includes a brief biographical sketch, a description of some of Burgess's musical and theatrical projects and of course, a works list. In addition, Phillips mentions some of the attempts Burgess made to bring musical structure to his writing. No doubt it would have pleased Burgess to see his name alongside the composers who had influenced him. This process of acceptance by the musical establishment has been gradual, and has been furthered by a few devotees. When *This Man and Music* was published in 1982, Burgess's status as a writer was well established, but his reputation

46 *Ibid.*, p. 216.

47 Burgess, *Little Wilson and Big God*, p. 121.

48 Ernest Bradbury, 'Music for Everyman,' *Yorkshire Post*, 13 October 1982 (HRC, box 131, folder 11). Subsequent reviews cited here appear in the same HRC file.

as a composer was heretofore undefined, and the topics of the book must have been surprising for some and puzzling for others.

The reviews of *This Man and Music* were mixed. The book's origin as lectures lends a slightly disconnected feel to the essays, especially on a first read, although the origins were obscured out of necessity because of the issues with Faber and Hutchinson. Perhaps if the reviewers knew that this book had grown out of a series of lectures, it might have prepared them for the 'heterogenous'<sup>49</sup> – as one reviewer called it – nature of the different chapters.

One complaint was that the book was too specialised. Robert Craft started his review by saying: 'the "brevity" of this review is determined by the book's limitation to a specialized readership'.<sup>50</sup> Ernest Bradbury of the *Yorkshire Post*, however, felt the opposite: '*This Man and Music* is music for Everyman.' Bradbury also noted the 'acute observations on James Joyce, Shakespeare, Swinburne and, not least, T.S. Eliot'.<sup>51</sup> Christopher Norris in the *British Book News* also felt that Burgess had done a good job of reaching the audience, and said: 'these essays range over a wide variety of musical, linguistic and literary themes with an easy briskness yet without the least show of popularizing condescension'.<sup>52</sup> The anonymous review in the *Economist* called *This Man and Music* 'rare fun of an erudite kind'.<sup>53</sup> In *Publishers Weekly*, the reviewer wrote: '[Burgess] tends to make connections that will enlighten more than a few academically trained music and literary critics. This delightful book will help open the eyes and ears of the world.'<sup>54</sup> Peter Porter in the *Observer* said: 'We have Burgess opinionated, Burgess autobiographical, Burgess expository, and it is all very readable.'<sup>55</sup> Frank Kermode in the *Guardian*

49 Christopher Wintle, 'The Ear of the Novelist', *Times Literary Supplement*, 24 December 1982, p. 1412.

50 Robert Craft, 'Compositions', *New York Review of Books*, 22 December 1983. Reprinted as 'Burgess and Music' in Craft, *Small Craft Advisories: Critical Articles 1984-1988* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1989), p. 238.

51 Bradbury, 'Music for Everyman'.

52 Christopher Norris, *British Book News*, February 1983.

53 Anon., 'Octet of Mixed Voices', *Economist*, 25 September 1982.

54 Anon., *Publishers Weekly* (no date in file).

55 Peter Porter, 'Novelist as Composer', *Observer*, 12 September 1982.

found *This Man and Music* 'bold and diverting'. Of the occasional misquotations, Kermode comments: 'Burgess brings to his task an occasionally flighty memory and much reading. Obviously he has a prodigious memory and never looks things up.'<sup>56</sup> Kenneth LaFave in the *Arizona Daily Star* said: '*This Man and Music* draws you engagingly into the twin preoccupations of one of our culture's most insightful and impassioned thinkers. It is a valuable experience.'<sup>57</sup>

Some reviewers took issue with Burgess's arguments. In a review from December 1982 in *Music and Musicians*, Andrew Green confessed to being unmoved by Burgess's passionate arguments on the topics of music and literature, although he did concede that the book would 'appeal more to the student of literature than music'.<sup>58</sup> In his *Daily Telegraph* review, Rupert Christiansen mentioned that some of Burgess's ideas on musical form and literature were 'frankly contentious'. In assessing the discussion of the poetic procedures of Gerard Manley Hopkins in Chapter 7, 'Nothing is So Beautiful as Sprung', Christiansen said that Burgess achieved 'some fascination, but the subsequent theory of prosody does not get us very far; surely poetry has more roots in the natural rhythm of speech than the artistic rhythm of music?' In the final tally, however, Christiansen found that *This Man and Music* 'makes a positive contribution' to the dialogue.<sup>59</sup>

In the *London Review of Books*, D.A.N. Jones questioned the logic of having so many musical examples ('smudgily printed') because they're useless to people who can't play them. He also mentioned that 'Burgess's tone is sometimes that of a schoolmaster, talking a touch over his pupil's heads'.<sup>60</sup> Somtow Sucharitkul, also known as S.P. Somtow, a composer and science fiction and fantasy author, wrote a thoughtful and lengthy review for the *Washington*

56 Frank Kermode, 'Maggots, Modesty, and Mozart', *Guardian*, 16 September 1982.

57 Kenneth LaFave, 'Burgess Reflects on Music's Ties to Literature', *Arizona Daily Star*, 2 October 1983.

58 Andrew Green, untitled review in *Music and Musicians*, December 1982.

59 Rupert Christiansen, 'Novelist as Musician', *Daily Telegraph*, 16 September 1982.

60 D.A.N. Jones, 'Musical Beds', *London Review of Books*, 30 December 1982.

*Post* in which he stated that the jargon of music and literature ‘limits the number of those who can keep up with his arguments to those few with a background in both music and literature’. Somtow found the autobiographical sections the most effective, but felt ‘when it comes to specifics, though, almost everything Burgess says becomes arguable’. In discussing one of Burgess’s points about 4/4 metre and iambic pentameter: ‘the resultant theory is elegant; so is a house of cards’. His final assessment: ‘It’s a frustrating book, then, if at times a brilliant one.’<sup>61</sup> Cliff Hanley took a similar view, saying that *This Man and Music* is not for the faint of heart; it was for ‘adults with stamina’. Hanley stated that the pages were ‘crammed’ and ‘exasperating’.<sup>62</sup> John Greenalgh’s review in *Classical Music* ultimately found the book ‘unsatisfying’. Greenalgh even suggested that Burgess could have taken his own idea by balancing this book by having a theme or motif recurring throughout: ‘I tried to find such a structure in *This Man and Music*, but could not’.<sup>63</sup>

Perhaps the most detailed review came from Christopher Wintle in the *Times Literary Supplement*. Wintle’s two-decade tenure as a faculty member of the Music Department of King’s College London and his considerable written contribution to historical musicology and musical analysis put him in an excellent place to critique Burgess’s work. Wintle criticised the ‘heterogenous structure of the book’ as a contributing factor to the work as a whole’s being ‘a bit of a shambles’. He found it hard to believe that Burgess had left aside the concept of musical genre, and suggested that the book suffered from conflicting ideas and inconsistent conclusions; ‘some arguments simply won’t stand up to scrutiny’, he declared.<sup>64</sup>

As the reviews rightly suggest, *This Man and Music* has its challenges, the largest being one of expectation. When it was obvious that ‘Blest Pair of Sirens’ was not a viable title, *This Man and Music* was chosen. There is no archival material to explain how this title

61 Somtow Sucharitkul, untitled review in *Washington Post*, 6 February 1984.

62 Cliff Hanley, ‘Rich Music from His Master’s Voice’, *Sunday Standard*, 12 September 1982.

63 John Greenalgh, ‘A Novel Sort of Music’, *Classical Music*, 23 October 1982.

64 Wintle, ‘The Ear of the Novelist’.

was selected or who made the final decision. It is possible that the title was chosen to emphasise the autobiographical aspect of the book. Or perhaps it was chosen to de-emphasise the mention of music and literature together, in order to appease Faber. The book might more accurately have been called *This Man, Music, and Literature*, or *Music, Literature, and This Man*. But as it stands, the title *This Man and Music* is misleading. For a musical memoir, the name would be perfect, but instead (and confusingly) there are full chapters about Hopkins's sprung rhythm and Joycean verbal fugues. Burgess might have gone further to explain how he was working through the points of his argument. Nevertheless, there is valuable material in *This Man and Music*: Burgess sharing his creativity, his passion for composition; Burgess elucidating – in his own unique way – thorny structures in the fiction of James Joyce; Burgess taking the reader by the hand through two of his more challenging novels. There is a wellspring of information, both personal and analytical. The reader must undertake the journey in the knowledge that there will be multifarious twists and turns, much like the sinuous path of Burgess's own musical odyssey.

*This Man and Music* is a significant work in Burgess's output. It is often quoted by Burgess scholars who require the author's opinion or interpretation on any number of subjects, and it has therefore become the source of many well-known Burgessian 'sound-bites'. *This Man and Music* reflects a self-consciousness that marks a few of his works from this period, and, as an autobiographical item, it provides a useful picture of Burgess the composer. Furthermore, *This Man and Music* provides the author with an opportunity to explain two of his novels. For those wanting a deeper understanding of these works – a clearer picture of both intention and execution – the final two chapters of this book are invaluable. As a window into Burgess's creative process as a composer and orchestrator, Chapter 3 alone is noteworthy. *This Man and Music* is, however, less useful in the accomplishment of its proposed primary aim. The central question is not even elucidated until the fifth chapter, and what follows seems to proceed without a stated rationale. Listening to the audio recordings of the lectures, one can hear the impressiveness of Burgess's cavalier

erudition. The references to poetry, song lyrics, modern fiction and musical examples – all presented in Burgess’s entertaining oratory – work perfectly for a lecture presentation. The ephemeral nature of a lecture series means that it is of the moment, but to freeze those thoughts into book form is to invite scrutiny in a manner quite unsuited to them. In reworking and expanding the lectures for publication, Burgess seemingly made little effort to offer greater context for the reader or illuminate the logic of his arguments. To borrow adjectives from reviewers, *This Man and Music* is both exasperating and exhilarating, often in equal measure. It is worth the time of anyone who takes pleasure in Burgess’s novels, for it gets to the heart of his own desires as a writer and composer, and it is an interesting, if flawed, take on the intractable subject of music and literature.