

HP0077 Richard Arnell – Transcript.

RICHARD ARNELL Composer

Interviewed by John Shearman [JS], recorded on 15 February 1989 by Alan Lawson [AL] Copyright of the recording is vested in the ACTT History Project.

SIDE 1, TAPE 1

JS: Born?

RA: September 15, 1917.

JS: Whereabouts?

RA: 537a Finchley Rd, Hampstead, NW3.

JS: You were educated at...

RA: The [?]School and University College School, both in Hampstead.

JS: Did you have any musical education there?

RA: I had some piano lessons from a character called Richard Chanter, and his way of giving me a lesson would be to say play me something my boy, he would put his feet up on the piano, and he had very big heavy socks, this I remember, and I'd play him something and he'd say play me something else. He also taught me so called counterpoint because I wished to compose and

JS: Was this at the Hall or UCS

RA: UCS. There was no musical event at the Hall at all.

JS: Go on, I want to find out about how people get educated musically.

RA: After that, I wanted to be a film director and I think it was Gaumont British offered a course for £100 where you could be an apprentice and I put this to my father and he refused to allow this because we had a history of so called tuberculosis in the family and he said you will have to be indoors all the time and it's not a good idea so I won't agree to that.

JS: Can you put a date on when the Gaumont British course was?

1 RA: I'm not quite sure whether it was Gaumont British, but it was a well-known thing, it was at Shepherd's Bush in the studios there.

AL: Was that Ian Dalrymple?

RA: Probably, you have to remember I was only 17, so yes. And by the way before that I'd made my own films because my father had given me my own 1611m camera, he gave me the camera because he wanted me to take pictures of him playing tennis. But of course I went on and did other things with that camera, and I made 2 silent little feature films, aged 16, 17. So that was turned down, Then a chap called Jimmy Verity who then turned up and you asked me about my education, this was it, Jimmy Verity, bought a sound van for £ 100 and he wanted my father to pay for this van, we were going to go round the countryside making films and he turned that down as well. I'm sure he was quite right because I'm sure Jimmy Verity, may god bless him was a queer as a coot, and there may have been other motives here.

JS : This was when?

RA: I was born in 1917 and say I was 18 at the time, this would be 34/35 . Nobody knew what to do with me and my piano teacher said why don't you go to the Royal College of Music. I put this forward, I'd always written music but I'd never took it very seriously, because it came naturally

JS: You'd written music? JS: All those little black dots?

RA : Yes I learned how to do that, and also I was able to study harmony very easily because my father loved buying second hand objects and one of the objects he bought was a piano accordion. Well a piano accordion on the left hand has a series of dots which are all the chords, common chords, so very quickly you can learn, and improvise as well on the piano, you can learn which chord goes with what, so I learned how to deal with harmony before I went to music school at all.

So nobody knew what to do with me and the piano teacher said why don't you go to the Royal College of Music and I said well yes, I'd like to do that. My father said no, he wanted me to be an architect. Because he was a speculative builder after the First World War his company was King and Arne 11 which built most of Kingsway, the King is nothing to do with Kingsway but they built 3 or 4 buildings there. Well he said no to that but there was one person my father was afraid of and that was the family doctor and the family doctor said why don't you let him go to the Royal College of Music. So I went to the Royal College of Music.

To go into the Royal College of Music in those days was extraordinarily easy because they were short of students. There were no government grants at all and the college was broke, all colleges were broke. And so to get in you had to do simple things like telling whether one note was higher than another when played on the piano. And recognise certain chords which I was good at, having played the piano accordion, so I got in. And then I went into the office and the chap in the office, a lovely man called Hare who was a Cockney who ran the college really. He said who would you like to study with. I said Vaughan Williams, it was the only name I really knew, because I was brought up completely illiterate as far as music was concerned. He said I'm sorry he's full. Would you take John Ireland, I said yes, I knew his name, so I studied with John Ireland, very successfully, because he was the perfect teacher for me. He forced me to be academic in the sense. I learned strict counterpoint, I'm now an expert on strict counterpoint, very few people are. Also he was very good at orchestration, he never interfered with what I wanted to do creatively, and he was a wonderful teacher. I could go on about John Ireland for ages.

JS: What technical facilities did you have at the time at the Royal College? Could you say I want to hear this on a clarinet or cello?

RA: Yes, because you could con a student or a friend in to doing that for you. And I wrote works for people at college. I wrote 2,3 string quartets, a piece for cello and piano, an orchestral piece which was never performed. I wrote about 6, 8, 10 pieces when I was a student at college. And one of them was performed at college, a violin concerto, played by a character called Dennis Exxx. He was a wonderful violinist in those days, he had a disastrous future. He was captured by the Japanese, he got jungle rot in his hand and that was that. He's still a friend of mine but that was his disaster. But he played my violin concerto when I was a student.

JS: You said your father wasn't musical, was your mother?

RA : I didn't say my father wasn't musical.

JS :Is there a heredity thing in this ability to do music?

RA: I have a German Jewish grandfather called Sher who came to England in the beginning of the century and was a master hairdresser in Hastings and HE played the violin in the local orchestra . I can say there was a relationship there . My mother always claimed that she was a child prodigy at the age of 4 but then the money ran out

JS :In what way?

RA: She said she was a prodigy, in other words she could play the piano brilliantly, I don't know whether that's true or not. But then the money ran out because grandfather had a solicitor who was the solicitor for the hairdressing firm in Hastings, and I 've got pictures of grandfather as chairman of the hairdressers whatever it is, 1904, and ran off with all the money to South America. So the piano money stopped, and my grandmother a wonderful old woman who died at the age of 92 ran the house as a boarding house, but my mother's piano lesson's stopped. She always insisted that I had piano lessons which I always did.

JS: You were composing as a student without commission?

RA: It started earlier than that. I never got a commission to write music until I would say 1949.

JS: By which time you were in America.

RA: Yes. But I didn't get any commissions, I had performances but I wrote the music because I had to write music. But it wasn't until 1949, which makes me 27, that I actually get a commission which was to write a ballet called Punch of The Child which was recorded by Goossens, but I had no commissions no.

JS: Let me move you specifically onto film music. Was your first film score commissioned or [on] spec?

RA: No that was commissioned. I'm talking about commissioned, I presumed you meant my classical side. All the films are commissioned. The first film which was commissioned was The Land, Robert Flaherty's film, I was 22 at the time, 23 at the end.

JS: How did that happen, can you remember the moment?

RA: Totally. When, it has to go back a bit, in London there was a character called Lady Meyer, Sir Robert's wife, you will remember Robert Meyer and the children' s concerts and the rest of it. Lady Meyer helped young composers in the sense that she had a studio in Marylebone and she used to have concerts for young

composers and I had a couple of works played at that, and they sailed off to America like most of the British establishment, and I'm the only one who admits I left England because I was afraid, but we'll get onto that later. But she went to America, Robert and she did and the three children went to America before the war, and when she was in America, I was in touch with them, she invited me to come to Washington because there was a concert of Brahms Chamber music and she also wanted to introduce me to people in Washington. So I went to Washington. She paid for this and when I got back she gave me an envelope and I don't know to this day how much was in the envelope because I gave it to Charlotte my first wife, I said don't tell me how much she put in the envelope.

Anyway when I was in Washington, this would have been 1941 she introduced me to Russell Lord and Russell Lord wrote the text for the film The Land and I said I admired Flaherty, actually

I idolised the man, I thought he was the greatest documentary filmmaker in the world. So she said to me and this is a thing I tell all my students, she said why don't you go and see him. And he's working, Russell Lord said he's working in the Department of Agriculture, in the basement there, why don't you just go down there. And I did. This was difficult for me to do because I'm shy by nature but for some reason I was compelled to go. And I took the tram, there were trams in Washington then, I went to the department of agriculture and down in the basement was Bob Flaherty with Helen and Don working on *The Land*. He said how nice to see you, a charming man. I said I'd like to write the music for your film, he laughed it off rather. Then he said can you send me something that you've written. At that time I'd only had two public performances, and the second one was the *Divertimento*, which was recorded, made by CBS in New York, it was a chamber orchestral work in a Hindemith style, the last possible type of piece of music you would expect to go with a documentary about the land. Absolutely the last.

J S: And it was on a disk

RA: Acetate disk. There were no tapes, 78 [rpm]. So I sent him this disk and I got a telegram, because he didn't like writing letters, come to Washington and we will pay your fare.

JS : Where were you?

RA: In New York, it was very necessary because we had no money at all. Charlotte No 1 was a fashion artist and I had no money at all. So I went to Washington and they said we like your music, would you like to write the music for the film. When I say we, Bob Flaherty made his films *en famille*, there was Frances and at that time Franny, his medium daughter on board. So I said of course. They said there's a certain person who's going to be difficult for you, his name is Brusival [?], he's the music contractor and he's a rough diamond, he didn't use those words, but watch out for Brusival. He was the music contractor who would find the orchestra and everything else. I met B and he in fact protected me against the Flaherty family, because he was one of us you see
JS: He was a little black dots man.

RA: He was the person who protected me against the Flaherty family. Now the contract was an interesting thing. It was for 1,500 dollars, multiply that by 20 for these days, for a five reel film, in other words 500 dollars a reel. Then there had to be music for every minute in the film. This was in the contract. So I had to create a symphonic work — there were 45 minutes of music. I had to produce 45 minutes of orchestral music, full symphony orchestra which would go with a commentary which Flaherty himself read which was written by Russell Lord. And I can only say that the editor Helen van Dongan did a miraculous job I've never heard anything so good, the way she managed to mix this symphony orchestra with speech.

JS :You had a big orchestra

RA : A full symphony orchestra.

JS: Where did you record?

RA : In New York, it was done on the cheap with the National Youth, then there was a thing called the National Youth Administration which was part of the New Deal and this was a student musicians who were paid a subsidy to survive and that was conducted by a conductor called Fritz Mahler, it says on the film, in fact he didn't conduct it, it was another chap who had never conducted a film score in his life, he did a beautiful job, which tell you something about the mystique which goes with film music and everything else. If people know how to do their own job, they can do film music . Anyway it is my finest score, there is no question about it This

chap Hofstadter Hugo I think it was, he was a New York conductor, he'd never done it before and he did a beautiful job.

JS :Was he conducting to screen, or to stop watch?

RA : To stop watch.

JS :He couldn't see the pictures like we do nowadays.

RA: No, it was done to stop watch, which I've often done myself. It was done to stopwatch. And they cut the film to the music too .

JS :Helen van Dong cut to score?

RA : Oh yes .

JS: Tell me about Helen van Dongen who is one of my idols.

RA: She's a little woman, very, very strong , I was frightened of her but she did a beautiful job. I can only say I admire her because it was a fantastic job. Have you seen the film?

J S: Oh yes , 3 times.

RA: Then you agree with me, it's fantastic, the combination of orchestral score with commentary, it's amazing how she did that.

JS :I agree with that entirely. Do you know where it was dubbed, mixed, and who mixed it? No. You recorded this more or less live, live a performance or in tiny little bits. No, there weren't any tiny little bits.

RA: No there weren't any tiny little bits. I designed the score with one eye on the concert hall so to say. There are sections which start and finish as pieces. In fact I've made two suites out of the film, one of which has been performed quite often. But it was done exactly the same as any other film score. It was timed precisely. There wasn't anything airy fairy about it, it was precisely timed. I was given the timings and agreed with the timings and did what I could to fit in with what was there.

AL: Did you see a rough cut of the film before you started?

RA: Yes, I did. I saw lots of cuts of the film because there used to be sessions down in the department of Agriculture where the film would be shown, a bit of the film. And Bob would sit there and say what do you think Frances, and she would say that she said, and it became what do you think Tony. And Tony would pipe out. And Bob of course paid no attention to what anybody said I noticed. At least that was my impression. He was very, very nice to me and I'm still a member of the family. Michael Flaherty and I have a lot of conversations. In fact, I have a new project about Nanook of the North myself. So once a Flaherty, always a Flaherty. It was a marvellous experience. I started at the top. And he took a risk. All the great men I've met, I haven't met many but a few like Beecham, they all take a risk. The middle men never take a risk, they ask someone else. But the great men don't care. They take a risk, they don't care if someone's unknown, known, whatever it is they will take a risk.

J S: Can you say a little bit more about The Land because it got into political disrepute at one time?

RA: Yes, it got into complete disrepute.

J S: It was the most important thing which happened to me.

RA: Composing music for The Land was the most important thing that happened to me as an artist. I'm using the word artist in the French term. Because up to that point I didn't really know if I was a composer, I didn't really know who I was. But having written the music to The Land I said to myself you have to accept the fact that you can write music. And I was fortunate in having that challenge to do that. It was a fantastic challenge, to write music for the most famous documentary composer in the world. I know he was in disrepute, but that's not the point, to write that music, to write it for a full symphony orchestra, 45 minutes continually, to do it in a short period of time was a fantastic challenge. And I succeeded. So I said to myself, yes, Richard Anthony S Arnell, you are a composer.

AL: Can you remember how long you had?

RA: Yes, one month.

JS: From when he said yes we want you to do it?

RA: I wrote it in 4 weeks. 45 minutes of music for a full symphony orchestra.

J S: Did you employ copyists?

RA: They did all the copying, I wrote out the full score. I wrote the music in 45 minutes in one month. I sat in Washington, I hired a piano, I was very lonely. I fell in love with a girl 'round the corner which was disastrous. Nothing happened. And I was alone in Washington.

AL: You were saying the film did run into political difficulties.

RA: It did because the film was made under Pare Lorentz's direction of the film system there. He got Flaherty in to do the picture, I was recommended I'm sure actually by Vergil Thomson. You see Vergil had already supported me in New York with Beecham and I'm sure Vergil recommended me for the picture. He never admitted that he did this because he'd done The River and The Plow That Broke the Plains, I'm sure Vergil recommended me for the job. Either he didn't want to do it, but I give the credit. He is a great friend of mine and I've dedicated a work to him and everything else. The political problem was this, Wallis was the secretary for Agricultural and he turned out to be a Communist or at least a Fellow Traveller. And he was disgraced and anything to do with him, which was the Department of Agriculture fell into disgrace. So the film was never actually released, never has actually been released.

JS: I saw it when Bob brought a copy and he more or less smuggled it to London.

RA: He would have had to because it was never released.

JS: And he showed it to a group of us, two or three times. It was never released.

RA: Never.

JS :It's an amazing film. It's The Grapes of Wrath.

RA:It is the abstract Grapes of Wrath you see.

JS :You would agree.

RA: I do, I think it is a great film. I know it has got its faults but it is a marvellous film with faults. I can't tell you how proud I am to be associated with it. And I must say I contributed to it, because the music has a great deal to do with supporting what happened.

J S: I'd certainly say that. I'm not arguing with you about that.

RA: I'm not arguing.

JS: I wanted to make it clear there was a big shift of political opinion that mitigated against the film and got it banned.

RA: No, that's not the reason. I dare say Henry Wallis was involved in the problem, but the problem was different. The film was made in 1940. I wrote the music in 1941, and what happened, Pearl Harbour happened. So what you don't want to show as a government film is erosion problems in the United States of America. I don't think you can blame it on Henry Wallis or his communist affiliations entirely. I don't think any country would be showing a film which showed disasters in its own country during time of war.

JA: Can I blame it on McCarthy?

RA: No you can't. It's out of date. It's to do with the war. The war came in 1941, Pearl Harbour in 1942 or whenever it was and how can you show a film which shows that America is suffering from disaster. I dare say you should, but looking at ordinary bureaucrats I would say that was the reason the film was never shown. Not the Henry Wallis thing. I would say that. Because you must realise that I lived in America during that war so I understood the climate. And I don't think the film would have been helpful to the war effort. After all everyone in this country was making films about the war effort. This was a film against the war effort because it showed America was in a disaster area agriculturally. And since America was supposed to feed the world during the war effort, it would not be a helpful thing, I'm talking as a politician now, not as an artist. So I don't think the Henry Wallis thing, although it may have militated against it was the reason for it's not being released.

J S: Tell me truly, what is your philosophy, music on film theoretical it seems a strange concept, why have it?

RA: Alright. The reason there is music on film is I believe film is music is two dimensional. We no longer have music in the theatre, we used to have people playing in the pit in melodrama. I don't think music is necessary in most films. I think it is necessary in melodrama because for one thing it's realistic in real life, most people listen to music all the time. You see, I travel about a lot, all the young have earphones listening to music. They're used to music therefore music is part of life. Therefore music is part of films. But I think a lot of film is ruined by music. I would recommend less and less music. I think a serious film doesn't need any music at all unless there is a reason for music in the film. That is to say as in Bergman films, if somebody plays a cello, he plays a cello. Or somebody plays a piano, or there might be an opening statement, there might be an overture, I don't mind that. Like Egmont which is an overture to a bad play. Alright Beethoven wrote that overture, that is a marvellous overture. An overture to a film marvellous and perhaps an end piece great, but inbetween silence. If it is a good film, a great film, I don't see the reason for music at all.

J S: I'm very interested because I say in the little work I've done have always said you have to be very selective about what you do on the soundtrack. That if you're doing dialogue you do dialogue. And if you're filling in by doing music, you fill in by doing music seriously. And that somebody ought to control the whole soundtrack. Would you go along with me?

RA: Yes, I think in a film what we might call the synthesis of music and sound is essential. That is to say the soundtrack whether it is wind or speech, whatever, this has to be integrated totally. So the music has to, if there is music and the director wants music, it has to be integrated so the music doesn't interfere with the speech. I've been talking to students a long time about this. And one thing you must never do. Put a piece of music bang on the beginning of a piece of speech track because if you do you'll lose those words. You can put it before or after but you mustn't put it bang on and

that's true in opera. And it's exactly the same in opera. That's why Verdi is such a good opera composer, he never does that. If the word is important, you hear the word and you hear the music or you hear the music first and then you hear the word but you don't hear them both together. Because if you do, you won't hear either. You'll hear a blur. That's hopeless. If we are going to have music on film and under dialogue then composer has to know or should be told what the dialogue is, so he can arrange his music to fit the dialogue. And one thing which is very difficult and you shouldn't do is have very fast music under dialogue because it will totally confuse the dialogue. And you get that a lot with composers, directors who think they can just put a bit of pop music under the dialogue, but pop music is too aggressive and you can't hear what the people are saying, which is essential, that comes first, what the people are saying is the message.

JS: What about the images, how as a composer do you relate?

RA: I take the images totally seriously. And in fact when I was writing ballet music, I always asked of the producer, this was at Sadlers Wells of course, I said what are you going to do about the front cloth, because I'm writing the overture to the front cloth and I want to know what the image is. I am very conscious of the image. I fortunately had a very good visual image, that's why I will never have, writing film music, if I do any more, which I possibly will, I will never have a television monitor on my piano, I will not. I will see the film, I will take it home with me in my head, I will remember the images and the relationship between what I do and the images is vital.

JS: So that you are working in a number of dimensions, because you're thinking about the words and the sound effects and the images

RA: There is one thing I can't think about because I can't control because I'm not the sound editor, I'm not thinking about the sound effects, very often the composers complain about this. They write a particular thing and what happens someone slaps a wave on top or a thunderstorm and your entire situation has been ruined. That happened to me with one film which musically worked quite well, *The Man Outside*, with Van Heflin in it. I thought I wrote a good score and at the end of it, Van Heflin is saying goodbye to the lady on Paddington Station and I wrote a very nice piece for clarinet and strings which expressed everything, it fitted in with the words he was to say like goodbye. It didn't work out because they're lost, she said was something like farewell, as she was a German, farewell, they didn't have that on the track. So they had her saying something and no word. What did they do, they put a diesel sound on that. And they ruined my clarinet concerto so to speak, by putting a diesel sound because they'd lost the track. Very often composers are faced with this, that people lose a track and you have to suffer because they put something else on top.

JS: Do you sit in on dubbing sessions?

RA: I'm never allowed to.

JS: Would you if you could? A composer friend of mine said my ideal world would be where I had complete control of the soundtrack, would you go along with that?

RA: No, I wouldn't go along with that. I would tend to trust the people who were supposed to be making the masterpiece with which I was associated. I would like to be invited on a dub if the music was absolutely vital, I don't mean background music, but absolutely vital, say somebody's

playing a violin concerto on a scene, I would like to be there to see that it sounds like a violin concerto, that the spatial relationship between the violin and orchestra, I'd like to be involved.

JS : I'm not really asking about musicals either.

RA: No, about film. In my own experience which has really been minimal.

JS: You've had 14 credits.

RA: 35 actually. But compared with Bill A Ivun[?] which is 100 extra, I would say no I don't want to be on the dub because there are so many other problems, such as getting the speech right, getting the soundtrack right, and getting whatever is right. I would say I have to trust the people making the picture. I would not like to be an autocrat on that unless, as I said before, the music was a vital part of the film in which case yes I would.

JS : Do you like to be in on music recording sessions?

RA: I'm usually the conductor so the answer is yes.

JS : That's a bit cheapskate isn't it.

RA : Well I am usually the conductor.

. JS: Shouldn' t they employ a conductor

No, sir.

RA :

JS: I'm kidding.

RA : No, if the composer who wrote the music is a competent film conductor, it will save them money to a certain extent, but on the other hand the man knows the music and he can do it off the cuff so to speak, right away. I don't need a conductor.

AL: When you say somebody who can conduct film music, is there a different in conducting film music then?

RA: Yes, there is because the film conductor has to be able to change his tempo according to what is happening on his screen or his monitor. It's a special feeling of being able to relax into a situation. Some people can do it, most people can do it actually, there's no mystique about it, it's not very difficult, I refused to admit that it's difficult.

JS: Have you worked, to screen, and to ticker and all those restrictions?

JS: Is that hell or normal ?

RA : Yes, perfectly normal, the most difficult thing to do is what David Newton and I have done is to write a score to precise timing for a film you 've never seen. This is animation .

AL: I said to John.

I said to John, listen, why don't you show me the film first. He said well Walt Disney always did it like that. I said what does that mean. He said it's easier for me, he said in Hungarian. I've learnt how to do it but it's bloody difficult. We did it in half second timings and you've got a little tiny drawing thing, and you've got to decide what you're going to do with that drawing.

JS: And you know that's going on with movements and so on.

RA: And x plus. And fade and fade in and etc., etc.

JS: You've got that accurately.

RA: Yes to the half seconds, yes.

JS: So what do you use technically, the old fashioned metronome?

RA: I don't use a metronome at all. I use a simple system which is called 2 beats to a 4/4 bar which makes 120 beat, or slow beat of 60 seconds, 60 beats to a minute. I learned not to be subtle, in other words you can do an awful lot in those two, one is slow and one is fast. If you will find if you listen to all pop music it all runs at exactly the same speed which is why it's so boring, 120, it's all 120, always. Now this fits in...

JS: 120 what?

RA: Beats to the minute. And therefore you can work out, you're working out at 1, 2, 3, 4, you've got 2 seconds in a bar or you've got 1, 2, 3, 4, 4 seconds in a bar. Or 1, 3 seconds in a bar. You restrict it to a very simple common denominator. I didn't do that for The Land and it was very tricky for all concerned but I do now and so does everybody else, and the result is boring actually. It is boring. There's a boring common denominator about rhythm and if you listen to pop music, you'll know exactly what I'm talking about.

JS: But you don't claim to be a pop composer.

RA: I've written pop music.

JS: Sure.

RA: I have, but I'm not a pop composer.

JS: I want to ask something else about your philosophy of

putting music on film at all, that is the natural film, the film of live people as opposed to animation, do you find as a musician, as a composer an enormous difference between the two?

RA: Are you asking me two questions?

JS: Yes.

RA: I can only answer one question at a time, let's start again.

JS: Natural films as opposed to animation, are they utterly different to the composer.?

JS: In what way.

RA : Well to me animation film is similar to puppetry which I very much love. It's different from real life film in that sense. And you have to ask me the question.

JS: More appealing or less to you as a composer?

RA : The same .

JS: Would you love to do puppet film more than you would to do Garbo?

RA: I've no wish to do Garbo. I had a girlfriend rather like her once and that was disastrous. No John, I'm not quite clear about your question. I happen to have been involved in animation film for a while. As you know I've written for four or five feature film scores. I don't particularly like the styles which are now used in feature films because I would like to work with a director that I admire. Shall we say I would like to have written a score for Bergman, I really would, I think I could have written a great score for Bergman. I'm not interested in making a lot of money. So at my stage of life now, I would like to write a film for a director that I admired, who admired me. As Flaherty admired me and I admired him and we produced a masterpiece. That's what I would like, I'm not interested in commercial filmmaking, no. I like John Halas, I think he's a master. I admire him and that's the way I'd like to go.

SIDE 2, TAPE 1

JS: I was trying to make you make the definitive statement about naturalistic film as opposed to the puppet/ animation, totally artificial film, speaking as a composer.

RA: I can't quite see your distinction, this is what I find hard to answer.

JS :Ballet as opposed to documentary film.

RA: I can't get on your wavelength. I can't say, you come to me as a producer, which you are, a very brilliant one, you say Tony, I've written a film, made a film, would you like to write the music. And I say can I see the film and you show me the film and if it's a good film I will write the music.

JS: And whether its 24 fps real life or drawn by multi—cell doesn't mean much too you?

RA: No, to me film is film, image is image, I will write music to image. Definite. My preference would be towards something which I think is of great quality.

AL: Of the feature films you made, you talk about The Man Outside, what other ones would you like to remember?

RA: The Third Secret, John Crichton's only feature film after he gave up Ealing Studios, in fact his only film which is not a comedy, it's a psychological drama, have you seen the film? This is the first feature film I wrote. After The Land I was in the doghouse with Flaherty, nobody wants to know in your feature world about people who have written for documentaries, because documentaries and features don't fit and Hollywood is definitely not interested in anyone who's written documentaries, I found that out. So next time I wrote a film score was in 1963 remembering I wrote the first film score in 1941, that's 22 years away. The Third Secret, it's a good film, a psychological drama, made by a chap called Robert Joseph who wrote it and produced it and it was I suspect subsidised by the Bernstein family, because Leonard Bernstein's sister was the co—producer. She was a very tricky lady but we got on fairly well. That was my first feature film, it was a good film.

JS: What was that very good, controversial film that you made that got into trouble in England.

RA: The Black Panther, yes. That's a brilliant film, not totally

brilliant, I'm going to say something outrageous, I'm not quite sure that film is an art. As an artist I have to say this, with my string quartets to my credit, but The Black Panther is a very well made film by an outré film director called Ian Merrick. He raised the money god knows how, and he made the film about this Yorkshire chap who kidnapped a girl, and he got into real trouble because although it wasn't censored or anything, in fact it played at the Plaza for 6 weeks, all the local authorities insisted in seeing the film which meant that he had to produce a number of prints he couldn't afford. It was an efficient form of censorship. I show this film quite a lot and I'm showing on March 16th at the film school. It was effectively banned by the establishment, reason, I'm not going to tell the reason because even I suspect what you my do with my information.

JS: When was that?

RA: 1970s

JS: You were talking about students. I know a little about your career Tony. I know you did a very important thing, you made an interchange between composition students and film students. Will you tell us about that.

RA: Teaching at Trinity College of Music I had many students, all the composition students wanted to be involved in film, I mean all. At the National Film School there was always a need for dogsbodies to put music to film, if they take my advice, because one of my jobs down there was to take care of copyright god help me,

JS: You were very severe about it.

RA: I know, that's been relaxed now and they're going to be in trouble about it, I warn you.

I don't need to warn you, or me because I've resigned. What happened was that film students had the opportunity to work with composers from Trinity College of Music. So there was an interrelationship between the two schools, and the composers came down on a one term basis, they came to all my classes which meant they met the filmmakers and I introduced the ones which I thought would be helpful to one another. If I thought somebody had the right style for a picture then I got them together and it worked very well and a lot of films were done by students from Trinity College. It was an interrelationship which has carried on.

JS: Has it carried on into the big world?

RA: Yes. I can't cite you cases but I will tell you this that it carried on to the point that York University is interested in a relationship with students from the Film School and students from York University, composer students. In other words the idea of an interrelationship has been developed. How successful it will be I wouldn't know John. But it's going to happen somehow. So I created an interrelationship between two places for music.

JS: People of my age always talk about film, that stuff with sprocket holes down it. Do you see a big difference between film and electronic television.

RA: Yes I do.

JS: If you're composing for the little screen is it different?

RA: That's a difficult question, because if you're writing music now for film you're also writing it for television. The distinction is weakened. Let's take *The Life of The Whale*, this is my latest score which I've scored for John Hal as which is going to be done on Easter Sunday on ITV. That was filmed presumably on 16mm, animation, I don't know, some of it was done on computerized animation, the mixture for me is becoming total. So I wouldn't say that there is any difference at all.

AL: Is there any different in impact?

RA: I'll answer that this way. Every now and then I go to the cinema and because I prefer to go in the afternoon I go to the cinema in York and there are three people in the audience, I have a big screen, it's true. The audio side is much too loud, because the chap behind is saying nice and loud. I have a great deal of advertising to look at, I have four people accompanying me, so I'm on the side of electronics I think. I love film, I love the big screen, I love everything else. I can't afford to go to the cinema, a lot of people can't. They can afford to hire something in their home and look at it in their home. It's not the same as going out at night, but going out at night is a hazard. If you have a drink, you get caught. If you're old you get mugged, it's all different.

JS: You used the word electronics. When we first worked together a few years ago, you were very interested in improvisation, but since then I understand you have got very interested in electronic musical sounds. Can I ask you about that, I'm still on this philosophy of music on films lark.

RA: When you asked me for music for film, you said please, I'd rather you didn't use a synthesizer because they rear up and bite you, from some experience of your own. I agreed with you and I didn't. I didn't use improvisation, I used an improvising group. By the way they've disappeared unfortunately, they were rather good I thought.

JS: Sticky George. They were brilliant.

RA: They've disappeared. Well groups do. Improvisation is very important. But if you're doing electronics, David and I sit together and create something, David Huston who is my electronic partner, it is improvisation, very largely.

JS: With a rehearsal?

RA: You sit there and think it out, you say let's try this, let's try that.

JS: With what in front of you, a keyboard?

RA : There's a keyboard, a piece of paper for music on which you write notes, you say let's try that . Or I'll play the piano.

J S: And you have the visuals?

PA: No, if you're doing a feature film you have the visuals, they give you a video tape which you take home. If you 're doing, well the animation thing, it's totally different and very remote, and very few people do this, but on the whole in feature film now you're given a tape of the scenes which are going to be used with music and the director discusses with the composer where the music is. And also he suggests what kind of music he wants and you take the video tape with you and you take it home.

JS: Suppose you were doing then a score on those terms, not for electronics but with a big orchestra. How would you deal with that?

RA: First of all, if I was dealing with that I would be dealing with a feature film which cost a lot of money. And because an orchestra of 60 costs 60 times 100, what's that, £ 6,000 a session, and we 've got a lot of music so we can only do so much a session, so the orchestra is going to cost £50, 000—£60, 000. So we ' re dealing with a big production. How would you deal with that. I would deal with it in the old fashioned way. That's to say I would have the screen up there and the ticker going, actually monitor is a very good way of dealing with this.

JS: That's the old fashioned way of scoring the film, it's old— fashioned.

RA: It isn't John, it depends on the director, it all comes back to the prime mover, pictures. You must remember this, somebody makes the film, I don't make the film, I write the music. I'm like the designer for the sets. You tell me, you raise the money and you tell me I want a symphony orchestra, I want a chorus, I want soloists, I will say yes, if I like the picture or if I like the money or both, I'll say yes of course, John, I'll do it. Tell me when, tell me how long, show me the picture, give me the timings, and I 'm yours. It's as simple as that. Or as complicated. Give me the masterpiece or give me a little film which the student says Tony I do need some music here, I don't know what to do? And I say I know Julia Hill who did a beautiful job for the last student film and will do a beautiful job for you.

JS: I'm terribly interested in this interplay in our business, the film business, as opposed to the lonely artist working away by himself. Do you find this interesting?

RA: I'm not a lonely artist working on my own. I was when I was young. But as soon as I got involved, I became Chairman of the bloody Composers Guild, etc., etc., fighting battles with the BBC, et al. And since I was forty I've never been on my own at all. If you're talking about the lonely artist you haven't got one here.

There are lonely artists, but it's very unusual in composition, because composers have to have performers, like filmmakers. I'll just make an analogy here, we're getting a little bit philosophical here which is correct. Filmmaking is similar to writing a symphony orchestra, let's face it. You have 65 people down there, you have a conduction, you have a proscenium where you do your bit, you have the person who wrote it, you have the conductor who conducts it and you have the organisation which sells it. What is the difference between that and making a film? It's the same.

The only difference is that it's not visual. Don't try and put Beethoven's Fifth on the screen, if you want to I'll do it for money. It will cost, it will cost. Actually it's a bloody good idea.

JS: Not the fifth which I like very much. Let's do the ninth.

RA: I don't like the ninth, I've never liked it. In fact I attacked Hans Keller once about it, it was at some symposium about music, I said I'm sorry, that's irrelevant.

J S: How do you get on with filmmakers on the whole, when someone says looks I've made this little offering, do you love them or hate them?

RA: I've loved them all except one. Her name is Kieren Scott, she made a picture about an exhibition about contemporary art in Dublin. Her father was a very famous man called Scott. He won the Queen's medal for architecture, a lovely man, and Kieren Scott was involved in an earlier picture called John the Magic Music Man. John the Magic Music Man was something I helped to set up at the film school. In fact I've set up, in fact three film companies, with students, I've suggested make your company and go and they've done it. This film did quite well, it was rather like the young musician's thing, Malcolm Sargent picture, it's quite a good picture indeed, it's about a young musician's concert where they played a piece illustrating the various instruments, it worked rather well.

JS: Like The Young Person's Guide...?

RA: Exactly like that, it's an up to date version, it's a very good one. Well Kieren Scott asked me to write the music for a film she was making about this exhibition of her father's in Dublin. So I saw the picture which wasn't too marvellous, I didn't think but I wrote the music and I went to the session, no I'm not going to tell this story.

J S: I'm trying to lead you on to say something about film makers, because you're almost unique between composers and filmmakers, in the thing we talked about, the school.

RA: Why am I unique?

J S: I don't know anyone else who's brought composing students and filmmaking students together.

JS: I want to know about the relationship between composers and filmmakers.

RA: My relationship has been, with Robert Flaherty which was marvellous, I'm still a member of the family, and that went on with Charles Crichton, Robert Joseph's excellent, with yourself excellent, I had no problems with relationship, with relationships with film composers, I understand them, they understand me, because my father gave me a camera when I was 16, please don't forget this, it's rather important, I do know exactly, I used to edit my own films, I do know exactly what you do. I think that's if I may say so unique, very few composers have that background of film.

J S: Has this changed completely? Some of the young people I know in the electronic medium don't regard me as different, has there been an enormous change?

RA: I think there has been a change. I watch a great deal of television. And the music on the whole is dreary, it's alright, but it doesn't fit anything particularly, it doesn't upset anyone, it's not important. In fact I would have thought that music in film is finished. I think films in the future if it's serious should drop music altogether the way theatre has.

AL: Is that an economic reason?

RA: No, it's an artistic reason. If a serious film needs music to support it, I say no, don't do it. As I said earlier, I can agree to an overture, an extra piece at the end to explain something, this is true in the theatre, and perhaps if necessary music, somebody plays the piano, of course, I think if a film is going to be serious it must drop incidental music completely.

J S: That¹ s a good word, incidental music, that' s a word from my childhood, I 've always worried about it when I was trying to do this kind of thing, you think it must stop?

RA: Totally. I'm talking about serious films, I 'm not talking about melodramas, I'm not talking about films where there are chases, of course they've got to have music or else all they've got is the noise of the car. But I 'm talking about serious films don't need music at all if they' re going to be serious at all.

J S: Then what do you put on the track then?

RA: What's on the track mate. The voices speaking, the background sounds, canary singing in the background, that's all you put.

J S: Can we stop here a moment ? INTERVIEW FINISHES AT THIS POINT

Transcript: Linda Wood